

FINAL REPORT

2007 Fun in the Sun Evaluation



United Way
of Santa Barbara County



PREPARED BY
MIRIAM RESENDEZ, M.A.
CLAREMONT GRADUATE UNIVERSITY
AND SENIOR RESEARCHER, PRES ASSOCIATES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Maria¹ is a seven year old Hispanic girl that is heading into second grade. Maria was born in Mexico and is the youngest of nineteen children. A few years ago, one of her eldest brothers brought Maria to live with him and his family. One of Maria's nieces (a fifth grader) that lives in the same household attended the FITS program as well. Maria's parents remain in Mexico...The first few days at the FITS program, Maria kept to herself. She was exceptionally shy and distant. The adults did all they could to get her to join the activities that we were offering. Slowly and steadily she would approach and participate. As the program continued, Maria was constantly being given encouragement and praise for her efforts. Approximately three weeks into the program, Maria stood in front of her entire summer school class and explained, in full detail, how she felt that it was incredibly unfair that so many other children did not have the opportunity to attend this wonderful FITS program. She further explained in explicit detail some the activities she had most liked up to that point. Her teacher said that because Maria had never expressed herself with so much enthusiasm and joy in her voice she felt compelled to share this act with us and praise our efforts. By the end of the summer program, Maria was usually one of the first girls to raise their hands to volunteer to try something, or would not hesitate to speak out loud when asked a question. Maria was very upset on the last day of the program, but was soon contented knowing that she could be back next summer.

--FITS Administrator

Fun in the Sun (FITS) is a comprehensive summer program that provides educational and recreational opportunities to low-income Santa Barbara County youth in order to promote academic, social and emotional growth. During this 7-week program, youth engage in a variety of indoor and outdoor activities creatively geared to engage and reinforce learning and experiences that would otherwise languish over the summer months, support their positive well-being and identity, discover their world through field trips, find self-expression through the arts, and cultivate positive relationships with peers and adults. Given the need for accountability

¹ Name has been changed to ensure the anonymity of the participant.

of its program, the United Way of Santa Barbara County requested an external, independent evaluation of the 2007 FITS program.

The evaluation of 2007 FITS collected data from multiple sources, including participants, parents, teachers, and program leaders. Among other things, information was collected on: (a) participants' reading ability and attitudes towards reading; (b) participants' perceptions of positive identity, self-control, family and community support, and other Healthy Assets and Character Counts! pillars; (c) parents', teachers, and program leaders' perceptions of changes among participants in goal-related areas; and (d) parental and participant satisfaction with the FITS program and components. Surveys and assessments used are valid and reliable. **Results showed that overall, FITS was successful in meeting its targeted goals.**

- ✚ 48% of general program participants showed gains in reading skills, under the targeted goal of 60%. It should be noted that this result occurred in the context of serving a much greater percentage of intensively academically at-risk children at the two Santa Barbara School District sites than in previous years. It is important to note that despite not meeting the target, there were gains observed overall, across all participants. In particular, results suggest that instead of losing 2-3 months in reading achievement, as is typical of low-income children, on average FITS participants were prevented from this loss and instead, showed 1 month gains in reading.
- ✚ 77% of general program participants gained in or upheld their attitudes towards enjoyment of reading. While this is below the targeted goal of 80%, it is notable that over 40% of students indicated that they liked reading more because of FITS.
- ✚ 87% of general program participants gained in or upheld their positive self-identity, exceeding the target of 80%. In general, participants tended to feel hopeful for their future, happy, and proud of themselves because of FITS.
- ✚ 87% of general program participants gained in or upheld their self-control. Parents and program leaders also tended to observe positive changes in their interactions with others. However, it should be noted that, in general, self-control improved the least as compared to other targeted areas.

- ✦ 92% of general program participants upheld or gained in their perceptions of family support, exceeding the targeted goal of 80%.
- ✦ 84% of general program participants upheld or gained in their perceptions of community support, exceeding the targeted goal of 80%. In addition, 94% of general program participants indicated that they could identify more or the same number of caring, supportive, non-parental adults as a result of FITS.
- ✦ In general, the majority of this year's FITS participants indicated possessing positive identity, family support, achievement motivation, having role models with high expectations, and being in a supportive community (FITS) that values children. Furthermore, most of the participants indicated demonstrating the Character Counts' pillars of respect, fairness, and good citizenship. In contrast, positive self-control, delay of gratification, constructive use of time, resistance skills, planning and decision-making, empathy, and perceived safety were noted as the most problematic areas in terms of the percent of participants showing these assets.
- ✦ Participants and their parents overwhelmingly liked the FITS program. The highest rated program components among general program participants included field trips, science activities/experiences, FITS adults and program leaders. While the least rated item among participants were the literacy activities, parents really liked that their children were exposed to more academics and felt that these experiences would better prepare their children for school in the fall. Parents also commented that they liked the field trips that their children attended, the quality of care that was being provided, and the opportunity their children had to interact with others.

This year, FITS underwent a number of dynamic programmatic changes. Changes were made in order to reach out to more children and areas that are in need of programs such as this one. As may be expected in comprehensive programs undergoing restructuring, obstacles existed. However, challenges experienced were addressed and for the most, the program was able to flourish.

In summary, the program was again successful in addressing the multiple needs of disadvantaged youth. Through strategic partnerships, the program

was able to serve a larger population, and one that was in great need. In particular, this year's inclusion (and in fact, requirement) that students be at-risk of academic failure and of low socioeconomic status at three of the four FITS sites, meant that FITS was serving "the neediest of the neediest." Still, FITS was able to meet almost all goals and indeed, there was improvement observed in reading skills among a population of students who are, for the most part, at risk of failing school. This is quite notable. Furthermore, feedback obtained from parents clearly indicated that they were greatly appreciative of the FITS program and felt it had made a positive impact on the social, affective, and academic skills of their children.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Project Background	6
Overview of 2007 Fun in the Sun.....	7
Project overview	9
Design & Methodology.....	9
Description of FITS' Participants and Goal-Related Activities	11
General Program Participants	11
Counselors-in-Training	14
FITS Goal-Related Activities	14
Evaluation Results	18
Summary of Results.....	20
Detailed Results	21
<i>How effective was FITS in accomplishing its intended goals? Did this vary with different types of participants (e.g., gender) and sites?</i>	21
TARGET #1 – 60% OF PARTICIPANTS WILL DISPLAY GAINS IN READING COMPREHENSION, PHONICS, AND VOCABULARY SKILLS.....	20
TARGET #2 – 80% OF PARTICIPANTS WILL MAINTAIN OR DISPLAY A GAIN IN ENJOYMENT OF READING.....	20
TARGET 3: 80% OF GENERAL PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS WILL MAINTAIN OR DISPLAY A GAIN IN POSITIVE IDENTITY	27
TARGET 4: 80% OF GENERAL PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS WILL MAINTAIN OR DISPLAY A GAIN IN SELF-CONTROL	29
TARGET 5: 80% OF PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS WILL MAINTAIN OR DISPLAY A GAIN IN THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF CARING AND SUPPORT FROM PARENTS.....	30
TARGET 6: 80% OF YOUTH WILL MAINTAIN OR DISPLAY A GAIN IN THEIR ABILITY TO IDENTIFY CARING, SUPPORTIVE, NON-PARENTAL ADULTS	32
TARGET 7: 80% OF YOUTH WILL MAINTAIN OR DISPLAY A GAIN IN THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF CARING AND SUPPORT FROM NON-PARENTAL ADULTS.....	32
<i>To what extent do FITS participants possess Healthy Assets (e.g., empowerment, social competencies, etc.) and Character Counts! pillars?</i>	33
<i>What did participants and parents of the FITS program think about it?</i>	37
Recommendations and Conclusion	40
FITS Program Recommendations.....	41
Conclusion	43
References	45
Appendix A: Detailed Statistics	46

Figures

Figure 1. Targeted Outcomes for 2007 FITS.....	19
Figure 2. 2007 FITS Evaluation Results.....	20
Figure 3. Change in Reading Skills from Pre- to Post-testing.....	21
Figure 4. Reading Skills: Percentile Rankings at Pre and Post-testing.....	22
Figure 5. Reading Skills: Grade Equivalents at Pre and Post-testing.....	22
Figure 6. Change in Reading Skills from Pre- to Post-testing-Harding.....	23
Figure 7. Percentile Rankings (PR) and Grade Equivalents (GE) from Pre- to Post-testing-Harding.....	23
Figure 8. Change in Reading Skills from Pre- to Post-testing-Franklin.....	24
Figure 9. Percentile Rankings (PR) and Grade Equivalents (GE) from Pre- to Post-testing-Franklin.....	24
Figure 10. Change in Reading Skills from Pre- to Post-testing-Ellwood.....	25
Figure 11. Percentile Rankings (PR) and Grade Equivalents (GE) from Pre- to Post-testing-Ellwood.....	25
Figure 12. Percent of Parents, Program Leaders, and Reading Teachers Indicating Improvement in Reading Skills.....	26
Figure 13. Percent of Participants' Showing Improvement or Maintenance in Liking for Reading.....	26
Figure 14. Percent of Parents, Program Leaders, and Teachers Indicating Improvement in Enjoyment of Reading.....	27
Figure 15. Percent of Participants' Indicating Maintenance or Gain in Positive Identity.....	28
Figure 16. Percent of Parents and Program Leaders' Indicating Improvement in Positive Identity.....	28
Figure 17. Percent of Participants' Indicating Maintenance or Gain in Self-Control (and engagement in positive behaviors).....	29
Figure 18. Percent of Parents and Program Leaders' Indicating Improvement in Self-Control... ..	30
Figure 19. Percent of Participants Indicating Maintenance or Gain in Family Support.....	30
Figure 20. Percent of Participants Indicating Supportive Non-Parental Adults Identified by FITS Participants.....	32
Figure 21. Percent of Participants' Indicating Maintenance or Gain in Community Support.....	33
Figure 22. Perceived Improvement on Character Counts! Pillars-Parents and Program Leaders	36
Figure 23. General Participants' Satisfaction with FITS.....	37
Figure 24. Parents' Satisfaction with FITS.....	37
Figure 25. Program Leaders' Perceptions of FITS.....	39
Figure 26. FITS Outcome Targets and Results.....	40

Tables

Table 1. FITS Site and General Program Participant Characteristics.....	123
Table 2. Percent of New Participants in FITS in 2006 and 2007.....	134
Table 3. Number and Percent Adds and Drops from FITS (2006).....	145
Table 4. CIT Characteristics.....	145
Table 5. Percent of Participants' Indicating Maintenance or Gain in Positive Identity by Site ...	29
Table 6. Percent of Participants Who Agreed to Healthy Asset Items.....	34
Table 7. Percent of Participants Who Agreed to Character Counts! Pillar Items.....	366

PROJECT BACKGROUND

To be successful in school and in life, youth need trusting and caring relationships. They also need opportunities to form their own identities, engage in autonomous self-expression, and take part in challenging experiences that will develop their competence and self-esteem. (Kreider, Caspe, Kennedy, & Weiss, 2007, p.1)

Summertime often evokes images of fun and relaxation. However, for many working parents, it is also characterized as a time when they must rush to provide a safe and affordable out-of-home environment for their children. For children from low-income families in particular, summertime can be detrimental to their future social and academic well-being. Indeed, research shows that the summer months are associated with a number of negative consequences for youth, including:

- ❖ Low-income students experience greater summer reading loss than middle and high-income students, particularly in reading. While high and middle income students show slight gains, lower-income students lose approximately 2-3 months in reading achievement (Cooper et al., 1996).
- ❖ The achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged children may be the result of summer reading loss as opposed to school-year circumstances. As children progress through school, this cumulative summer loss effect increases the achievement gap (Alexander & Entwisle, 1996).
- ❖ Low-income and minority parents are substantially more likely to encounter problems finding quality, affordable and available summer programs than their middle- and high-income peers (Center for Summer Learning, 2005).

- ❖ At least 11% of children between the ages of 6 and 12 care for themselves over the summer months (Center for Summer Learning, 2005).
- ❖ Low-income children tend to have less opportunities to attend summer camps, museums, parks, learn new social and emotional skills, or take family trips (Rothstein, 2004).
- ❖ Unsupervised children and teens during out of school time are more likely to use alcohol and drugs, and engage in criminal and other high-risk behaviors (Carnegie Council, 1994).
- ❖ Teachers typically spend between 4-6 weeks re-teaching material that students have forgotten over the summer (Center for Summer Learning, 2005).
- ❖ Students typically score lower on standardized tests at the end of summer vacation than they do on the same tests at the beginning of summer vacation (Cooper, 1996).

Together, this research suggests that “summer loss” can have broad and serious consequences on children’s educational, social, and affective development. However, research also suggests that well-planned summer programs can help alleviate some of these negative outcomes (Johnson, 2000). Summer programs that focus on increases in achievement and positive youth development have been linked, among other things, to: 1) higher attendance and achievement during the school year, 2) increased character development, 3) increased feelings of safety and belonging, 4) reduced incidence of violence and risky behaviors, 5) more involvement from parents in their children’s education, and 6) greater opportunities for children to interact in meaningful ways with supportive adults (Fairchild, McLaughlin, & Brady, 2006).

OVERVIEW OF 2007 FUN IN THE SUN

In an effort to reduce the effects of summer loss on disadvantaged youth in Santa Barbara County, of which 45% of total youth are estimated to be of low socioeconomic status², the United Way of Santa Barbara County created the Fun in the Sun (FITS) program in 1997 to provide educational and recreational opportunities to low-income youth in order to promote academic, social and emotional growth. The United Way provides full scholarships to youth entering grades 1-6 for the general program and youth in the Counselor in Training (CIT) program. As the director and primary funder of the FITS program, the United Way of Santa Barbara County guides and works with Girls Inc. of Greater Santa Barbara, the lead agency in charge of administering the FITS program. In addition, for the 2007 program, a new partnership with the Santa Barbara School District was formed in which certified teachers implemented the academic portion of the program to at-risk participants. Furthermore, a partnership with the Carpinteria School District was formed and for the first time, FITS was in Carpinteria under the administration of Girls Inc. of Carpinteria. Additionally, through collaborative relationships with over 30 organizations, resources and services were provided to help meet the programmatic needs of FITS.

