

SCHOOL STREETS PROGRAM REPORT

AUGUST 2023



CITY OF
VANCOUVER



Walk Bike Roll

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SCHOOL STREETS

Tell us what you think about School Streets.
(Place a sticker in one of the boxes)

How do you feel about the School Streets program?

KIDS ONLY

Do you think the School Streets program is helpful for walking, biking, or rolling to school?

YES NO

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About School Streets

Introduction



The City of Vancouver expanded the School Streets Program to seven local schools in the 2022-23 school year. The purpose of the program is to improve safety around schools and encourage active transportation (walking, biking, rolling and transit) to and from school in support of the [Climate Emergency Action Plan](#) goal of having two-thirds of daily trips be taken by active transportation and transit by 2030.

During drop-off and pick-up times one street adjacent to each participating school was closed to motor vehicle traffic and open to walking, biking or rolling for 30 to 60 minutes. On school days, school volunteers set out road barriers in the morning and afternoon to prevent motor vehicles from entering or exiting the School Street. The program was delivered in partnership with the Vancouver School Board as part of our [School Active Travel Program](#).


Did you know?

The School Active Travel Program offers a variety of initiatives to improve safety around schools, educate students, and encourage active travel to and from Vancouver schools.


Learn more at: [Vancouver.ca/SchoolActiveTravel](https://vancouver.ca/SchoolActiveTravel)


A School Street is a car-free block beside a school open to walking, biking, and rolling during drop-off and pick-up times. Motor vehicles are not permitted to enter or exit a School Street.


The seven participating schools included:


 **Lord Roberts Elementary**
returning year-round school
2022-23 school year

 **Lord Nelson Elementary**
returning spring program school
May 8 – June 2, 2023

 **L'Ecole Bilingue Elementary**
new spring program school
May 8 – June 2, 2023

 **Lord Selkirk Elementary**
new spring program school
May 8 – June 2, 2023

 **Pierre Elliott Trudeau Elementary**
new spring program school
May 8 – June 2, 2023

 **Lord Strathcona Elementary**
new spring program school
May 8 – June 2, 2023

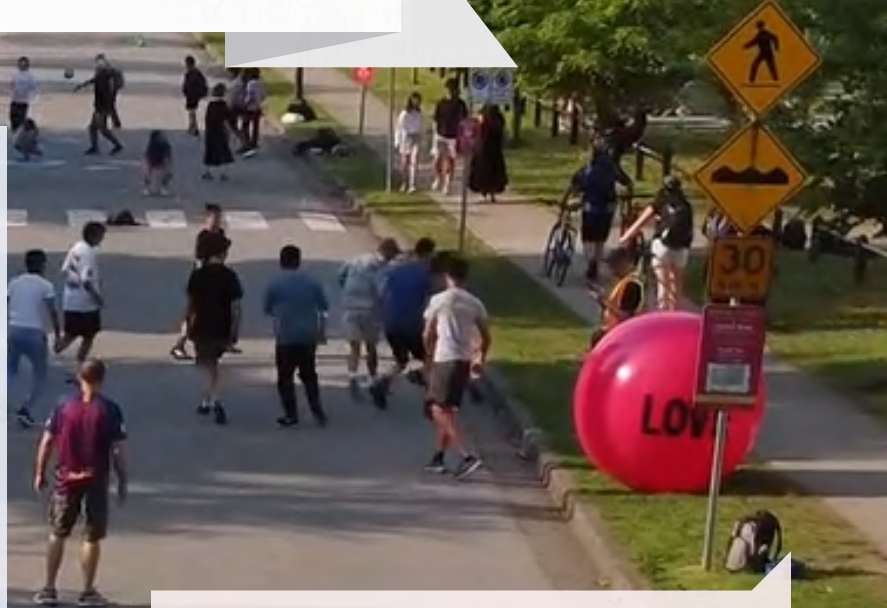
 **Sir Winston Churchill Secondary**
new spring program school
May 8 – June 2, 2023

THREE CHEERS FOR SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL SECONDARY

Churchill was the **first secondary school** in Vancouver to pilot the School Streets Program! **33% of students** reported walking more to school during the program.

