

How to overcome common barriers to active travel

How to use this document

When developing a School Travel Plan, local barriers to active travel are identified in consultation with parents, teachers and students. This document provides an overview of some of the barriers most commonly identified by schools, accompanied by evidence-based examples of effective strategies to overcome these.

These examples are provided to assist with planning and developing your School Travel Plan. However, as every school is different, it is important to consider the local context and specific issues affecting your school when deciding on activities and strategies. It is also important to ensure your selected activities and strategies link directly to the “Objectives” you have identified in your School Travel Plan.

Links to the Healthy Together Achievement Program and whole school approach

The Healthy Together Achievement Program supports a whole school approach to improving health and wellbeing, by considering where the school needs to focus efforts to ensure a holistic approach is taken. These areas are shown in the figure below.

Healthy policies	Policies clearly articulate conditions and practices necessary to create a physical and social environment which promotes health and wellbeing
Healthy physical environment	The physical environment facilitates and encourages health choices and lifestyles, complementing the health messages taught in the curriculum
Healthy social environment	Respect, fairness and equality is promoted and modelled, and a sense of belonging is fostered
Learning and skills	Learning opportunities and experiences within the curriculum enable children and young people to gain knowledge and skills and take action to enhance health and wellbeing
Engaging children, young people, staff and families	Structures are established to engage children, young people, families and staff as active participants in the promotion of health and wellbeing
Community partnerships	Partnerships with local health professionals, services and the wider community enhance health promotion capacity and support children, young people and their families’ health and wellbeing needs

To assist schools in developing a holistic School Travel Plan, each of the activities and strategies in this document have been linked to the key ‘domains’ of a whole school approach and the Achievement Program. It is important that your school delivers, or plans to deliver activities, initiative and actions in each of these domains this will be considered by Council when endorsing your School Travel Plan. Some of these strategies and activities can meet more than one domain, depending on how they are implemented. These have been noted.

Common barriers to active travel in schools students

1. Distance – It's too far for students to walk or ride to school

Drop off points close to school – known as Part Way is Ok / Park and Stride.

Schools can work together with Council officers to identify drop-off points and walking routes to school so students do not have to be dropped at the school gate. An oval or park is a great place to have a designated drop-off point, but it could also be on a footpath on a route to school. This strategy can reduce traffic around the school gate and enable children to take a walk before school. It is recommended that drop-off points are 600 metres or more from the school gates. Data and maps that show where students live and the main traffic routes can be used to assess the best drop-off points. Once the drop-off point has been selected, it is important to promote this to the whole school community through school newsletters, social media, parent-teacher interviews and/or signage. Bicycle Network also offer an Active Maps service where preferred routes are mapped out and can be displayed on newsletters, social media and posters in the main entrance/foyer of the school. Drop-off points can be combined with 'Active Path Markers' (see page 6).

This activity/idea aligns to:	Engaging children, young people, staff and families
If delivered in a way that includes supporting families who live further away from the school:	Healthy social environment

2. Age of the child

Informal walk to school groups.

Schools can help facilitate informal walk to school groups. Parents who want their child(ren) to be supervised when walking could share this responsibility with other parents. A roster could be drawn up so all trips to and from school can be covered.

For example, if five families work together, each family would be responsible for one day of the week. Through this approach, parents gain time and avoid the morning rush on the days they don't walk children to school.

This activity/idea aligns to:	Engaging children, young people, staff and families
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3. Unsafe bike paths, walking tracks and crossings

Active Path Markers (Bicycle Network).

The Active Path Markers initiative highlights and physically marks routes to school on the footpath. These marked paths make it easier for students who want to ride, walk, scoot or skate to school to identify where to go, and encourage more students to walk together on the identified path/s. They are designed to make the journey as clear, popular and fun as possible. Active Path Marker routes are identified in conjunction with Bicycle Network, Council and the school community and consider things such as:

- The most direct route
- Minimisation of known traffic and bus routes
- Locality of good pedestrian infrastructure, and
- Walkable catchments to the school

Cost: \$1,500 per kilometre (depending on the number of markers needed and number of routes implemented) if delivered in partnership with Bicycle Network.