The stated goals of the 2007 FITS program are:

- ❖ General program participants will maintain or improve upon reading competence and positive perceptions of reading.

² Although Santa Barbara and surrounding communities are typically considered affluent, according to documentation obtained from United Way, 45% of youth in public schools receive free/reduced lunch.

- ❖ General program participants will maintain or improve their positive identity and positive self-control.
- ❖ General program participants will maintain or improve perceptions of family support.
- ❖ General program participants will maintain or improve perceptions of community support.

In a 7-week comprehensive, summer enrichment program (June 25 to August 10, 2007), youth engaged in a variety of indoor and outdoor activities creatively geared to engage and reinforce learning and experiences that would otherwise languish over the summer months, to support their positive well-being and identity, discover their world through field trips, find self-expression through the arts, and cultivate positive relationships with peers and adults. Specific programmatic activities included:

- ❖ Children were provided with curricula in four categories: literature, media literacy, sports and physiology, and art during morning sessions.
- ❖ At least 1 hour of reading curriculum was provided to each group, with the exception of Canalino Elementary³. The children also participated daily in 30-45 minutes worth of independent reading and journaling time.
- ❖ Afternoon activities included environmental awareness programs, swim lessons, dance and music appreciation, guest speakers, and field trips to existing community resources and partners in the area.

FITS served a total of 271 children in grades 1-6 in the general program. In addition, 25 CITs, entering 7th-10th grades, and who have participated in past FITS'

³ During the first 4 weeks of the FITS program, students at the Carpinteria site attended summer school during the first half of the day and then participated during the second half of the day in FITS. Since, for the most part, the reading intervention was not being provided through FITS, Canalino participants were excluded from the reading component of this evaluation.

programs⁴ were selected to assist program leaders in the supervision of participants. CITs also participated in activities designed to improve upon their leadership skills, sense of empowerment, and to provide community support.

As previously noted, for this year's program, a new partnership was formed with the Santa Barbara School District. As part of this new partnership, students participating in FITS at two new sites, Franklin and Harding Elementary Schools, had to meet two specific eligibility requirements. In particular, students had to be: (1) of low socioeconomic status (defined as being eligible for free/reduced lunch status), and (2) at-risk of failing academically. Following these two criteria, preference was given to prior FITS participants⁵. In addition, to meet numerical quotas set by the district, a minimum of an additional 24 students had to be recruited to participate in the academic component. These students did not participate in the afternoon FITS program. Students participating at these sites were provided with academic experiences (primarily) by certified teachers in the morning for 3 hours, and recreational experiences designed to promote social and emotional growth by program leaders in the afternoon.

Ellwood was a new site as well, replacing last year's Hollister site in the Goleta School District. Due to the superintendent's request, children eligible for summer school (because of at-risk status) could not participate in the FITS program at Ellwood. As such, the FITS participants at Ellwood were not academically at-risk (as

designated by their respective schools) but still of low income status. Unlike the Harding and Franklin sites (in the Santa Barbara School District), FITS program leaders provided the majority of educational, enrichment and recreational experiences.

The new partnership with the Carpinteria School District and Girls Inc. of Carpinteria allowed the FITS program to expand outside of the Santa Barbara and Goleta communities to Canalino Elementary. In addition to being eligible for free/reduced lunch, students attending FITS at Canalino had to be at-risk and recommended by their teacher. In addition, they could not belong to any other after-school program.

Franklin, Harding, and Ellwood sites held FITS activities Monday through Friday from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. during the 7 week period. It should be noted that the program was extended 1.5 hours compared to last year. At Canalino, FITS participants were required to attend summer school for the first 4 weeks (June 25-July 20) in the morning. Students participated in the FITS program from noon to 5 P.M. during this time. For the remaining 3 weeks (July 23-August 10), students participated in the full day FITS program.

Each site had a site coordinator who oversaw all activities at each site and a family advocate from the Family Service Agency, who provided support. Groups of approximately 14 youth, 1 program leader and 1-2 CITs were at each of the sites. For the morning academic component administered at Harding and Franklin, students were grouped by grade level only. For the afternoon component of the program, and at Ellwood and Canalino, groups were formed on the basis of grade level and gender. For example, female students entering grades 1-3 were grouped

4 The exception to this was at Canalino. As a new site, there were no CITs who had previously participated in FITS.

5 More detailed information on recruitment efforts are described in the Girls Inc. of Greater Santa Barbara 2007 Report.

together and female students entering grades 4-6 were grouped together.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Given how critical it is to provide supportive resources to disadvantaged youth, it is of vital importance that programs such as FITS be carefully examined in terms of their impact on the youth they serve. In order to determine the extent to which its overall program goals are being realized and to inform future programming, the United Way of Santa Barbara contracted with Miriam Resendez, Senior Researcher for Planning, Research and Evaluation Services (PRES) Associates and with over 9 years of applied research experience, to conduct an evaluation of the 2007 FITS program.

The overarching purpose of this study was to evaluate the ability of the FITS program in helping youth improve upon essential social, affective, and academic skills. Specifically, the evaluation was designed to address the following key evaluation questions:

- ❖ How effective was FITS in accomplishing its intended goals? Specifically, did participants show targeted maintenance or improvements in:
 - Reading skills
 - Attitudes towards reading
 - Positive identity
 - Self-control
 - Perceptions of family support
 - Perceptions of community support
- ❖ Are there differences in reading skill changes between the reading intervention models being implemented across the various sites?
- ❖ To what extent do FITS participants possess *Healthy Assets* (e.g., empowerment, social

competencies, etc.) and Character Counts! pillars?

- ❖ What did participants and parents of the FITS program think about it?

The remainder of this report includes: 1) a description of the design and methodology; 2) a description of FITS goal-related activities; 3) results of the evaluation; and 4) conclusions and recommendations for future FITS programs.

DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

It should be noted that this year's evaluation was smaller-scale in comparison to the 2006 evaluation. In particular, reading assessments and other surveys were administered only to selected grade levels. Reading assessments were conducted Pre- and Post-. Non-academic outcomes were evaluated through a Post- survey. Nevertheless, this evaluation provides valuable information that can be used to inform future program planning and evaluations.

The evaluation consisted of a within subjects design in which selected youth were assessed during the 1st and 6th week of FITS. Both quantitative and qualitative research techniques were employed in order to provide a comprehensive picture of FITS. Other important methodological features include:

- ❖ Background data was collected on educational and other programmatic activities, and used to inform results;
- ❖ A standardized assessment measure was used in order to enhance the sensitivity of the study to picking up effects and to inform future programming;
- ❖ Student assessments and surveys are valid and reliable as shown by technical

documentation and statistical analyses performed⁶.

Based on the needs of the United Way of Santa Barbara County, the following methods⁷ were employed to evaluate FITS:

- 1) Pre-Post Student Reading Assessments: Pre- and post-assessments were administered to participants (excluding CITs) during the first week, June 25th to June 29th, and sixth week, July 30th to August 3rd, of the program. At Harding and Ellwood, students entering 3rd grade were assessed. At Franklin, students entering 4th grade were assessed. In addition, due to their at-risk status, students at Harding and Franklin were administered a version of the test that was one-grade below current grade level. At Ellwood, assessments were on-grade level.

The assessment consisted of a standardized, norm-referenced test: the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS). These were group-administered. The ITBS (2003 and published by Riverside Publishing) subtests that were administered to students included the reading comprehension, word analysis, and vocabulary subtests. **Reliability estimates are in the range of .86 to .94, which means that this is a highly reliable measure⁸.** The publisher has extensive documentation on the validity of this measure as well. For more detailed information, the reader is referred to the ITBS Technical Manual.

- 2) Post Student Surveys: A post-survey was administered to participants during the 6th week of the program. The survey for general

6 Detailed information on the reliability and validity of student surveys are provided in Appendix C of the 2006 FITS Evaluation Report. The vast majority of items were the same as those in the 2006 surveys.

7 The data collection for this evaluation was designed to obtain valuable information while operating within practical and fiscal constraints associated with this project.

8 Reliability refers to the property of a measurement instrument that causes it to give similar results for similar inputs. The range of this value is 0 (no relationship) to 1 (complete relationship). Typically, a value of .70 or greater is considered adequate.

program participants, entering grades 4-6, gathered information on: attitudes toward reading, perceptions of positive identity, self-control, family and community support, other Healthy Assets⁹, and basic background information. Post-surveys also included items regarding their perceptions of changes that may have occurred over the course of their participation in FITS in the aforementioned areas as well as their satisfaction with the FITS program. Reliability estimates for the 4-6th grade survey ranged from .73-.81.

- 3) Post Surveys for Program, Teachers, and Parents. These surveys were collected during the sixth-seventh week of FITS.

- For program leaders and teachers, post-surveys were collected to gather information on their perceptions of changes observed among the general program participants. Open-ended items were also included in order to obtain qualitative information about perceived changes.
- For parents or primary caregivers of participating youth, a survey was collected to measure their satisfaction with the FITS program and perceptions of changes observed in their child(ren) over the course of their participation in FITS. Open-ended items were also included in order to obtain qualitative information about perceived changes.

- 4) Interviews with Program Participants: Interviews were conducted with a randomly selected sample of participants in grades 4-6 (approximately 10%) towards the end of the program. This consisted of interviews with general program participants in order to

9 The Search Institute has identified 40 developmental assets that promote positive development among youth (see www.search-institute.org). Prior FITS evaluations included measures of these assets. Although not a focus of this evaluation, in order to describe the current population of FITS participants, and to compare them to prior FITS participants, items measuring some of these developmental assets were included.

obtain more in-depth qualitative information on perceived changes and satisfaction with FITS and is an important supplement to the quantitative survey data.

- 5) Rosters (including names, enrollment, demographics) were obtained from Girls Inc. in order to examine if different types of students showed variability in attainment of goals.

DESCRIPTION OF FITS' PARTICIPANTS AND GOAL-RELATED ACTIVITIES

Prior to discussing the results, it is important to understand the characteristics of the participants and the activities that took place in order to meet the goals of FITS. Such information is important because it serves as the foundation for the observed results. That is, it is necessary to have a thorough understanding of what events took place and the types of youth that the program served in order to place results in the right context.

GENERAL PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

Table 1 shows the characteristics of FITS youth participating in the general program within each site and as a whole. Key findings from this table include:

- There were a fairly equal proportion of females and males across all sites.
 - Hispanics made up the majority of FITS participants.
 - Participants were primarily in their first year of FITS (76%).
 - There was much more variability in the schools that Ellwood youth attended. This may be due in part to the expanded recruitment efforts at Ellwood due to a low number of initial applications. In contrast, most of the Franklin participants attended Franklin Elementary. Similarly, most of the Harding participants attended Harding Elementary, followed by Adams and McKinley schools.
- Harding served the most participants.
 - Most youth were in the 3rd-6th grade range, and 1st graders in particular constituted the smallest proportion of FITS participants. It should be noted that Harding only accepted children in grades 2-6.

Table 1. FITS Site and General Program Participant Characteristics*

		Franklin		Harding		Ellwood		Canalino		Total	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Participants		79	--	84	--	52	--	56	--	271	--
Grade	unknown	4	5.1%	3	3.6%	3	5.8%	0	.0%	10	3.7%
	1	8	10.1%	0	.0%	3	5.8%	8	14.3%	19	7.0%
	2	12	15.2%	19	22.6%	9	17.3%	9	16.1%	49	18.1%
	3	15	19.0%	16	19.0%	10	19.2%	19	33.9%	60	22.1%
	4	12	15.2%	16	19.0%	8	15.4%	8	14.3%	44	16.2%
	5	13	16.5%	17	20.2%	11	21.2%	10	17.9%	51	18.8%
	6	15	19.0%	13	15.5%	8	15.4%	1	1.8%	37	13.7%
	7	0	.0%	0	.0%	0	.0%	1	1.8%	1	.4%
Gender	F	38	48.1%	45	53.6%	24	46.2%	28	50.0%	135	49.8%
	M	41	51.9%	39	46.4%	28	53.8%	28	50.0%	136	50.2%
Ethnicity**	White	0	.0%	1	1.7%	0	.0%	--	--	1	.7%
	Hispanic	43	95.6%	56	94.9%	28	82.4%	--	--	127	92.0%
	African Am.	1	2.2%	2	3.4%	0	.0%	--	--	3	2.2%
	Asian Am.	0	.0%	0	.0%	3	8.8%	--	--	3	2.2%
	Other	1	2.2%	0	.0%	3	8.8%	--	--	4	2.9%
Prior Attendance at FITS	Yes	26	32.9%	23	27.7%	15	30.0%	0	0%	64	23.9%
	No	53	67.1%	60	72.3%	35	70.0%	56	100%	204	76.1%
School**	Adams	0	.0%	17	20.2%	1	1.9%	--	--	18	6.6%
	Cesar Chavez	1	1.3%	0	.0%	0	.0%	--	--	1	.4%
	El Camino	0	.0%	0	.0%	3	5.8%	--	--	3	1.1%
	Ellwood	0	.0%	0	.0%	12	23.1%	--	--	12	4.4%
	Fillmore School	0	.0%	1	1.2%	0	.0%	--	--	1	.4%
	Foothill	0	.0%	0	.0%	3	5.8%	--	--	3	1.1%
	Franklin	77	97.5%	0	.0%	0	.0%	--	--	77	28.4%
	Harding	0	.0%	53	63.1%	0	.0%	--	--	53	19.6%
	Hollister	0	.0%	0	.0%	7	13.5%	--	--	7	2.6%
	Isla Vista	0	.0%	0	.0%	9	17.3%	--	--	9	3.3%
	La Patera	0	.0%	0	.0%	14	26.9%	--	--	14	5.2%
	McKinley	1	1.3%	9	10.7%	0	.0%	--	--	10	3.7%
	Peabody	0	.0%	0	.0%	1	1.9%	--	--	1	.4%
	St. Raphael's School	0	.0%	0	.0%	2	3.8%	--	--	2	.7%
Washington	0	.0%	2	2.4%	0	.0%	--	--	2	.7%	

*The above counts and percents exclude missing data.

