



School Travel Planning

An Introduction for Teachers



This simple journey can mean so much

Physical health

Walking or cycling to school regularly can help children get daily physical activity and establish habits that will help them avoid chronic disease and lead healthy, happy lives.

Mental acuity

Students who get physical activity in the morning arrive more alert and ready to learn - and studies show they score higher on tests.

Environmental well-being

Reducing the number of cars at schools will decrease carbon dioxide levels and help mitigate the effects of global warming.

Happiness

Children who walk or cycle the route to school understand their connection to their surroundings; they find joy in plants, animals, and other people, which leads to less stress and less depression.

Happiness skills can be taught! A teacher's guide for grades P/K-6 called *Sustainable Happiness and Health Education* is available at no cost at www.sustainablehappiness.ca/for-educators. Lesson plans are designed to meet Canadian health education curriculum outcomes for each province and Yukon Territory.

Did you know?

Since 1960, the rate of children walking to school has decreased from close to 60% to less than 30%.

In the same time, rates of overweight/obesity in children have nearly doubled.

Children are more vulnerable to air pollution when they play in city parks and schoolyards near high traffic areas.

Effects include aggravation of asthma (more hospital emergency visits); increase in respiratory symptoms in children; longer-lasting infections; lowered lung function in children; and increased sickness rates (more school absences).

The poor and disadvantaged in our society may be more at risk as they often live in neighbourhoods close to major highways and industry.

You can plant trees to fight air pollution; their leaves trap airborne particles, which are then washed away by the rain. And beautification of schools and neighbourhoods adds to the joy of walking to school!

High traffic volumes and major streets to cross have been found to significantly reduce the likelihood of children walking home from school, and therefore supportive built environment features (e.g., traffic calming, safe crossings) around schools may encourage more students to use active travel.



Photo by child walking



Photo by child in car

A community that cares

School Travel Planning involves students, parents, teachers, principals, health nurses, police, school planners, urban planners, elected officials and other interested parties.

Community members work together on campaigns that get children excited about using active transportation. They also devise solutions to route infrastructure problems so it becomes easier and safer for children to walk and cycle.



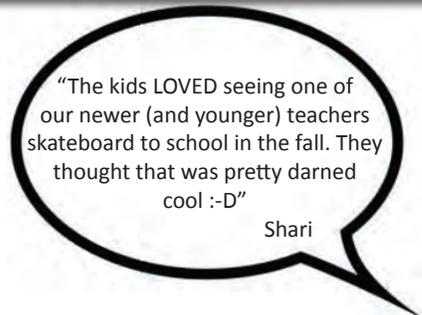
Teacher champions

We know children look to parents and teachers for guidance - even when you don't think they're looking! When they see a teacher walking or cycling to school, they get excited about doing it, too.

And when their teacher helps to lead walking events in their school, they know active travel is a real priority. School Travel Planning needs caring teachers to engage students for a healthier, happier future.

You can help lead your school to greater physical, mental and environmental health:

- Walk or cycle to school
- Watch out for walking and cycling children in the school neighbourhood
- Conduct quick in-class data collection
- Use sustainable happiness lesson plans
- Join the School Travel Planning committee at your school



"The kids LOVED seeing one of our newer (and younger) teachers skateboard to school in the fall. They thought that was pretty darned cool :-D"

Shari

What participants say

"Having (the children) walk and bike when they can to school has been excellent for them in terms of getting a little bit more activity every day. I think they're happier when they get to school and even when they get home. I know when they walk it's a great feeling for them."

Bruce Krentz, parent
Thompson, MB

"I feel proud of the work we accomplished. Families were eager to change their habits and my students ended the year with a new sense of pride and a greater understanding of what it really means to be healthy and environmentally friendly...I have also noticed less traffic out my window this year. I think our message brought positive change to our community."

Elizabeth Kim, grade 4/5 teacher
Richard McBride Elementary,
New Westminster, BC.

"Physically, it's a great way to start. I walk to work, or bike to work, and I know from experience it's a great way to kind of start to think through what is ahead of you in the day."

Rick Keller, parent
Ottawa, ON

"By the end of the program and into the next school year, there has been a substantial increase in the number of families walking and biking to school."

Matt Sol, grade 4 teacher
FW Howay Elementary,
New Westminster, BC

What it means to your classroom

30 minutes of physical activity at the beginning of the day can boost metabolism, increase mental sharpness for 4-10 hours and help children sleep better at night for better classroom productivity.

Children who walk and cycle leave their homes prepared for the weather; when they're dressed for the trip to school, they are also dressed for classroom breaks that offer open spaces and unstructured physical activity all through the school day. Frequent physical activity breaks lead to better concentration in class.



A 6-year old student's response to the question "What do you do every day for your health?"

What it means to your commute



School Travel Planning aims to reserve parking lots and nearby streets for necessary traffic like teachers who often live far from the school and/or carry heavy baggage to work every day.

Chaotic traffic near schools every day is not just a hassle, it is dangerous. Freeing traffic from near the school makes the entire area safer for students and teachers who walk and cycle.

Curriculum connections



Greening Trees display the environmental impact of students' travel mode choice - the greenest leaves are for active travelers.



Students can measure the distance they walk to school every day on a map across their province or the country to show how far they have traveled.



School Travel Planning supports many health lessons and increases DPA.



Younger students make the connection between fewer cars and a more stable environment.



Students in NWT wrote and produced a fashion show to demonstrate proper winter wear.

A few School Travel Planning successes



Walking School Busses



Reduced speeds in some school zones



Cycling instruction



Exciting walking events



Walking buddy systems



Beautiful slow-traffic streets



Barrier walls protecting children from cars



Parking lot safety measures