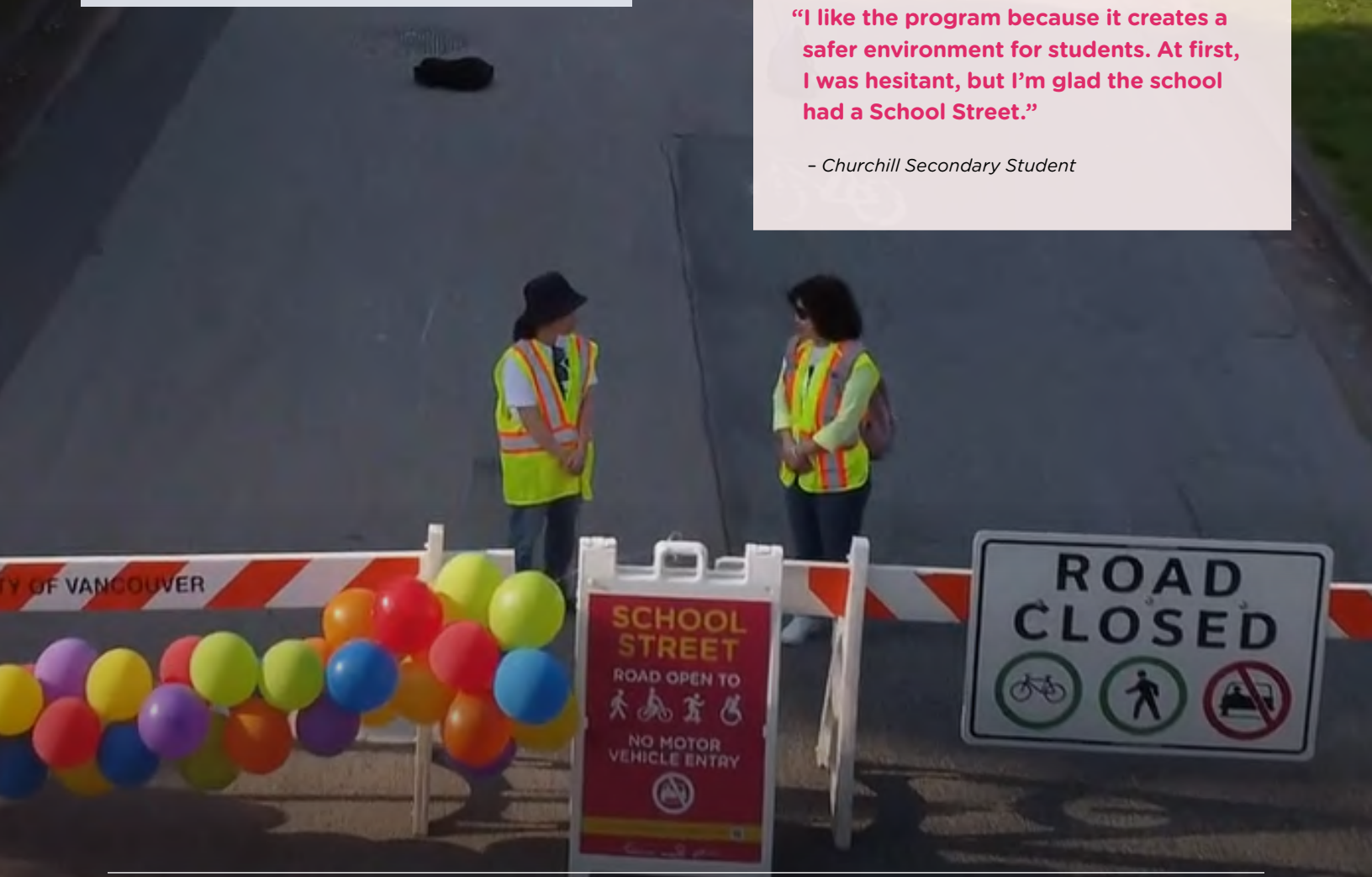
Watch our video to see how School Streets transformed drop-off and pick-up at Churchill.

[YouTube Video Link >](#)



“I like the program because it creates a safer environment for students. At first, I was hesitant, but I’m glad the school had a School Street.”

– Churchill Secondary Student



About School Streets

Accessibility

To minimize impacts on residents we chose streets without driveways and where residents had alternative access to their homes through alleys. To ensure those who needed to drive had access to the school, all other blocks around the school, apart from the School Street, remained accessible for motor vehicles. Where necessary, designated drop-off areas for parents or students with disabilities were put in place in advance of the program and communicated to residents.

Engagement



City staff engaged each school through presentations to principals and Parent Advisory Councils. Additionally, a School Streets Working Group was assembled with committee members from all spring program schools to help support planning and implementation efforts.

To help inform the community, the City mailed notification letters one month in advance of the program start date to all residents within a two-block radius of participating schools. Additional notifications included surveying residents at select schools, on-street signage, banners, and online promotion.

