

Map your route

Time: 45 minutes

Materials

- Map of the school area (contact your school nurse)
- Markers
- Flip chart paper

Instructions

This activity encourages discussion about safe and active routes to school. It supports work being done by Niagara Region with Niagara Students Transport Services (NSTS) to encourage students who walk and bike to school or their bus stop. Speak with your school nurse or email healthyschools@niagararegion.ca to arrange for large copies of maps for you to use as part of the lesson plan. For clarification about this project email ast@nsts.ca

- Form small groups of 3-4. Ensure that at least one student in each group walks or cycles to school (identify using a hands-up survey). If many of your students walk or cycle to school, you may be able to group students from similar areas together.
- Handout one map of the school area to each group
- Have groups identify and circle destinations on the map they frequently visit (e.g., school, library, favorite store or restaurant, their home if applicable)
- Have each group draw routes they could walk or cycle from school to one or more of the destinations they identified, ask each group to:
 - Estimate expected time to travel to these destinations
 - Note nearby features that make the route safer for walking or cycling such as crossing guards
 - Identify obvious barriers to walking or cycling such as highways, missing sidewalks, or busy intersections
- For students who do not use active travel, ask them what is keeping them from walking or cycling to school. Keep in mind that some circumstances may be beyond their control.
- For students who do walk or cycle, ask them what motivates them to choose active travel

- Discuss the findings as a whole class and make a chart of the features that encourage and discourage safe active travel. Add to the chart personal reasons that encourage and discourage active travel
- List recommendations to improve walkability and bikeability of school area and ways to increase active school travel
- Post the maps and chart to show other students how fast and easy it can be to walk or bike to school

Variations

- Send any marked up maps to NSTS along with the identified features that help or hinder active travel via your internal courier (or email pictures of these items to ast@nsts.ca. Staff will digitize the map and return it to your principal for ongoing promotion of common routes to your school.
- If you have access to iPads, access an online mapping system and have students identify an active route to a favourite location from their home such as a park or friends home.
- Using the findings from the above activity, have students write a letter to their Mayor asking for any features that would improve the safety of their neighbourhood and encourage active travel or thanking them for features that are already in place
- Have students create a presentation for your parent council explaining any concerns that were identified about the safety of walking or cycling routes or enhancements needed to encourage active travel
- Have students develop and identify routes to school from many different neighbourhoods. They could visit younger grade classrooms and present the possible routes to them. This map could then be posted in the hallway for other students to see.