**This information was not provided for Canalino. However, qualitative information obtained indicates that a large proportion are Hispanic and regularly attend Aliso and Canalino Elementary Schools.

Of note is that recruitment efforts were challenging for this year's FITS. As a result of changes in the program and new selection criteria set forth by the Santa Barbara, Goleta, and Carpinteria School Districts¹⁰, there were challenges faced in meeting the additional criteria of (non)at-risk status, as well as numerical quotas at two sites. However, strategic recruitment efforts ultimately produced the targeted number of FITS participants (with additional youth on waiting lists). However, if FITS is to continue with partnerships with the school districts in which more stringent criteria are put into place, it is recommended that greater collaboration occur among the school districts, family advocates, and other FITS staff, and that recruitment efforts begin even earlier given the more unique population of students being targeted.

Furthermore, in comparison to last year (2006), there was a decline in the percent of students returning to FITS. That is, there were more new participants this year (76%) in comparison to last year (41%). This is likely due to several factors, including: (1) the new selection criteria that were implemented at all FITS sites, (2) the new locations for FITS in the Santa Barbara and Goleta areas, and (3) the addition of one new site in Carpinteria (this is the first year that FITS was in Carpinteria and therefore, all students were new). As previously noted, Franklin and Harding participants had to be at-risk and of low-income, whereas Ellwood participants could *not* be at-risk but still of low income.

Table 2 shows the percent of new participants in comparison to last year by comparison site. Again, it should be noted that this year's sites are at new locations so

10 In the past, low-income status was the primary selection factor. This year, at-risk status (either they had to be or could not be, depending on site) was added.

comparisons should be made with this caveat in mind. As shown, while enrollment of new participants are higher this year across all sites, the greatest discrepancy occurred between the Adams site last year and the Harding site this year. Given that a high proportion of FITS participants were new to the program, this meant that it likely took more time for these new participants to get into the routine of FITS and accustomed to its procedures, rules, and expectations.

Table 2. Percent of New Participants in FITS in 2006 and 2007

	2006	2007
Adams / Harding	23.3%	72.3%
Ortega / Franklin	52.3%	70.0%
Hollister / Ellwood	56.8%	67.1%

Dropout information obtained from Harding, Franklin, and Ellwood¹¹ shows that a higher percentage of participants dropped from the Franklin and Ellwood sites, see Table 2. Reasons given for dropping out included excessive unexcused absences, missing the first day of FITS, behavior difficulties, family issues, and movement to other programs. Dropouts can have an impact on the reliability of results because participants measured during week 1 of FITS (pre-testing) may be different than those measured during week 6 (post-testing). Examination of available information revealed that there were no significant¹² differences between participants who dropped out and participants who remained on a number of demographic characteristics

11 This information was not provided by the Canalino site.

12 "Significant" means that we can be 95% or more confident that the observed differences are real. If the significance level is less than or equal to .05, then the differences are considered statistically significant. If this value is greater than .05, this means that any observed differences are not statistically significant and may be interpreted as inconclusive.

(e.g., gender, site, grade level). As such, it is unlikely that dropouts have biased results.

In addition, a larger number of students did not qualify for FITS at Harding and Franklin, most likely due to the additional criterion that was imposed this year of at-risk status.

Table 3. Number and Percent* Adds and Drops from FITS (2006)

	Franklin		Harding		Ellwood	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Dropped	14	15%	11	12%	9	15%
Did Not Qualify	14	--	39	--	5	--
Active*	79	--	84	--	52	--

*These are the total number of participants who were enrolled at FITS (excludes drops and do not qualify).

COUNSELORS-IN-TRAINING

Table 3 displays the characteristics of the 2007 CITs. The majority of CITs were female and in 7th and 8th grades.

Table 4. CIT Characteristics

	Total*	
	#	%
Males	7	33.3%
Females	14	66.7%
7 th grade	8	47%
8 th grade	5	29%
9 th grade	2	11.5%
10 th grade	2	11.5%
Ellwood	7	--
Canalino	4	--
Franklin	6	--
Harding	8	--

*Obtained via rosters and excludes missing data and demographics from Canalino.

FITS GOAL-RELATED ACTIVITIES

In order to address each of the FITS goals, United Way of Santa Barbara County, Girls Inc. of Greater Santa Barbara and Girls Inc. of Carpinteria administered a summer enrichment program that provided numerous educational, social, cultural, and creative opportunities for participants. The following provides a summary of these activities as they relate to the goals of FITS. For more detailed information on the program components and providers, the reader is referred to the Girls Inc. of Greater Santa Barbara and Girls Inc. of Carpinteria Final Reports on FITS 2007.

FITS READING GOAL

In order to address general program participants' literacy needs, minimize the potential for summer reading loss, and contribute to their enjoyment of reading, FITS included literacy activities and direct instruction. Specifically, FITS provided morning educational curricula, and afternoon reading/writing journaling activities. What follows is a summary of these literacy activities administered at the various sites.

1. **Harding:** Morning literacy instruction, provided by certified teachers, was primarily based on SRA McGraw Hill's (2006) *Summer Adventures in Reading*. *Summer Adventures in Reading* is a remedial reading and writing program with 30 instructionally-sound summer reading lessons (6 units) in each level. For FITS, the program was used as a guide and adapted as needed based on needs and developmental levels of the students. Teachers noted supplementing this

program with their own resources. Time spent was typically 1.5 hours each day and instruction was delivered in whole and small groups. For some groups, teachers job-shared; one teacher would teach for a certain amount of time (e.g., a few weeks) and then another teacher would take over. Specific literacy skills addressed varied by grade level. Generally, however, teachers focused on fluency, vocabulary, phonics, phonemic awareness and comprehension. Teachers also addressed spelling and writing skills. In addition, teachers used *Interact Simulations*; these are interactive activities that are designed to engage students while providing educational experiences. Two simulations used at this site that may be considered as having a literacy component (as used at this site) where the *Zoo* and *Museum Interact Simulations*. For example, students read and wrote as they learned about animals and artists.

2. **Franklin:** Morning literacy instruction, also provided by certified teachers, was based on various resources. Teachers indicated that they individualized their own curricula according to the needs of their students. Like Harding, job sharing among teachers occurred. Of the 3 teachers who responded to our survey, one teacher of 1st grade students noted using alphabet review workbooks, word wall, and flash cards to help students with phonics, phonemic awareness, alphabet, comprehension and vocabulary. A teacher for 2nd and 3rd grade students used the *Read Naturally* program (OpenCourt), in addition to having students read folk

tales. Focus was placed on fluency, vocabulary, phonemic awareness, comprehension, spelling, and writing skills. The 6th grade teacher had the students read a novel (*Old Yeller*) and focused on reading comprehension, spelling and writing. Time spent was typically 1.5 hours. In addition, one teacher noted using the *Rhyme Square Interact Simulations* which targeted phonics and fluency.

3. **Ellwood:** Morning literacy instruction, provided by program leaders, was based primarily on the *Summer Adventures in Reading*. It should be noted that there were 2 certified teachers on staff as well to help with implementation. Instruction lasted 60 minutes daily for a 5 week period. At the 1st and 2nd grade levels, focus was placed on phonics, phonemic awareness, and vocabulary, with some comprehension. At the 3rd and 4th grade levels, students read stories and worked on comprehension and fluency skills. At the 5th and 6th grade levels, students used *Summer Adventures in Reading* for the first 3 weeks. However, it was determined that program was too easy for them. This is unsurprising since the program is designed for remediation and students in Ellwood were not deemed academically at-risk-- therefore, a number were unlikely to need reading intervention. To appropriately address their developmental levels, these students instead read a novel (*Because of Winn Dixie*) and literature-based activities were provided that complemented the material being read and that focused on comprehension, fluency, and writing

skills. In addition, the *Interact Simulations of Spelling Wizards* were used among 4-6th grade participants while *Rhymes Square* was used among 1-3rd grade participants.

4. **Canalino:** As previously noted, after the 4th week of FITS, students at Canalino participated in a FITS reading program, based in large part on the *Summer Success in Reading* program. They also used magazines (*Central Reading*) and attempted to relate program activities to what was being read (a thematic approach). Program leaders provided direct literacy instruction for 30 minutes. In addition, students engaged in silent reading during the mornings for approximately 20 minutes. It should be noted that it was originally planned that teachers would use the *Summer Success* program during the summer school session and that program leaders would continue using this program where the teachers had left off. However, during summer school, teachers used other resources and therefore, consistency in instruction and resources did not occur.

At all sites, youth participated in additional reading/writing activities for 30-45 minutes in the afternoons. During this time, participants read silently from a book selected from the book mobile, library, FITS collection, or one brought from home. Students also engaged in journal writing during this time. Ideas for writing topics were provided by the program leaders.

Of note is that while not a targeted area, instruction in other academic areas occurred as well (e.g., math, arts, sciences). As noted

earlier, some teachers and program leaders in all sites used *Interact Simulations* designed to engage students in interactive activities while teaching them, for example, mathematics skills.

FITS POSITIVE IDENTITY AND SELF-CONTROL GOALS

In order to maintain and improve upon participants' positive identity (i.e., self-concept and esteem, personal power, sense of purpose, and positive view of personal future) and their self-control (i.e., expressing emotions appropriately, respecting others, engagement in positive behaviors, and disengagement in negative behaviors), the program implemented a number of activities during the 2007 FITS. At the backbone of FITS is Character Counts!¹³, a program that promotes character development in the areas (or pillars) of trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship. It is built into all aspects of the program, including language, rules, guidelines, and program policies. While at certain times of the week, pillars are made explicit and emphasized (e.g., during morning celebrations on Monday, the week's pillar is announced and modeled), it is embedded in all activities and interactions. For example, program leaders were instructed to point out and exemplify the pillars during interactions with participants throughout the week. Reward systems were used to commend students exemplifying a pillar. Visual displays of the pillars were also available at each of the sites. It is hoped that through use of these pillars, participants will learn to exhibit more positive behaviors (and therefore assist

13 Character Counts! was developed by the Josephson Institute of Ethics and is used nationwide at schools, YMCAs, and other organizations serving youth. For more information on this program, please see www.charactercounts.org.

in self-control of negative behaviors) and this in turn will influence positive identity.

To further promote positive identity and self-control, FITS staff were asked to provide daily encouragement and to celebrate participants engaging in positive behaviors during special sessions (e.g., Friday town meetings). The Teamwork program, which was implemented once per week at Harding, Franklin, and Ellwood, focused on effective communication skills, working collaboratively, conflict mediation, and goal setting. Furthermore, the STAR (Stop, Think, Act, and Review) approach continued to be employed for the 2007 program at Harding, Franklin, and Ellwood. Participants were taught this approach to dealing with negative or uncomfortable situations. Additionally, during Dancing Drums, children were taught musical routines that coincided with the Character Counts! pillars. This served to reinforce the pillars while providing opportunities for participants to express themselves in meaningful ways.

Interact Simulations were also designed to help students learn cooperative play and responsibility. As an example, one group at Harding using the *Zoo Interact Simulation* built cages for their ‘animals’ (stuffed) and learned about the foods they eat and how to take care of them. They pretended to be caretakers of a zoo as well as administrators. For example, they “sold tickets” to their zoo, and served as tour guides. As an added bonus, they visited the local zoo. In another group, the *Museum Interact Simulation* was used. They did paintings based on the work of famous artists (e.g., Andy Warhol, Thomas Rivera) and learned about their history, including time and place. They were also introduced to Latin American Art given their own cultural heritage (the vast majority are Hispanic). In sum, these activities aim to

provide an enrichment experience that is engaging and will also teach them how to be responsible and interact cooperatively.

FITS FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT GOALS¹⁴

There was a family night at each site designed to induce family involvement in the FITS program. The evening, organized by family advocates, typically consisted of a potluck with performances by the participants. In addition, site coordinators introduced the FITS program and all the various experiences and services provided to their youth.

Family advocates also played a critical role in encouraging family support. They made sure participants were fully prepared for the day (e.g., hats, water bottles, etc.). They provided a number of resources and information including case management, translation, dental referrals, general medical referrals, and individual outreach. In addition to providing support and advice to participants and their families, family advocates provided assistance to site coordinators and program leaders about participant behavioral issues and management.

At the Harding and Franklin sites, parents were invited to a health-information session provided by Santa Barbara Neighborhood Clinics. The Canolino site also offered parents a health information session. The focus was on providing information on nutrition, illness prevention, and insurance. In addition to this, at Ellwood, UC Santa Barbara sponsored a

¹⁴ More detailed information on the family night, Lunch Bunch participation, and other activities designed to instill family and community support is provided in the Girls Inc. 2007 FITS Final Reports.

mother/daughter class that focused on communication skills.

To address community support goals, FITS staff were instructed to build positive relationships with participants, including getting to know personal issues of importance to the participants. They also received training on how to engage participants (e.g., eye-contact, positive compliments). Lunch Bunch was also a source of community support. As part of Lunch Bunch, volunteers logged 732 hours of time with the children. During lunch, volunteer members of the community and United Way staff would interact with participants and serve as adult role models. These adults would play with the participants, help with art projects, or simply talk to participants. Furthermore, activities provided by other organizations and individuals (e.g., Dancing Drums, guest speakers, United Way volunteers, lifeguards, etc.) also exposed youth to caring adults. It is hoped that such opportunities to meet other adults will inspire a sense of support and caring from others who are not family members.

EVALUATION RESULTS

Through consultation with United Way of Santa Barbara County, targets were set for each of the FITS' goals. It was determined that the same targets would be used as the last evaluation in 2006, with the exception that CIT goals would be eliminated. As was determined during the last evaluation, there is not a structured CIT program for addressing the prior goals set for this group and as such, it would be difficult to identify measurable outcomes.

Figure 1 displays the goals with targets. To facilitate comparability to future FITS evaluations, percents of participants meeting goals as opposed to actual point increases are provided. Furthermore, it is important to note that non-academic goals and targets are measured from the perspective of participants (e.g., their perceptions of self-control). That being said, data was also collected from program leaders, parents, and teachers to supplement information obtained from the participants.

