

## Final Report

# 2008 Fun in the Sun Evaluation



PREPARED BY:  
Miriam Resendez, M.A.  
Senior Researcher  
PRES Associates, Inc.  
October, 2008



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

---

*Fun in the Sun has had a great impact on my children. They are so much more active and willing to help and are just having fun being a kid.*

-- Parent

*Fun in the Sun...I'm just so happy with it. It helps with not having to watch TV and stuff like that that is boring. I can do fun activities like painting, coloring, and all that stuff, and I am helping other people and caring. I want to come back next year.*

--3<sup>rd</sup> grade FITS Participant

Initiated in 1997 by the United Way of Santa Barbara County, 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 of its program, the United Way of Santa Barbara County requested an external, independent evaluation of the 2008 FITS program.

Similar to prior years, the evaluation of 2008 FITS collected data from multiple sources, including participants, parents, program leaders, and other staff at Fun in the Sun. 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' 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 FITS was successful in meeting ALL its targeted goals.**

- ▶ 61% of general program participants showed gains in reading skills, exceeding the targeted goal of 60%. Moreover, reading growth was statistically significant which means that these learning gains are real and unlikely due to chance. These results are even more noteworthy because instead of losing 2-3 months in reading achievement, as is typical of low-income children, on average FITS participants showed 1 – 4 month *gains* in reading comprehension and phonics skills.
- ▶ 82% of general program participants gained in or upheld their attitudes towards enjoyment of reading, exceeding the targeted goal of 80%. This represents a change from the prior year in which 77% indicated gains or maintenance of their enjoyment for reading.
- ▶ 85% 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 since participating in FITS. This positive outcome was also noted by parents and program leaders.
- ▶ 88% of general program participants gained in or upheld their self-control,

exceeding the targeted goal of 80%. In general, participants indicated that they could stop and think before acting, handle problems appropriately, and engage in positive behaviors.

- ▶ 93% 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, 90% 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.
- ▶ The majority of this year's FITS participants indicated possessing family support, empathy, positive identity, and being in a supportive community (FITS) that values children. In addition, there was a decrease in the number of risk behaviors among this year's participants in comparison to last year. Furthermore, most of the participants indicated demonstrating the Character Counts' pillars of fairness, caring and good citizenship. In contrast, planning and decision-making, resistance skills, and safety are the most problematic 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.
- ▶ As in previous years, participants and their parents overwhelmingly enjoyed being a part of the FITS program. The highest rated program components among general program participants included field trips and FITS adults and program leaders. Parents also

commented that they liked the opportunity their children had to interact with others, the field trips that their children attended, and the quality of care that was being provided. Parents were very thankful for FITS -- having a safe, fun, and nurturing environment for their child during the summer was clearly noted as important for their children and they were very grateful for this opportunity.

In summary, the program was again successful in addressing the multiple needs of youth served by FITS. Through strategic partnerships, the program was able to serve a larger population, and one that is disadvantaged in many respects, including educationally and economically. Despite the challenges associated with providing comprehensive activities designed to promote academic, social and emotional growth among this population of children in the greater Santa Barbara community, FITS was able to meet 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 educationally. This is quite remarkable. 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. As so aptly stated by one parent:

*All I have to say is thank you very much. I hope you continue to have programs like this one for kids. It really has helped them to develop their minds and has given them enthusiasm in whatever they do. Thanks a million!*  
--Parent

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

<b>Project Background</b> .....	<b>6</b>
Overview of 2008 Fun in the Sun .....	7
<b>Project overview</b> .....	<b>9</b>
Design & Methodology .....	9
<b>Description of FITS' Participants and Goal-Related Activities</b> .....	<b>11</b>
General Program Participants .....	11
Counselors-in-Training .....	13
FITS Goal-Related Activities .....	13
<b>Evaluation Results</b> .....	<b>16</b>
Summary of Results .....	18
Detailed Results .....	18
<i>How effective was FITS in accomplishing its intended goals? Did this vary with     different types of participants (e.g., gender) and sites?</i> .....	19
TARGET 1 – 60% OF PARTICIPANTS WILL DISPLAY GAINS IN READING COMPREHENSION, PHONICS, AND VOCABULARY SKILLS .....	18
TARGET 2 – 80% OF PARTICIPANTS WILL MAINTAIN OR DISPLAY A GAIN IN ENJOYMENT OF READING .....	18
TARGET 3: 80% OF GENERAL PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS WILL MAINTAIN OR DISPLAY A GAIN IN POSITIVE IDENTITY .....	25
TARGET 4: 80% OF GENERAL PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS WILL MAINTAIN OR DISPLAY A GAIN IN SELF-CONTROL .....	26
TARGET 5: 80% OF PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS WILL MAINTAIN OR DISPLAY A GAIN IN THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF CARING AND SUPPORT FROM PARENTS .....	28
TARGET 6: 80% OF YOUTH WILL MAINTAIN OR DISPLAY A GAIN IN THEIR ABILITY TO IDENTIFY CARING, SUPPORTIVE, NON-PARENTAL ADULTS .....	28
TARGET 7: 80% OF YOUTH WILL MAINTAIN OR DISPLAY A GAIN IN THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF CARING AND SUPPORT FROM NON-PARENTAL ADULTS .....	29
<i>To what extent do FITS participants possess Healthy Assets (e.g., empowerment, social     competencies, etc.) and Character Counts! pillars?</i> .....	30
<i>What did participants and parents of the FITS program think about it?</i> .....	34
<b>Recommendations and Conclusion</b> .....	<b>37</b>
FITS Program Recommendations .....	38
Conclusion .....	39
<b>References</b> .....	<b>41</b>
<b>Appendix A: Detailed Statistics</b> .....	<b>42</b>