This activity/idea aligns to:	Healthy physical environment
If done by students as a curriculum activity (e.g. Design and application of the Active Path Markers):	Learning and skills
If delivered in partnership with Bicycle Network:	Community Partnerships

Additional supervised crossings or infrastructure improvements

In order to create safer environments for active travel, additional supervised crossings and changes to existing infrastructure (such as footpaths, crossing locations) may be required. Council officers are able to advise if these changes are possible and the decision making process involved.

For Council officers to accurately provide advice, schools need to first identify barriers faced within their school community. This can be achieved by undertaking a walking audit. A number of walking audit resources can be found on the Victoria Walks website www.victoriawalks.org.au

Reviewing parking restrictions and drop-off points should also be considered in this audit. Once you have identified the need for infrastructure improvements, contact the City Design and Transport department at the City of Whittlesea.

This activity/idea aligns to:	Healthy physical environment
If done by students as a curriculum activity (e.g. Students undertake walkability audit):	Learning and skills

4. Family concerns around safety

Parental concerns regarding the safety of their child(ren) using active travel to and from school is a common theme at many schools. It is important for the school to recognise the potential risks and concerns families may have, but also focus on how these can be overcome. For example, parents may be concerned their child will be unable to cross the road safely – the school can respond to this by encouraging families to teach their children about road safety, and assuring them that the school will also be delivering road safety lessons within class.

Engaging parents in an open forum

A forum can be a great way of engaging with parents and informing them of the school’s focus on increasing active travel – it gives them a chance to have their concerns heard and also involve them in being part of the solution. By inviting this dialogue, you give parents the opportunity to ask questions, hear what can be done to minimise risks, and hopefully feel more comfortable in allowing

their child(ren) to travel to and from school by bike, scooter or on foot. Having a guest speaker who is informed in the area of active travel is also a good idea to ensure staff, families and students feel they have the knowledge to make a switch to active travel. Council officers can help you identify appropriate speakers – these might include Bicycle Network, Victoria Walks or a Council staff member.

This activity/idea aligns to:	Engaging children, young people, staff and families
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Active travel information for parents

Parents’ concerns about safety can be minimised by highlighting what the school is doing to maximise safety. Developing and distributing safe travel information could be a good way to communicate this.

The information could acknowledge traffic safety concerns around the school, and include the schools responses (e.g. including a map of where to park, pictures of parking signs, and details about strategies being undertaken). The information can be sent home to every family in the school and included in information packs for new families.

Including active travel information in communication to new families, including prep families, demonstrates that the school supports and encourages active travel and will support them from the outset, to use active travel.

This could consist of one page outlining the school’s active travel policy/position/ vision, or a few pages out of the School Travel Plan. If the school has current initiatives running, such as drop-off points or ‘Part Way is OK’, it is important to include this so new families can plan the best way to use active travel to get to school. Contact the City Design and Transport department at the City of Whittlesea to enquire about the School Travel Plan.

This activity/idea aligns to:	Engaging children, young people, staff and families
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Bike confidence training for parents

By involving parents, schools can support families to develop bike skills, to encourage them to ride with their children. Bikes@Work can deliver a two or three hour hands-on training session for parents/families. Sessions are delivered to small groups and can be held at the school. Participants need to bring their own bike for the session. For more information about the training visit their website at bikesatwork.com.au. It is recommended that bike education for students is run at the same time, so both parents and students are gaining bike riding skills.

This activity/idea aligns to:	Engaging children, young people, staff and families
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School newsletter updates/social media

School newsletter updates and social media are a great way for schools to get important messages to parents, families and the school community. Newsletter items can focus on promoting initiatives and celebrating achievements to support an active travel culture across the school. It is also a great way of showcasing other options such as drop-off points close to the school. Keeping the school

community up to date with any active travel initiatives is important so they feel they can be part of the solution. You could also consider profiling in each newsletter a student, staff member or family who regularly uses active travel, to inspire others and show that the school values active travel.