The following presents the results of the evaluation. A summary of findings is presented followed by a detailed account. Detailed results are organized by the key evaluation questions and targeted goals. In addition, detailed descriptions of the statistical analyses conducted are provided in Appendix A.

Figure 1. Targeted Outcomes for 2007 FITS

Goal – General program participants will maintain or improve upon reading competence and positive perceptions of reading.

- **Target #1** – 60% of participants will display gains in reading comprehension, phonics, and vocabulary skills.
- **Target #2** – 80% of participants will maintain or display a gain in positive perceptions of reading.

Goal – General program participants will maintain or improve their positive identity and positive self-control.

- **Target #3** –80% of participants will maintain or display a gain in positive identity (i.e., self-concept and esteem, and positive view of personal future).
- **Target #4** – 80% of participants will maintain or display a gain in positive self-control (i.e., thinking carefully before acting, engagement in positive behaviors, and disengagement in negative behaviors).

Goal – General program participants will maintain or improve perceptions of family support.

- **Target #5** - 80% of participants will maintain or display a gain in their perceptions of caring and support from parents/caregivers.

Goal – General program participants will maintain or improve perceptions of community support.

- **Target #6** –80% of participants will maintain or display a gain in their ability to identify caring, supportive, non-parental adults.
- **Target #7** - 80% of participants will maintain or display a gain in their perceptions of caring and support from non-parental adults.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

HOW EFFECTIVE WAS FITS IN ACCOMPLISHING ITS INTENDED GOALS? DID THIS VARY WITH DIFFERENT TYPES OF PARTICIPANTS (E.G., GRADE, GENDER, ABILITY LEVELS, YEARS AT FITS) AND SITES?

The figure below shows the results of the targeted outcomes. As shown, FITS general program participants met the majority of targeted goals. The only areas where targets were not met were in the areas of reading ability and enjoyment of reading. While the reading targets were not met across all sites and measures, it should be noted that improvements (and meeting of targets) were met at specific sites. For example, 4th grade participants at Franklin showed significant increases in reading comprehension from pre- to post-tests, as well as improvement in vocabulary. Third grade students at Harding demonstrated improvement in vocabulary and phonics skills. At Ellwood, 3rd grade students showed improvement in phonics skills. **Furthermore, across all sites, results suggest that instead of losing 2-3 months in reading achievement, as is typical of low-income children, FITS participants were prevented from this loss and instead, showed 1 month gains in reading achievement, particularly comprehension and phonics.**

TO WHAT EXTENT DO FITS PARTICIPANTS POSSESS HEALTHY ASSETS (E.G., EMPOWERMENT, SOCIAL COMPETENCIES, ETC.) AND CHARACTER COUNTS! PILLARS?

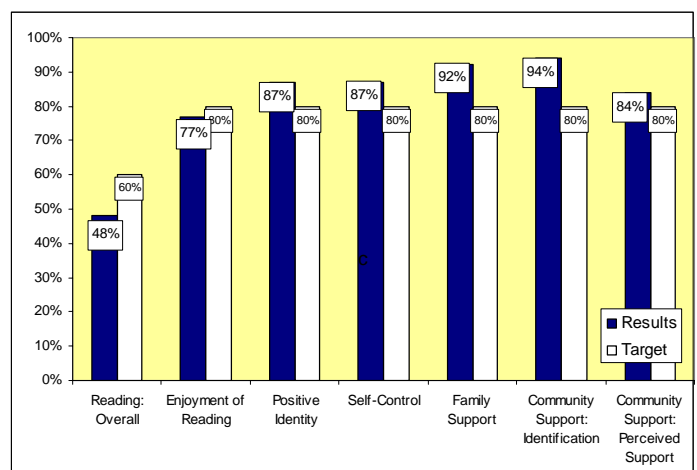
In general, the majority of this year's FITS participants indicated possessing positive identity, family support, achievement motivation, having role models with high expectations, and being in a supportive community (FITS) that values children. Furthermore, most of the participants indicated demonstrating the Character

Counts' pillars of respect, fairness, and good citizenship. In contrast, positive self-control, delay of gratification, constructive use of time, resistance skills, planning and decision-making, empathy, and perceived safety were noted as the most problematic areas in terms of the percent of participants showing these assets. Thus, these are areas that should continue to be targeted and addressed by future FITS programs. Furthermore, in comparison to last year, results are fairly stable.

WHAT DID PARTICIPANTS AND PARENTS OF THE FITS PROGRAM THINK ABOUT IT?

Participants and their parents overwhelmingly liked the FITS program. The highest rated program components among general program participants included field trips, science activities/experiences, FITS adults and program leaders. While the least rated item among participants were the literacy activities, parents really liked that their children were exposed to more academics and felt that these experiences would better prepare their children for school in the fall. Parents also commented that they liked the field trips that their children attended, the quality of care that was being provided, and the opportunity their children had to interact with others.

Figure 2. 2007 FITS Evaluation Results



DETAILED RESULTS

HOW EFFECTIVE WAS FITS IN ACCOMPLISHING ITS INTENDED GOALS? DID THIS VARY WITH DIFFERENT TYPES OF PARTICIPANTS (E.G., GENDER) AND SITES?

TARGET #1 – 60% OF PARTICIPANTS WILL DISPLAY GAINS IN READING COMPREHENSION, PHONICS, AND VOCABULARY SKILLS.

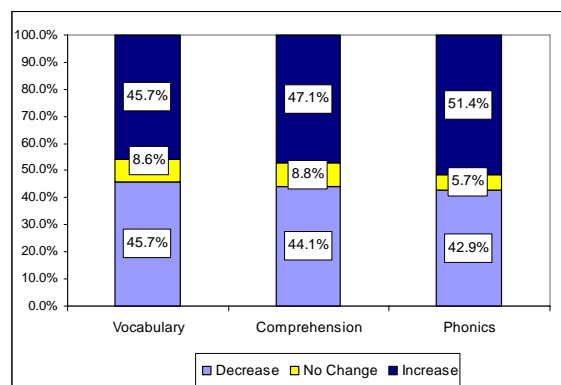
I read more fluently and I know how to comprehend every word. I read a little faster and I learned how to read better out loud.
--FITS Participant

As previously noted, as a smaller-scale evaluation, only students entering the 3rd or 4th grades were included in the evaluation of reading outcomes. After review of the intended literacy instruction to be provided to FITS participants (prior to program inception), it was determined that literacy instruction would primarily target reading comprehension, phonics, and vocabulary skills. While the focus of this goal is that *gains* be made by FITS participants, it should also be noted that given that summer loss is likely to occur among low-income children, even maintenance (and thus, prevention of summer loss) is a positive finding.

For all skills, less than 60% of participants (the stated target) tested showed improvement in test scores, see Figure 3. Across all measures, 48% of participants demonstrated gains in reading. Thus, this goal was not met. **However, given that summer loss in reading is a typical finding among this group of students, the gains observed among these students is still an impressive finding.**

Note that this finding is in contrast to last year's results in which this goal was met. **However, three caveats should be noted.** First, it is important to point out that this analysis was done with a small subset of students (3rd graders at Harding and Ellwood and 4th graders at Franklin, $n=35$) whereas last year's results included all FITS participants. Second, the student population is different compared to last year. All FITS participants at Harding and Franklin were at-risk academically. In contrast, the participants at Ellwood could not be at-risk. Last year, the only requirement was that they be of low socioeconomic status. Third, a different assessment was used this year as opposed to last year. This was due, in part, to the different reading skills being targeted for this age-group (e.g., including vocabulary) and the need to have an assessment that could be group-administered to students of various ability levels.

Figure 3. Change in Reading Skills from Pre- to Post-testing



- Across all measures, 48% demonstrated gains in reading and an additional 8% showed maintenance of their reading levels. Given that summer *loss* in reading is a typical finding among this group of students, this should be viewed as a positive finding.

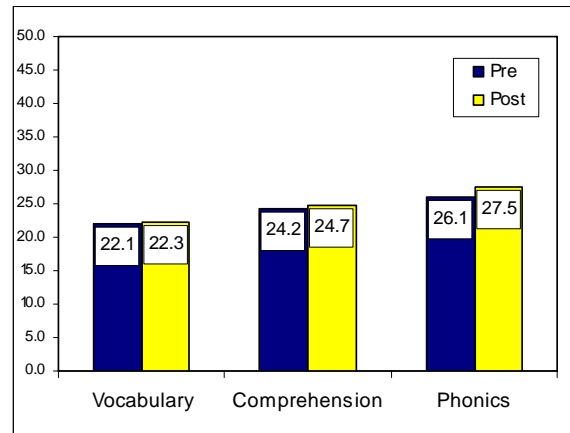
Goal 1 was not met. 48% of participants showed improvement in comprehension, vocabulary, and phonics from pre- to post-testing. However, more than half the students avoiding losing ground in reading over the summer

I think it's really helped me with reading because here you read with other people and they teach you how to read faster and you do activities that help you learn words, really hard words...and it's not boring.
 --FITS Participant

Figures 4 and 5 show the percentile rankings¹⁵ and grade equivalents for both time periods (pre and post). As shown, participants showed some growth, though small, in their percentile ranking relative to the national norm sample that took the ITBS. Examination of the grade equivalents shows that over the summer, students gained approximately one month of knowledge in comprehension and phonics skills. Given that summer *loss* is the typical outcome, this small gain should be viewed as a positive finding.

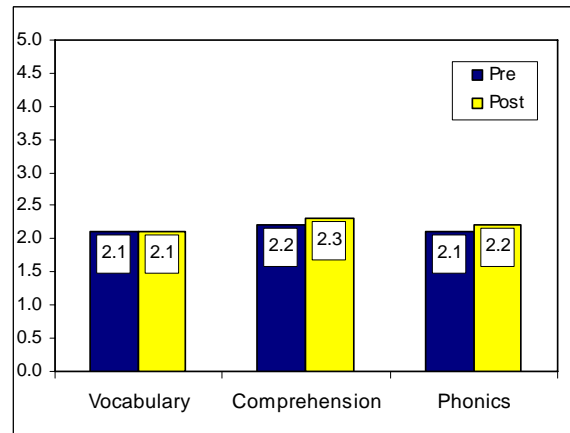
¹⁵ Percentile ranks indicate the relative standing of a student in comparison with other students in the norm (reference) groups who took the test at a comparable age. Since percentile ranks do not represent equal units, and since their interpretation is limited to the reference group from which they were derived, percentile ranks should not be compared and are best used for reporting scores when position in relation to the reference group is of primary interest.

Figure 4. Reading Skills: Percentile Rankings at Pre and Post-testing



- Participants showed small gains in nationally-normed percentile rankings (.2 to 1.4) over the course of FITS.

Figure 5. Reading Skills: Grade Equivalents at Pre and Post-testing



- Participants showed a one month gain in comprehension and phonics skills over the course of FITS.

Although goal 1 was not met, it should be noted that students gained approximately one month of knowledge in comprehension and phonics skills. Since summer loss is what typically occurs among low socioeconomic children, this is a positive finding.

In order to understand if results varied by subgroups, growth among different subgroups of participants was examined. The subgroups included gender and grade level¹⁶. Results showed no significant differences between males versus females, and 3rd versus 4th grade students. This means that the amount of growth within these different subgroups of participants was similar.

Analysis by subgroups showed that changes in performance were consistent among females and males, and 3rd and 4th grade participants.

ARE THERE DIFFERENCES IN READING SKILL CHANGES BETWEEN THE READING INTERVENTION MODELS BEING IMPLEMENTED ACROSS THE VARIOUS SITES?

Given the differences in the types of children participating in FITS at the various sites, as well as the distinct literacy instruction being provided at each site, analyses were performed to examine changes in literacy instruction within each site. Note that given the variability in students tested at each site, including ability level, grade levels, and form of the test given (below or on-level), comparisons between sites should be interpreted with caution.

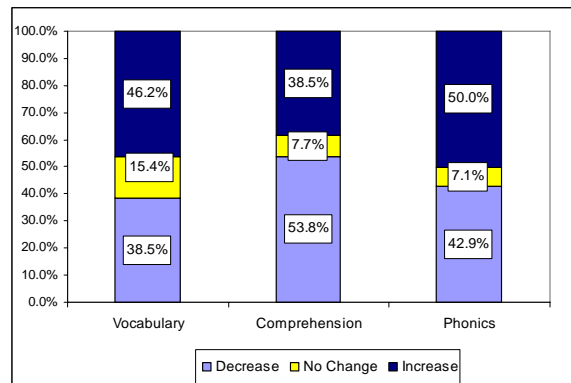
Harding

At Harding, where teachers used the *Summer Adventures in Reading* program while supplementing with their own curriculum, and provided approximately 1.5

¹⁶ Note that there was very little variability by ethnicity and as such, comparisons between Hispanics and non-Hispanics could not be made. In addition, unlike last year, information on Limited English Proficiency and special education status was not available.

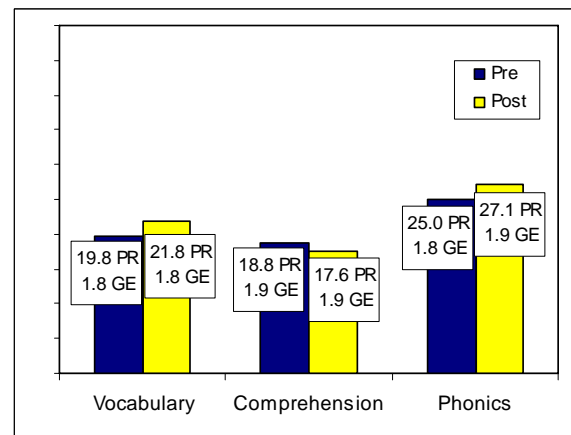
hours of instruction on literacy skills each day, results showed that goals were not met among 3rd graders tested, see Figure 6. However, improvement (as measured by gains in percentile rankings and grade equivalents) were observed in the areas of vocabulary and phonics, see Figure 7. In contrast, a slight decrease was observed in reading comprehension skills from pre- to post-testing. Participants' low literacy skills are also of note; compared to the national sample who took the ITBS, **Harding participants were ranked at the 19th to 25th percentile indicating that these students are truly in need of intervention services.**

Figure 6. Change in Reading Skills from Pre- to Post-testing-Harding



*Based on 14 students tested.

