

## Basic Steps for Starting a Walking Club

**Establish Meeting Time and Place** - April is the ideal season to start an outdoor afterschool club, because of the later daylight hours. Clubs starting in October need to keep in mind that in northern locations, darkness starts to fall at 4:30 pm. The club should arrange to meet regularly on a set weekday (i.e., every Tuesday at 3pm).

**Recruit Members** - Send an invitation letter to parents. It should describe the club, tell where the club will be walking, list some examples of planned activities, provide the dates of the meetings and **emphasize the drop-off and/or pick-up times**. Attach a “walking field trip” permission slip. This should include spaces to fill in the student's name; parent or guardian name, authorization signature, emergency phone numbers and email; the names of other people who are authorized to retrieve the student at pick-up time, such as relatives or neighbors; and any allergies or important health information. Consider also attaching a photo permission form (in order to share photos of club activities).

**Create a Roster** - Use the permission slip information to create a roster of club members, along with parent contact information. The roster always travels with the club, and club leaders should carry a well-charged cell phone.

**Prepare a Club Backpack** – Include the roster, attached to a clip board with a pen or pencil. Keep a couple bottles of water and a first aid kit\* in the pack, along with any items required for the day's activities - snacks, nature guides, binoculars, compass, chalk, etc.

**Plan Meetings** – Design club programming to be age-appropriate. The [storywalking.com](http://storywalking.com) website *Program* page provides audio stories, as well as story guides with conversation starters and activity ideas that can be readily adapted to age and ability. The page also provides suggestions of where to walk and how to find interesting adventures. A Story Walking expert can provide consultation and field training for club leaders and program administrators who would like assistance with planning and execution.

**Start off on the Right Foot** - Begin the first club meeting by introducing yourself, with enthusiasm, and tell the students about where they will be walking. Show students how to introduce themselves to one another, confidently, using the “Hello Hello – Webby Handshake” game as an icebreaker. Encourage them to make new friends.

**Establish Clear Rules** – Ask the students for suggestions in creating a clear list of club rules - for thoughtful behavior, an inclusive culture and physical safety. State the rules with positive words; avoid using *don't* or *not*. We ask for the behavior we want, as opposed to the behavior we wish to avoid (examples below). Write down all the rules on a white board or black board, and make sure everyone understands the rules before setting out on a walk. Review these rules at the beginning of every meeting. Here are some rules to add, if students do not already suggest them:

- Stay together as a group.
- Listen attentively and remain quiet while adults are speaking.
- Stay on the sidewalk/stay on the trail.
- Be thoughtful and kind to one another.

\* *Rhode Island First Aid and CPR Training class info can be found at <http://cprinri.com>.*