This activity/idea aligns to:	Engaging children, young people, staff and families
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5. Road safety issues/traffic conditions and congestion

Street scene (RACV) – road safety sessions and teacher resource

Schools can arrange for the RACV to deliver incursions for students, through its Street Scene initiative. Separate sessions are designed for P-6 year levels and the sessions aim to increase knowledge around road safety.

Up to six different sessions can be delivered in one day (i.e. the school can only book this for one day a year) and each session goes for 45 minutes. Teachers can choose what they would like the session to focus on depending on their current inquiry unit - options include bicycle, pedestrian or passenger safety.

The RACV also provides online teacher resources.

There is no cost for these sessions and resources. For more information or to make a booking visit www.racv.com.au

This activity/idea aligns to:	Learning and skills
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Safe to school (VicRoads)

VicRoads has online resources to help address traffic congestion around drop off and pick up times at schools. The resources can be used to inform parents and staff members of how the school is going to address the issue and also includes case studies of schools that have had issues with traffic congestion. Resources and case studies can be found on the website www.vicroads.vic.gov.au

This activity/idea aligns to:	Engaging children, young people, staff and families
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Kids on the move (VicRoads) – resources and teacher training

Kids on the Move is a VicRoads road safety education resource for primary schools, specifically for children in Prep to Year 2, and children transitioning from primary to secondary school (Years 5 and 6). The resources include three hard copy books and a DVD which can be downloaded or sent to your school. Teacher training in road safety can also be organised for free through the website www.vicroads.vic.gov.au

This activity/idea aligns to:	Learning and skills
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Incorporate active travel into lesson plans and the school curriculum (Smart Steps)

Smart Steps for Primary Schools, is provided by Victoria Walks and provides a range of free AusVELS aligned active travel resources, designed for the curriculum taking learning 'into the neighbourhood'. Smart Steps includes lesson plans, class projects, inquiry units, activity sheets, newsletter inserts and more. Schools should contact Victoria Walks for more information www.victoriawalks.org.au

This activity/idea aligns to:	Learning and skills
If delivered in partnership with Victoria Walks	Community partnerships

Speed observation trailer to display road safety messages

The City of Whittlesea has a Speed Observation Trailer which is available for use by schools within the municipality. Schools can nominate streets within their school zone for deployment of the Speed Observation Trailer for a one week period.

The Speed Observation Trailer will then be deployed in due course. Schools can nominate streets through the City Design and Transport department at the City of Whittlesea.

This activity/idea aligns to:	Engaging children, young people, staff and families
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6. Lack of bicycle skills and confidence

Teachers training to deliver Bike Education

Bike Education (Bike Ed) is designed to help children aged nine to 13 years (Grades four - seven) develop the skills needed to ride safely and independently on roads and paths. It involves a mix of practical activities conducted off-road (in the school grounds) and on-road (in local streets), plus classroom activities and curriculum.

Teachers, or other staff, can complete professional development training to become qualified to deliver Bike Ed. A two-day comprehensive Bike Ed training and accreditation courses for instructors, and shorter courses for training as assistants, is available throughout Victoria from **Cycling Safe**. The instructor certificate lasts for five years. People who have held the certificate for more than five years need to do a short refresher course.

Bicycle Education Instructor Training

- Full course (9am – 4pm over two days)
- Assistants' course (9am – 1.30pm over two days)
- Re-accreditation course (9am – 1.30pm on 2nd day only)

A Bike Ed kit is also available and contains information on planning and implementing Bike Ed. The manual consists of five modules:

Information about course registration, school programs and events can be found online at

www.cyclingsafe.com.au

1. Getting started
2. Basic bike skills
3. Building skills for riding in traffic
4. Riding on paths
5. Riding on-road

This activity/idea aligns to:	Learning and skills
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7. Lack of bike/scooter parking facilities at school

Plan, design and build bike/scooter parking

There are currently a number of different brands and companies offering bike/ scooter parking to schools. It is important for the school to decide what type of parking they would like to implement e.g. a bike shed, multiple bike racks, scooter parking etc.