Figure 7. Percentile Rankings (PR) and Grade Equivalents (GE) from Pre- to Post-testing-Harding



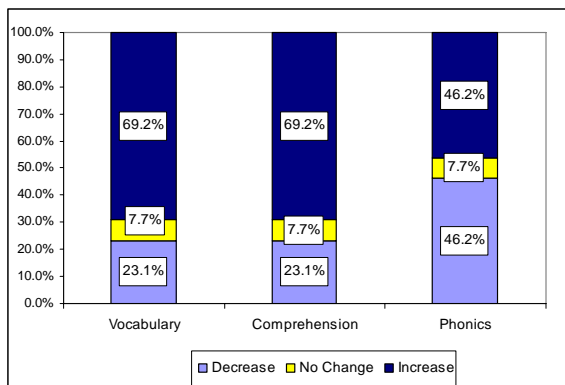
*Note: Students are entering 3rd grade.

While targeted goals were not met at Harding, an increase in vocabulary and phonics skills was observed among 3rd graders (as measured by percentile rankings and grade equivalents).

Franklin

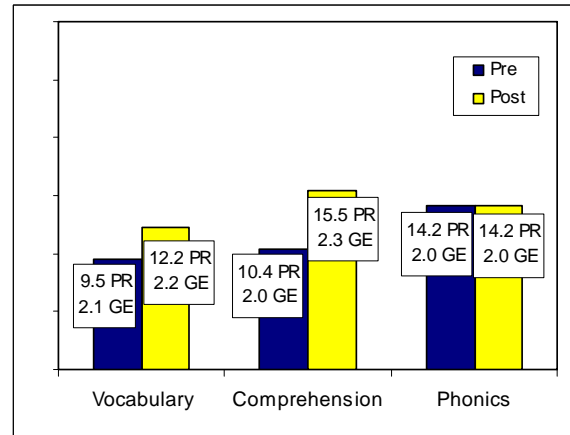
In Franklin, where teachers used various resources and provided their own individualized curriculum to meet the needs of their 4th grade students, results showed that goals *were* met in the areas of vocabulary and reading comprehension. Furthermore, there was *significant* improvement in the area of reading comprehension, $t(12)=2.18, p=.05$. That is, we can be 95% confident that the change observed in reading comprehension is real and unlikely due to chance, see Figures 8-9. Again, the low literacy levels of students at this site are also of note. **Franklin participants were ranked at the 9th to 14th percentile indicating that these students are truly in need of intervention services.**

Figure 8. Change in Reading Skills from Pre- to Post-testing-Franklin



*Based on 13 students tested.

Figure 9. Percentile Rankings (PR) and Grade Equivalents (GE) from Pre- to Post-testing-Franklin



*Note: Students are entering 4th grade.

At Franklin, reading comprehension and vocabulary goals were met. That is, over 60% of 4th grade participants at Franklin demonstrated gains in these areas. Furthermore, students showed significant increases in reading comprehension.

Ellwood

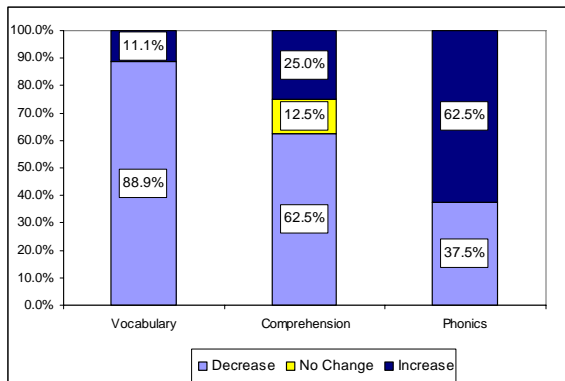
Program leaders administered the *Summer Adventures in Reading* program in Ellwood at the tested grade level. Of note is that this is a remedial program, whereas participants were not academically at-risk and as such, a number may not have been in need of reading remediation. It should further be noted that subsequent information obtained indicated that reading comprehension, phonics, and fluency skills were primarily targeted at the grade level tested (3rd) and unlike Harding and Franklin, structured literacy instruction occurred approximately 60 minutes as opposed to 1.5 hours.

Results showed that goals *were* met in the area of phonics, see Figure 10. Indeed, students improved by 3 percentiles (or 3 months worth of phonics gains). However,

in the areas of reading comprehension and vocabulary (not targeted at this site) results showed that the majority of students tested showed decreases in these areas, see Figures 10-11. In comparison to the other sites, the higher literacy levels of students at this site are of note; this is consistent with the types of students that were to be served at Ellwood.

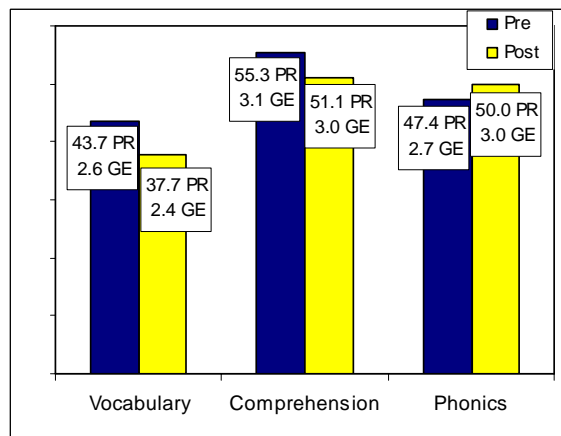
At Ellwood, improvement in phonics skills was observed. Over 60% of participants at Ellwood demonstrated gains in this area. However, students also showed declines in reading comprehension and vocabulary.

Figure 10. Change in Reading Skills from Pre- to Post-testing-Ellwood



*Based on 9 students tested.

Figure 11. Percentile Rankings (PR) and Grade Equivalents (GE) from Pre- to Post-testing-Ellwood



*Note: Students are entering 3rd grade.

In summary, the results show that gains observed depended on the site and the literacy skill being measured. Franklin showed the most gains, with improvement in both comprehension and vocabulary, whereas Harding students showed gains in vocabulary and phonics. In Ellwood, improvement was evident in phonics, but decreases were observed in the other measured areas. These differences between sites are likely a function of the variability in the types of students served and in the way the program was implemented. Teachers at Franklin aimed at individualizing instruction and curriculum according to the needs of the students. While teachers and program leaders at the other sites also did this to some extent, qualitative and quantitative information indicates that Franklin teachers were much more selective in the resources used so that individual student needs could be met and tended to target specific literacy areas. Furthermore, some teachers were reading specialists. A more collaborative relationship between FITS program staff and teachers was also noted. In addition, it must be noted that students tested were also an older group (4th grade) in comparison to the other sites. Nevertheless, all these factors likely impacted the more positive findings observed at Franklin.

Perceived changes in literacy ability were also obtained from parents, program leaders, and reading teachers. In general, parents were more likely to indicate that they perceived improvement in reading ability. In contrast, results from program leaders and teachers were more in line with

the findings presented herein, see Figure 12. In particular, depending on the reading skill, 33% to 70% of teachers and program leaders indicated that their students showed notable improvement (i.e., some to much improvement). For example, in the area of reading comprehension, 86% of parents perceived some to much improvement whereas only 67% of teachers and 62% of program leaders perceived improvement in their participants comprehension skills.

I think the morning reading groups and activities produced the greatest change, not only in reading but also in their ability to think in new ways.

--Program Leader

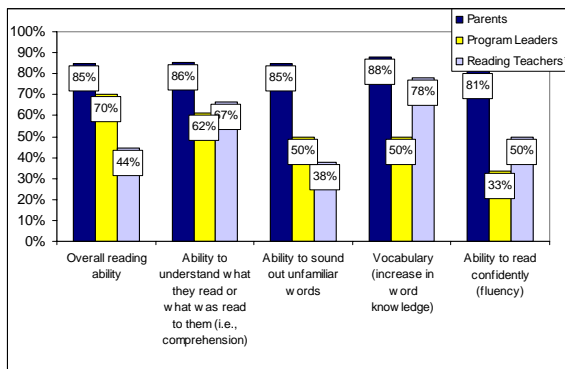
The morning summer program has been great. Our teacher was wonderful and the kids are always excited to learn and improve.

--Program Leader

The FITS program is an excellent program because my daughter has advanced tremendously in reading and comprehension.

--Parent

Figure 12. Percent of Parents, Program Leaders, and Reading Teachers Indicating Improvement in Reading Skills



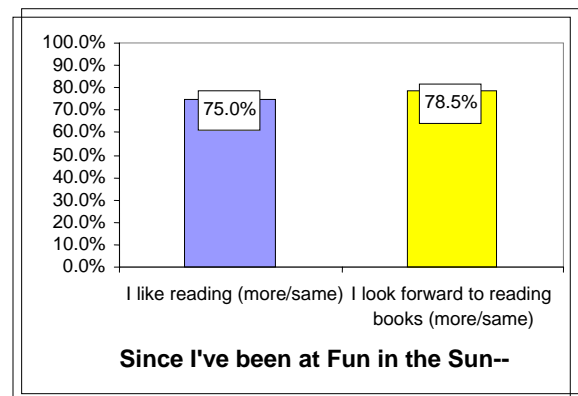
*Reading teachers were only at Harding and Franklin.

- Parents tended to differ in their perceptions of participants' reading ability as compared to program leaders and teachers. More parents tended to perceive improvement.

TARGET 2: 80% OF GENERAL PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS WILL MAINTAIN OR DISPLAY A GAIN IN POSITIVE PERCEPTIONS OF READING

A retrospective measure was included in the student survey in which 4th through 6th grade¹⁷ participants were explicitly asked (during week 6) to make judgments about perceived changes they had experienced as a result of FITS. That is, participants were encouraged to think back and make a choice about possible changes (i.e., less, more, same) in their attitudes about reading. Results showed that, on average, 77% of program participants gained or maintained an appreciation for reading over the course of FITS, see Figure 13. That is, these participants indicated that since being at FITS, they liked reading more or about the same.

Figure 13. Percent of Participants' Showing Improvement or Maintenance in Liking for Reading



- Across both measures, 3/4 of FITS participants showed gains or maintenance of their attitudes towards reading.

17 Given that students in these grade levels can more easily understand and communicate their attitudes (and the smaller-scale nature of this evaluation), the evaluation focused on the attitudes of these older participants.

Participants fell just short of the target for positive perceptions of reading (80%). About 77% continued to like reading or showed gains in their attitudes towards reading.

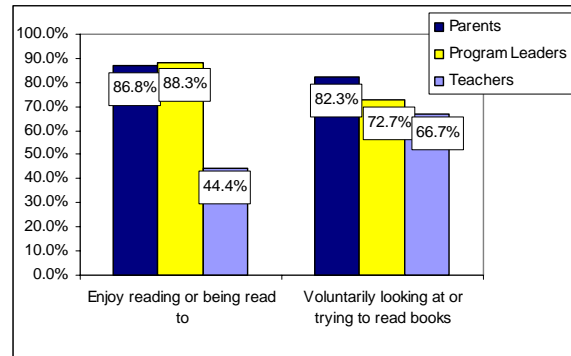
Furthermore, analysis of gains by subgroups of grade levels, gender, years at FITS, and sites showed that liking for reading was consistent across all sites and subgroups of participants.

The percent of students perceiving gains and maintenance of attitudes towards reading is lower in comparison to last year (91% for 4-6th graders). One potential explanation is that the increased focus on academics during this year’s FITS may have “burned out” students and that therefore, their attitudes were affected. As previously noted, however, there were no significant differences by site. Furthermore, Franklin (66%) and Canalino (63%) participants showed the least positive perceptions of reading; in contrast, participants at Harding (85%) and Ellwood (89%) had the highest perceptions. Given that there was a more expanded academic component at Harding and Franklin, one would expect less positive attitudes at these sites if academic burnout was a contributing factor. However, this was not the case.

As shown in Figure 14, parents and program leaders also perceived positive changes in participants’ liking for reading (“some to much improvement”). While teachers at Harding and Franklin perceived positive changes as well, the extent to which they noted “some to much improvement” was less as compared to parents and program leaders.

I’ve noticed that my child reads books on his own. He seems to like reading more, thanks to FITS.
--Parent

Figure 14. Percent of Parents, Program Leaders, and Teachers Indicating Improvement in Enjoyment of Reading



- A higher percentage of parents and program leaders perceived some to much improvement in participants’ enjoyment of reading as compared to teachers.

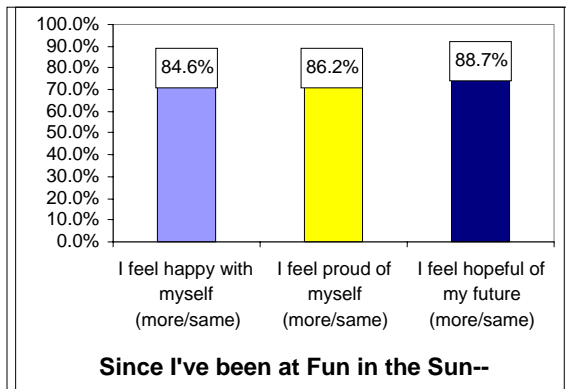
TARGET 3: 80% OF GENERAL PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS WILL MAINTAIN OR DISPLAY A GAIN IN POSITIVE IDENTITY

I feel special about myself because I’ve gotten to know other people and they make me feel better about myself.
--FITS Participant

[FITS] has made me feel better about myself because I am able to accomplish things.
--FITS Participant

Examination of perceived changes in positive identity from student surveys revealed that, on average, 86.5% of participants in grades 4-6 showed maintenance or gains in their positive identity. That is, these participants indicated that since being at FITS, they felt happy, proud of themselves, and hopeful of their future more or the same. Thus, overall FITS participants met this goal, see Figure 15. Note that this percentage is only slightly lower than last year’s result of 89% for this age group.

Figure 15. Percent of Participants' Indicating Maintenance or Gain in Positive Identity



- Across all measures, over 80% of FITS participants showed gains or maintenance of their positive identity.

