

HPB INTRODUCES SINGAPORE'S FIRST WALKING SCHOOL BUS AND FUN DANCE ROUTINES FOR PRE-SCHOOLERS

*The two new initiatives aim to encourage physical activity amongst young children in
childcare centres and kindergartens*

Singapore, 6 February 2013: In order to help young children below the age of seven achieve the recommended 180 minutes of physical activity, HPB is introducing fun dance routines at childcare centres and kindergartens as well as Singapore's first *Walking School Bus* as a pilot. HPB has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with PCF today to encourage young children to achieve the 180 minutes of physical activity in childcare centres that operate on a full-day basis and 90 minutes in kindergartens that operate on a half-day basis. HPB will also be signing a similar MOU with Kinderland as well as others and plans to reach 500 pre-schools by 2015.

2. This follows on from the new physical activity guidelines for young children announced by HPB in December 2012 as increased participation in physical activity during one's childhood and youth is directly linked to a lower prevalence of various chronic diseases later in one's life. Physical activity has also been reported to improve academic performance including improved grades, time-management skills, concentration and attentiveness in class. The new guidelines for young children aged below seven are:

- For infants, physical activity should be encouraged particularly through floor-based play in safe environments;
- Children capable of walking unaided should be physically active for at least 180 minutes, spread throughout each day in safe environments;
- Limit total sedentary entertainment screen time to less than two hours per day.

Walking School Bus

3. HPB is introducing Singapore's first *Walking School Bus* as a pilot in PCF Tanjong Pagar-Tiong Bahru situated at Block 6 Kim Tian Road. A *Walking School Bus* is a group of children who walk to and from school along a safe and enjoyable route, accompanied by adults namely parents/caregivers, volunteers or pre-school educators. It can be as informal as gathering parents/caregivers together to walk their children to school to being as structured as a route with meeting points, a timetable and a regularly rotated schedule of adults.

4. The *Walking School Bus* is a free service that provides opportunities for children and adults to engage in physical activity while developing friendships and a sense of place and community in their neighbourhood. *Walking School Buses* are also practised in the United Kingdom, Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand.

5. Walking is an activity which young children together with their parents/caregivers can easily participate in everyday. It also contributes to the daily recommended physical activity that they should have for healthy growth and development. Walking helps to build strong bones, muscles and joints, improve motor skills and brain development and gets them connected socially to their community and surroundings. Walking can also help to save money for parents/caregivers, especially for those who may take public transport when the pre-school is one or two bus stops away.

6. Pre-schools can participate actively during the International Walk to School Month (IWALK) which occurs in October every year. They can also apply to HPB for funding through the CHERISH Junior framework to organise their own customised *Walking School Bus* and other health promoting activities that can occur at any time of the year. HPB will provide pre-schools with a checklist to help plan and organise the initiative in their community.

Fun Dance Routine

7. A series of fun dance routines will also be jointly developed with KK Women's and Children's Hospital (KKH) and HPB over the next two years. The moves and steps in the dance routines are based on building fundamental movement skills among pre-schoolers. As the activity pattern among young children is sporadic and intermittent, using fun dance which includes music and movement reinforces the interest and appeal that being physically active is fun for pre-schoolers. The routines also provide opportunities for pre-schoolers to practise movement skills. When children have a higher competency in movement skills, they are more likely to participate in sports and stay physically active when they grow up.

8. A series of fun dance routines with different themes will be developed. The first fun dance routine has been developed and this dance routine DVD with a pre-school theme will be distributed to all childcare centres and kindergartens in 2013. These fun dance routines can be integrated into curriculum time at different parts of the day to improve music and movement skills or serve as energy boosts for children in between lessons.

9. Integrating physical activity into academic subjects such as mathematics or numeracy is one of the ways that schools can help promote an active lifestyle among children. The key intent is for pre-school educators to develop an understanding that they can leverage on physical activity to impart a learning concept such as counting to pre-schoolers. At the same time it provides an opportunity for children to be physically active and helps meet their daily recommended level of physical activity.

10. Parents and caregivers are important role models who help to nurture healthy habits in young children. Children view physical activity as part of their daily lifestyle when parents stay physically active with their children. The fun dance routine DVDs will also be made available to parents so that they can engage their children below age of seven in some form of physical activity at home.

11. Ms Indranee Rajah, Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Law and Ministry of Education, Member of Parliament for Tanjong Pagar GRC said, “A child’s early years in pre-school is when they experience the joy and thrill of inquiring, exploring, and discovering the world around them. Pre-school educators and parents play a significant role in cultivating a healthy environment for our young children. The influence these parties have over a child’s life is immeasurable. HPB has developed novel methods of integrating physical activity into academic subjects such as mathematics. In addition, HPB will also be working with parents and caregivers to introduce fun and exciting physical activity initiatives for young children in the home environment so that our young children are a leap in the right direction when it comes to purposeful play.”

