Active Community Environments (ACE)  
Special Project: Barnwell County

**ABSTRACT**

SC Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) and Eat Smart Move More (ESMM) South Carolina funded Barnwell County for an ACE Special Project. Utilizing an existing master bicycle and pedestrian plan and a county needs assessment, ESMM Barnwell County and other community partners worked to implement strategies to improve access to safe physical activity at Macedonia Elementary School (MES).

**BACKGROUND**

The Town of Blackville has limited opportunities for safe places to be physically active. ESMM Barnwell chose MES for the ACE project due to its location in a large neighborhood and community recreation use at the school. Traffic was the primary safety concern because the MES playground lacked a fence and drivers created a road through the playground, which is also a cut-through for students walking to two other schools in the area.

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this project was to increase bicycle and pedestrian safety by installing fencing and signs, improving crosswalks, and establishing an Open Community Use Policy.

**ASSESSMENT & RESULTS**

The Active Neighborhood Checklist was used to complete a walkability assessment and community input was collected through a community survey. Sixth graders at the school completed the Safe Routes to School Scavenger Hunt. Assessment results indicated a need for:

- **Crosswalks.** Needed in areas where lower grade levels exit the building for recess.
- **Traffic Signs.** Speed limit, student crossing and children present signs not on campus.
- **Crossing Guards.** No crossing guard. Faculty/staff assist with student loading/unloading and crossing.
- **Bus Loop.** Speed limit and right of way signs not present. Bus loop marked as bus entry only, but acts as exit for car drivers.
- **Safety Belt/Idling Signs.** No safety belt or no idling signs displayed on the campus.

**KEY STEPS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

- Installed fencing around MES playgrounds.
- Passed an Open Community Use Policy to open track and playgrounds to the community outside of school hours.
- Installed Open Community Use signs indicating hours and rules.
- Improved safety at MES drop-off and pick-up area.
- Issued high visibility vests, flashing stop signs, whistles, and signs to crossing guards.
- Key partnerships were formed and included: Barnwell School District 19, MES, Barnwell County United Way, Barnwell County First Steps, SC Safe Routes to Schools, Lower Savannah Council of Government, Town of Blackville, DHEC, City of Barnwell, Savannah River Rural Health Network, Community Walking Club, and parents.

**LESSONS LEARNED**

- Assessment and implementation takes time.
- Know who the decision makers are in your community.
- Have a community champion in your corner.

**NEXT STEPS**

Crosswalks at MES will be updated and similar improvements will be made to the junior and senior high schools in Blackville. Connectivity among communities and resources throughout Barnwell County will continue.

**SAFETY HAZARDS**

- No fence around playground. Cars drive through.
- Parking on sidewalk at drop-off and pick-up hours.

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