The positive identity goal was met. Approximately 86% of participants showed gains or maintenance in their positive identity.

Furthermore, analysis by subgroups of grade levels, gender, years at FITS, and sites showed that, with the exception of site, positive identity was consistent across subgroups of participants. That is, there were differences in positive identity by site only, $\chi^2=14.49, p=.03$. As shown in Table 5, with the exception of feeling happy, a lower percentage of participants at Franklin tended to indicate maintenance or gains in positive identity.

Table 5. Percent of Participants' Indicating Maintenance or Gain in Positive Identity by Site

	Ellwood	Franklin	Harding	Canalino
Feel happy	100%	81.3%	70.0%	90.0%
Feel Proud	100%	68.8%	80.0%	100%
Feel Hopeful / Future	100%	75.1%	100%	80.0%

She comes home positive and happy about everything she has done at FITS throughout the day.

--Parent

The program has taught her to value herself more. She is just so much more confident.

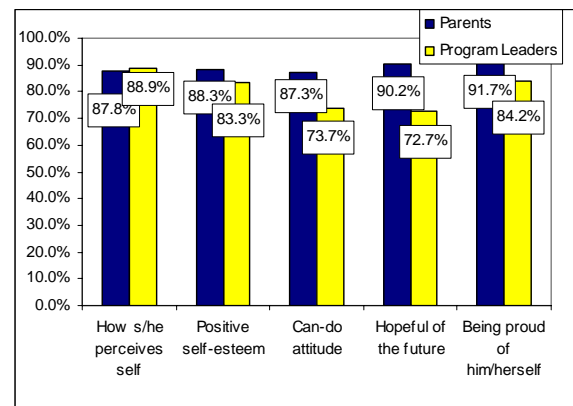
--Parent

Being in a group of 14 and spending so much time together has established very strong bonds. Nearly everybody is friends with each other. Because of this, there is a constant sense of community and that is very supportive for the kids and improves self-esteem.

--Program Leader

These findings are supported by parents and program leaders. As shown in Figure 16, in general, while both parents and program leaders perceived improvement in participants' positive identity, a smaller percentage of program leaders perceived some to much improvement. It is important to note that this *does not* reflect the extent to which participants' possessed positive identity. Rather, this measure reflects perceived changes in positive identity.

Figure 16. Percent of Parents and Program Leaders' Indicating Improvement in Positive Identity



- While both parents and program leaders perceived positive changes in the positive identity of participants, a higher percentage of parents perceived improvement.

In general, parents and program leaders perceived positive changes in participants' positive identity.

TARGET 4: 80% OF GENERAL PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS WILL MAINTAIN OR DISPLAY A GAIN IN SELF-CONTROL

FITS has helped me with self-control. I'm better able to do that now because when I get mad sometimes I think about FITS and the rules/consequences I learned.

--FITS Participant

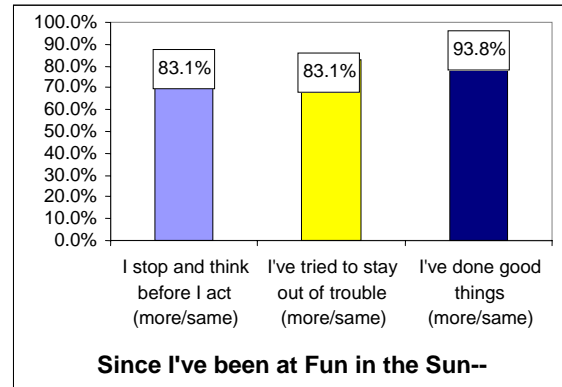
When [student] first started with the FITS program he was excessively rude, outspoken, and down-right mean to most of his classmates. At the beginning, his counselor, the family advocate, and I worked with [student] almost on a daily basis. As the summer continued, we saw less and less of [student] in the office. His mean temperament continued to dwindle. He used "thank you" and "please" more often than not. The improvements he made regarding his disruptive behavior were noticed by all his classmates. I truly believe that our constant and integrated reinforcement efforts made a substantial impact on his life over the course of this summer.

--FITS Program Administrator

When 4-6th grade participants were asked to make judgments about perceived changes in their self-control since being at FITS, approximately 87% of general program participants indicated that they gained or maintained their level of self-control over the course of FITS, see Figure 17. This is lower than last year's figure of 92%, using the same type of retrospective measure and including 4-6th grade participants. That being said, this goal was nonetheless met.

The goal for self-control was met. Approximately 87% of participants indicated maintaining or gaining in the area of self-control.

Figure 17. Percent of Participants' Indicating Maintenance or Gain in Self-Control (and engagement in positive behaviors)



- Across all measures, 87% of participants indicated that they showed gains or maintenance of their self-control since being at Fun in the Sun.

Furthermore, these results were consistent across gender, grade levels and years at FITS. Site specific differences were observed, however, $\chi^2=15.51, p=.02$. In particular, a higher percentage (64%) of participants at Franklin indicated that they tried to stay out of trouble *less* since being at FITS, as compared to participants at Harding (18%), Ellwood (0%), and Canalino (18%).

As shown in Figure 18, approximately 39-53% of program leaders perceived some to much improvement in self-control, as measured by being able to stop and think before acting and handling disagreements positively. When asked about interacting with others in a positive manner, improvements rates among program leaders increased to 83%. In contrast, and across all

items, over 80% of parents indicated some to much improvement.

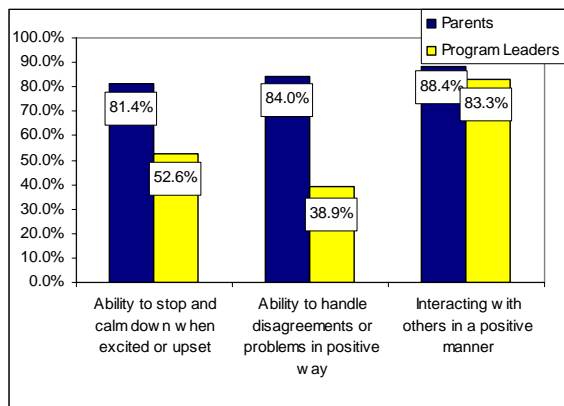
The program has showed the kids to be more responsible and to follow the rules and wait for their turns and to socialize appropriately with others.

--Parent

Of note is that, qualitative feedback obtained by program leaders indicated that self-control was by far the least improved area among participants. When asked for the area in which participants showed the least improvement, 89% indicated that negative behavioral issues (e.g., being disrespectful, not listening, etc.) showed the least improvement. As one program leader noted:

I saw the least improvement in self control. I really tried to work on self-control with my boys but they really found it to be a difficult concept to learn. I think that they would understand what they needed to do to control their behavior but would easily be distracted by the 13 other boys. They still have room for improvement.

Figure 18. Percent of Parents and Program Leaders' Indicating Improvement in Self-Control



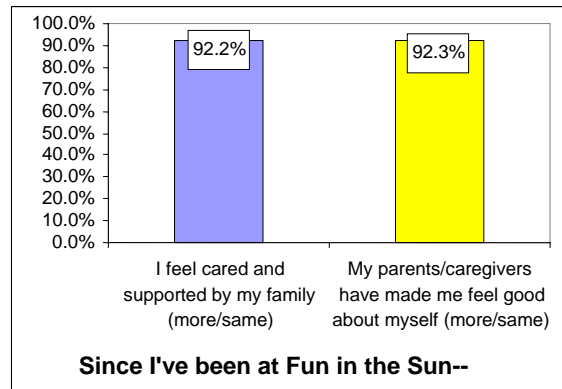
- Less program leaders perceived positive changes in self-control than parents.

Program leaders tended to rate self-control as the least improved area in comparison to all other target areas.

TARGET 5: 80% OF PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS WILL MAINTAIN OR DISPLAY A GAIN IN THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF CARING AND SUPPORT FROM PARENTS

Examination of changes and maintenance in perceptions of family support from student surveys revealed that approximately 92% of participants showed maintenance/gains in their feelings. Thus, this goal was met. In addition, this percentage is similar to that obtained last year (93%), using the same measure and age-group. These results were also consistent across all subgroups, including grade levels, gender, years at FITS, and sites.

Figure 19. Percent of Participants Indicating Maintenance or Gain in Family Support



- Across both measures, 92% of FITS participants showed gains or maintenance of their perceptions of family support.

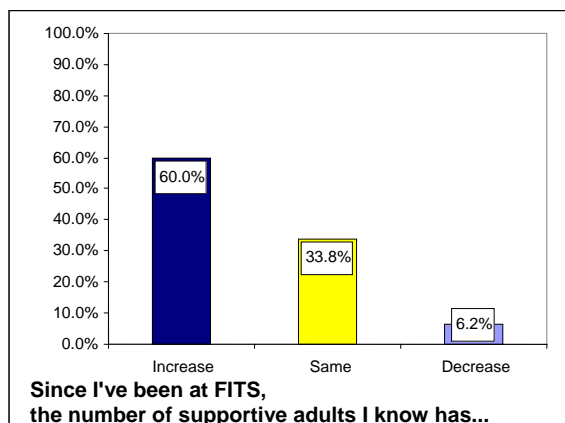
*The family support goal was met.
Approximately 92% of participants
maintained their perceptions of family
support.*

TARGET 6: 80% OF YOUTH WILL MAINTAIN OR DISPLAY A GAIN IN THEIR ABILITY TO IDENTIFY CARING, SUPPORTIVE, NON-PARENTAL ADULTS

I've gotten to know different people [during Lunch Bunch] and more about them. And they play with us. Sometimes they bring us treats which is nice. We also talk about the future and what I might do which is nice too.
--FITS Participant

Participants entering 4-6th grades were asked to indicate whether they perceived an increase, decrease or no change in the number of supportive, non-parental adults they knew. Survey results showed that a high proportion of students, 60%, perceived an increase in the number of adults they thought were supportive, and another 34% perceived a maintenance in their ability to identify supportive adults, see Figure 20. Thus, this goal was met. These results were also consistent across all subgroups, including grade levels, gender, years at FITS, and sites.

Figure 20. Percent of Participants Indicating Supportive Non-Parental Adults Identified by FITS Participants



- More than half of the participants surveyed perceived an increase in their ability to identify caring and supportive adults that were not their family members.

FITS participants met the goal of showing gains or maintenance in their ability to identify supportive non-parental adults. Over 94% were able to do so.

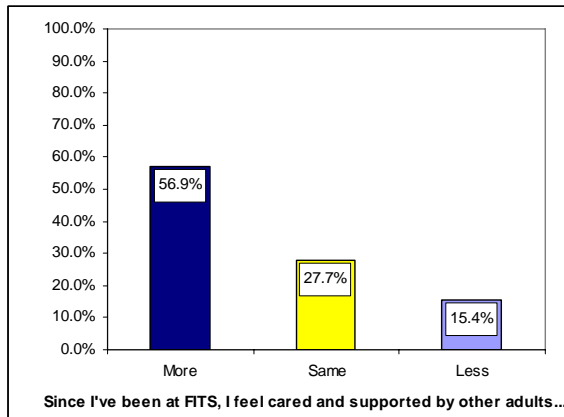
TARGET 7: 80% OF YOUTH WILL MAINTAIN OR DISPLAY A GAIN IN THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF CARING AND SUPPORT FROM NON-PARENTAL ADULTS

[My program leader] is really supportive and I really like him because he'll listen when you need to talk to him...like the other Program Leaders. Lunch Bunch [people] talk to you and this makes you feel more confident...and you can go up to people and talk to them. The teachers in the morning, they help you a lot too; they're always there to help you.

--FITS Participant

Examination of changes and maintenance of perceptions of community support revealed that approximately 84% of participants showed maintenance or gains, see Figure 21. In comparison to last year's results which included the same measure and age group (91%), this represents a decrease in their perceptions of community support. Nonetheless, this goal was met. It should be noted that these results were consistent across all subgroups, including grade levels, gender, years at FITS, and sites.

Figure 21. Percent of Participants' Indicating Maintenance or Gain in Community Support



- More than half of FITS participants showed gains or maintenance of their perceptions of community support. Thus, this goal was met.

The community support goal was met. Across all participants, 84% of youth maintained or showed gains in their perceptions of community support.

FITS children love this part of the day [Lunch Bunch]. The children seem to really connect and have tons of fun with the Lunch Bunch.

-- FITS Administrator

TO WHAT EXTENT DO FITS PARTICIPANTS POSSESS HEALTHY ASSETS (E.G., EMPOWERMENT, SOCIAL COMPETENCIES, ETC.) AND CHARACTER COUNTS! PILLARS?

I think the FITS program's emphasis on responsibility has greatly improved the children's sense of responsible duty and overall character development.

--Program Leader

[FITS] has taught me to be more respectful with people, how to help others when they need it, and to be a trustworthy [person] with everybody.

--FITS Participant

My children learned so much. They learned a lot about Character Counts. They even did most of the pillars!

--Parent

Prior evaluations of the FITS program have examined the extent to which participants display *Healthy Assets* and pillars of Character Counts! These represent characteristics of youth development that are central to helping children/youth grow up to be healthy, responsible and caring adults. In order to help the United Way of Santa Barbara County understand trends¹⁸ of current participants in comparison to prior participants, participants were asked about the extent to which they displayed key assets.

Table 6 displays the assets measured and the percent of current and prior year FITS participants that displayed these assets. Because most of the prior evaluations only surveyed 4-6th graders, and this year also included only 4-6th graders, only this subgroup is included in the table. It is important to note that some items designed to measure a particular asset may have changed over the years. In addition, methods for calculating percents differed in 2004, see table footnote b. As such, comparisons should be viewed with caution. With this caveat in mind, in general there is an increasing trend with more participants indicating having assets over the years. In comparison to last year, results are fairly stable, with slight increases and decreases. In addition, a high percentage of this year's FITS participants indicated possessing positive identity, family support, achievement motivation, having role models with high expectations, and being in a

¹⁸ It is important to understand that although there were some returning FITS participants, there was also a significant portion of new participants. As such, this should not be viewed as a longitudinal comparison.

supportive community (FITS) that values children.

