



Walking My Neighborhood

60 – 90 minutes

In this lesson, students use the online resource, *Walk Score*® to evaluate their neighborhoods by their walk-ability. They identify the variety of destinations within walking distance and develop a personal walking plan with a month-long goal.

Objectives

- Students will identify destinations in their neighborhood that are within walking distance.
- Students will discuss the environmental and personal health benefits of walking.
- Students will create a personal walking plan for a period of a month.

Materials

- *Walking My Neighborhood Handout* (one copy per student)
- *Walking My Neighborhood Classroom Presentation*

Background

Many families live on a tight schedule. Many times jumping in the car becomes the easiest and fastest way to get from one place to another. But what are we depriving ourselves of by always using the car instead of our own two feet? And how does this affect the environment? This lesson will review the many benefits of walking by providing students with the tools and opportunity to create personal walking plans. (**Note:** In communities where walking is not a feasible option, consider having students discuss possible improvements of proposed walking routes or having students form groups to walk in or around the school building.)

Advance Preparation

You will need computers with internet access for this lesson. Bookmark the following website for students: <http://www.walkscore.com/>.

Do Now

Have students respond to the following question in their notebooks: *Why do you think so many people drive to so many of their destinations instead of walking?*

Mini-Lesson

1. Place students in pairs and have them share their Do Now response with their partners. Then, invite volunteers to share their responses with the class. Then ask students the following questions:
 - For destinations closer to home, how many of you get rides out of habit?



- When considering our personal health, why is it important to think about alternatives to driving?
 - When considering the environment, why is it important to think about more sustainable transportation options such as walking?
2. Explain to students that they are going to learn more about the opportunities they have to walk in their neighborhoods, and why walking is a more sustainable choice for their personal health and for the environment.
 3. Load the *Walk Score*[®] website and project its homepage for the class. Enter your school's address in the address field. Explore the results with the students, allowing them to highlight interesting information and ask questions.
 4. At the top of the *Walk Score*[®] homepage, click on the tab titled, "Why It Matters." Review with the students the information about the benefits of walking to the environment, personal health, and the economy. Ask students to share other benefits they may have learned about.
 5. Ask your students: *What distance would you be willing to walk in order to get to a single destination on a regular basis?* Each student should choose a reasonable and realistic personal walking distance goal. Invite volunteers to share their goals with the class.

Activity

1. Assign each student to a computer and have them load the *Walk Score*[®] website. Have them enter their home address in the address field.
2. Have students identify all of the destinations near their homes that are within the distance they have chosen for their personal walking goals. They should list these in their notebooks. Encourage them to consider destinations that might not show up on the website, such as their friends' or neighbors' homes. Give students adequate time – about 15 minutes – to explore the website and discover the various walking destinations available to them.
3. Have students circle or highlight all of the destinations that they currently walk to or can safely walk to over the next month. For each destination they circle or highlight, have them calculate the total miles to and from that location.
4. When students have finished, explain that they are going to create a personal walking plan for the next month. Not only will they measure the distance walked, they will also measure the benefit to their personal health by calculating minutes spent outside and the number of calories burned.
5. Give each student a copy of *Walking My Neighborhood Handout* and review the directions as a class. Model the process for completing the chart and calculating calories burned.
6. Have students write in the name of one or more destinations they would like to walk to over the next month. They should also write in the distance in miles. Be positive and encouraging of all levels of commitments that students are comfortable making. (**Note:** Consider having the class make a pledge to walk a certain amount of miles over the month.)
7. Project *Walking My Neighborhood Classroom Presentation* and review with the students the tips for safe walking. Give students a few minutes to reexamine their personal walking plans.



8. Before class ends, set the date for students to return their handouts. Wrap up the activity by asking students this question: *What other positive impacts will all of our walking have on our personal health and on our environment?* Students might discuss the following: reduced emissions, less fuel consumed, reduced air pollution, personal time with nature, stronger muscles, and healthy activity.

Assessment

Have students complete an exit slip in which they summarize their personal walking plan. They should identify their favorite neighborhood destination within walking distance of their homes and how many miles they plan to walk over the next month. Then, they should list at least one benefit to their personal health and to the environment by choosing to walk to this destination instead of driving.

Modifications

- Pre-teach unfamiliar vocabulary concepts to **English Language Learners**. Give them a list of important words from the lesson and have them work with a partner to create an illustrated glossary of terms. Each term should include a definition and a simple visual. Consider the following terms for this lesson: mobility, sustainability.
- For the Activity, create heterogeneous pairs to provide additional support for **Students with Special Needs**. Partners should work together to identify walking destinations and create their personal walking plans.

Extensions

- Extend this lesson by having students organize an "I Walk To School" day for the school community. After arranging a date with the administration, students could plan for any number of activities to raise awareness for walking. These might include a walking challenge, a walking safety workshop, guest speakers, and so on.
- Extend this lesson by having students research the impact of indoor environmental quality on personal health. They can share what they learn to help others better understand why time spent outside is important for one's personal health.