

STP Presentation

My name is Laurie McDowell and I am the Facilitator for the School Travel Planning Project, also known as STP. I'd like to thank Mr. Bright for inviting me to speak with you tonight.

Over the next few minutes I'm going to explain STP and how Glynn A Green has participated in the pilot project.

STP has 3 aims:

- decrease car trips around the school especially at arrival and dismissal times
- increase the number of children using active transportation
- it brings together like-minded people to work on the first two aims

STP started here in May 2009, with the support of Mr. Giancola, the former Principal. The Committee consisted of Mr. Giancola, Mrs. Howey, a Glynn A Green parent who is here tonight, Mr. Swan, a volunteer with the Pelham Active Transportation Committee, Mr. Berketo from NSTS which provides the busing and the Facilitator at the time, Mrs. Coppola. School Council surveyed the parents about student/pedestrian safety.

During the fall of 2009 a presentation was made to the Town Council with recommendations for infrastructure improvements.

In May 2010 there were surveys done by school families and classes. 96% of parents responded that they supported STP. This data helped the Committee formulate the Action Plan, which sets out short and long term goals of the Committee.

The Action Plan focused on encouraging more students to walk or cycle to and from school, as well as improving the safety of children getting to and from school. In order to meet these goals, we organized Walk to School events on a regular basis. A bike rack was added at the Stella Street entrance to the school yard.

The Committee met with the Town Treasurer, asking that having new sidewalks installed happen sooner than later. As you can see around the school, there are a number of infrastructure improvements taking place. Once the work is complete, it will be safer for the students to use active transportation to and from school.

The second goal was to improve the safety of children to and from school. Last May the school hosted a very successful bike for for grades K to 6, with about 77 students participating. The event consisted of bike safety teaching by Mrs. Desjardins, the School Nurse, and a skills course overseen by Mr. Swan.

As you may be aware, the school has been having a monthly Walk to School

event. We are fortunate in having support of your local Sobeys. CAA sponsored walking events last fall and this spring.

Why do all of this work? Obesity rates are on the rise, and the fact that screen time is taking the place of physical activity. With about 29% of students being driven, that can lead to high traffic volumes. Up until now the parking lot was shared by buses and cars. Once the work on Port Robinson Road is completed, the buses will have a dedicated area away from the parking lot.

Walking or other active transportation has many benefits. It helps children work toward the 60 minutes of physical they are supposed to have every day. It builds a sense of community with groups walking together. It also helps students with taking responsibility for themselves – getting up and moving in order to be on time for school. Finally, it helps them practise planning and decision making.

Using active transportation helps with concentration. A 2012 study of about 20,000 Danish students aged 5 – 19 found that the students who used active transportation to get to school did measurable better on tasks requiring concentration like solving puzzles. These effects lasted for up to four hours after arriving at school. The researcher said if students exercise and bike to school, their ability to concentrate increases to the equivalent of someone a half year ahead in grade level. A U.S. statistic from 2009 shows 13% of students used

active transportation. In 1969 that number was 50%.

At this point, some of you are perhaps thinking, What can I do?

Where possible, encourage your child to use active transportation safely to get to and from school. You may need to recheck helmets and review safety rules when bikes come out again.

Be a role model. If you can, walk with your child. Look around your neighbourhood to see who else is walking. Maybe an informal walking school bus.

Can you find somewhere to park the car a block or two away from school and walk the rest of the way?

Walking can take place in all seasons and most weather. A child needs to be dressed for the weather to go outside for school breaks. That means they would be dressed to walk to school.

Finally, you can volunteer to sit on Glynn A Green's STP Committee. As the school community, you can influence what happens at school. It is not a large time commitment to be on the Committee. The meetings have been about once a month for about an hour.

As the saying goes, many hands make light work. There are many ways to be involved. What's yours? Thank you for your time and attention.