

# Survey: parents a safety threat in school zones

**A recently conducted BCAA school zone safety survey revealed that parents have major concerns about one particular aspect of their child's daily trip to school: other parents.**

Speeding, ignoring road signs, and hostility were just a few driving behaviours that parents reported seeing every day. The problem is bad and getting worse, according to 48 per cent of respondents to the survey conducted by Insights West for BCAA, made up of parents and guardians of elementary school aged children, along with principals and faculty from schools across B.C. The vast majority (68 per cent) expressed deep concern for the safety of their kids.

"It's the Wild West in school zones during drop-off and pick-up times," BCAA's Shawn Pettipas stated in a release. "School zones can be frantic places with not everyone on their best driving behaviour. We commissioned the survey to see the extent of the problem, but the results were more concerning than even we expected."

Results include:

- 75 per cent say they've seen 'near misses,' when a child is almost struck by a car.
- 83 per cent have witnessed parents/guardians speeding in school zones.
- 80 per cent have witnessed parents/guardians ignoring traffic signs and road rules.
- 51 per cent have seen hostile behavior from parents and guardians such as honking and using profanities.
- 82 per cent have witnessed distracted driving by parents and guardians.
- 88 per cent say they've seen illegal parking by parents and guardians.

The school zone survey also revealed that many parents and guardians are dropping off and picking up their child in ways that put their kids at risk, with 87 per cent seeing kids getting in and out of cars in undesignated areas such as double parked cars on the street.

The survey comments were rife with details about kids being dropped off outside of designated areas and running into oncoming traffic, kids darting out from in between cars and school buses and parents talking on cell phones and otherwise distracted. The assumption by both parents and school staff is that parents are rushed and running late,

with congestion in the school zone as another factor.

Many survey participants noted that they would like to see all drivers near schools reduce their speed, change their driving attitude and follow the school rules.

"We understand that parents and guardians are busy and the survey wasn't intended to focus on anyone in particular," stated Pettipas. "We appreciate the honesty of parents, guardians and school staff who participated. At least a problem has been highlighted, which means we all can start working on solutions starting with better driving behaviour by all drivers and safer choices by parents and guardians when it comes to dropping off and picking up their child."

The posted speed limit in school zones which is 30 kilometres per hour in most communities. The BCAA recommended strict adherence to that speed limit, as well as these other driving guidelines for parents and guardians:

- Follow the school's drop-off and pick-up procedure which includes letting children in and out of the car at designated areas.
- Teach children how to safely get in and out of the car, cross the street and walk or ride their bike to school.
- Talk to your school and parent committee about ways to address congestion in your school zone. If the school already has drop-off and pick-up procedures in place meant to ease heavy traffic, follow those instructions.
- Be patient and courteous to other parents and guardians, school staff, crossing guards and student safety patrolers. Reacting with extreme frustration may aggravate the situation and increase the risk of unsafe behaviours.

About the survey: Results are based on an online study conducted from Aug. 29 to Sept. 1, 2016, among a representative sample of 712 adults in British Columbia, including 301 who currently serve as principals, teachers or school staff at a British Columbia elementary school, and 411 parents or guardians who drop off and/or pick up a child from school. The data has been statistically weighted according to Canadian census figures for age, gender and region. The margin of error for the entire sample – which measures sample variability – is +/- 3.7 percentage points.