



The National Active School Streets Initiative: Addressing Safety Barriers to Outdoor Play and Activity in School Neighborhoods

Anguli Bharmota

Contact Author: Anguli.Bharmota@bcchr.ca
Faculty of Medicine, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Patricia Collins

Department of Geography and Planning, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada

Katherine Frohlich

Department of Social and Preventative Medicine, Université de Montréal, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Raktim Mitra

School of Urban and Public Planning, Toronto Metropolitan University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Sonia Daly

School of Public Health, Université de Montréal, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Carise Thompson

Department of Geography and Planning, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada

Mariana Brussoni

Department of Pediatrics, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Abstract

Background: Traffic safety issues has changed the outdoor play landscape for many school children, as it can discourage them from walking and playing along the streets of their schools. The National Active School Streets Initiative (NASSI) is a nationwide initiative led by Green Communities Canada, that temporarily closes streets around schools during drop-off and pick-up periods. This creates car-free zones to facilitate children's safe travel, providing them with the opportunity to play outdoors. Our objectives are to implement the NASSI initiative in Vancouver and examine how school streets influence children's physical activity, and to understand children's perspectives on walking or playing on the streets surrounding their school. This nationwide initiative is also being implemented and evaluated by researchers in Kingston, Mississauga, and Montreal, as national data collection can help us implement NASSI in other jurisdictions.

Methodology: This current project will focus on the implementation in a Vancouver elementary school. We will survey kids about how they travel to school, and parents will be surveyed about safety concerns with their children independently walking and playing near their school. We will conduct group discussions with children to understand experiences on their outdoor activity when travelling on the streets of their school neighborhoods.

Results and Conclusion: Preliminary data will be shared from the child group discussions, helping us gain perspective into the outdoor play landscape of school children along the streets of their schools. Quantitative survey data from children will also be shared from the pre-liminary, and during-intervention stages, to highlight the ways they are currently travelling to school. This data will allow us to explore the different modes that children are using for school travel, and learn existing outlooks on their current walking and play habits in their school neighborhoods. This will ultimately help us examine how the intervention will have shaped their school street's outdoor landscape.

Keywords: school streets; active transportation; children's physical activity; children's independent mobility