

School Travel Survey

This year Gladesville Public School began working with the City of Ryde Council and Ryde Hornsby Health Promotion to improve the safety, health and fitness of students and ease traffic congestion around our school. All parents were sent a *School Travel Survey* to find out how our students travel to and from school and to understand any travel issues for parents.

First of all, congratulations!

We had a very good response with over 200 parents completing the survey. So now we have a picture of how our pupils from K-6 travel to and from school every day.

In this summary we have tried to capture some of parents' in-depth views on the issues involved in travelling to and from school. One thing stood out- support for a safe and physically active school journey was overwhelming.

Let's look at a brief snapshot of responses.

Who Drops Off and Picks Up Our Students Each Day?

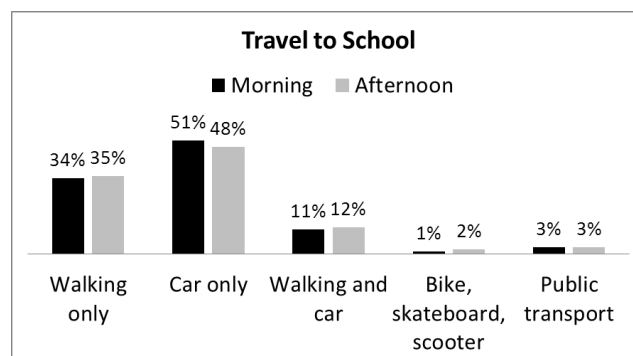
It won't surprise anyone to find out that parents do the bulk of transporting children to and from school each day.

The majority (80%) are mothers. Fathers play a big role with rates of 12%, and nearly 3% of children are accompanied by their grandparents.

How Do Our Students Travel To and From School Each Day?

With 51% in the mornings and 48% in the afternoons, the majority of children are driven to school.

Walking to school is the second most popular mode of transport with approximately 35% of children walking in the morning and in the afternoon. Many (approximately 12%) walk as well as being driven and 3% travel by public transport to and from school.



All in all, less than **half** of our pupils have a physically active school journey.

However, the good news is that 88% of parents would prefer their children to either walk or ride a bike to school.

Is It Too Far To Walk?

While there may be many reasons why children don't walk to school, distance was not necessarily the major factor. Almost **80%** of parents thought that their children **could** walk the distance to school.

How Do Parents Prefer Their Children To Travel To and From School?

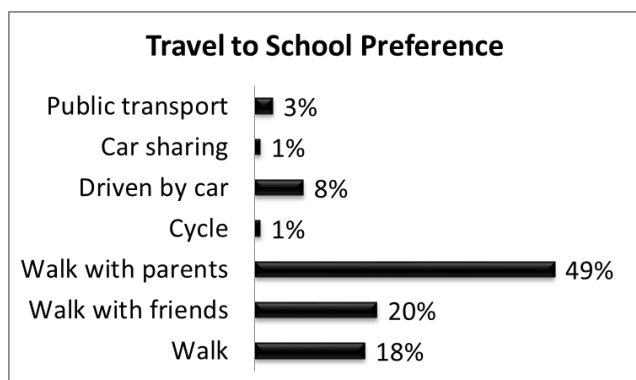
The way children get to and from school and the way parents would **prefer** them to travel are very different.

Most parents would **prefer** their child to walk to and from school.

"The best way to start and end the school day. Fresh air, exercise, mental readiness and wind-down. Plus it's great "together" time"

"Active kids are healthy kids"

"Opportunity to chat without trying to do a million other things. Exercise is very important to our family"



It was positive to see that despite many concerns to do with distance and safety over **90%** of parents said that they would prefer their children to walk, ride a bike or catch public transport to and from school. Of those, 49% of parents would like to walk with their children to and from school and 20% of parents wanted their children to walk to and from school with friends.

Why Do Parents Want an Active School Journey?

