

# School Active Transportation: Parent Engagement



**OSTA**  
Ottawa Student  
Transportation  
Authority

# Who am I?

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EnviroCentre is a non-profit organization that provides people with practical tools to lighten their environmental impact.



# Presentation overview:

- The current state of school zone traffic
- Data on why this issue is important
- Common barriers
- Actions we can take



# Traffic, traffic, traffic...

- Schools across the city experience a mini and condensed rush hour daily.
- Cars parking/stopping illegally.
- Idling cars affect air quality (cars pollute more when idling)
- Conditions are unsafe for pedestrians, cyclists, busses and drivers

... but it wasn't always like that.





# It wasn't always like that...

- Historically, walking to school was the norm.
- Over the last generations, walking to school has declined dramatically.
- We have become a car centric society, where even short trips are done by car.

This has had a massive impact on our health and wellness.





Few children in Canada walk and wheel for their school journey.

Only 25% of 5- to 17-year-olds in Canada typically use active modes of transportation. Many children who could walk, wheel, or take the school bus for their school journey are being driven.



Canadian children don't get enough physical activity.

Only 9% of Canadian children and youth (ages 5-17) get the [recommended 60 minutes of daily physical activity](#). Insufficient activity is linked to chronic diseases, including obesity, cancer, diabetes, and stroke, as well as poor mental health.

# Social Norms:

Social Norms are informal understandings that govern the behavior of members of a society.

Norms are acceptable group conduct as well as individuals' perception of particular group conduct.

# Changing social norms isn't easy

A recent publication by Dr. Richard Larouche looked at how active transportation is pursued or avoided around the world and found that parents believe and equate driving their children to school as demonstrating their love and care for them.

Some of the hardest concepts to challenge are those based on emotions.

But social norms can shift over time when new norms are encouraged and valued.





# Convenience



Traffic Inducing Traffic

Many believe it is faster to drive door to door, however...

- Traffic slows down closer to the school.
- Rushing often causes parents to jay-walk, cross unsafely – behavior we do not want kids to learn.

Choose safety over convenience.

# Video

Click on the link below to watch a video and hear from a local principal.

[CLICK HERE](#)

(EnviroCentre on Vimeo)

# Teaching safety



- Parents recognize the need to teach children home safety.
- Natural opportunities in the home (like baking/cooking) are used to teach children to use appliances safely.



## **We teach our kids home safety, why not street safety?**

We put our kids in and out of cars until age 16 and then allow someone else to teach them to drive. This is a lost opportunity.

# Teaching Street Safety

By walking together, you create opportunities to teach age appropriate street safety like:

- Stop, look and listen
- Safe places to cross
- Stopping before the curb edge
- Being visible
- Making eye contact with drivers
- Being predictable, etc.



# Value the experience

- Re-discover the world through your child's eyes
- Explore new things
- Create experiential learning opportunities that reflect classroom lessons
- Connect with your child





Kids who are accompanied by their parents  
and taught the skills to become  
independently mobile are more confident  
about their abilities, less anxious and more  
resilient.

Here are some tips for getting started...

# Family commitment

- Start with a family conversation about why this is important and the benefits.
- Pick the reasons that resonate.
- Make a poster or sign for that visual reminder. Have everyone sign it.
- Celebrate milestones



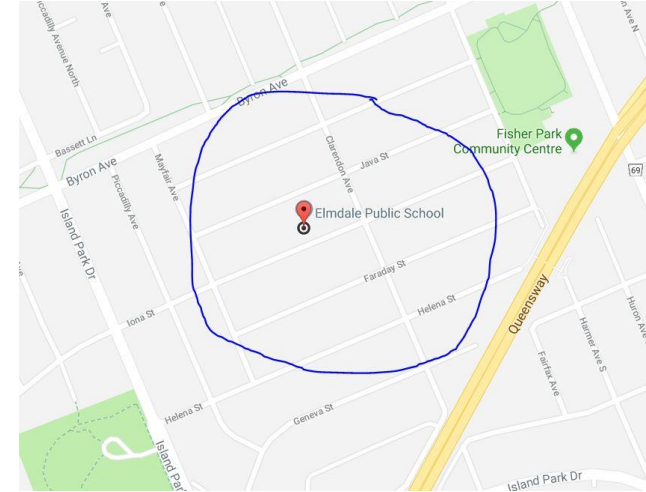
# Start small



- You don't have to do the same thing every day.
- Pick a day of the week that works.
- Start with one day a week.

# Drive to 5/Walk a Block

- Drive to a five minute radius from the school.
- Walk the last block together.
- Map it out as a family.
- Walking part of the way is a great place to start



Use google maps



OSTA Walk Zone Map



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## Walk and Roll Zone



Offering helpful resources for a safe  
walk to school.