Furthermore, examination of this information reveals that positive self-control, delay of gratification, constructive use of time, resistance skills, planning and

decision-making, empathy, and perceived safety are the most problematic in terms of the percent of participants (65% or less) showing these assets. Thus, these are areas that should continue to be targeted and addressed by future FITS programs.

Table 6. Percent of Participants Who Agreed to Healthy Asset Items

Asset Category	Asset	Item	2007	2006	2005	2004 ^b
External Assets						
Support	Family Support ^a	I get along with my family.	89%	88%	84%	81%
		My parents/caregivers show me in lots of ways that they love me.	99%	93%	91%	83%
		My parents/caregivers give me help and support.	99%	93%	90%	88%
	Positive Family Communication	If I'm worried about something, I can talk to my parents/caregivers about it.	74%	74%	--	70%
	Adults at FITS ^a	Adults at FITS really care about me.	74%	75%	67%	--
		Adults at FITS make me feel good about myself. (rev)	69%	81%	80%	--
Empowerment	Community Values Children	Adults at FITS make me feel important.	75%	73%	77%	--
		Adults at FITS listen to me when I have something to say.	89%	78%	72%	--
		Adults at FITS tell me when I do something good.	83%	88%	77%	--
	Service to Others	I try to help other people. (rev.)	75%	83%	65%	66% ^c
	Safety	Sometimes I am afraid that someone might hurt me. (rev.)	59%	24%	15%	35% ^c
Boundaries and Expectations	High Expectations	Adults at FITS want me to do the best I can. (rev.)	89%	83%	86%	--
		My parents/caregivers expect me to be the best I can.	94%	91%	74%	78%
	Adult Role Models	My parents show me what is right and wrong.	99%	93%	--	82%
	Family Boundaries	My parents know what I'm doing most of the time.	83%	76%	--	67%
Constructive Use of Time	Time at Home	When I'm at home, I spend most of my free time playing video games or watching TV.	58%	59%	--	69%
Commitment to Learning	Achievement Motivation	I try as hard as I can to do my best work. (rev)	85%	92%	--	83%
	Reading Pleasure ^a	I like reading things for fun.	75%	65%	65%	64%

Table 6 continued. Percent of Participants Who Agreed to Asset Items

Internal Assets						
Social Competencies	Empathy	I care about other people's feelings.	63%	74%	82%	61%
	Positive Self-Control ^a	I can calm myself down pretty quickly when I get mad.	48%	60%	56%	31%
		I stop talking when adults tell me to stop.	65%	63%	67%	45%
	Peaceful Resolution Conflict	If someone hit or pushed me for no reason, the first thing I'd do would be hit or push them right back.	--	41%	20%	10%
	Planning & Decision Making	Most of the time, I think carefully about what to do before I decide things.	65%	71%	--	45%
	Affiliation	I can easily make and keep friends.	72%	71%	--	67%
	Resistance Skills	I am able to say no when someone wants me to do things that are wrong or dangerous.	63%	83%	--	69%
		I can stay away from people who will get me in trouble.(rev)	62%	74%	--	49%
Positive Identity ^a	Self-Esteem	Most of the time, I like myself	83%	88%	74%	51%
		Most of the time, I am glad to be me.	89%	89%	--	71%
	Personal Power	If I set a goal, I feel as if I can reach it.	77%	84%	--	63%
	Positive View of Personal Future	I feel as if I will be happy and successful as I grow up.	92%	83%	--	61%
		I feel hopeful when I think about my future.	89%	88%	--	60%
Thriving Indicator	It's easy for me to wait for something I want.		60%	63%	--	41%
Risk Behavior Patterns^d	Damaged property just for fun (e.g., breaking windows, scratching car, spraying paint on buildings or sidewalks, etc.)		34%	18%	18%	13%
	Hit or beat someone up		48%	33%	47%	28%
	Felt really sad or depressed		68%	64%	73%	57%
	Smoke cigarettes		8%	2%	5%	4%
	Have alcohol to drink (not including for religious ceremonies)		11%	8%	23%	14%
	Used illegal drug. (rev.)		--	3%	6%	6%

^aThese items do not constitute the entire scale used to measure attainment of goal.

^bThe total percents include percent of missing data (i.e., it is not the valid percent without missing data). Valid percents of which the 2005-2007 totals are based on, produce higher percentages. As such, the percents listed here are likely slightly lower than the valid percents and therefore, comparisons should be made with caution.

^c Because some items were reworded, the percent reported for the entire asset is reported here.

^d For 2004-2005, results represent % of participants who did these activities at least once in the past year. For 2006 and 2007, the results represent % of participants who did these activities in the past month. Therefore, comparisons should be done with caution.

(rev) = Revised item: these are not worded exactly the same. Therefore, comparisons should be done with caution.

-- Not available

In addition, information pertaining to the pillars of Character Counts! were also included in student surveys. Table 7 provides the results of these surveys. In addition, to ease comparisons between 2007 and 2006 participants, results from both years are provided. Results show that most of the participants indicated demonstrating

respect, fairness, and good citizenship. That is, most participants indicated that they possessed these pillars. In addition, in comparison to last year, there was a general drop in the percentage of participants indicating that they demonstrated the Character Counts! pillars.

Table 7. Percent of Participants Who Agreed to Character Counts! Pillar Items

Pillars	Item ^a	Grades 4-6 (Post)	
		2006	2007
	Since I've been at FITS, I feel like I am a Character Counts! kid more.	56%	46%
Trustworthiness	I tell the truth, even when its hard.	62%	60%
	I stand up for what I believe in, even when others don't agree with me.	74%	74%
Respect	I am respectful to others.	77%	71%
Responsibility	I do what I am supposed to do.	77%	68%
	I stop and think before I act.	66%	57%
	I admit when I make a mistake or get into trouble.	76%	63%
Fairness	I play by the rules.	84%	69%
	I share and listen to what others have to say.	81%	77%
Caring	I care about people's feelings.	74%	63%
	I help other people.	84%	75%
Citizenship	I speak up for others who are being taken advantage of.	76%	77%

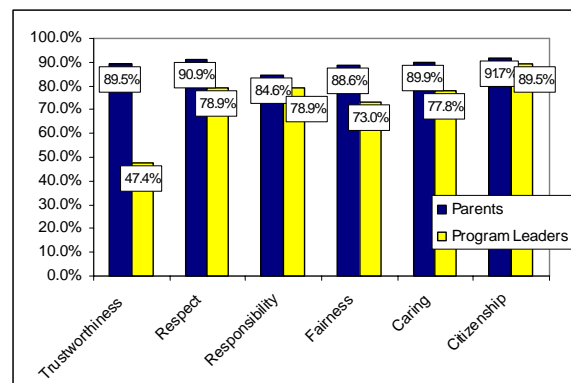
^aIt should be noted that some items listed in the assets table can also apply to these pillars. In addition, items listed here are similar to those in the Positive Values Healthy Asset. However, because in the original Search Institute survey, these items are preceded with "My parents tell me it is important that I... (e.g., tell the truth)" they are excluded from the Healthy Assets table and included here.

I think the program and the staff work very hard to make sure every student has a positive self image. We reward those who are outstanding, recognize those who are a positive influence and encourage everyone to be a solid citizen within the FITS community.

--Program Leader

Furthermore, parents and program leaders were asked about perceived improvements on Character Counts! pillars. As shown in Figure 22, most parents and program leaders saw the greatest improvement in the areas of responsibility, respect, caring, and citizenship.

Figure 22. Perceived Improvement on Character Counts! Pillars-Parents and Program Leaders



WHAT DID PARTICIPANTS AND PARENTS OF THE FITS PROGRAM THINK ABOUT IT?

I liked the field trips. They were really fun. I enjoyed everything. I made new friends and I learned a lot.

--FITS Participant

FITS participants and their parents were asked about their satisfaction with the entire 2007 FITS program and with specific elements of FITS. As shown in Figure 23, the highest rated items among general program participants included field trips, science activities/experiences, FITS adults and program leaders.

I liked that their minds were constantly kept busy. Also the trips they were taken on were nice because some were to places that the parents can't always take them to.

--Parent

Program leaders also noted that the field trips had a positive impact on the participants. As two program leaders noted:

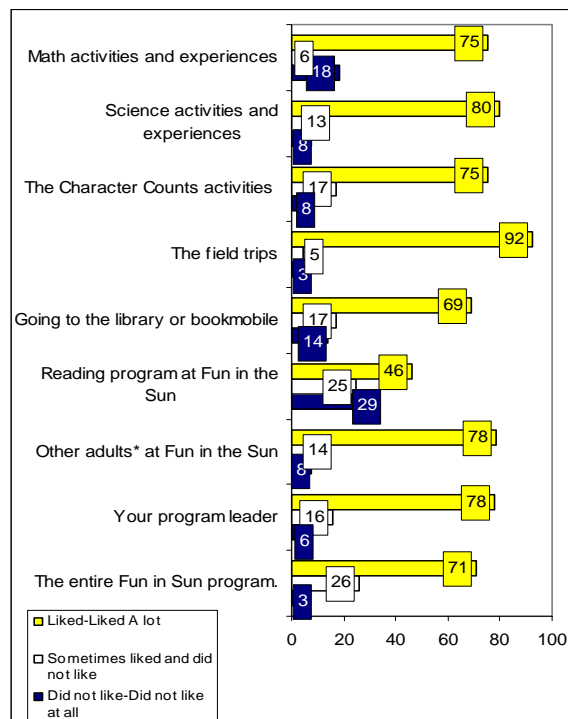
The kids loved going on field trips. It impacted the children positively because it sparked their curiosity. I saw that they asked the most questions during this time

--Program Leader

I think the field trips such as the museum, botanic gardens, and zoo helped provide a positive impact because the kids get to see and learn about things that they probably would not have the opportunity to do without FITS. I think that these outings are great opportunities to teach appropriate public behavior. My boys really learned a lot from these trips and enjoyed them as well

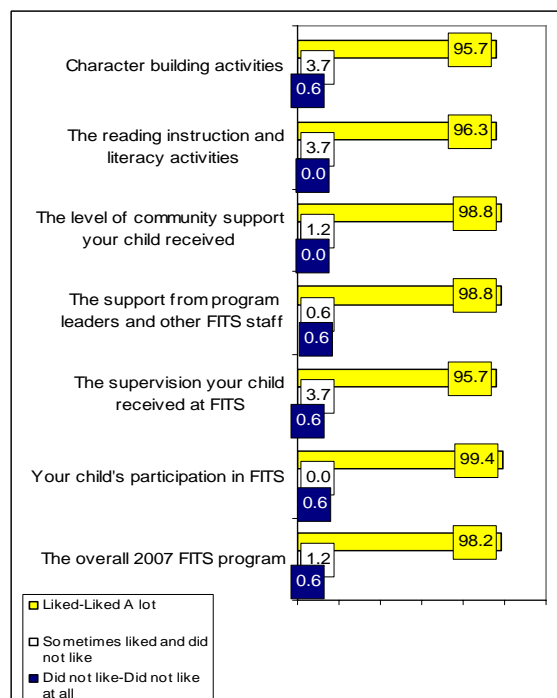
--Program Leader

Figure 23. General Participants' Satisfaction with FITS



*These include site coordinators, family advocates, Lunch Bunch people.

Figure 24. Parents' Satisfaction with FITS



Among participants, reading activities were liked least (46%). To put another way, the more academic portion of the FITS program was not liked by 29% of participants. In contrast, a highly rated area among parents was the academic component. In particular, a number of parents noted that the reading instruction their children received during FITS was the component that they liked most. As two parents noted:

I liked everything but most of all, I liked that there were [academic] classes during FITS so that she'll be better prepared for school.
--Parent

I liked that it was like summer school—but much more fun. It keeps my children from staying home and watching TV all day.
--Parent

Parents also commented that they liked the field trips that their children attended, the quality of care that was being provided, and the opportunity their children had to interact with others.

I liked the fact that my daughter is kept occupied in positive activities and is able to socialize with other kids. --Parent

I really liked the program because the kids are well taken care of. My daughters had a real good time and met new friends. They were also given food and clothes which was nice. --Parent

Parents also commented on the more extended hours (8-5 P.M.) and greatly appreciated the longer hours so that they could more easily drop off and pick up their children.

I especially liked that the hours were convenient for us. Although the kids came home tired, they were still happy.
--Parent

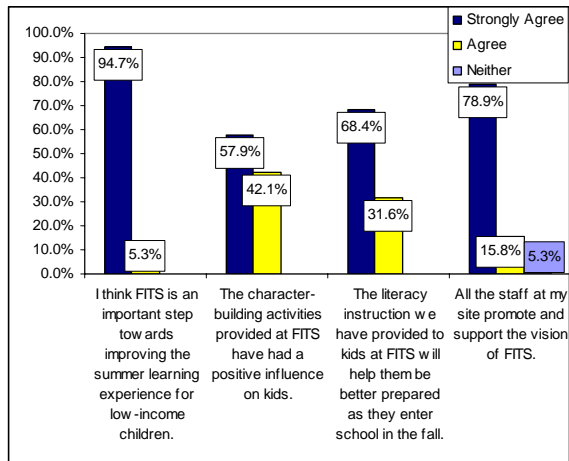
When parents were asked for things that they least liked about FITS, the vast majority indicated nothing—that is, they thought the program was good just the way it is. A few parents did mention discipline issues; interestingly, some noted that the rules were too strict whereas others noted they were too lax (or noted behavioral problems occurring within some groups). A couple of parents also suggested expanding the program to include more children.

In addition, feedback on the Interact Simulations that were used this year was also obtained from teachers and program leaders. For the most part, they found these activities engaging and the participants liked them. However, a couple of teachers noted that they were difficult (*Zoo* and *Into the Unknown-Math*) for their younger students and recommended the availability of other activities that were conducive to the developmental levels of their students.

Students really got into spelling wizards [Interact Simulation]. At the beginning of each week they usually complained that I gave them words that were too hard. But after a whole week of activities many of them scored 100%. Some students even worked on activities at home!
--Program Leader

Further information obtained from program leaders via surveys indicated that they all thought (1) the program was an important step towards improving the summer learning experiences of children, (2) the character building activities provided at FITS had a positive influence on children, (3) the literacy instruction students received would help children be better prepared for school, and (4) most indicated that the staff at their respective site promoted and supported the vision of FITS, see Figure 25.