12. Mr Ang Hak Seng, Chief Executive Officer, HPB, said, “Inculcating the habit of physical activity daily from a young age is very important to improve development and academic performance especially since the pre-school environment provides one of the most conducive environments for influencing long-term lifestyle habits. It is with this insight that we have introduced two new physical activity initiatives for young children. The *Walking School Bus* concept is simple, adults namely parents, volunteers or pre-school educators act as a school bus driver and bring children to and from school, but minus the physical bus. This concept has added benefits of not just physical activity but also bonding between young children and parents. Besides this, integrating fun dance routines with learning concepts helps young children achieve more by doing less.”

13. The *Walking School Bus* and fun dance routines will be offered at all childcare centres and kindergartens by 2015.

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Annex 1 Walking School Bus

Annex 2 List of childcare centres and kindergartens that will fulfil the recommended 180 minutes of physical activity

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Annex 1 – Walking School Bus

WHAT IS IT?

It's about encouraging an active lifestyle from young, applying safe pedestrian skills, and learning more about the living environment.

WHO IS IT FOR?

Anyone who wants to make travelling to and from school into a fun and active experience for the children. It is an initiative which brings people together – they can include the parents/caregivers, teachers, volunteers, etc.

WHY DO IT?

Walking School Bus (i.e. walking) provides an opportunity for children to engage in physical activity so as to contribute to the daily amount of physical activity needed. It is also a suitable activity to involve all ages including the parents and caregivers as they can get their dose of physical activity for the day too.

Walking is good because it:

- Promotes healthy growth and development in children when it is done regularly
- Improves children's motor skills
- Encourages children's social connection to their community and surrounding
- Saves money on transport

WHEN TO DO IT?

You can do it every day, once a week/ or once a month. You can also participate actively during the International Walk to School month which takes place in October every year.

Here's how you can get started:

1

Identify interest

- Brainstorm if the activity is feasible and meets the needs of the children and parents/caregivers
- Find out who would like to take part in the activity
- Contact potential partners to support the activity

2

Map and walk the distance

- Obtain a map of the neighbourhood and school area
- Take a walk around the neighbourhood to assess if the environment is safe and suitable for the activity.
- Map the families who would like to take part in the activity and identify possible routes. (Note: In the event that it is difficult to designate a route, it may be fruitful to find out if there is a common walkway which will most likely be used by children and their parents/caregivers on route to school.)

3

Plan activity

- Publicise the activity if the frequency is not high
- Provide key information – when and where the walk is happening and its duration
- Reminders for those who are interested to take part during the weeks leading up to the activity

4

Implement activity

- Organise the activity as part of parent engagement
- Obtain feedback from the families they find the activity fun and interesting

5

Sustain the interest

- Keep the interest of activity alive by injecting fun ideas for the walk. For example, playing "Eye Spy" game such as "Eye Spy blue colour"; doing a colourful poster with the leaves they picked up along the paths; organise "Spelling Bee" by getting children to spell the item they saw during the walk such as 'tree', 'car', 'bus', etc.

Annex 2 - List of childcare centres and kindergartens that will fulfil the recommended 180 minutes of physical activity

PCF AYER-RAJAH - K+ BY THE RESERVOIR CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTRE
PCF BUKIT BATOK SPARKLETOTS CHILD CARE CENTRE
PCF BUKIT BATOK SPARKLETOTS CHILD CARE CENTRE
PCF BUKIT BATOK SPARKLETOTS CHILD CARE CENTRE
PCF BUKIT GOMBAK SPARKLETOTS INFANT CARE & CHILD CARE CENTRE
PCF CANBERRA SPARKLETOTS CHILD CARE CENTRE
PCF CHANGI SIMEI - K+ @ BLK 233 CHANGI SIMEI CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTRE
PCF CHONG PANG SPARKLE TOTS CHILD CARE CENTRE
PCF FENGSHAN SPARKLETOTS CHILDCARE CENTRE
PCF FENGSHAN SPARKLETOTS INFANT AND CHILD CARE CENTRE
PCF JALAN KAYU - K+ @ JALAN KAYU CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTRE
PCF KAMPONG CHAI CHEE INFANT & CHILD CARE CENTRE
PCF KAMPONG UBI-KEMBANGAN - K+ @ EUNOS VILLAGE CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTRE
PCF KEBUN BARU SPARKLETOTS CHILD CARE CENTRE
PCF KRETA AYER-KIM SENG K+ @INDUS GARDENS CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTRE
PCF LITTLE WINGS BUKIT TIMAH CHILDCARE CENTRE (BLK 305)
PCF LITTLE WINGS JURONG CENTRAL CHILDCARE CENTRE
PCF LITTLE WINGS JURONG CENTRAL CHILDCARE CENTRE BLK 404
PCF LITTLE WINGS JURONG SPRING CHILD CARE BLK 455
PCF LITTLE WINGS JURONG SPRING CHILDCARE CENTRE BLK 553
PCF LITTLE WINGS YUHUA CHILDCARE (BLK 108)
PCF LITTLE WINGS YUHUA CHILDCARE CENTRE (BLK 233)
PCF LITTLE WINGS YUHUA CHILDCARE CENTRE (BLK 264)
PCF MARSILING - K+ BRAIN BUILDERS CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTRE
PCF MOULMEIN - K+ @MOULMEIN CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTRE
PCF MOULMEIN-TAI PEI CHILDCARE AND DEVELOPMENT CENTRE
PCF NEE SOON EAST SPARKLETOTS CHILDCARE CENTRE
PCF NEE SOON SOUTH SPARKLETOTS CHILD CARE CENTRE
PCF PUNGGOL CENTRAL - K+ @ ARTS CIRCLE CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTRE
PCF PUNGGOL EAST SPARKLETOTS INFANT & CHILD CARE CENTRE
PCF SPARKLE TOTS PUNGGOL CENTRAL (BLOCK 259B)
PCF SPARKLETOTS (ADMIRALTY)
PCF SPARKLETOTS (CHUA CHU KANG)
PCF SPARKLETOTS (EUNOS)
PCF SPARKLETOTS EUNOS
PCF SPARKLETOTS (HONG KAH NORTH)
PCF SPARKLETOTS (JALAN KAYU)
PCF SPARKLETOTS (NANYANG)
PCF SPARKLETOTS (NEE SOON EAST)
PCF SPARKLETOTS (NEE SOON SOUTH)
PCF SPARKLETOTS (PASIR RIS EAST)
PCF SPARKLETOTS (PASIR RIS WEST)

