

How Does Walk Across Texas Work in Schools? General Instructions for Coordinators/Site Managers

Walk Across Texas is a free fitness program that was created in 1996 by Texas AgriLife Extension Service and the Texas A&M School of Rural Public Health.



This fun and flexible program challenges teams to walk across Texas on a map—approximately 830 miles—during the eight-week program. Anyone can participate, whether they're 10 or 100 years old!

There are many reasons that schools might want to participate in Walk Across Texas. The most important reason is to educate children about the importance of exercise. Teachers may incorporate science, math, reading, and other subjects as they plot their way across Texas with their students. Character education may be taught by developing the traits of honesty and fairness in the recording of walking times. Naturally, students love to feel good about themselves and to receive awards, which this program also provides. In addition to the students benefitting in many areas, teachers may personally enjoy the opportunity to reinforce the need for all of us to increase our daily exercise.

Program Overview

In schools, the students in a class are a team, and classes within a school compete with each other. Sometimes, schools compete with other schools in their district. However you choose to implement Walk Across Texas, it is a great way to increase students' physical activity levels!

Once the program begins, the time that you walk depends on your schedule. You may walk as a class or individually. At school, teachers may set aside time each day to walk with their students, or they may find parent volunteers to do this. Students may walk in their physical education class, at recess, or even after lunch. Biking and walking at home may also be included in the weekly mileage totals.



Schools often choose to have a map of Texas in a location where students can check to see how far their team has walked compared to other teams in the school. A volunteer can download all the mileage totals on Monday of each week and show the ranking of the teams on the maps. Another option is to announce the ranking or to place the ranking on a bulletin board. Texas is about 830 miles across, depending on where you choose to start and finish. Once a team reaches the other side of the state, they should turn around and head back the other way because the team walking the most miles during the eight weeks is recognized, too.



Program Leadership

Walk Across Texas has two types of leaders—the coordinator/site manager and the teachers/team captains. The **coordinator/site manager** is usually chosen by a school administrator (such as the school principal) and is in charge of the school’s overall Walk Across Texas program and general assemblies. The coordinator/site manager makes sure all teachers/team captains enter the weekly mileage from their classes on the Walk Across Texas website. The coordinator/site manager also keeps a map of Texas to track the progress of each class. The **teacher/team captain** is responsible for collecting class mileage results each week and being sure that the information is entered on the website by Sunday of each week.

The coordinator/site manager leads the Kick-Off assembly at the start of Walk Across Texas, the Don’t Give Up Now assembly that occurs about four weeks into the program, and the Awards and Recognition assembly at the end of the eight weeks. At the **Kick-Off** assembly (see sample agenda at http://walkacrosstexas.tamu.edu/PDF/school_kickoff_assembly.pdf), several of the following ideas might be included: (1) a welcome to Walk Across Texas; (2) an explanation of the program; (3) a presentation on the following topics: Pedestrian Safety for Walkers (http://walkacrosstexas.tamu.edu/pdf/health_breaks/h_pedestrian_safety.pdf), Bicycle Safety (http://walkacrosstexas.tamu.edu/pdf/youth_health_breaks/c_safety_first.pdf) Warm-Up Stretches (http://walkacrosstexas.tamu.edu/pdf/health_breaks/flexibility_handout.pdf), Choosing the Right Shoes (http://walkacrosstexas.tamu.edu/pdf/health_breaks/sole_facts_handout.pdf), Protection from Sunburn (http://walkacrosstexas.tamu.edu/pdf/youth_health_breaks/f_sun_time.pdf); and (4) a listing of the possible awards that will be presented at the end of WAT.

At the halfway point (four weeks), a **Don’t Give Up Now** assembly is important to keep students motivated; a pizza party for the team that is in the lead at this time can be a successful motivator. Also during this assembly, you could do an optional fun event, such as matching paper feet to students. Have each student make a paper drawing of his/her foot (without shoes); mix up the paper drawings, and let the students try to match the paper foot to its owner!

