

CASE STUDY SERIES

Profiles of *Active & Safe Routes to School* initiatives in Canada involving one or more schools at the local, regional or provincial/territorial level.

3: R.H. SMITH SCHOOL



<i># of schools</i>	<i>Setting(s)</i>	<i>City/Town OR Region</i>	<i>Province/Territory</i>
1	Urban	Winnipeg	Manitoba

KEY WORDS

Language(s): English

Problems/Solutions: traffic congestion, better safety skills

Partners: community police, school administration, municipality

Tools: surveys, pizza party, patrol supervisor (teacher), crossing patrollers (students), Patrol of the Month Award, school and school division newsletters, letter to parents, school zone signs, PA announcements

Events: Walk to School Day

Curriculum resources:

Case study version: September 1999

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Partners

Community Police
City of Winnipeg
Go for Green

Participants

R. H. Smith Elementary School

Goals

- To increase the number of students walking to school
- To decrease the amount of vehicular traffic around the school
- To raise awareness about the benefits of active transportation versus motorized transportation.

Program Components (& Players)

- Improve the safety skills of student crossing patrols (principal, patrol supervisor (teacher) and community constable)
- Walk Your Child to School events (parents and students)
- Promotion of walking to school vs. driving (volunteer parents through school newsletter)
- Surveys to determine school family attitudes about active transportation to school (volunteer parents)

Background

Concerns about the number of vehicles around the school at drop off and pick up times and how this is impacting the safety of those students who do walk prompted this Active & Safe Routes to School project. Organizing parents also saw a need to promote active transportation to school as a way to reduce congestion and the associated pollution, while increasing physical activity levels of students. Initial investigations highlighted the need to improve the skills and abilities of the student crossing patrollers. This became a priority action item for the project, requiring the assistance of the local police.

Implementation

An A&SRTS Steering Committee, consisting of volunteer parents with support from school administration staff, was formed to guide the project. The support of the community police constable was enlisted to improve the safety skills and confidence of the student crossing patrollers. A pizza party was held to thank the constable, patrollers and playground committee members who have supported the program. Patrollers are also eligible for a Patrol of the Month Award.

Families were surveyed to determine their attitudes towards active transportation to school and a kick-off 'Walk to School Day' event was held. 80% of the school's student population walked to school on this day—an increase of about 30%!

With the support of school administration, articles were included in the school newsletter and an introductory letter about the program was sent home to parents.

Traffic counts were conducted to determine the number of vehicles dropping children off at the school. This has provided a baseline for future counts as the program progresses. 'School Zone' signs have been erected around the neighbourhood by the City of Winnipeg at the request of parents.

Promotion & Communication

Promotion within the school was key to the success of the kick-off 'Walk to School Day' event. PA announcements were delivered by students leading up to the event. Regular articles in the school newsletter as well as a letter from the principal to parents helped to reinforce the issues of children's safety and active transportation. Articles were also written for the School Division newsletter to promote the A&SRTS idea to other area schools.

The program has received media attention on local radio and television stations as well as write-ups in the Winnipeg Free Press and the local community paper.

Lessons Learned

- Since the start of the program in the fall of 1998, there has been a growing awareness of safety for children throughout the school community. Continued emphasis on active transportation and its benefits will be key as we move forward.
- The special event days are very popular, especially with the students and provide an excellent opportunity to focus on the key issues of school transportation.
- Our enthusiasm to get more people walking caused us to first review safety around the school, which led to the realization that student crossing patrollers required more training. After enlisting the support of the community constable to provide the necessary training, there is a noticeable increase in the appreciation of patrollers' efforts by the school administration.
- The groundwork for A&SRTS has been laid, although it took longer than was expected. Now the project is ready to start working on promotion of Walking School Buses to encourage families to walk on a regular basis.

Building on the Experience

The volunteer parents learned to be very persistent in their endeavors to get the program started. It took a while to gain the support of the principal and community constable, but once they were on board, they were very supportive of the project. 'Walk to School Days' will continue to be organized on a regular basis, while plans proceed to launch some pilot Walking School Buses.

Do Something About It

Call *Go for Green* toll free at 1-888-UB-ACTIV (822-2848)

or visit our Web site at www.goforgreen.ca