Figure 25. Program Leaders' Perceptions of FITS



- All program leaders thought the program had a positive impact on the participants' character development and educational preparation.

In summary, participants and their parents were generally quite satisfied by the FITS program. While the reading portion was not rated highly by participants, parents and program leaders saw this part of the program as a valuable component that would help their children be better prepared for the upcoming school year.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The 2007 FITS program met its targets for the majority of goals, see Figure 26. Specifically, targets were met for general program participants in the areas of positive identity, self-control, family support and community support. While goals were not met for reading achievement and enjoyment

of reading, it should be noted that gains were observed. **In particular, results suggest that instead of losing 2-3 months in reading achievement, as is typical of low-income children, FITS participants were prevented from this loss and instead, showed 1 month gains in reading achievement, particularly in comprehension and phonics.**

Figure 26. FITS Outcome Targets and Results

Goal – General program participants will maintain or improve upon reading competence and positive perceptions of reading.

- **Target #1** – 60% of participants in 3rd grade will display gains in reading comprehension, phonics, and vocabulary skills.
- **Result #1** – 48% of participants demonstrated gains in reading (average across comprehension, phonics, and vocabulary)
- **Target #2** – 80% of participants will maintain or display a gain in positive perceptions of reading.
- **Result #2** – 77% of participants displayed maintenance or gains in positive perceptions of reading.

Goal – General program participants will maintain or improve their positive identity and positive self-control.

- **Target #3** – 80% of participants will maintain or display a gain in positive identity (i.e., self-concept and esteem, and positive view of personal future).
- **Result #3** – 87% of participants displayed maintenance or gains in positive identity.
- **Target #4** – 80% of participants will maintain or display a gain in positive self-control (i.e., thinking carefully before acting, engagement in positive behaviors, and disengagement in negative behaviors).
- **Result #4** – 87% of participants displayed maintenance or gains in self-control.

Goal – General program participants will maintain or improve perceptions of family support.

- **Target #5** – 80% of participants will maintain or display a gain in their perceptions of caring and support from parents/caregivers.
- **Result #5** – 92% of participants displayed maintenance or improvement in perceptions of family support.

Goal – General program participants will maintain or improve perceptions of community support.

- **Target #6** – 80% of participants will maintain or display a gain in their ability to identify caring, supportive, non-parental adults.
- **Result #6** – 94% of participants displayed maintenance or gains in their ability to identify caring, supportive, non-parental adults.
- **Target #7** – 80% of participants will maintain or display a gain in their perceptions of caring and support from non-parental adults.
- **Result #7** – 84% of participants displayed maintenance or improvement in perceptions of community support.

In summary, the program was quite successful in meeting the targeted goals. That being said, based on observations, feedback obtained from program staff, and the findings of this evaluation, recommendations for program improvement are provided.

FITS PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

First, given that this was the first year (and perhaps the first of many) of some substantial programmatic changes as described in this report and elsewhere¹⁹, this provides a unique opportunity to improve upon the program by identifying those aspects that worked, and those that did not. Indeed, as a result of the changes that occurred in the 2007 program, the United Way, along with key partners and stakeholders, should clearly articulate what they envision for the future. While this is always done following FITS programs, it is also important to revisit and discuss what they want the program to look like and what they hope to accomplish—and carefully plan accordingly. For example, changes in the characteristics of the target population can have profound effects and need to be carefully considered (e.g., are there going to be any recruitment challenges or are changes to program activities needed?). In short, advanced, collaborative planning is essential for the success of any program and this will undoubtedly help refine the FITS program even further. More specific recommendations follow.

- Recruitment efforts were challenging for this year's FITS. As a result of changes in the program and new selection criteria set forth by the Santa Barbara, Goleta, and Carpinteria School Districts, there were challenges faced in meeting the

additional criteria of (non)at-risk status, as well as numerical quotas at two sites. However, strategic recruitment efforts ultimately produced the targeted number of FITS participants (with additional youth on waiting lists). If FITS is to continue with partnerships with the school districts in which more stringent criteria are put into place, it is recommended that greater collaboration occur among the school districts, family advocates, and other FITS staff, and that recruitment efforts begin even earlier given the more unique population of students being targeted.

- If FITS wants to continue providing a more expanded academic component, as was provided this year through United Way's partnership with the Santa Barbara School District, clearly articulated roles and greater collaboration and communication among the school district and FITS staff is needed. While the program was successful in providing needed remediation to at-risk students, the general lack of consistency in behavioral expectations and the number of transitions (i.e., movement from one program component to another²⁰) made it challenging for some teachers and program leaders to manage their groups. In addition, the roles of program leaders and CITs during the academic component (unless this will not be the case in the future) needs to be clearly decided on and be consistent across all groups. Thus, it is important that there be more collaboration and discussion on roles and expectations, as well as support from all levels so that FITS participants can progress through the day seamlessly.

¹⁹ See the Girls Inc. Final Reports for more detailed information.

²⁰ This is especially problematic for at-risk youth.

- As was true last year, self-control and related-behavioral issues were most problematic over the course of FITS as noted by program leaders and teachers. It is again recommended that program administrators research and try other structured, research-based approaches to improving upon this area. For example, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory published a research synthesis of best practices in school and classroom discipline²¹. Potential options cited include: (1) reinforcement (verbal, symbolic, or tangible); (2) more explicit teaching in self-control skills (modeling plus teaching self-instruction, self-monitoring, and self-reinforcement); (3) prosocial skills training; (4) use of group contingencies; and (5) peer tutoring. Researching other specific discipline programs such as Responsible Thinking Process, Assertive Discipline, and Positive Approach to Discipline would also be beneficial.

Additionally, in order to fully realize this goal, more time and focus to the training of program leaders in this area is recommended. Related to this, and as discussed earlier, better collaboration and a more consistent approach to discipline is recommended between FITS staff and teachers if such a partnership is to continue in the upcoming year.

Furthermore, this year, FITS did not provide parental informational sessions on positive discipline and communication, with the exception of a mother/daughter session in Ellwood. While attendance has been less than ideal in prior FITS programs, it is recommended that these sessions again

be made available to parents through community-wide outreach efforts. In addition, it is important to keep in mind that such sessions can foster a greater sense of community. In sum, parental involvement in their children's lives, through open communication, is an important step toward promoting positive behaviors among children.

- As noted following last year's evaluation, reading research suggests that reading interventions have the greatest impact at the early primary grade levels (K-1). Therefore, FITS may want to consider putting greater efforts at recruiting students at these early grade levels since these students (1st grades) were least represented in this year's population. That being said, one of the reasons for the lower amount of 1st graders was because Harding did not accept children at these grade levels.
- FITS should continue to move toward a thematic approach in its programming (e.g., Canalino made great efforts to incorporate a theme to their daily activities). Thematic programming provides a framework for linking academic content to other program activities in ways that engage participants. Benefits of thematic programming include: (1) sustained participant interest, (2) continuity of wide-variety of summer activities, (3) deeper learning, (4) energizing staff, and (5) offering multiple opportunities for family involvement.

21 For a copy of this document:
<http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/5/cu9.html>

CONCLUSION

This year, FITS underwent a number of dynamic programmatic changes. Changes were made in order to reach out to more children and areas that are in need of programs such as this one. As can be expected in comprehensive programs undergoing restructuring, obstacles existed. However, challenges experienced were addressed and for the most, the program was able to flourish.

Indeed, a careful examination of elements associated with a successful summer program and FITS, leads to the conclusion that Fun in the Sun continues to meet the vast majority of these important components. According to the Center for Summer Learning at John Hopkins University, a leading institution in summer learning research, aspects that are associated with successful programs are as follows.

1. Intentional focus on learning

- ✓ We focus on quality instruction and intentionally reinforce academic skills.
- ✓ We provide extensive opportunities for enrichment.
- ✓ We offer a variety of well-organized learning activities to accommodate the needs of diverse learners.
- ✓ We hold and communicate high expectations for all young people in our programs.

2. Strong commitment to youth development

- ✓ We support young people in their development and in meeting their basic personal and social needs to be safe, feel cared for, belong, be useful, feel competent, be valued, and have influence.

- ✓ We provide opportunities for young people to build skills and competencies that allow them to function and contribute in their daily lives.
- ✓ We provide regular and ongoing opportunities for youth feedback, and we incorporate their feedback into our programs.
- ✓ We maintain a youth to staff ratio of 15:1 or less to allow youth to frequently interact with caring adults.

3. Proactive and preventative approach to summer learning

- ✓ We understand the implications of research on summer learning loss, and provide opportunities for all young people to advance their skills over the summer.
- ✓ We are committed to providing programs over multiple summers, and to offering a continuum of services.
- ✓ We consider the needs of special populations, including low-income and disadvantaged youth.

4. Advanced, collaborative planning

- ✓ We involve community stakeholders, including our customers, in our planning process and gain broad support for our strategies.
- ✓ We begin planning for the following summer at least six months prior to our program, and have a process for clearly defining and securing needed resources.

5. Extensive opportunities for staff development

- ✓ We provide adequate opportunities for staff development, both prior to the start of our summer program and ongoing throughout the year.

- ✓ We consider the needs of our diverse staff (full-time, seasonal, experienced educators, volunteers), and target staff development appropriately.

6. Strategic partnerships

- ✓ We are familiar with the landscape of potential partners, and form mutually beneficial relationships.
- ✓ We work to enhance the mission and vision of each partner organization.
- ✓ We actively involve families and communities in our programs.
- ✓ We have clearly articulated roles and responsibilities for each of our partners.

7. Rigorous approach to evaluation and commitment to program improvement

- ✓ We regularly collect data to track our performance.
- ✓ We have a system for reviewing our indicators of performance and make adjustments to indicators when needed.
- ✓ We use data to find ways to improve services, and we are willing to change or discontinue services based on what the data show.
- ✓ We share results with our stakeholders.

8. Clear focus on sustainability and cost-effectiveness

- ✓ We know what we want to sustain and can articulate why.
- ✓ We have a sustainability plan that enables us to set priorities and take action.
- ✓ We maintain relationships with key stakeholders, decision makers and funders, and regularly communicate program outcomes.

- ✓ We have strong fiscal processes and can easily communicate our financial needs and concerns.
- ✓ We evaluate our services for cost effectiveness.

In summary, the program was again successful in addressing the multiple needs of disadvantaged youth. Through strategic partnerships, the program was able to serve a larger population, and one that was in great need. In particular, this year's inclusion (and in fact, requirement) that students be at-risk of academic failure and of low socioeconomic status at three of the four FITS sites, meant that FITS was serving "the neediest of the neediest." Still, FITS was able to meet almost all goals and indeed, there was improvement observed in reading skills among a population of students who are, for the most part, at risk of failing school. This is quite notable. Furthermore, feedback obtained from parents clearly indicated that they were greatly appreciative of the FITS program and felt it had made a positive impact on the social, affective, and academic skills of their children.

REFERENCES

- Alexander, K. L., & Entwisle, D. R. (1996). Schools and children at risk. In A. Booth & J. F. Dunn (Eds.). *Family-school links: How do they affect educational outcomes?* (pp. 67-89). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Carnegie Corporation (1994). *Starting Points: Meeting the Needs of Our Youngest Children*. New York: Author.
- Center for Summer Learning (May 2005). *Focus on Student Achievement: Characteristics of Effective Summer Programs*. Presentation Given at the Eastern Regional Conference on After School.
- Cooper, H., Charlton, K., Lindsay, J., & Greathouse, S. (1996). The effects of summer vacation on achievement test scores: A narrative and meta-analytic review. *Review of Educational Research*, 66, 227-268.
- Fairchild, R., McLaughlin, B., & Brady, J. E. (2006). *Making the Most of Summer: A Handbook of Effective Summer Programming and Thematic Learning*. Baltimore, MD: Center for Summer Learning.
- Rothstein, R. (2004). *Class and Schools: Using Social, Economic, and Educational Reform to Close the Black-White Achievement Gap*. Washington, D.C.: Economy Policy Institute.

APPENDIX A: DETAILED STATISTICS

The following tables display statistical results for paired sample t-tests. Paired sample t-tests analyses consist of analyzing whether there is a significant change from pre to post among the same students.

For these analyses, a “significant” difference means that we can be 95% or more confident that the observed differences are real and not likely the result of random error. If the significance level is less than or equal to .05, then the differences are considered statistically significant. If this value is greater than .05, this means that any observed differences are not statistically significant and may be interpreted as inconclusive.

Table A1. Results for Reading: Paired t-tests - Overall

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Phonics	-1.83	11.65	1.97	-5.83	2.17	-.929	34	.360
Pair 2	Reading Comprehension	-.973	8.54	1.47	-3.95	2.01	-.662	33	.512
Pair 3	Vocabulary	-.66	6.10	1.03	-2.75	1.44	-.638	34	.528

Table A1. Results for Reading: Paired t-tests - Ellwood

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Phonics	-3.50	16.04	5.67	-16.91	9.91	-.617	7	.557
Pair 2	Reading Comprehension	1.88	9.58	3.39	-6.14	9.89	.553	7	.597
Pair 3	Vocabulary	4.00	5.12	1.71	.06	7.94	2.342	8	.047

Table A1. Results for Reading: Paired t-tests - Harding

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Phonics	-2.00	11.68	3.12	-8.74	4.74	-.641	13	.533
Pair 2	Reading Comprehension	1.38	6.86	1.90	-2.76	5.53	.728	12	.481
Pair 3	Vocabulary	-1.773	5.51	1.53	-5.10	1.56	-1.158	12	.269

Table A1. Results for Reading: Paired t-tests - Franklin

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Phonics	-.62	9.12	2.53	-6.13	4.90	-.243	12	.812
Pair 2	Reading Comprehension	-5.08	8.39	2.33	-10.15	-.01	-2.181	12	.050
Pair 3	Vocabulary	-2.77	5.92	1.64	-6.35	.82	-1.687	12	.117