

## Many Oklahoma City children walk to school as part of national event promoting physical activity

Cesar Chavez Elementary students, parents and teachers start their day with a few laps around south Oklahoma City park.

by [Tim Willert](#) Modified: October 9, 2014 at 12:00 pm • Published: October 8, 2014

Not long after the sun came up Wednesday morning, dozens of Cesar Chavez Elementary School students descended on nearby Hathaway Park.

They talked and laughed as they walked around the park with parents and teachers. Some, like third-grader Cloe Freeman, 8, walked and ran, telling anyone who would listen that she wanted to be “a cop and a pediatrician.”

Best friend Maekala Hernandez, 8, tried walking and reading at the same time.

“I was bored,” she said.

Cesar Chavez Principal Laura Morris walked hand-in-hand with granddaughter Eowyn, 3, and second-grader Jasmine Dumas, 7, as part of Walk to School Day.

The national event promotes physical activity through walking and cycling.

“The purpose of our walk is to help children and their parents understand how important it is to get out and exercise every single day,” Morris said. “Exercise helps everything, especially learning.”

After a couple of laps around the south Oklahoma City park at the corner of SE Grand Boulevard and S Lindsay Avenue, the kids and adults walked to the school with the help of a police escort, where breakfast awaited.

“It’s not good not to be healthy,” said Lilli Daniels, 10, a fifth-grader who walked around the park three times.

Tyrion Carolina, 11, walked with a football in his hand “because it doesn’t fit in my backpack.”

Cesar Chavez Elementary was one of several metro-area schools that participated in Walk to School Day, coordinated locally by the Oklahoma City-County Health Department’s Wellness Now Coalition.

“For children to have physical activity during the day is crucial to their learning,” said Meagan Carter, coalition coordinator. “They’ll have better focus in their classes. So it’s great that they’re able to get out and do this before the school day starts.”

Several coalition volunteers, including Diana Romano, were there to assist with the event and raise awareness of the need for children and their parents to be more physically fit.

“Everybody has a park near their house or their school,” Romano said. “You don’t need to have a membership to a gym; you can just use what you have close to you and walk with your family.”



Parent Kendra Jones, a member of the school’s child nutrition team, walked alongside son Korey Snell, 4. She usually drives him to school because they live about 10 miles away.

“I think it’s healthy. I think kids should walk to school,” Jones said. “I thought that this was something that he should be involved in.”

Pre-kindergarten student Ricardo Solis, age 5, walks with fellow students Wednesday as part of Walk to School Day in Oklahoma City. Photo by Paul B. Southerland, The Oklahoman **PAUL B. SOUTHERLAND** -

