

SAFE
ROUTES TO
SCHOOL
ONTARIO - A
CASE STUDY

Rail-Volution



Active and Safe Routes to School is a comprehensive program that taps into the latent demand for safe, walkable neighbourhoods. Kids, parents, teachers, principals, health units, traffic safety engineers, and police – in short, everyone who has participated in our program – is excited!

Green Communities | Active & Safe Routes to School was initiated in Toronto in 1996 with 3 schools. Over the past 9 years we have grown to over 1,000 schools in 18 Ontario communities – and growing.

ASRTS Audience

- ◆ Ontario elementary schools and middle schools (Kindergarten to Grade 8) - 4,000
- ◆ High Schools - see www.saferoutestoschool.ca for Case Study. Phase 2 of this project is currently underway in Toronto.

ASRTS Program Goals

- ◆ Encourage healthier lifestyles;
- ◆ Increase daily physical activity levels in children and youth;
- ◆ Decrease local emissions of greenhouse gases and other pollutants;
- ◆ Displace short local vehicle trips to school with active travel trips, creating a culture of walking;
- ◆ Improve visibility and child safety on neighbourhood streets;
- ◆ Raise awareness about children's health and transportation;
- ◆ Allow for greater independence, fun and freedom for children.

Project Partners

- ◆ School Boards
- ◆ Public Health Units
- ◆ Municipal Transportation Staff
- ◆ Municipal Politicians
- ◆ Police
- ◆ Funders and sponsors
- ◆ IWALK
- ◆ Media
- ◆ Other ASRTS programs
- ◆ Organizations with an interest in health, physical activity, safety, sustainable transportation, air quality, climate change

The Need for Active & Safe Routes to School

- ◆ Communities have been planned for cars - children's mobility is not considered.
- ◆ Children today are chauffeured to and from school, to play with a friend, and to numerous activities.
- ◆ With little opportunity for unstructured play or independent travel, children become inactive.
- ◆ An auto-dependent community lacks 'eyes on the street'.
- ◆ Community schools are being closed, forcing children onto school buses.
- ◆ More single parent families; more working Moms - less time to walk children to school.

Decreased Physical Activity

- ◆ Less than one-third of Canadian students currently walk or cycle to school.
- ◆ 57% of Canadian youth are so sedentary it is harmful to their health.
- ◆ Fewer than one in four U.S. children are getting 20 minutes of vigorous activity every day of the week
- ◆ Less than 25 percent get any type of daily physical activity
- ◆ At all grade levels, girls get fewer hours of exercise per week than boys

Decreased Physical Activity

- ◆ As children advance through high school, their level of participation drops off.
- ◆ In the U.S. 13% of children 6-11 and 14% of adolescents 12-19 are overweight, more than double since 1980.
- ◆ 24% of U.S. children age 2-17 (nearly 14 million) are obese; another 8.6 million are overweight and at risk of becoming obese.

Declining Air Quality

- ◆ In Canada 16,000 people die prematurely every year from poor air quality.
- ◆ Children are particularly susceptible to poor air quality as they take in more air than adults.
- ◆ Long term exposure to air pollution in some of America's largest metropolitan areas significantly raises the risk of dying from lung cancer and is about as dangerous as living with a smoker.
- ◆ In a year, a typical North American car will add close to five tons of CO₂ into the atmosphere. Cars account for an estimated 15-25 percent of U.S. CO₂ emissions.

Traffic Safety

- ◆ Road crashes are the leading cause of death for Canadian youth.
- ◆ Americans run only 25% of all errands by foot, a drop of 42% in the past 20 years.
- ◆ 75% of all trips are less than one mile from home.
- ◆ And 47% of U.S. trips are under one half-mile.
- ◆ Average amount of time spent in a car each day in the U.S. is 68 minutes.

Academic Performance

- ◆ A study recently released by the California Department of Education (CDE) shows a distinct relationship between academic achievement and the physical fitness of California's public school students.

"This statewide study provides compelling evidence that the physical well-being of students has a direct impact on their ability to achieve academically," said Diane Eastin, State Superintendent of Schools. "We now have the proof we've been looking for: students achieve best when they are physically fit."

Stepping Out with ASRTS

In 2002 Green Communities | Active & Safe Routes to School launched a three-year pilot project in 10 Ontario communities to test the efficacy of providing seed funds to community champions to initiate local ASRTS projects.

