



Walking Buddies

Friends from the neighbourhood or friends from the same class arrange to walk together to school. This is particularly effective for older students, as they support each other in making the decision to walk and they enjoy the trip to school. Parents need to make sure their children manage their time well and are ready to meet their friends at the assigned time. Children can sign a pledge form and be rewarded for participating at a year-end celebration.



Photos: Nick Gaudin, Teacher,
École Howden (Winnipeg)

4.5 WALK-A-BLOCK ZONES

This strategy works well for families who live too far from their school to make walking all the way feasible, or for working parents who drop their children off at school on their way to work. Work with local municipal traffic staff to identify safe and legal parking spaces a few blocks from the school. This will encourage driving parents to park their car in these spots and walk the remaining blocks with their children, or allow their child to join an active Walking School Bus or meet their Walking Buddy.

Children and parents will enjoy the short walk, and traffic congestion will be reduced in the immediate school area where it is important to be clear for school buses and other walking or cycling students. Some schools even barricade the street in front of the school to prevent cars from driving and parking there.

Walk-a-Block Zones help to diffuse the traffic throughout the school neighbourhood, making the immediate area around the school safer. However, because they also impact the traffic in the broader community, it is a good idea when deciding where to set up your drop-off zones to consult with the immediate neighbours and other community members who might be affected when they are leaving home in the morning or returning at the end of the day.

Why not ask a local store, church, community centre or other neighbourhood hub for permission to use their parking lots for drop-offs?

École Howden in Winnipeg made arrangements with the local CanadInns to use their parking lot adjacent to the school yard for this purpose. It's a win-win situation – the hotel contributes to the broader community, the parents and school buses have a safe place to drop off their children and the students get to run and play in the school yard for the rest of their trip to school.

4.6 NEIGHBOURHOOD WALKABOUTS AND WALKABILITY SURVEYS

Conducting a Neighbourhood Walkabout and doing a Walkability Survey can be a useful tool to understand the barriers and best routes for children to walk or bike to school. The tools below will guide you in this process.

The Neighbourhood Walkabout should be organized to coincide with pick-up or drop-off at the school. All stakeholders should be identified and present to participate in the walkabout. Determine the scope of the walkabout before you begin; i.e., decide if you will look only at the area immediately surrounding the school, or if you also need to look at safety concerns further away.

Doing the walkabout and survey helps to identify and understand the safety issues around the school through direct observations of the problems. Some common issues include traffic congestion around the school and excessive speeds.

At the end of your Neighbourhood Walkabout, you want to end up with a written description of the problem(s), aided visually with area maps. Maps can be obtained through the school division or from your local municipal transportation engineer.



Photo: Nick Gaudin, Teacher, École Howden (Winnipeg)

Walkabouts are an integral component of the School Travel Planning process, involving members of the school community, local municipality, elected officials and the police service. If you are developing a School Travel Plan, please follow the specific instructions for a Neighbourhood Walkabout from your School Travel Planning Facilitator.
