

Promoting Active Travel with Colourful Paths in the Strathcona Neighborhood

SUSTAIN 3S03: Implementing Sustainable Change

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McMaster SUSTAIN 3S03 students at Strathcona Elementary School running stations at the event. From left: Julia Ungureanu, Mia Le, Krishna Desai, Jenna Liegghio.

Photo Credit: Kate Whalen



Overview

Transportation accounts for one-fifth of global carbon emissions, contributing to air pollution and environmental degradation [1]. In some Hamilton schools, up to 40% of students in grades 1 to 8 who live within a walkable area get driven with parents citing 'safety' and 'convenience' as their primary reason [2]. When students walk, they become mentally and physically healthier, form social bonds, and develop sustainable transportation habits. The Daily School Route (DSR) works with schools, parents, and children, aiming for 100% of students to walk and wheel to school daily. We collaborated with DSR to engage the Strathcona Elementary School community in the importance of developing safe and friendly travel routes for kids. The goal of our project was to help students demonstrate to their community the importance of safe school zones for walking and wheeling daily.

Objectives

1. Engage students as leaders through active participation.
2. Enable lasting change with a permanent installation at the school.
3. Develop a toolkit for all Hamilton schools to use.

Reporting

To achieve our first objective, our team worked with the DSR to design an engaging event that would foster leadership in students. We used music, chalk, and bubbles to encourage creativity and empowerment among participants. Our team played familiar pop music and provided students with multi-coloured chalk to create a mural along their school routes. Through this event, about 100 students from grades 1-5 worked together to decorate three key routes to school.

To achieve our second objective, we designed colourful footprint cutouts that included questions about how students feel when they walk to school. Students wrote their responses directly on the footprints during the event, which were used to create a mural in the school's entranceway. This mural serves as a daily visual reminder to students of the event and their leadership skills.

To achieve our final objective, our team collaborated with the DSR parent engagement team in creating a toolkit for schools across the City of Hamilton. This toolkit acts as a guide regarding the nature of the event, the benefits of participation, and included insights from the Strathcona event. To ensure all students have this opportunity, we worked with the DSR to distribute our toolkit to all schools in both the Public and Catholic school boards.

Collaborators

This project could not have been accomplished without the support of the following collaborators: Our Community Project Champions, Daniel Chong and Sandra Alexander; McMaster Academic Sustainability Program, Dr. Kate Whalen, Liana Bontempo, and Nathan Butterworth; SUSTAIN 3S03 Daily School Route- Parent Engagement Team Pratha Bhat, Rachel Gallagher, Eden Cassidy and Marwa Kamak h; Strathcona Elementary School principal, teachers, staff and volunteers; and Strathcona Elementary School students for their creativity, energy and tremendous leadership.

References

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