Each community received:

- ◆ \$30,000 over three years
- ◆ All ASRTS-related resources at no cost
- ◆ Hands-on consulting support

Stepping Out with Active & Safe Routes to School was funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation, an agency of the Ministry of Culture, who receives annually \$100 million of government funding generated through Ontario's charity casino initiative. The Foundation allocates grants to eligible charitable and not-for-profit organizations in the arts and culture, environment, human and social services, and sports and recreation sectors.

Stepping Out Participants

- ◆ 10 Ontario communities implementing ASRTS:
 - Local stakeholder committees consisting of School Boards, Health Unit, Police, Municipal Transportation Staff, local politicians, local ENGO/NGO, local funders/sponsors, parents, school staff
- ◆ 510 elementary schools
- ◆ 220,000+ students and their parents
- ◆ School administrators, teachers

Results of Stepping Out

- ◆ Feedback indicated that ASRTS:
 - Creates stronger ties in the community
 - Meets community objectives in the areas of:
 - increasing daily physical activity;
 - fully utilizes the approach of the 4 E's;
 - leads to local action to reduce climate change emissions;
 - reduces locally produced air pollution from transportation;
 - directly addresses personal and traffic safety issues.
- ◆ Demand for the program locally exceeds their capacity to deliver.
- ◆ The program's adaptability to suit local needs is a big plus.

Results (Cont'd)

- ◆ 510 schools in 22 school districts participated.
- ◆ Average participation rate per school was 75% = 165,000 students.
- ◆ 170 articles appeared in 78 community papers, reaching 1,400,000 readers, plus 24 TV stations and 12 radio stations.
- ◆ The potential audience was 3,650,227 or 31% of Ontario's population.

Results (Cont'd)

- ◆ Approximately 1,439 volunteers (parents, school administrators, teachers, community partners, etc.) contributed about 6,819 hours to the project.
- ◆ Community contributions valued at \$345,000 cash and \$375,000 in-kind.
- ◆ Approximately 58.69 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions were avoided.

Our Approach

- ◆ Community based approach to implementation
- ◆ Provide 'seed funds' to pay a 'local champion'
- ◆ Provide adaptable resources at no cost
- ◆ Recognize communities have different needs and issues
- ◆ Provide a suite of adaptable programs
- ◆ Small steps - build on each other
- ◆ Keep the program fun for participating students
- ◆ Don't forget about those students who cannot use active travel to school
- ◆ Provide easy-to-implement curriculum linked program activities

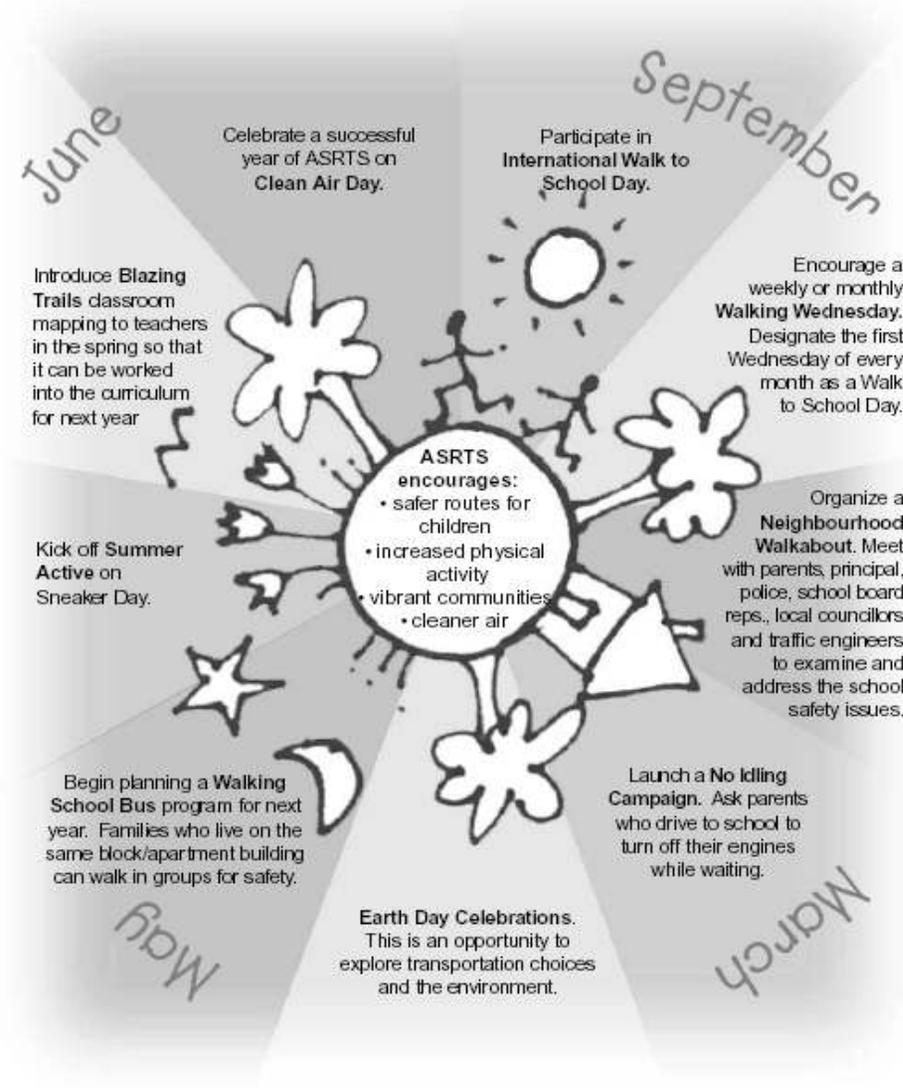
Our Approach (Cont'd)