For assistance in planning and implementing bike/scooter parking and estimated costs see the following providers:

- Bike parking experts (Bicycle Network) www.bicyclenetwork.com.au
- Polite bike racks and shelters <http://polite.com.au/product-category/bike-racks/>
- Cora Bike Racks www.cora.com.au
- SecuraBike www.securabike.com.au

***Note:** The list is provided as a guide only and is not exhaustive. City of Whittlesea provides no warranties in relation to the services of any of the providers listed and accepts no liability for any loss or damage incurred as a result of the services provided

This activity/idea aligns to:	Healthy physical environment
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Appoint student bike shed monitors

Appointing students to monitor the use of bike shed facilities will provide further data on how many students are cycling or scooting to school.

This data can inform the school as to whether installation of new facilities is warranted. Furthermore it will also ensure students are engaged in supporting active travel.

This activity/idea aligns to:	Engaging children, young people, staff and families
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8. School bags are too heavy

Educate parents and students on suitable backpacks for school.

Schools can encourage parents to purchase suitable backpacks for their children to enable them to more easily walk/ride/scoot to school. It is also important to encourage and educate students on correct packing, safe lifting and carrying of the backpack. More information can be found online at www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/back-pain-children

This activity/idea aligns to:	Engaging children, young people, staff and families
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Limit amount of textbooks or heavy items required to be regularly taken to and from school

Schools can explore ways to reduce the books and equipment that students need to carry to and from schools, so a heavy backpack is not a barrier to active travel. This could be staggering homework across days, lending books to students in class who couldn't carry their copy to school, providing electronic access to homework etc. These practices can be embedded in your school policy to encourage a whole-of-school commitment.

This activity/idea aligns to:	Healthy social environment
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This activity/idea aligns to:	Healthy social environment
If this action is included within School policy:	Healthy policies

9. Low rates of active travel

Dedicated active travel day each week

To support a culture of active travel and encourage more students to try walking, riding, scooting and skating, schools can initially introduce one dedicated active travel day each week.

Schools choose which day of the week would work best then give it a name (e.g. Walking Wheeling Wednesday) and encourage the school community to actively travel on that day every week.

Tracking progress can be helpful and teachers can collect *Hands Up!* data in class (see *Hands Up!* page 16.)

Schools can encourage participation by theming days such as Easter festivities walk, walk in house colours/crazy hats/wacky socks or by having a different class responsible for promoting each week. Staff should be encouraged to use active travel too.

To help inform the school community, your school could develop a calendar of events promoting planned active travel events and competitions. Creating awards such as a 'golden wheel' or 'golden sneaker' that is won by the class with the highest percentage of students travelling sustainably to school creates some healthy competition and might encourage more people to give active travel a go.

This activity/idea aligns to:	Engaging children, young people, staff and families
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Active Travel Event Days

Schools are encouraged to link their active travel work with National and State-wide event days e.g. National Walk Safely to School Day, Ride to School Day, Walk to School month etc. It is recommended schools sign up and register for these free events.

This activity/idea aligns to:	Engaging children, young people, staff and families
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Incentive prizes

School can provide reward incentives for students with positive achievements regarding active travel. These could be presented at school assemblies demonstrating to the school community that the school is prioritising and values active travel.

Examples of incentives include vouchers for healthy food at the canteen, bike accessories such as helmets, backpacks, pedometers, stickers or certificates of achievement.

To encourage and monitor this, students and staff could be given an *Active Travel Passport* at the start of the year - every time they use active travel they get a stamp.

