

Program aims to make walking to school more appealing

January 13, 2017 12:00 PM Naomi King Englar
nking2@tulane.edu



(Photo from Thinkstock)

Children get to school in different ways, but walking is usually involved at some point — from a parent's car or school bus, after biking or all the way home.

To make the journey safer, the Tulane Prevention Research Center (PRC) recently created a [school crossing guard manual](#) at the request of the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development.

The manual is part of the larger [Safe Routes to School program](#), which provides biking and walking safety education for more than 330 fourth- and fifth-grade students at 10 New Orleans schools. The program also assesses parents' attitudes

about children walking or biking to school and provides safety equipment to school crossing guards. The project was funded in partnership with local nonprofit Bike Easy.

“Regular physical activity, like walking and biking, is important for staying healthy and preventing diseases,” said John Marmion, SRTS program coordinator at the Tulane PRC. “To make it easier and safer to get that activity, we saw the need for schools, students and families to learn and practice street safety.”

Fifteen of 19 bike-training classes earned a class mean of 70 percent or more for the quiz taken after each educational program. Only five of 19 classes achieved the same score for the walking quiz.

The parents’ surveys show that many are not in favor of children walking or biking to school with distance to school being the most frequently identified barrier. Sidewalk quality, traffic and time were also cited.

“Parental concerns about the distance to school and road conditions remain an issue,” said Carolyn Johnson, Tulane PRC director and principal investigator for the SRTS program. “We hope the education of students and the use of our crossing guard manual will help improve safety for students and eventually increase walking and biking for everyone.”

The parents’ surveys show that many are not in favor of children walking or biking to school with distance to school being the most frequently identified barrier.