

I'm a parent of a 9 year old and a 12 year old, and I run the Pedal Ready cycle skills programme throughout the Wellington Region.

My experience going into schools quite regularly is that kids love riding bikes but they aren't riding to school.

The reasons or barriers:

- Cycling not being regarded as an option for getting to and from school
- Bikes in poor repair
- Kids not having the skills and knowledge required to do it safely or never having learned
- Fear of traffic, and driver behaviour

Encouraging your kids to cycle to school.

Parents:

- Get their bikes working well and keep them working well. Brakes! Bike Space and Mechanical Tempest –community minded bike repairs
- No bike – charities such as ReBicycle, Paekakariki Bike Library
- Allow kids to learn and really get to know their bikes.
- Ask the school if they are receiving Pedal Ready training
- Take them to the park. Take them on the river trails.
- Progress to riding to the dairy or supermarket
- Ride with them over to their friend's house
- Ride to school with them or walk beside and catch the bus to work. Choose a good route that they can do by themselves eventually
- Don't push it. Don't force them to ride in the rain if they really don't want to. Pick them up at the end of the day if the ride home is hard. Once they discover the freedom and fun that cycling gives them they'll be demanding to ride home.
- Don't be unrealistic. Some hills are too steep, some distances are too far.
- Role model. Ride to work, or the supermarket, or the park.
- Don't send your kid out on to the streets if the infrastructure and traffic behaviour makes it unsafe. Demand safety improvements. Talk to the neighbours, tell them your kid is riding to school. Get people looking out for their safety.

Schools:

- Make sure the bike racks are available and easily useable. Some of the older style racks don't work so well with modern bikes.

- Encourage this behaviour. Say Hi to the active commuters in the morning. Thank their parents for not being one more car clogging the school area each morning.
- Get Pedal Ready training at your school. It's free.
- Take part in Moving March, take a look at our Active School's Toolkit and our upcoming Track our Travel website.
- Become a Bikes in Schools school. Cycling becomes the norm. Bikes are kept in good repair. It is social, fun and healthy. The students are engaged and resilient. They learn how to really ride a bike, they learn how to negotiate space. It makes cycling to school a very easy option.
- Intermediate and High Schools with uniform policies. Allow active commuters to wear a PE uniform or mufti through the school gates. Access to showers and lockers, esp at High School
- Make the school area safe for your students. Establish safe routes, or, if there aren't any, demand change.

Mistakes to avoid.

- The biggest mistake is giving up. Saying, oh well, my neighbourhood isn't a safe place to ride a bike. Seek out safe routes, or demand change.
- More kids cycling to school more often is a very achievable goal. We have all the tools and now is the time to do it.

Matt Shipman.

Greater Wellington links:

www.pedalready.org.nz

<https://www.movinmarch.com/resources>

https://media.wix.com/ugd/6b604e_148005d565fb4b5bb99f843f3323eb06.pdf

(active schools)