

An overview

TRAILBLAZERS



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A network of student walking ambassadors

The Trailblazer program teaches older students to be confident and competent walkers and lends visibility to all students on foot. Wearing visibility vests and walking preferred routes, Trailblazers provide exemplary models for families in the neighbourhood and bring peace of mind to caregivers – especially those whose children are starting to walk with friends or on their own.

What they do

Trailblazers are simply asked to take the training and to wear a class 2 safety vest (provided by STSWR) while walking a preferred route (designated by STSWR) from home to school. They are expected to set a responsible example, to know safe walking procedures, and to be welcoming of all other students who elect to walk with them. They are not on a particular schedule, they do not “pick up” students along their route, they are not responsible for babysitting smaller children, and they are not expected to save lives.

Parents are ultimately responsible for getting their own children to and from school, but Trailblazers are in place to demonstrate preferred routes to school, to add increased visibility, and to set a positive walking example for all students.

A proven model

Experience shows that the visual cue of students wearing vests and walking in the community serves as a bright alert to drivers that it is the period students will be walking and there are vulnerable users on the sidewalks. Trailblazers are trained “eyes on the street,” contributing to the feeling of safety experienced by students and parents alike. We recommend 20-30 students enter the program per school to ensure great coverage.

Training

Trailblazers will be required to attend in-school Trailblazer training. This training equips student participants with an understanding of traffic safety, how to safely cross a street, anti-bullying procedures, and some crisis identification training, all of which begin to prepare Trailblazers to act as student walking ambassadors. It also includes skills to troubleshoot and overcome barriers that might appear on the route (e.g. stray dog, construction and learning discussions designed to reveal students’ current experience of walking routes, and what may or may not be safe along the way).

In addition, a School Travel Planner from STSWR is available to work with the School Coordinator (usually a teacher) or the Principal to expand on the training with opportunities for Trailblazers to deliver active transportation announcements, lead walking/cycling celebration events (e.g. Winter Walk Day), lead anti-idling campaigns, or other relevant initiatives they feel are needed.

What we need from each school

A School Coordinator is required at each school to recruit students, assign routes, manage issues that arise, and issue online refresher training in Jan/Feb. The coordinator may identify gaps where additional Trailblazers are needed and recruit students from those areas as necessary to encourage balanced coverage. Minimal organization is expected after startup over managing student concerns that arise during their walks. Consultation with your School Travel Planner is always available.

Vetting of students

Students are asked to volunteer for the program by responding to recruitment efforts. The School Coordinator has the authority to deny any single student from acting as a Trailblazer if they are deemed inappropriate for the position. It is hoped that students who show interest but are not yet ready to be Trailblazers can be given other duties like reading announcements, supporting walking/cycling celebration events (e.g. Walk for the Earth), or completing odd jobs for the program at the School Coordinator's discretion until such a time as the student is capable of being a Trailblazer.

Consequences for irresponsible behaviour

In the case that a student is not performing to the levels required of the position, the School Coordinator is advised to follow a procedure to ensure they are not negatively affecting other student's walking experience.

1. First offence: issue a warning and review relevant training information.
2. Second offence: a phone call to parents along with similar training reminders.
3. Third offence: surrender of vest and expulsion from the program.

Lessons Learned

The School Travel Planner may review the program with the School Coordinator, the Principal, and the STSWR Transportation Planner to promptly correct issues and improve upon the program where opportunity permits.