

THE WESTVALE TRAILBLAZERS

May 2006

The following documents the process undertaken by Westvale Public School in Waterloo, Ontario, to create a student-led Walking School Bus program – The Trailblazers.

Green Communities thanks Westvale Public School for their inspiration and for allowing us to put this document on our web site. Questions, comments and new ideas can be directed to Diane Matyas (dianematyas@rogers.com) or Elizabeth Sproule (e.sproule@rogers.com).



The Walking School Bus initiative at Westvale Public School in Waterloo began in the Spring of 2005. Their goal was to create a program that would address parents' safety concerns around walking to school but would not be dependent on parent volunteers. The result was the "Trailblazers" program which involves older students walking with the younger students along designated routes. The program provides the senior students with an opportunity to develop leadership skills and it fosters, in all the students, a greater sense of community and self-confidence as well as the obvious benefits of fresh air and exercise.

The majority of Westvale's students live within walking distance of the school but many parents perceived the distance from home to school as too far to walk. The school decided that a walk of 15 minutes would be viewed as reasonable by most families – to determine how many families would qualify the school simply asked parents to walk their children to school once and note how long it took. The location of homes and the time it took to walk served as benchmarks for the 15 minute radius.

To determine the best routes to the school a map of the neighbourhood, with a letter outlining the Walking School Bus Program, was sent home and families were asked to indicate their location and if they were interested in participating. Only a small percentage of surveys were returned, but it was enough, combined with observations of the flow of students arriving at school in the morning, to propose start locations and times.

Although the program is student run the initial start up does involve a few parents. For the balance of the year two organizers randomly monitor the routes: one on each side of their neighbourhood.

Westvale continually strives to improve the quality and sustainability of their Walking School Bus program and they encourage other schools to set up similar programs. Their experience to date shows that this approach does get kids walking. They have attempted to organize and simplify, as much as possible, the process they used to set up the program and it is their hope that this document will be of assistance to other schools. Please feel free to make use of the enclosed forms or information in starting up a Walking School Bus at your school.

Schedule 1) **Walking School Bus Program Start Up Process**

Schedule 2) **Walking School Bus Program Forms Checklist**

Schedule 1 -Walking School Bus Program, Westvale Public School

Start Up Process

1. Establish a 15 minute walking distance (radius) from the school. Ask parents from different streets to volunteer to walk with their children to school and record the time.

2. Create and distribute a survey and map to the school community, (a map may be available already (Form #1) ask your principal or school board), to explain the program and gather information about:

- 1) Potential passengers (students)
- 2) Potential leaders (Trailblazers)
- 3) Parents willing to volunteer for initial training period (1 week) and random monitoring of specific routes.

Note: Survey responses are generally low but should provide some indication where to start the routes. This step does not have to be repeated each year.

3. Create a map indicating proposed routes (Form #2). Be creative: use a theme like colours or shapes, something simple and visual. Use the location of the students and label the proposed starting points and times. The walking time from a starting point to the school should be 15 minutes or less. Routes with a shorter walking time will have a later starting time. The goal is to set a start time that will easily get the students to school on time but not before the schoolyard supervision. Check with your school for the start time of the supervision.

NOTE: During the start-up phase of the program, Green Communities recommends that schools contact their local Police division and Municipal Traffic Department to request assistance in ensuring good pedestrian controls exist along the walking routes, and any potential conflict areas are addressed. As well, these stakeholders can be available to assist with the education and awareness of parents and students.

4. Visit the classrooms of all grades 5 and 6 students or higher to generate interest and hand out Trailblazer Volunteer Forms and Trailblazer Instruction Forms (see Form #3 & Form #4) to interested students.

5. Review returned Trailblazer Volunteer Forms. Sort according to routes, call parents and confirm the day(s) their child will be volunteering. Create a master list of the Trailblazers, their routes, schedules, phone numbers, email addresses. The goal is to have two Trailblazers for each route, each day. When you have determined what days you have two Trailblazers to run the route, create the Bus Service Schedule (Form #5) and the Trailblazer Schedule & Instructions For Each Route (Form #6). You may not be able to offer the service everyday on every route. Offer what you can initially and eventually more students will come forward to volunteer.

6. Contact all of the parents who were willing to volunteer for the training period and assign them a route, starting point and start time. Hand each parent a copy of the Parent Volunteer Schedule & Instructions For Each Route (Form #7) so they also know what is expected of them and the Trailblazers. Have the parent volunteers walk each route for the first week at least. Each route can have a different parent volunteering each day.

7. Deliver the Bus Service Schedule & Route Map (Form #5 & Form #2) with Launch Letter (Form #8) to the school community with a clearly marked **START DATE**. Promotion of the Launch Letter may include: visiting each classroom, school council newsletter, school newsletter, daily announcements, posters throughout the school.