- ◆ Link the program to children's safety and health issues, injury prevention, environment Advocate for child friendly streets - show how to do this
- ◆ Track measurable results: kilometers walked, greenhouse gas emissions avoided, reduction in idling vehicles, infrastructure changes, etc.
- ◆ Encourage networking of community initiatives - provide tools to make this easier
- ◆ Share the successes - through the network and through the media

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL ONTARIO – A CASE STUDY

Active and Safe Routes to School Through the Year

**OUR PROGRAM:
Small Steps
Lead to
Success:**



Lessons Learned

- ◆ Seed funds motivate
- ◆ Adaptable, ready-to-use resources
- ◆ Community Based Social Marketing
- ◆ Phased Implementation
- ◆ Media Opportunities
- ◆ Liability



Seed Funds Motivate

International Walk to School Week participation rates 2001 through 2004 in the 10 Stepping Out communities:

| STEPPING OUT COMMUNITY | IWALK 2004 | IWALK 2003 | IWALK 2002 | IWALK 2001 |
|---------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Brantford | 65 | 40 | 21 | 12 |
| Kitchener/Waterloo | 41 | 24 | 13 | 7 |
| London | 122 | 107 | 72 | 39 |
| Ottawa | 52 | 41 | 30 | 20 |
| Hamilton | 31 | 16 | 8 | 4 |
| Thunder Bay* | 9 | 7 | 5 | 1 |
| Guelph | 28 | 17 | 9 | 5 |
| Simcoe County | 12 | 10 | 7 | 3 |
| Peterborough | 43 | 31 | 26 | 12 |
| York Region* | 98 | | | |

*Thunder Bay pulled out of the ASRTS program in 2003 and was replaced by York Region.

Adaptable, Ready-to-Use Resources

GCC provides:

- ASRTS Resource Guide/Brochure
- IWALK 'how-to' resources, stickers, posters, colouring sheets, etc.
- Cross Canada Walking Maps
- Walking Wednesday Instructions
- Walking School Bus kit
- *NEW* iwalk club resources
- No Idling at School kit
- Mapping tools
- Prizes and incentives - where funds allow

Adaptable, Ready-to-Use Resources

Resources have to be:

- ◆ Available electronically for local customization - web site and on CD
- ◆ Electronic and hardcopy for schools - ready-to-use
- ◆ Curriculum-linked
- ◆ English/French

The IWALK Club

277,539 kilometres and still walking!



The **IWALK Club** makes physical activity FUN!

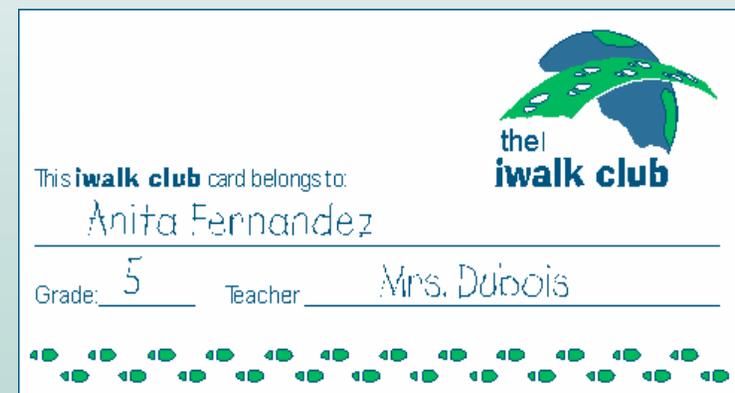
Launched February 2005 in Ontario, Canada

