There was a time when the sight of children walking and bicycling to school was a familiar scene in communities across California. In fact, in 1969 approximately 50 percent of children walked or bicycled to school. Today, fewer than 15 percent of children do and rates of childhood obesity and overweight are overwhelming.\(^1,2\)

Concerns about traffic safety are often cited as one of the main reasons children do not walk or bicycle to school.\(^3\) And for good reason, as in 2010 alone, over 21,000 California school children were sent to an emergency department and over 1,500 were hospitalized due to pedestrian or bicycle injuries.\(^4\)

Creating safe opportunities for walking and bicycling is critical to improving the safety of young pedestrians and bicyclists and to reducing overweight and obesity among California’s youth. Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs are key to reversing these trends. SRTS programs increase the number of children who safely walk and bicycle to school through education and encouragement programs, enhanced enforcement, engineering improvements, and strong program evaluation.

**PROGRAM SUMMARY**

Led by the City of Irvine Community Services Department, in partnership with the Irvine Unified School District, the *Walk to School Wednesdays* program promotes healthier lifestyle options for students and families through active transportation and reduced car usage, ultimately decreasing traffic congestion around school campuses. The program was designed to encourage students to regularly walk, ride or skate to school by designating one day a week when student participation is tracked and recorded.

Seven schools in the district had 2,600 students participating in *Walk to School Wednesdays* during the 2010-2011 school year. Tracking students’ efforts was a cooperative effort between city staff and school personnel. Teachers were asked to write each child’s name on a chart and mark their square for every Wednesday that they walked or bicycled to school. Incentive items and activities were provided to encourage participation.

Pre- and post-surveys showed that over the school year, more children were walking to school one day a week while also keeping...
Implementing Agency
City of Irvine, Community Services Department

Location
Irvine, Orange County
Caltrans District 12
CA Assembly District 70
CA Senate Districts 33 and 35

Funding
Federal SRTS Non-Infrastructure

Participating Schools
Alderwood Elementary, Brywood Elementary, Canyon View Elementary, Lakeside Middle, Oak Creek Elementary, Plaza Vista School and Woodbury Elementary

3 to 15 percent of students at participating schools are eligible for the Free and Reduced Price Meals Program

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them walking over an extended period of time. The schools also stated that they noticed a significant change in their parking lots and a shift in the habits of families now walking to school versus driving.

PROGRAM SUCCESSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>% Increase in Student Body that Walked to School from 2010 to 2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alderwood Elementary School</td>
<td>170%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brywood Elementary School</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canyon View Elementary School</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakeside Middle School</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oak Creek Elementary School</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plaza Vista School</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodbury Elementary School</td>
<td>190%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- The program received an “Outstanding Supporter of Prevention” award from the Irvine Prevention Coalition in April 2011.
- After initial grant funding completed, the Walk to School Wednesdays program was sustained in school year 2011-12 with City funding. The number of student participants in 2011-12 increased from the previous year, with an average of 3,120 students actively taking part in each of the three program sessions throughout the year.
- With new SRTS non-infrastructure funding, the Walk to School Wednesdays program will expand into additional schools, with the goal of reaching 14 schools by the end of the grant period in 2016. One year into implementation, nine schools are already participating in the program and five more schools are committed to the program.


The California Safe Routes to School Technical Assistance Resource Center is a program of California Active Communities, a joint Unit of the University of California San Francisco and the California Department of Public Health, and is funded through a statewide non-infrastructure SRTS award from the California Department of Transportation.