Too cold to walk or bike?

Pottstown’s walking school bus resumed yesterday, as adults escorted students in grades kindergarten through fourth grade to Rupert Elementary School, a distance of up to 1½ miles for some walkers.

Students throughout the district are being encouraged to walk or bicycle to school. Later this year, new painted bike routes will connect downtown Pottstown, the East End, and the high school — middle school complex via High Street, Roland Street, and Jackson/Wilson streets.

But what happens when temperatures drop into the teens and single digits, as they have this week? The answer: Bundle up and keep walking and bicycling!

Although Denmark and the Netherlands are famous for walking and bicycling, few cities on earth have a higher percentage of walkers and bicyclists than Oulu, Finland.

Oulu, population 200,000, is just 107 miles south of the Arctic Circle, closer than any big city except Murmansk, Russia. The mean temperature in January is 12° Fahrenheit.

Yet 44 percent of all trips in Oulu are made by walking and bicycling, even in winter when it’s cold and dark.

The city has 500 miles of bicycle and pedestrian lanes, almost all constructed of asphalt. The main bike routes are plowed and sanded (it’s too cold for salt to work) by 7 a.m. weekdays.

Oulu has a highly educated workforce. Its main employers are a hospital network, the University of Oulu, and high-tech industries like Nokia. But the Finns like healthy and hearty living!

Back in the USA, the surgeon general recommends children should get at least 60 minutes of daily exercise.

In Pottstown, students can reach that goal just by walking to and from school in spring, fall — even winter.