The **IWALK Club**:

- ◆ reduces car trips to the school
- ◆ encourages walking and other active travel
- ◆ promotes daily physical activity
- ◆ reduces pollution and climate change emissions
- ◆ promotes healthier lifestyle choices for students and their families
- ◆ has a theme of walk around the world - all activity ideas are curriculum-linked

How It Works

- Schools initiate **IWALK Clubs** in their school.
- Members can be individual classes, grades or the entire school.
- Students are rewarded every time they travel actively to school with stamps and stickers in their **IWALK Club** card.
- Schools with large numbers of students who are bused to school initiate in-school walking clubs.
- All resources available in English and French.



Community-Based Social Marketing

Definition:

Community-based social marketing draws heavily on research in social psychology which indicates that initiatives to promote behavior change are often most effective when they are carried out at the community level and involve direct contact with people. The emergence of community-based social marketing over the last several years can be traced to a growing understanding that conventional social marketing, which relies heavily or exclusively on media advertising, can be effective in creating public awareness and understanding of issues related to sustainability, but is limited in its ability to foster behavior change.

- ◆ **Work with local communities to identify issues and barriers**
- ◆ **Address those issues and barriers:**
 - through modification of program and adaptable resources
 - pilot projects
 - media coverage
- ◆ **Continuous improvement cycle**
- ◆ **Include incentives and rewards, i.e. the iwalk club**
- ◆ **Celebrate success - individual, group and community**

Phased Implementation

- ◆ Year 1:
 - Make the case for the program
 - Engage stakeholders and gain commitment
 - Source local funding and sponsorships
 - Hold a media event
 - Promote the issues through IWALK
 - Set reasonable targets

Phased Implementation

- ◆ Year 2:
 - Lessons learned from year 1 - implement changes
 - Increase IWALK registration
 - Implement community-wide Walking Wednesday or other similar challenge
 - Select pilot schools - 3 is a manageable number
 - Work with pilot schools
 - Hold a media event
 - Draft sustainability plan

Phased Implementation

- ◆ Year 3:
 - Examine results from pilot schools
 - Expand program to more schools
 - Increase IWALK registration
 - Hold a media event
 - Solicit long-term support
 - Work to integrate ASRTS into local policies: health; school board; municipal transportation; etc.

Media Opportunities are Key

- ◆ No better way to reach out to communities
- ◆ Stepping Out initiative over 3 years: 170 articles appeared in 78 community papers, reaching 1,400,000 readers. As well, coverage from 32 radio stations and 24 TV stations.
- ◆ Provide media resources for schools/communities
- ◆ Sample media releases/PSAs/backgrounders

Liability

- ◆ Liability issues can have an impact. Our approach:
 - Safety of students is the key issue - if the routes to school are not safe then students should not be walking
 - Promote several strategies to deal with safety issues:
 - Neighbourhood Walkabout
 - Parent and Student Safety/Walkability Surveys
 - School assemblies with Police
 - Police and traffic engineers walk routes with families
 - WSB - 1 adult for every 3-4 children

Liability (Cont'd)

- Walking Buddies for older students
- Initially all adults should walk together with children
- All of our program materials address the safety issue
- If parents do not feel comfortable participating then they should not

Next Steps

- ◆ Locate appropriate Cdn national and provincial funding sources
- ◆ Maintain support level for existing communities
- ◆ Increase participation levels of existing schools
- ◆ Continue to increase program growth year over year
- ◆ Work with teachers to create more curriculum-linked resources
- ◆ Work to institutionalize SRTS programs in Ontario and Canada



U.S. ASRTS Experts

- ◆ International Walk to School site - www.iwalktoschool.org
- ◆ U.S.A. Walk to School site - www.walktoschool-usa.org
- ◆ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/kidswalk/index.htm
- ◆ Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center - www.hsrb.unc.edu and see also www.saferoutesinfo.org
- ◆ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration - www.nhtsa.dot.gov and see also www.walktoschool.org/resources/sr2s-nhtsa.cfm
- ◆ California Safe Routes to School - www.dhs.ca.gov/routes2school
- ◆ Safe Routes to School, Marin County - www.saferoutetoschool.org
- ◆ National Center for Bicycling and Walking - www.bikewalk.org
- ◆ Federal Highway Administration - www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped

Green 
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CANADA

www.saferoutestoschool.ca

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