Volunteers



Almost 180 volunteers across the seven participating schools supported the program this year, many of whom were parents of students. These volunteers implemented and monitored the School Streets to ensure safety for students and their families.

99% of volunteers rated their experience as positive and **92%** said they would volunteer again if the program continues.

“I am pleased to have participated in this program as a volunteer. It was an excellent experience getting to know the parents who also participated and having meaningful conversations. This experience has been incredibly valuable for me, and I would gladly participate in a similar service in the future. Thank you.”

– Churchill Volunteer

About School Streets



Encouraging Active Travel

To further promote active travel during School Streets, various complementary initiatives took place at schools. All eligible schools received City-funded Active Travel Education delivered by HUB Cycling for grade 6 and 7 students. The Active Travel course includes four lessons that teach students walking and cycling safety theory and on-bike skills through school ground training and group rides around the neighbourhood. In addition, all schools received \$500 to support promotional activities of their choosing. Activities included distributing prizes during Bike to School Week and inviting a local bike mechanic to provide complimentary tune-ups at a school event. The final week of the spring program also overlapped with Bike to School Week and Go By Bike Week, which provided a celebratory end to the program.



About School Streets



Play Streets

Following a successful partnership in 2022, we worked with the Society for Children and Youth of BC (SCY) again this year to offer Play Streets at select School Street locations. Play Streets involved play activation through simple programming and resources. They are designed to encourage safe active outdoor play for children and families, and to promote community connection. SCY hosted 16 Play Street events in total. A full report on this initiative can be found [here](#).

The Play Streets were co-designed with kids via in-person workshops and an online survey facilitated by SCY. The play offerings provided by SCY were divided into sections along the school street ranging from low energy to high energy and included a quiet zone with puzzles and crafts, badminton and a scooter/bike course with ramps.

Play Streets transformed our School Streets into spaces where families could connect and encouraged students and the wider community to reimagine different uses for public space.

SCY ran pop-up engagements at all school sites to ask for feedback on the initiative. Over 70 people answered their survey questions, 84% of whom were children.

97%

reported that they are more physically active with Play Streets than they would be on a regular day

82%

reported feeling more connected to their community with Play Streets

“The School Street has been fantastic for my special needs kid to connect with his community and meet kids who aren’t in his class that he might not otherwise associate with. Much to my surprise, he has thoroughly enjoyed the play streets and for a kid who dislikes being at school for a minute longer than necessary, has been having a good time with them.”

– Lord Selkirk Parent



CONGRATULATIONS TO LORD NELSON ELEMENTARY



“This is my first time partaking in the School Street Program and I think it is wonderful. It really encourages building the school community, encourages more walking and bike use and is just fun for the families. Keep it going!”

– Lord Nelson Parent

After a successful School Streets pilot in 2022, Lord Nelson Elementary participated in the spring program again this year. In the second year of the program:

79%

of parents reported they would like to see the program continue

96

families in total tried walking, biking, or rolling to school for the first time

x2

Parent and volunteer engagement doubled

Lord Nelson ran their own Play Street this year. SCY provided a workshop to help get them started and they used their \$500 School Streets funding to purchase equipment and games. Almost **80% of Lord Nelson parents** thought Play Streets improved the program.

School Streets Program Impacts

Report reflects data compiled from the six schools that participated in the one-month spring program. For more information about the year-long Lord Roberts School Street see [here](#).

Impacts on Travel Behaviour



23% of families
33% of secondary students

Reported walking more

21% of families
12% of secondary students

Reported biking more

441 families and secondary students

Tried walking, biking or rolling* for the first time

Impacts on Active Travel

The School Streets Program encouraged more families and secondary students to use active travel more often to get to and from school during the program.

Student Spotlight

Secondary students were asked to select which programs or initiatives would support and encourage them to walk, bike or roll to school more often. The top 3 responses were:

45%

Free or subsidized transit pass

44%

More protected bike lanes, sidewalks or safer intersections near the school

21%

Continuation of the School Streets Program

“My daughter gets up earlier and walks to school more than before.”

– Churchill Parent

“We will go to school by bike more than before.”

– Lord Nelson Parent

“Walking to school becomes more fun with the school street program. My child loves it.”

– Trudeau Parent

Evaluation

A number of monitoring tools and feedback methods were used to gather data and better understand the impacts of the School Street program.