[Read More](#) +

# Setting yourself up for success

- ✓ Prepare all or part of lunches the night before.
- ✓ Have kids pack their school bags and prepare their clothes the night before
- ✓ On days you walk, make coffee/tea at home instead of going to drive through.
- ✓ Try walking/wheeling to school on the weekend – test your route together without the pressure of the school day.
- ✓ Have a technology-free morning to focus on getting out the door

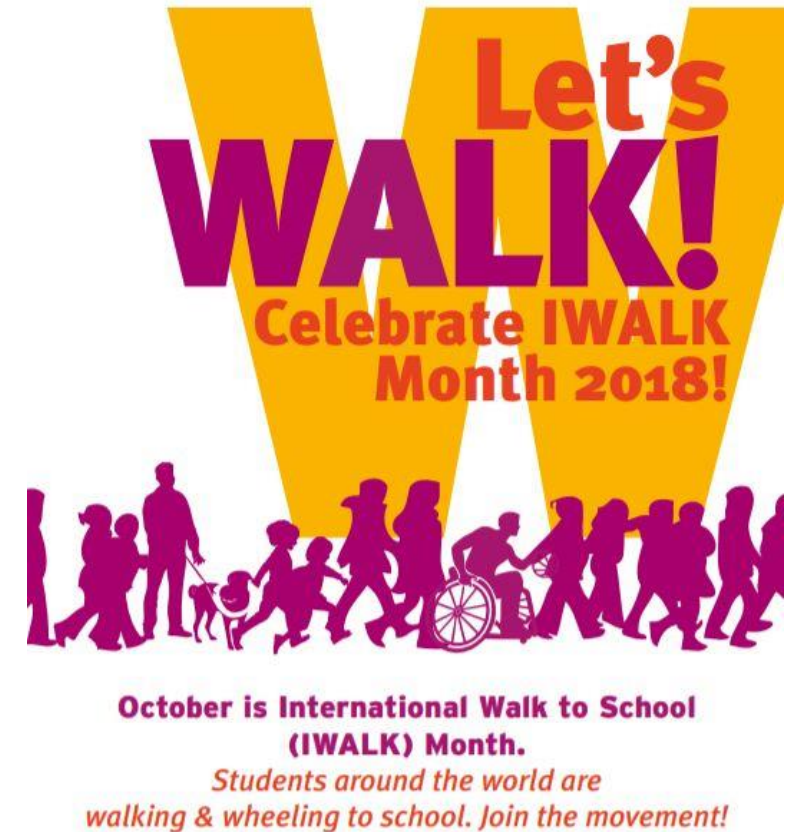
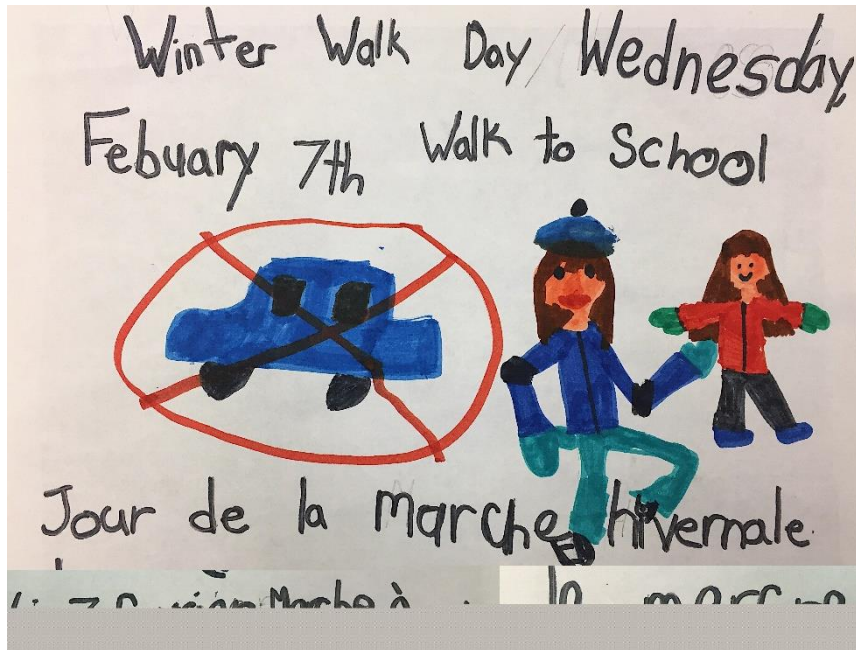


# Engage other parents

- Keep reminding yourself, and others, of the benefits of active transportation.
- Strength in numbers – seek out other walking parents and starting talking about ways to engage other parents.
- Seek out interested teachers and school administrators. You never know who the next Champion might be.

**Changing “the norm” takes a long time, so don’t give up!**

# School Activities



# Video

Click on the link below to watch a video about an iWalk Day event at a local school.

[CLICK HERE](#)

(EnviroCentre on Vimeo)

# OSTA School Active Transportation

- Walking Hazard Assessment Procedure
- Walk Routes to School Maps
- School Travel Planning (EnviroCentre)
- Pedestrian Safety (Ottawa Safety Council, City)
- Walking School Bus (Ottawa Safety Council)
- Ottawa School Active Transportation Network

**Community Partners** – Bike Rodeos (OSC, City, OPH), School Safety Patrollers (CAA)

*Coming Soon:*

SAT Ambassadors

School Site Maps

School Site Traffic Management

# Thank you

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