Certain milestones (e.g. 20th active travel day) can then be associated with a reward. This could be run as a class or whole school competition. Victoria Walks and Bicycle Network both offer a number of incentive prizes to schools including trophies and stickers.

This activity/idea aligns to:	Engaging children, young people, staff and families
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Bicycle maintenance days

Teachers could give students active travel 'homework'. This could include encouraging students to go for a walk with their parent or carer, writing about what they saw and presenting it back to the class. Other ideas could be the students measuring the distance from their home to school, or identifying different ways they could walk to school and mapping this.

This activity/idea aligns to:	Engaging children, young people, staff and families
If done by students as part of a curriculum activity (e.g. Mapping and measuring the distance from home to school):	Learning and skills

Promoting Active Travel

Regularly promoting active travel ensures the broader school community knows it's a priority and keeps the momentum going.

Schools can promote active travel through internal channels including:

- School Assembly (reminders, results of interclass competition)
- School newsletters
- School website
- Variable message board
- Facebook / Twitter
- Staff meetings as a regular agenda item
- PFA and School Council meetings as a regular agenda item

Other ways to promote active travel can involve students developing promotional material including:

- Fact sheets about the health and environmental benefits of walking
- Posters to display around the school highlighting the school's focus on active travel and the benefits of active travel to the whole school community

If a school is running an active travel event or has achieved some great milestones in increasing active travel it may be of interest to one of the local newspapers:

- Whittlesea Leader: whittlesea@leadernewspapers.com.au (distributed weekly)
- Northern Star Weekly: westeditorial@starweekly.com.au (distributed fortnightly)

This activity/idea aligns to:	Engaging children, young people, staff and families
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10. Active travel keeps dropping off the schools agenda

School travel policy

Formally incorporating a School Travel Plan, active travel vision and actions into your school’s policies will ensure the ongoing commitment of the school community to increase active travel. Schools may like to develop a dedicated active travel policy, or incorporate it into an existing policy, such as a health and wellbeing policy.

This activity/idea aligns to:	Healthy policies
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Active travel working group

Establishing a working group that brings together the school community (principal, students, staff and parents) is an important first step for demonstrating a school’s commitment to increasing active travel.

A working group will allow issues and ideas from different perspectives to be discussed and will ensure the workload is shared rather than having one person take on all of the work.

Working group members can receive guidance and support by attending the *Whittlesea School Active Travel Network*. Network meetings are held quarterly and schools can learn how to develop school travel plans. For more information contact the City Design and Transport department at the City of Whittlesea.

This activity/idea aligns to:	Engaging children, young people, staff and families
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Calendar of active travel events

Developing a calendar of active travel events is a great way to ensure the school celebrates days such as Ride2School Day, Walk to School Day and Walk to School month.

It is recommended that schools expand these days to include a morning of bicycle maintenance, bicycle donation days, award celebrations or linking an inquiry project to the event.

Ensure that the calendar is available to the school community and regularly promoted to ensure participation. Collecting data on these days is recommended so schools can track their progress, show commitment and celebrate successes throughout the year.

This activity/idea aligns to:	Engaging children, young people, staff and families
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11. It's too hard to monitor active travel rates

Active travel data collection – hands up (Bicycle Network)

Bicycle Network's HandsUp! is a key reporting tool available to all schools to help easily track active travel. It allows schools to track progress across the year, and is a great way to measure and reward your school's success.

Hands Up! requires little effort and time and consists of the classroom teacher/ lead student asking students how they get to school once a term or month - students put their hands up if they rode, walked, skated, scooted, caught public transport or were driven to school. The total number is then recorded or entered online. The reporting tables and charts can be used to communicate achievements to the school community.

Prizes are often awarded to schools that consistently enter and keep track of active travel numbers. Schools that also show exceptional dedication to improving their active travel rates are often eligible to receive funding or rewards to help further increase active travel.

Rewards could include:

- A School community breakfast
- Sports vouchers for the school or students
- Free bike parking facilities
- Free Bike Ed training for teachers.