439

Parent Surveys completed online (representing an estimated 22% of the student population)



83

School Staff Surveys completed online (representing 20% of all staff)



65

Volunteer Surveys completed (representing 46% of volunteers)



209

Students participated at in-person Engagement Pop-ups at elementary schools



186

Secondary Student Surveys completed by Churchill students (10% of student population)



* Wheelchair, skateboard or scooter

School Streets Program Impacts

Impacts on Driving & Transit

The program also encouraged families and secondary students to drive less as well as take transit, carpool, or drive and park a five-minute walk away from the school, which assists with reducing congestion during drop-off and pick-up times.

19% of families
16% of secondary students

Reported driving less

12% of families
20% of secondary students

Reported “driving-to-five” more†

146 families and secondary students

Tried taking transit, driving-to-five, or carpooling for the first time

A reduction in overall motor vehicle volumes was observed on the streets adjacent to Churchill Secondary School during the program‡

In addition, the program also encouraged school staff to change their travel behaviour.

17%
Walked more

11%
Took more transit

22%
Biked more

18%
Drove less

We asked parents and teachers whether they faced any challenges travelling to school as a result of the School Street and 15% reported they did. Individuals cited difficulty finding parking, increased congestion on adjacent streets and challenges navigating the closure adjacent to other construction projects as their primary concerns.

“We do a mix of walking, biking, and driving to and from school. We previously used Jackson as a drop-off street when driving and biking. I’m happy to switch to using Pender for drop-off on driving days so that we have less conflict with cars and pedestrians when dropping off by bike on Jackson on biking days. Please make the street closure permanent.”

- Lord Strathcona Parent

† Drive-to-Five is an initiative that encourages parents to drop their children a couple blocks away from the school instead of directly beside the school. Children can then complete the rest of journey on foot either accompanied by their parent or unaccompanied.

‡ Manual traffic counts were conducted on all streets surrounding Churchill Secondary School (Heather, W 54th, W 57th, Laurel, and Neal Street) one day before the program as well as one day during the program during drop-off and pick-up times. Overall, motor vehicle volumes on the street directly adjacent to the school decreased by 24% during the program compared to before the program. It is important to note that a number of variables can impact traffic counts including weather and school population changes.

“It felt a lot safer and calmer to walk home from school. As someone with hyperacusis, the program made it more accommodating for me to walk home from school as opposed to calling my parents to pick me up.”

– Churchill Secondary Student

“It was much calmer at pick up and people were walking more around the school and interacting with other people.”

– Trudeau Staff

“The program really reduced the traffic in the neighborhood - it felt much safer to cross 22nd Avenue. We would love for the program to continue so that when our children are a little older, we would feel comfortable letting them walk to school alone.”

– Selkirk Parent

Impacts on Safety and Well-being

The majority of participants (students, parents and teachers) reported feeling safer and more connected to the community during the School Street program.

92% of **elementary students** reported the street felt safer

69% of **school staff** felt that the School Streets Program improved the sense of community at the school (14% reported feeling neutral)



School Streets Program Impacts

Additional Program Feedback

During our in-person pop-up engagement sessions held at elementary schools piloting the program, we asked students how they felt about School Streets.

Here’s a summary of what they had to share.



We also asked students to tell us what they liked and disliked about the program by writing and drawing on sticky notes. We collected a total of 188 notes (150 likes, 38 dislikes). Top themes that reflect what students liked about the program include:

- 57** Games and Prizes
- 45** Community and Friends
- 19** Safety / No cars
- 20** Walking, Biking, Rolling



“The street closure gave my children confidence to walk to school without us. They are fearful of crossing the Jackson intersections because of traffic moving quickly in the mornings. The street closure drastically increased the sense of community before and after school. PLEASE keep it!”

– Strathcona Parent

Generally, students, parents, teachers are in support of the program continuing in the future.

100%
OF ELEMENTARY STUDENTS
support the School Street continuing

69%
OF SCHOOL STAFF
support the School Street continuing
(16% reported feeling neutral)

74%
OF PARENTS
support the School Street continuing
(11% reported feeling neutral)

36%
INCREASE IN SUPPORT
by parents, secondary students and teachers (support of the School Street after they experienced it)

“School Streets increased our interactions with other parents and students. It created more community with local residents, parents and kids. This program made my child think more about how we got to school and often choose more active ways to get there.”

– Lord Strathcona Parent

“I strongly support the School Streets program. Both parents and kids feel much safer!!”

– Churchill Secondary Student

THANK YOU!

Special thanks to the Vancouver School Board, school communities, members of our School Streets Working Group and all the School Street Volunteers. Without your support, this program would not be possible!

“Thank you to all the volunteers and those who contributed!”

- Lord Nelson Parent



City of Vancouver
Engineering Services
Community Transportation

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vancouver.ca/School-Streets