



# School Travel Planning

## An Introduction for Parents

### This simple journey can mean so much

#### Physical health

Walking or cycling to school regularly gives your child opportunities for daily physical activity that will help him or her avoid chronic disease and lead a healthy, happy life.

#### Mental strength

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

#### Environmental well-being

Reducing the number of cars at schools improves air quality, creating healthier environments where children spend a great part of their day.

#### Happiness

Those who walk and cycle the school route enjoy a deeper connection to their community and find joy in nature and people along the way; all of which leads to less stress and less depression.



Photo by child walking



Photo by child in car

### Your community cares



School Travel Planning gets whole communities working together so that children living within walkable distance of the school can walk or cycle.

In communities across Canada, students, parents, teachers, principals, public health nurses, police, school planners, urban planners and elected officials are gathering in School Travel Planning circles to discuss the ways they can encourage more students to walk or bike to school, which

sometimes includes creating Walking School Busses or launching campaigns to get children excited about walking to school.

These groups also perform Walkabouts to see problem areas at the school and on surrounding streets that have been identified by students and parents. Then they work together to devise solutions that will make the school journey easier for the sake of happier, healthier children.

### Parent champions

Action-oriented parents who care about children's health and the environmental effects of car congestion are needed. Lead your school to greater physical, mental and environmental health:

- **Let your children walk/cycle to school**
- **Watch out for all children in your neighbourhood**
- **Share your observations in surveys**
- **Join your School Travel Planning committee**



# But what about...

## What parents say

*"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*

*"It's not a far walk, so it is nice to get out; and get a good start, run a few errands and walk home and get a little fresh air!"*

*Anja Liddy*

*"Having them 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*

*"Dress proper...just dress for the weather."*

*Brenda McDonald*

## The time it takes to walk or cycle?

Did you know it only takes about ten minutes to walk a kilometre with a kindergartner? Or that 30 minutes of physical activity at the beginning of the day can boost metabolism, can increase mental sharpness for 4-10 hours and can help your child sleep better at night?

*Walking School Busses* and *Bicycle Trains* arrange for children to walk/cycle together so that fewer parents need to supervise the journey. If you don't have the time to accompany your child in the morning, it doesn't mean your child can't start the day right!



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

## Convenience?



Some parents tell us they are on the way to work or other destinations every morning anyways, so they might as well drop their children off in the morning - but many other parents believe the benefits of a little exercise in the morning are well worth letting their children make the journey with a walking or cycling group instead.

If you think about the hassle and danger of congested traffic near the school, that quick drop off might not be so convenient, after all. You might even want to join the action and walk or cycle to your destination, too!

## The weather?

In Canada, we face some unique weather issues. But even in Yukon Territory, where much of the extreme cold, winter day is shrouded in dark, children are expected to go outside for recess down to -30 C, as long as they keep moving.

School children all across Canada spend 15-50 minutes outside at a time for recess and should be dressed appropriately to take advantage of that time for fresh air and open spaces. If they are equipped for that outdoor time, they will also be equipped for the walk to school.



A parent walks her child to school at 8:30 am in Yukon Territory.

## A few School Travel Planning successes



Walking School Busses



Reduced speeds in school zones



Cycling instruction



Fun walking events



Walking buddy systems



Beautiful slow-traffic streets



Barrier walls protecting children from cars



Parking lot safety measures

