Walking School Bus: A Tool to Increase Student Attendance

Tara FitzPatrick - Richmond City Safe Routes to School - Greater Richmond Fit4Kids
Richmond, Virginia

Independent City - Capital of Virginia

Pop. 228,783

Under 18: 18%

White: 40.0%
African American: 48.2%
Hispanic: 6.5%
Asian: 2.1%

Persons In Poverty: 25.2%
The Fairfield Court Elementary School Zone
September 2019 Enrollment - 456
96% of students considered “disadvantaged” by VDOE standards
Students who live within a mile of the school do not receive busing
VDOE Accredited
The school opened just a few months prior to the leasing of housing units in the Fairfield Court Public Housing Community
Fairfield Court

- Built in 1958
- 447 housing units
- Named after an old horse racing track in the area in the 1800s
Whitcomb Court

- Built in 1958
- 447 housing units
- Partially built on an old landfill
- Named after a nearby street
Why We Do It

● Safety was parents number one concern in their community
  ○ Shootings - 28 shootings within 1 mile in the past year
    ■ 8 of those were fatal shootings
    ■ 3 shootings during arrival or dismissal during 2017-18 school year
  ○ Pedestrian Safety

● Absenteeism
  ○ 2017-18 school year, 1 in 4 RPS students missed at least 10% of the school-days
  ○ Highest rate in the region
  ○ 11% Higher than National Average
Why We Do It

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How We Do It

- Cross reference the absenteeism data with student addresses
- Partnerships
  - Communities in Schools of Richmond
- Rollout
  - Spring 2017 - Weekly WSB
  - Spring 2018 - Daily WSB from March - EOY
  - October 2018-19 - Daily WSB from October - EOY
  - 2019-20 planning stipended program
- Supplies
Impact on Students & Community

- Absentee reduction
  - Spring 2018
    - 77% reduction in absences
    - 62% reduction in tardies
- Students arrive ready to learn
- Food access
- Improved interpersonal relationships
- Community support
The Future of Fairfield Court ES

- **Rezoning**
  - Final options show moving Whitcomb Court Students to George Mason Elementary
  - 33% reduction in student enrollment

- **Dismantling or our public housing communities**
  - No known 1-to-1 housing replacement at the current time
Walking School Bus: A Tool to Increase Student Attendance

Regina Stieber - Sixteenth Street Community Health Centers
Lincoln Avenue Elementary School
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Milwaukee

Population: **592,025**

Under 18: **26.2%**

White: **45.8%**
African American: **38.9%**
Latino: **18.4%**
Asian: **4%**

Persons In Poverty: **27.4%**
## Lincoln Village

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>Milwaukee</th>
<th>Near South Side</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Population</strong></td>
<td>592,025</td>
<td>68,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>% Latino</strong></td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Median Age</strong></td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average Household Size</strong></td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.4</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Median Household Income</strong></td>
<td>$38,800</td>
<td>$32,500</td>
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</table>
Lincoln Avenue Elementary School

- Bilingual, Public, Community School
  - 510 students, K3-5th grade
  - 98% Free or Reduced Lunch
  - 70% Latino, 20% black, 10% other (white mixed races, native)
- Sixteenth Street Community Health Centers partnership
Walk Zone

- 4th highest population of walk-zone students in the MPS district
- 58% of students who live in the walk zone
- 291 students in walk zone
Attendance and Safety in Neighborhood

**Safety**
Parent's most cited concern in Community Conversations annually

**Safe Route to School!**

**Absenteen Rate**
14% (Must be below 13% on State Report Card)
How we do it!

- Social Worker / Attendance Team
- Targeted outreach
- Door-to-door
- Parents and staff
- Incentives
- 2 routes, 2 days a week - low attendance days
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BPUmpGaldx0
Walking Routes
Impact on students
## WSB Student Data 2018-19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-WSB</th>
<th>Post-WSB</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student A</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>+5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student B</td>
<td>78.7%</td>
<td>81.9%</td>
<td>+1.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student C</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>+27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student D</td>
<td>74.6%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>+11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student E</td>
<td>78.9%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>+14.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student F</td>
<td>89.5%</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>+8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student G</td>
<td>63.9%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>-11.9%</td>
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</table>
Impact in Community

Safe Route to School!