PCF SPARKLETOTS (TAMPINES WEST)
PCF SPARKLETOTS @ MARSILING
PCF SPARKLETOTS AYER RAJAH - WEST COAST
PCF SPARKLETOTS BEDOK
PCF SPARKLETOTS BUKIT BATOK EAST CHILD CARE
PCF SPARKLETOTS BUKIT GOMBAK
PCF SPARKLETOTS CANBERRA (BLK 337)
PCF SPARKLETOTS CHENG SAN - SELETAR
PCF SPARKLETOTS CHILD CARE CENTRE (BISHAN EAST)
PCF SPARKLETOTS BISHAN NORTH
PCF SPARKLETOTS CHILD CARE CENTRE (TAMPINES CHANGKAT)
PCF SPARKLETOTS CHILD CARE CENTRE (TAMPINES CHANGKAT)
PCF SPARKLETOTS CHILDCARE CENTRE @CASHEW
PCF SPARKLETOTS CHONG PANG (BLOCK 115B)
PCF SPARKLETOTS FENGSHAN (BLK 108)
PCF SPARKLETOTS GEYLANG SERAI
PCF SPARKLETOTS KAMPONG CHAI CHEE (BLK 424)
PCF SPARKLETOTS KEAT HONG
PCF SPARKLETOTS KEAT HONG (BLK 435)
PCF SPARKLETOTS KEBUN BARU
PCF SPARKLETOTS KEBUN BARU
PCF SPARKLETOTS NEE SOON SOUTH (BLK 852)
PCF SPARKLETOTS PAYA LEBAR
PCF SPARKLETOTS PUNGGOL CENTRAL
PCF SPARKLETOTS PUNGGOL CENTRAL
PCF SPARKLETOTS PUNGGOL EAST (BLK 123A)
PCF SPARKLETOTS PUNGGOL SOUTH
PCF SPARKLETOTS RADIN MAS
PCF SPARKLETOTS SENGKANG WEST
PCF SPARKLETOTS SIGLAP
PCF SPARKLETOTS TOA PAYOH CENTRAL
PCF SPARKLETOTS YEW TEE
PCF TOA PAYOH EAST - K+ BLOSSOM @ 232
PCF WOODLANDS SPARKLETOTS CHILD CARE CENTRE
PCF WOODLANDS SPARKLETOTS INFANT & CHILD CARE CENTRE
KINDERLAND CHILD CARE CENTRE (MINISTRY OF MANPOWER BUILDING)
KINDERLAND CHILD CARE CENTRE (MAXWELL ROAD)
KINDERLAND CHILD CARE CENTRE (CARMICHAEL ROAD)
KINDERLAND CHILD CARE CENTRE (HOUGANG STREET 21)
KINDERLAND CHILD CARE CENTRE (PANDAN VALLEY)
KINDERLAND CHILD CARE CENTRE (WOODLANDS AVENUE 6)
KINDERLAND CHILD CARE CENTRE (YIO CHU KANG ROAD)
KINDERLAND CHILD CARE CENTRE (WOODLANDS)
KINDERLAND CHILD CARE-CENTRE (MARINE PARADE CENTRAL)
KINDERLAND CHILD CARE-CENTRE (CLEMENTI ROAD)

KINDERLAND CHILDCARE CENTRE (SINGAPORE POLYTECHNIC)
KINDERLAND KINDERGARTEN (CHOA CHU KANG)
KINDERLAND PRESCHOOL (MARINE PARADE)
KINDERLAND PRESCHOOL (PANDAN VALLEY)
KINDERLAND PRESCHOOL (SERANGOON)
KINDERLAND PRESCHOOL (WOODLANDS)
KINDERLAND PRESCHOOL (YIO CHU KANG)