8. Call a training meeting for all students who volunteered to be Trailblazers. Make sure they have all returned a signed copy of the Trailblazer Registration Form and Trailblazer Instructions (Form #3 & Form #4). Distribute:

a) Safety vests, umbrellas (school colours), nametags, whistles which can be on ribbons to hang around the Trailblazer's neck or attached to the safety vest.

b) Trailblazer Schedule & Instructions For Each Route (Form #6)

Review the **RULES OF SAFETY**, the importance of being **ON TIME** for their route and their **RESPONSIBILITY** to call a substitute if they cannot walk their route.

NOW START!

POST START UP:

1. Make changes to routes or start times as needed to improve service. Continually communicate with the school community to advise them of any changes.

2. Schedule random reminder meetings during the school day or after school to update the Trailblazers.

3. Schedule random "treat" day to offer support, recognition and incentive to the Trailblazers. Bring in a treat or have a volunteer parent/child bake something.

4. Schedule "thank you" parties each term and hand out "Certificates of Recognition" (Form #9) at the end of the year.

5. Take a group photo. Give each Trailblazer a copy of the photo at the end of the year.

MORE OPTIONS:

Incorporate theme days to make the Walking School Bus Program fun:

a) International Walk To School Day

b) Walk & Wave Days

c) Jingle Bell Days

Schedule 2 - Walking School Bus Program Westvale Public School

Forms Checklist

Form #1-Survey And Map

Form #2-Walking School Bus Routes and Schedules

Form #3-Trailblazer Volunteer Form

Form #4-Trailblazer Instructions

Form #5- Walking School Bus Service Schedule

Form #6-Trailblazer Schedule & Instructions for Each Route

Form #7-Parent Volunteer Schedule & Instructions for Each Route

Form #8-Launch letter, incorporating Final Map (Form #2) and Walking School Bus Service Schedule (Form #5). to be distributed to School Community

Form #9-Certificate of Appreciation

It's Time to Get Moving (School name)! **FORM 1**

(School Name) is (considering) introducing a new initiative to get students to school in a healthy active way, safely and on time! The program will be called the (school name) Walking School Bus and will involve volunteer student leaders, 'Trailblazers', walking with younger students from designated starting points at set times, along set routes, all within a 15 minute walking distance to the school. Students can join at the starting points or anywhere along the routes. In essence the Walking School Bus will ensure that students will have the safety of numbers.

The benefits of walking are numerous; it fosters independence, increases fitness, increases energy, improves learning and provides an opportunity to socialize and have fun. Fewer children being driven will also reduce traffic congestion and improve the air quality around the school. And parents can get on with their day earlier and in a less rushed manner!

Please indicate your interest in having your children participate in this program by completing the form below and returning it to the school by (date) .

During the initial start up period, approximately the first 2 weeks, we will be asking for parent volunteers to supervise the routes. Please indicate if you would be willing to assist in this.

(Map of Neighbourhood)

Please mark the best location for your child to join the Walking School Bus.

Child(ren)'s Names and Rm # _____

Parent Name: _____ tel. _____

Email _____ I can help during initial supervision period _____

WALKING SCHOOL BUS SCHEDULE

FORM 5

(EXAMPLE)

Red Route	Daily, 8:30
Orange Route	Daily, 8:30
Blue Route	'A' – Daily, 8:30 'B'- Daily, 8:35
Purple Route	Mon., Tues, Thurs., Fri. 8:30
Green Route	From Westvale Gate Tues., Thurs., Friday , 8:30 From Middlebury and Northhampton Cres. Daily 8:30
Maple Leaf Route	From Appledale ('A') Daily 8 :35 From Pinemeadow ('B') – Thurs. Fri. 8:30
Yellow Route	Daily, 8:40

Trailblazer Schedule & Instructions FORM 6

(colour) Route

Start at 8:30 am at the end of the walkway on Springfield
Walk to Westvale and turn left onto Westvale

This is your timetable. If you are unable to volunteer due to injury or illness, you are responsible to call another Trailblazer to take your place.

Name & Number	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Jerome-	X				X
Brittany L-		X			
Brooke-			X		
Michaela-	X				X
Shayne-				X	
Brittany B-		X		X	
Alex-			X		

Please feel free to call (contact name and number) if you have any concerns, questions, comments or new ideas about the **Walking School Bus Program**.

Trailblazer Schedule & Instructions

(colour) Route

Start at 8:30 am at the end of the walkway on Springfield
Walk to Westvale and turn left onto Westvale

This is your timetable. If you are unable to volunteer due to injury or illness, you are responsible to call another Trailblazer to take your place.