Walking School Bus
Walking School Bus: A Tool to Reduce Student Truancy

Tiffany Sabiel - Campbell Park Elementary School, St. Petersburg, Florida
Program Overview

- FDOT funded and administered through the University of Florida and other regional programs
- 13 SRTS educators cover 67 counties statewide
- Ped/bike education lessons are administered in schools and communities
- Provide “train-the-trainer” workshops where instructors are taught how to teach pedestrian and bicycle safety to children
St. Petersburg

- Pop. 265,098
- Under 18: 16.4%
- White: 68%
- African American: 23%
- Hispanic: 6%
- Asian: 3%
- Persons In Poverty: 15.9%
### Campbell Park Neighborhood Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>St. Petersburg</th>
<th>Campbell Park</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>265,098</td>
<td>27,171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% African American</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Age</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Household Size</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Household Income</td>
<td>$50,622</td>
<td>$34,328</td>
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</table>
Campbell Park Elementary School

- Population in Campbell Park Neighborhood: 27,171 (265,098 in St.Petersburg)
  - 655 students, Pre-K-5th grade
  - 86% Free or Reduced Lunch
  - 85% black, 9% white, 4% hispanic, 2% other (white mixed races, native)

- Students who live within 2 miles of the school do not receive bussing per Pinellas County School policy
Hazard Review Map of 2 Mile Walk Radius
The Problem: Truancy, Absentee Rate & Safety

- Truancy
  - Students coming to school 1-3 hours late daily
- Absentee rate
  - Students were missing days of school
- Safety
  - Walking alone, bad area, speeding
The Plan

- Approached by United Way Suncoast to organize a WSB program for the Campbell Park Elementary neighborhood school
- Meetings with various different community agencies to gain support
- Tampa Bay Rays sponsored the program and agreed to volunteer monthly
- Trial run; last 6 weeks of school, “WALK IT OUT” Thursday’s created to gain interest in the community
  - One route for 6 weeks, with volunteers, had 50 kids per week.
- Summer planning
  - 4 routes chosen by looking at the map to see where most students lived
  - Walked and timed each route; start time, pick ups and arrival at school
  - WSB table set up at the back to school event to gain volunteers and fill the bus
  - Flyers were created sent out, school calls when out to parents and flyer were posted throughout neighborhood
The Plan Continued

- WSB Training for volunteers
- Practiced Routes
  - Volunteers provided with wagons, rain jackets, umbrellas, charms and chains, reflective vests.
  - A booklet for tracking and a student list were provided along with instructions on day to day operational information.
- 4 Routes planned
- 13 parent volunteers along with agencies who volunteered
- Daily operating - am and pm
The Partners:

- United Way Suncoast, City of St. Petersburg, Jabil Circuit, Campbell Park Elementary School, Tampa Bay Rays, Chick-fli-a, Johns Hopkins All Children’s Hospital, Safe Routes to School, St. Pete Fire Rescue, St. Petersburg Police Department and Duke Energy
Campbell Park Elementary
Walking School Bus

Choose the route that’s closest to you...

Route 1
Bethel Heights
8:05 AM
Meet at the corner of 15th Street South and 7th Avenue South to walk to school.

Route 2
Silver Lake
8:00 AM
Meet at the park benches on the corner of 12th Avenue and 13th Street South and walk to school.

Route 3
Enoch Davis
7:50 AM
Meet at the corner of 18th Street South to walk to school.

Walk to School Every Wednesday!
Kickoff August 22.
Impact on Community

- Reduction in Truancy by over 25%
- Attendance rate increased by 15%
- Over 200 students walking daily
- Increase parent involvement
- Increase parent/school trust
- Increased safety while walking to school
- Police, Fire, and community support
- City support with infrastructure updates
Impact on Students

- Arrived to school on time
- Able to sit and eat breakfast
- No class interruptions
- Endorphins kicked in from walking
- Minds are awake and ready to learn
- Bonding with other students and community partners
- Learned pedestrian safety skills walking to school
WSB - VIDEOS

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UfunvKjFRsk

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=180&v=6E3UGZA8C5g
Takeaways/Call to Action/Advice:

- Point person - WSB coordinator at the school who helps with organization/tracking/volunteers
- Regular checkups and training are necessary to ensure ongoing safety of the WSB
- Keep the bus fun! Have special guests walk
- Monthly/quarterly thank you for volunteers
- Background checks on volunteers
- Constant communication with volunteers is key to having a successful program
- Volunteers need to be in place before start of the program
Thank You...

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University of Florida
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http://FloridaSRTS.com