The reasons parents preferred their children to go active to school include:

- It's good for health
- It's environmentally friendly
- It's an opportunity for independence
- It's an opportunity for bonding

"Healthy and environmentally friendly option"

"It's a healthy way to get to and from school and provides non-disruptive talking time"

"Safety, fun and independence"

Plus, if those who could walk did so just one day a week it would reduce our traffic congestion.

So if many of our students live close enough and want to walk, either with friends or parents what are some of the issues that prevent this?

Safety

While most of the school community (70%) agreed that they lived in a safe neighbourhood, there were concerns about the school journey.

Our school is surrounded by busy roads and intersections and safety is a big issue for parents.

"Drivers don't always stop at the crossing"

"The crossing we use is too dangerous. People do not always stop"

Many had particular concerns about their child's safety to and from school. However, over 40% believed that their child did have the required road safety skills to get to school proficiently.

Other Factors

Parent's employment is a crucial ingredient in the travel to school journey. Many parents take their child to school via their way to work. Working hours and time allocation are hard to manage in the mornings and afternoons with 40% of parents stating that work commitments are a barrier to walking their child to and from school.

"For health and social reasons it is highly desirable that they walk to and from school but my work commitments prevent this"

"I have to work so I can't walk them as it will take too long"

This may be the explanation of why so many people want their children to walk but don't. Some may have flexible hours which would enable them to walk either some mornings or some afternoons. Others may work a certain amount of days a week which may present an opportunity to walk on their days off.

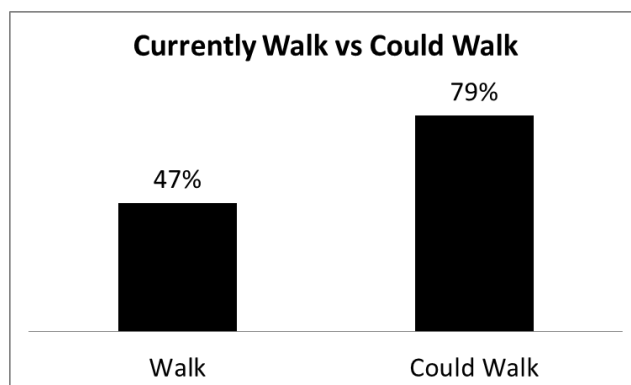
Interestingly, 77% of parents who work outside their home travel to work by car.

The Big Picture

From the survey results it's clear that parents are positive about wanting to improve children's health, independence and connection with the surrounding environment. But there are concerns about busy roads, children's safety and, for some, distance to school is also a barrier.

Where to Next

To conclude, 79% of students could walk the distance to school but only 47% do actually walk.



The aim of *Go Active 2 School* is to increase active transport even if it's by one day more a week thus reducing traffic problems and improving health and wellbeing.

We will be using the results of the School Travel Survey to work with parents to encourage and support children (and parents!) to *Go Active 2 School*.

Thanks to all those parents who completed and returned surveys.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT WALKING TO SCHOOL*

Walking is good for children:

- Walking is good for children's physical health:
 - Regular physical activity builds and maintains healthy bones, muscles and joints.
- Walking is good for children's mental health:
 - Physical activity helps to reduce levels of stress, depression and anxiety and can be a good social activity where children connect with their neighbours, become familiar with their surroundings and the community.
- Children that are active are more likely to continue healthy behaviours later in life.

Walking is good for children:

- Children who walk to school have been found to be more attentive and focused in class.
- Children who walk to school will have a greater connection with their community.
- More children walking to school means less traffic congestion around the school and improved safety for the children.

Walking is good for the environment:

- The environment also benefits because walking is a non-polluting and sustainable transport alternative.

Walking saves money:

- Finally, with the spiralling cost of petrol, walking also saves money!

Did you know?

- Despite the positive spin-offs of walking, today over 70% of children are being driven to school.
- Only 16% of older children and 14% of younger children walk to and from school on most days of the week, yet 61% of children in grades 3-6 who are currently being driven to school said they would prefer to walk if given the choice.

*Why it's Cool to Walk to School- Vic Health