At the end of eight weeks, the **Awards and Recognition** assembly (see sample agenda at http://walkacrosstexas.tamu.edu/PDF/school_award_assembly.pdf) concludes the program, and certificates/awards are given to classes.



Getting Started

At the beginning of WAT, the coordinator/site manager should provide each teacher/team captain with the *Walk Across Texas for Schools Guidelines for Teachers/Team Captains* (http://walkacrosstexas.tamu.edu/PDF/teacher_instructions.pdf) informational handout. Before making copies and distributing this handout, be sure to insert your name in the appropriate blank on page 1 as the coordinator/site manager, and insert important dates and times in the blanks provided. At the end of WAT, have teachers/team captains complete the *Teacher/Team Captain Evaluation* form (http://walkacrosstexas.tamu.edu/PDF/teacher_evaluation.pdf).

The procedures involved in Walk Across Texas for Schools are very simple and are listed below.

1. Each class becomes a team and creates a team name. (If a teacher has more than one class that will be participating, create a team name for each class.)
2. Depending on the situation of your school, each teacher/team captain or the Walk Across Texas coordinator/site manager for your school will register each team on the Walk Across Texas website. You may enter up to three classes on a Teacher Registration Form (http://walkacrosstexas.tamu.edu/wat_schools/sqlteacher_regist.asp). If you have more than three classes, start another Teacher Registration Form, and list the additional classes on the second form.
3. If you make a mistake during registration, correct the registration form by going to http://walkacrosstexas.tamu.edu/wat_schools/call_SchoolUpdate.asp.
4. Download the School Daily Mileage Log to track the daily mileage for each class (http://walkacrosstexas.tamu.edu/pdfs_download/school_mileage.pdf).
5. Teachers/team captains decide the time and place they will walk. Decide on a walking route, and determine the amount of mileage for the route. You could use a pedometer to find the mileage. If it is appropriate, you could drive the route, using the odometer, to get a measurement. Others credit 20 minutes of continuous walking with 1 mile. In other words, if 28 children walked ½ mile five days each week, your class could enter 70 miles a week.
6. Optional!! Some teachers want to allow children to get their family members to walk, too. Children wanting to have their family members walk during the eight weeks can have each family member record their miles walked each day. The child may walk additional miles with their family, too. If you want to add this option to Walk Across Texas in your classroom, download the Bonus Mileage Log Form (copy the form front-to-back) from the WAT website (http://walkacrosstexas.tamu.edu/pdfs_download/bonus_mileage_log.pdf), and distribute it to your students. Children participating in this option must turn in this form each week so you can enter the mileage with your team's weekly total on the WAT website. At the time that they turn in their completed form, they should be given another Bonus Mileage Log Form for the following week.
7. Depending on your school's situation, the following options are permitted for entering mileage on the Walk Across Texas website: (1) each teacher/team captain enters the mileage; (2) a school volunteer or student enters the mileage; or (3) teachers/team captains turn in the mileage to the coordinator/site manager, who enters the mileage. By Sunday evening each week, the total miles walked by each of your classes should be entered on the website. To add or update mileage information, go to http://walkacrosstexas.tamu.edu/wat_schools/call_teacher_log.asp.
8. Teachers/team captains can check on how their teams are doing compared to other teams by going to the website (http://walkacrosstexas.tamu.edu/ql_teachers.html) and clicking on the *Quick-Links for Everyone at School* section.
9. Prior to the Awards and Recognition Assembly, download and complete certificates that you may give your students to show how far they walked (http://walkacrosstexas.tamu.edu/pdfs_download/watstudentform.pdf).

Making Walk Across Texas a Part of Your Curriculum

Walk Across Texas may be incorporated into many curriculum areas. Refer to the *Walk Across Texas Lesson Plans* handout

(http://walkacrosstexas.tamu.edu/wat_schools/lesson_plans/index.htm)

for an extensive listing of lesson plans.

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The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating