

Greening Tree Activity Kit

The Greening Tree is a fun, visual way to track how students get to school. You can repeat this activity throughout the school year, or make it an annual activity, to see if your active school travel promotion activities are making a difference in how students travel to school.

For the purpose of this activity, **active and sustainable travel modes include:**

- Walking or wheeling (e.g. cycling, scooting, skateboarding, travel by wheelchair) all the way from home, or from a point 5 minutes or more from the school.
- Taking the school bus
- Taking public transit

This definition aims to be inclusive of the different challenges/barriers some families may have to travelling actively all the way to school. You may choose to expand this definition depending on the context at your school.



A sample Greening Tree

Checklist of Materials:

- ✓ Butcher paper and paint, construction paper, or whatever other creative materials you might have on hand to make your tree trunk and leaves. (Note: Using recycled materials, such as toilet paper rolls or egg cartons or good-on-one-side paper, is a great way to keep in line with the environmental themes of this activity.)
- ✓ Scissors
- ✓ Sticky tack
- ✓ Clipboards, paper and pen for tallying totals, or copies of the **Student Travel Survey**

Stage 1: Early Planning

- ✓ Decide who will be in charge of overseeing the event, and who else can help.
- ✓ Choose a day to track how students travel to school. This could be in line with a Walk/Wheel to School Day event, a day when you are already conducting a Student Travel Survey, or as part of any other school-wide active school travel promotion.
 - **Note:** You can also do this as an individual classroom activity separate from school-wide events; however, linking it to a school-wide activity can make the learning more memorable and impactful.
- ✓ Decide how you would like to count active and sustainable travel modes, e.g. ask students as they arrive at school, or conduct a survey in class. Remember to use the broad definition provided above to be as inclusive as possible.
- ✓ Decide how leaves will be brought to the tree, e.g. will each student bring their own leaf, or will one or more volunteers collect all the leaves and bring them to the tree? Decide who will be responsible for putting the leaves on the tree.
- ✓ Identify a central location in your school where the greening tree will be located. The ideal location would be one where students, staff, parents and other visitors can see it.

Stage 2: Getting Ready

- ✓ Create your tree trunk and leaves. Put up the tree trunk in your chosen location.
 - Note: Making the leaves can be a fun art project for classes.
 - Create colour-coded leaves to demonstrate different types of active and sustainable travel modes (e.g. darkest green for walking or wheeling, medium-dark green for school bus and medium-light green for public transit, and light green for walking or wheeling partway). This can lead to a discussion about the benefits of different modes and demonstrate that there are a variety of active and sustainable ways to travel to school.
- ✓ A few days in advance of the chosen day, make sure all participating classes have a copy of the Curriculum Connections.
- ✓ If you will be counting travel modes as students arrive at school, have clipboards, pens and blank sheets of paper available for your volunteers who will be doing the counting. Make sure to station volunteers at all the access points to the school property so you don't miss anyone! (Optional: You may want to give your volunteers the leaves so that students can write their name on a leaf as they arrive.)
- ✓ If you will be surveying travel modes in class, make sure each participating class has a copy of the Student Travel Survey. If students will be writing their names on a leaf, make sure each class also has enough leaves for every student in their class.

Stage 3: Time for the main event!

- ✓ Count how many students travelled to school by active or sustainable travel modes. (Optional: Have students who travelled by these modes write their name on a leaf).
- ✓ Have the leaves brought to the tree and put the leaves on the tree.
- ✓ Tally the total number of leaves on your tree. Consider displaying the total number of leaves as a percentage of your school population.
- ✓ Take a picture of your school's tree and share the picture with your school community. Congratulate the students who travelled by active and sustainable modes, celebrate the benefits of travelling this way (e.g. exercise, environment, safety), and encourage all families to consider travelling this way whenever they can.
- ✓ Optional follow-up: Classroom teachers can use the Curriculum Connections to enhance the learning experience further.

Other Ideas:

- ✓ To keep this activity engaging over time, consider making different decorations to place on the tree for different times of year (e.g. coloured leaves in fall, snowflakes for winter, blossoms or buds for spring). You can also change things up idea year over year using different creative ways to display your active travel modes (e.g. bar charts or pictographs).



A colourful "Responsibili-Tree"

Curriculum Connections (Optional)

The information below gives teachers ideas on how to incorporate the Greening Tree into other classroom activities if they wish to. It is not meant to be an exhaustive list.

Mathematics

- Before asking students how they got to school, ask them to estimate or predict the number of students who walked to school, rode the bus and were driven to school.
- After students have identified how they got to school, ask them to display these numbers in a graph.
- Ask students to compare different parts of the data and make statements about the data as a whole.
- Ask students to draw conclusions from the data presented.
- Ask students to compare the results with the predictions made beforehand.
- After all students' leaves from the entire school are on the greening tree, ask students to describe what they see (e.g. does it look like most students travelled by active or sustainable modes?).

Science

- Have students describe the impact on the environment if they were all driven to school and compare that to the impact if they used an active mode of transportation to school. A 1km car trip produces:
 - 0.2282 kg of carbon dioxide;
 - 0.0016 kg of hydrocarbons;
 - 0.0009 kg of nitrous oxides;
 - 0.0134 kg of carbon monoxide;
 - for total emissions of 0.2442 kg.(Source: Citizens Advisory Committee on Air Quality, www.airqualitywaterlooregion.org).

Social Studies

- Have students describe who helped them get to school safely and the role each of these people played.
- Have students draw a map of their route to school.

Language Arts

- Have students write a story about how they got to school. This can be done on their leaves before they are hung on the greening tree.

Visual Arts

- Have students draw a picture showing how they got to school.

Dramatic Arts

- Have students role play how they got to school or an experience they had walking to school in the past.

Music

- Using a tune from a familiar song, have students create a song about their journey to school.

Tree Leaf Templates