For more information or to register for the free *HandsUp!* program visit www.bicyclenetwork.com.au/general/programs/350/

This activity/idea aligns to:	Engaging children, young people, staff and families
If delivered in partnership with Bicycle Network:	Community partnerships

12. Parents are not engaged or supporting their children to actively travel to school

Incentives for parent interest

Offering incentives such as free coffee twice a term or personal training sessions to parents can be worth trialling if your school is struggling to gain interest from parents on active travel. If possible, ask a parent who is already engaged with the school for some more ideas and suggestions.

Linking active travel to other parent supported activities or fundraising events could be a good start. Continued promotion and integration of activities in other school activities will help build a supported parent culture over time.

This activity/idea aligns to:	Engaging children, young people, staff and families
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13. Lack of funds to support active travel initiatives

Grants

A number of grants are available for schools to apply for during the year from a range of organisations including the following:

- **Ride2School Program Star Rewards and Barrier Busters**

Star Rewards is a recognition incentive for schools that make the commitment to enter monthly *HandsUp!* reports, while increasing their active travel rate. Rewards include school community breakfasts and sports vouchers. A Barrier Buster Initiative is a targeted intervention designed to break down the barriers to active travel in a specific school community. Some examples of what schools have been rewarded with include bike parking installations and bike education training for staff.

- **TAC (Community Road Safety Grants and Local Government Grants for Small-Scale Infrastructure)**

The TAC offer grants for schools to apply for in partnership with Council, or other relevant organisations such as Bicycle Network or Victoria Walks.

The grants provide funding for initiatives to address road safety and the safety of pedestrians and cyclists. More information can be found online at www.tac.vic.gov.au/about-the-tac/grants-and-partnerships/local-goverment-grants.

This activity/idea aligns to:	Community partnerships
Depending on what type of grant you apply for will determine what domain the grant fits into (e.g. applying for an Infrastructure grant from the TAC would fit under the Healthy Physical Environment domain):	Healthy physical environment

Fundraising

Funding initiatives such as building new bike/scooter parking can be expensive. Running fundraising events can be a great way of involving the whole school community in order to cover the cost of these types of initiatives.

It may also uncover skills and resources within your school community that can contribute to assisting with initiatives (e.g. A local builder who can provide materials and time at cost price to build bike/scooter parking).

This activity/idea aligns to:	Engaging children, young people, staff and families
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Sponsorship

Schools are encouraged to seek sponsorship from businesses or community groups within the local community who may be looking to sponsor or work in partnership with schools to support active travel.

This activity/idea aligns to:	Community partnerships
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Overview of Healthy Together Achievement Program Benchmark Areas and where Active Travel activities align:

Learning and skills

- Street Scene (RACV) - Road Safety Sessions
- Kids on the Move (VicRoads)
- Incorporate active travel into lesson plans and the school curriculum (Smart Steps)
- Class exercise - conduct student cycling and or walking audits
- Train teachers to deliver Bike Education (VicRoads/CyclingSafe) and engage local Bike Ed assistants
- Active travel 'homework'

Community partnerships

- Active Travel Data Collection - Hands Up! (Bicycle Network)
- Apply for grants
- Seek Sponsorship
- Bicycle maintenance days
- Incorporate active travel into lesson plans and the school curriculum (Smart Steps)

Healthy physical environment

- Active Path Markers (Bicycle Network)
- Consider the need for additional supervised crossings or infrastructure improvements
- Review parking restrictions and drop-off points around the school
- Request a new a school crossing
- Plan, design and build bike/scooter parking

Engaging children, young people, staff and families

- Drop off points close to school – known as Part Way is Ok / Park and Stride

Healthy social environment

- Drop off points close to school – known as Part Way is Ok / Park and Stride
- Bicycle donation days

Healthy policies

- Educate parents and students on suitable backpacks for school
- Development and implementation of school