**The Walking Classroom (TWC) is Helping Bridge the Achievement Gap in Palm Beach County**

During the 2013–2014 and 2014–2015 school years in Palm Beach County, 340 preloaded audio devices (called WalkKits) and 18 Walking Classroom Teacher’s Guides were distributed to 4th and 5th grade classes at Pines Elementary, Allamanda Elementary, Beacon Cove Intermediate, Pine Jog Elementary, South Olive Elementary, Berkshire Elementary, and Gove Elementary.

“My kids LOVE it! They are always asking if we're going out to the woods and doing The Walking Classroom,” said Nancy Bentz a 5th grade teacher at Pine Jog Elementary.

**Why it works**

Eighty percent of what we know is acquired through listening, which is also closely connected with reading comprehension. Combine that with the strong connection between increased physical activity and improved brain function and you get a perfect solution with The Walking Classroom. The program’s “Walk, Listen, and Learn” methodology successfully combines listening with exercise to capitalize on these connections for stronger academic performance. And it’s fun!

The award-winning nonprofit program gets kids out of their seats and walking without sacrificing instructional time. Students go for a brisk 20-minute walk while listening to custom-written, entertaining, and educational podcasts about science, language arts, and history. Afterwards, lesson plans and quizzes developed by The Walking Classroom help educators lead discussions to synthesize and solidify learning.

To quote one of our adopters, “The Walking Classroom isn’t just technology for technology’s sake. It seamlessly integrates into the classroom and is a meaningful way to embed technology into the core curriculum.”

**Bridging the gap**

Children who grow up in poverty often have the lowest academic achievement. By age 4, children from low-income families have heard **32 MILLION fewer words** than their higher income peers. This language deficit greatly impacts their ability to learn to read because they have no context for what many words mean. Because children can listen and understand 2-3 grade levels higher than their reading level, The Walking Classroom can help them catch up with their classmates and enjoy success with grade-level activities.

“Your face would light up if you saw some of my biggest strugglers start to feel like they are the smartest ones in the school,” said a 5th grade teacher.

**Positive experiences and lasting effects**

The positive effects of exercise on academic achievement appear regardless of gender and socioeconomic differences, so all students can benefit from the program. And, this improved cognitive function can extend throughout the student’s adult life.

In addition to the obvious health benefits of walking, students return to the classroom after listening to a Walking Classroom podcast in better moods, more focused, and more likely to engage in post-walk discussions. Teachers regularly report that after implementing The Walking Classroom, students retain the information better, demonstrate better behavior and engagement in the classroom, and perform better on standardized exams.

In fact, in our 2016 end-of-year adopter survey, 97% of teachers using The Walking Classroom said that listening to TWC podcasts while walking strengthens student understanding of curriculum content. When asked about reaching different types of learners, 95% of teachers said TWC is an effective tool to differentiate instruction. Overall, 99% of teachers surveyed would recommend TWC without hesitation to colleagues.

**The Walking Classroom is national award-winning program**

Used by students and teachers in 49 states (and growing every day), The Walking Classroom has won the following awards:

**Runner Up:** Power of Sharing Award from Coastal Federal Credit Union Foundation 2016

**Finalist: Nonprofit of the Year:** Chapel Hill-Carrboro Chamber of Commerce Business Excellence Awards 2015

**Winner:** William J. Bennington Health Community Institute for Nonprofit Excellence Award from BlueCross BlueShield of North Carolina 2015

**National Finalist:**Innovations in Rural Health, Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust 2014

**National Winner:**Teachers’ Choice Award, eSchool News 2013-14

**National Grand Prize Winner:**ChildObesity180 / Active Schools Acceleration Project, 2012  
**Winner:**Health Innovation Challenge, BlueCross BlueShield North Carolina 2012

