

A guide for school administrators

Starting a Walk-to-School Program



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What is the Brampton School Traffic Safety Council?

The Brampton School Traffic Safety Council (BSTSC) reports to Brampton City Council on matters related to traffic safety around Brampton schools. The committee is made up of citizen members from our community, as well as representatives from:

- Peel Regional Police
- Brampton Fire and Emergency Services
- Brampton Safe City
- Student Transportation of Peel Region
- Peel District School Board
- Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board
- City of Brampton Traffic Engineering Services
- City of Brampton By-law Enforcement

The BSTSC meets monthly (except in July and August) to discuss pedestrian and traffic safety matters at and around elementary and secondary schools. It conducts school site inspections, advises upon matters related to school routes and refers school safety matters to the appropriate agency.

It also develops, implements and assists with education programs promoting safety awareness. That is what led to the creation of this guide.



Introduction to the Brampton Walk-to-School Program

With more and more parents and guardians driving their children to and from school each day, traffic and congestion is the number one issue faced by most schools in Brampton.

There is an overwhelming need to try and address this issue. One of the best ways to do that is to get more children walking to school.

Of course, it's easier said than done. There are a number of reasons why families might have concerns about their children walking – safety, distance and weather, to name just a few.

The goal of this document is to help you communicate with your students and their parents about those barriers, and educate them about the many benefits of walking to school.

Getting started

If you have decided to implement a walk-to-school program, your first step should be to create a committee that will promote the program to staff, students and parents. Ideally, the committee should include:

- School principal or other administrative representative
- Representative(s) from the school climate committee
- Representative(s) from the school's Parent Council
- If possible, a representative from the Brampton School Traffic Safety Council (see the 'Resources' section for contact information)

Once formed, the committee can decide on a meeting schedule. Early on, this group should decide on some realistic goals for the school – for example, "we want to increase walking by 10 per cent by the next school year". Having concrete goals for your school makes it easier to measure success.

You may also want to consider partnering with other schools in your neighbourhood. Not only will this help reach more families, it will also allow you to share costs and pool resources.



Implementing the program: planning your first event

Hosting an evening event will allow you to reach out to the parents and guardians at your school and educate them about this program. The committee will need to decide what it wants this event to look like.

Logistics

- Decide on a date and time for the event (recommended length is 1.5 – 2 hours). If you have specific people/agencies you want to attend, check with them first to make sure they're available.
- Determine when and how invitations will be sent out. Will they be printed or emailed? Will you use any other methods to promote your event?
- Establish a budget. It will need to include printing of invitations and handouts, giveaways, refreshments, etc.

Presentations

- Decide who will speak at the event. You will probably want to invite someone from an outside agency – e.g., Peel Regional Police, Brampton Fire, By-law Enforcement, etc. Be sure to book them well in advance.
- Determine speaking order and format of presentations.
 - What equipment will your presenters require? (e.g. laptop, projection screen, etc.)
 - Will families have an opportunity to ask questions during presentations or will they be asked to wait until the end?
- Will you provide surveys or feedback forms? Active and Safe Routes to School (www.saferoutestoschool.ca) provides a sample family survey that you can customize to fit your needs.

Resources

- Consider inviting outside agencies to set up tables with displays and handouts – i.e. parent council, Police and Fire, Peel Health/Active Transportation, Brampton Safe City, Brampton School Traffic Safety Council.
- Brampton School Traffic Safety Council has resources you can use for your event, including a "Traffic Safety Around Schools and Playgrounds" handout available in 12 languages and two videos ("Stepping It Up" and "Staying Safe Around Your School").
- Giveaways – depending on your budget, these may include pencils, brochures/flyers, safety whistles, etc.

Other things to consider

- During the event, be sure to clearly define the school's goals (i.e. "we want to increase walking by 10 per cent by the end of the school year.")
- Consider taking photos/videos of pick-up and drop-off at your school so that people can see real examples.



Post-event

Once your first event is finished, set up a committee meeting to debrief and set out next steps.

- Overall, how did the evening go? (pros and cons)
- What would you do differently next time?
- Will you do this more than once a year? If so, how often?
- What best practices can be shared with the Brampton School Traffic Safety Council so that it can share with other schools?
- What are your next steps to build momentum?
- How will you track progress toward the goals set out at the meeting?



Implementing the program: bringing it into the school

The meeting with parents and guardians is only the first step. To build momentum and get children excited about the program, you'll need to make it a part of everyday life at school.

- Walk the area in physical education class
- Incorporate it into different classes:
 - In physical education, take the students for a walk of the area.
 - In health, talk about the health and fitness benefits of walking;
 - In environmental studies, talk about carbon emissions from cars, and how small actions can have a positive impact on our environment
 - In math, work together to calculate reduction in number of cars, or how far the average student would walk in a year.
- Add reminders to the daily announcements and the school newsletter.
- Ask students on a regular basis, "who walked to school today, show of hands?"
- Encourage students to create walking groups through a "buddy program"
- Consider incentives or contests. Have classes or age groups compete against each other to see who can have the most students walking to school. If you're partnering with another school, set up a competition with them.
- Have students track their own progress with a "frequent walker card" – you can incorporate this into the contest idea above, where students/classes can win prizes.
- Help students engage in these conversations with their parents and guardians.

Active and Safe Routes to School (www.saferoutestoschool.ca) has lots of ideas for building interest and enthusiasm.

Resources

It is our goal to work with and support all schools in Brampton. As you implement your walk to school program, please contact us if you need assistance, copies of videos, or speakers for your events. We also hope you'll share your thoughts, ideas, resources and learnings with us.

Brampton School Traffic Safety Council
905.874.3829
cityclerksoffice@brampton.ca

There are a number of other resources available to you and your committee as you develop a program for your school. We encourage you to reach out to your community to support you.

We have already mentioned Active and Safe Routes to School elsewhere in this guide. This is a national program that encourages a culture of walking and other active travel options for students. Their comprehensive website (www.saferoutestoschool.ca) has many helpful resources, including surveys, newsletter articles, videos, PowerPoint presentations and more.

Other resources:

Peel Regional Police – Traffic and Community Services
905.453-3311

Fire and Emergency Services – Fire/Life Safety Education Centre
905-458-5580

City of Brampton Traffic Engineering Services
905.874.2500

City of Brampton By-law Enforcement
905.458.3424