Name & Number	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Jerome-	X				X
Brittany L-		X			
Brooke-			X		
Michaela-	X				X
Shayne-				X	
Brittany B-		X		X	
Alex-			X		

Please feel free to call (contact name and number) if you have any concerns, questions, comments or new ideas about the **Walking School Bus Program**.

Parent Volunteer Schedule & Instructions FORM 7 (colour) Route

Thank you for volunteering to assist with the **Walking School Bus Program**, we appreciate your support during this initial training week, as well as your continual support randomly throughout the school year. Below is a schedule of parent volunteers, start time and location, your walking school bus route, as well as a list of instructions and safety rules.

<u>Name & Number</u>	<u>Monday</u>	<u>Tuesday</u>	<u>Wednesday</u>	<u>Thursday</u>	<u>Friday</u>
Diane-	X		X		
Kim-		X			
Renata-			X		
Sue-					X

Your start time is 8:30am. Your start location is at the end of the walkway on Springfield. Wait until 8:29am and instruct the Trailblazers to blow their whistles. Wait until 8:30am and have them blow their whistles again. Walk on the sidewalk to Westvale and turn left onto Westvale.

Please ensure that the Trailblazers follow these instructions:

- Make sure one Trailblazer is at the front and one at the back of the bus
- Must wear the Trailblazer vest, nametag and whistle
- Make sure students do not cross any major street
- Do not stand in the middle of the street to stop traffic to help children cross, cross in a group when it is safe to do so
- Walk students onto the school property
- Report any problems to the office IMMEDIATELY!
- HAVE FUN! Invite students to join the Walking School Bus as you walk to school

Please ensure that the Trailblazers obey and enforce the following Safety Rules:

- Only walk on the sidewalk or on the left shoulder facing oncoming traffic
- Stop, Look (both ways) and Listen before crossing any street
- Do not cross any street from between parked cars
- Cross with the patrol/crossing guards
- Never approach the car of a stranger
- Never accept a ride from a stranger
- Walk bikes/scooters across the street

Please feel free to call (contact name and number) if you have any concerns, questions, comments or new ideas about the **Walking School Bus Program**.

It's Time to Get Moving (school name)!

FORM 8

(*School name*) (*council name*) is pleased to announce the official launch of the **WALKING SCHOOL BUS PROGRAM**, on (*fill in date*). At present (#) walking routes have been established with starting times between 8:30 and 8:40. Each route starts at a specific meeting location within a 15-minute walk from (*school name*). Students and/or families are welcome to join the **WALKING SCHOOL BUS** at any starting point or anywhere along the route. Please refer to the map on the back for more details.

The purpose of this initiative is to organize our students into co-operative groups to provide **safety in numbers**. Each day, two “**Trailblazers**” will meet at the starting point of each route and walk with the students to school. The “**Trailblazers**” will be wearing bright orange safety vests. Each “**Trailblazer**” attended training sessions to review the **RULES OF SAFETY** and we ask that all parents review these rules with their children.

Please note children who are too young or unable to follow the **RULES OF SAFETY** must be accompanied by a parent/adult/or older sibling. Parent volunteers, as well as “**Trailblazers**”, will supervise these walking routes for the first (#) days to ensure the **RULES OF SAFETY** are followed and address any immediate concerns. If you are able to assist in the initial supervision please contact the organizers indicated below.

EVERYONE CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE WALKING SCHOOL BUS! If you live beyond the starting points drive or walk your child to the closest walking route and let them join the **Walking School Bus**. This simple change in routine will provide a **safer, cleaner and healthier** way for your child to get to school. It will increase daily physical activity; increasing fitness levels and improving their ability to learn, reduce traffic congestion; making it safer to get to school, reduce emissions-making the air cleaner and easier to breathe; provide a time for socializing, improve self-confidence, and it's **FUN!**

If your Grade 5 or 6 student would like to take advantage of this leadership opportunity by being a “**Trailblazer**” but did not bring home a volunteer form please contact us.

Thank you for helping (*school council name*) launch this healthy initiative! If you would like more details or can help out please call (contact info).

RULES OF SAFETY:

- Always walk on the sidewalk.
- Always cross with the crossing guard.
- Do not cross any street from between parked cars.
- **STOP**, look both ways and listen before crossing the street.
- Never approach the car of a stranger.
- Never accept a ride from a stranger or anyone without permission from a parent.
- **WALK**, don't ride your bike/scooter across the street.

Please see reverse for the map of the **WALKING SCHOOL BUS** walking routes>>>>>



Westvale Public School

Certificate of Appreciation

Presented to

«TrailerblazerName»
Trailblazer

Thank you for your contribution to the success of the
Walking School Bus Program 2005.

Principal, Westvale Public School

Chair, Westvale School Council