## **Figures**

Figure 1. Targeted Outcomes for 2008 FITS .....	17
Figure 2. 2008 FITS Evaluation Results .....	18
Figure 3. Change in Reading Skills from Pre- to Post-testing .....	19
Figure 4. Grade Equivalents at Pre and Post-testing by Grade .....	20
Figure 5. Increase in Reading Skills by Year.....	20
Figure 6. Reading Skills: Percentile Rankings at Pre and Post-testing by Year .....	21
Figure 7. Change in Reading Skills from Pre- to Post-testing: La Cumbre by Year .....	21
Figure 8. Percentile Rankings (PR) from Pre- to Post-testing: La Cumbre by Year .....	22
Figure 9. Change in Reading Skills from Pre- to Post-testing: Franklin by Year .....	22
Figure 10. Percentile Rankings (PR) from Pre- to Post-testing: Franklin by Year .....	22
Figure 11. Change in Reading Skills from Pre- to Post: La Patera by Year .....	23
Figure 12. Percentile Rankings (PR) from Pre- to Post-testing: La Patera by Year .....	23
Figure 13. Percent of Parents and Program Leaders Indicating Improvement in Reading Skills.....	24
Figure 14. Percent of Participants' Showing Improvement or Maintenance in Liking for Reading .....	24
Figure 15. Percent of Parents and Program Leaders Indicating Improvement in Enjoyment of Reading ..	25
Figure 16. Percent of Participants' Indicating Maintenance or Gain in Positive Identity.....	25
Figure 17. Percent of Parents and Program Leaders' Indicating Improvement in Positive Identity.....	26
Figure 18. Percent of Participants' Indicating Maintenance or Gain in Self-Control.....	27
Figure 19. Percent of Parents and Program Leaders' Indicating Improvement in Self-Control.....	27
Figure 20. Percent of Participants Indicating Maintenance or Gain in Family Support .....	28
Figure 21. Percent of Participants Indicating Supportive Non-Parental Adults .....	28
Figure 22. Percent of Participants' Indicating Maintenance or Gain in Community Support .....	29
Figure 23. Perceived Improvement on Character Counts! Pillars-Parents and Program Leaders .....	34
Figure 24. General Participants' Satisfaction with FITS .....	35
Figure 25. Parents' Satisfaction with FITS .....	35
Figure 26. Program Leaders' Perceptions of FITS .....	36
Figure 27. FITS Outcome Targets and Results.....	37

## **Tables**

Table 1. FITS Site and General Program Participant Characteristics .....	12
Table 2. Percent of New Participants in FITS from 2006 to 2008.....	13
Table 3. CIT Characteristics .....	13
Table 4. Percent of Participants (Grades 4-6) Who Agreed to Healthy Asset Items .....	31
Table 5. Percent of Participants Who Agreed to Character Counts! Pillar Items .....	33

## Project Background

*Evidence is mounting that where and how youth spend their time outside of normal school hours has important implications for their development. Young people benefit when they spend time engaged in structured pursuits that offer opportunities for positive interactions with adults and peers, encourage them to contribute and take initiative, and contain challenging and engaging tasks that help them develop and apply new skills and personal talents. (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2007).*

For many working parents, the thought of summertime is more stressful than relaxing. It is characterized as a time when, with school no longer in session, they must find a way to provide a safe and affordable out-of-home environment for their children. Research has shown that low-income children in particular may experience a decline in academic progress during the summer months, especially relative to higher-income children (Cooper et al, 1996). Indeed, research has shown that the summer months are associated with a number of negative consequences for youth, both social and academic, including:

- ▶ 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).
- ▶ 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).

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 2008 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 status<sup>1</sup>, 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 2007, a partnership was established with the Carpinteria School District which was extended into 2008; FITS was in Carpinteria under the administration of Girls Inc. of Carpinteria. Furthermore, for the 2008

---

<sup>1</sup> 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.

program, two new sites were used (La Patera and La Cumbre replaced Ellwood and Harding, respectively). Additionally, through collaborative relationships with 19 organizations, resources and services were provided to help meet the programmatic needs of FITS.

The stated goals of the 2008 FITS program are:

- ▶ General program participants will maintain or improve upon reading competence and positive perceptions of reading.
- ▶ 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 23 to August 8, 2008), 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 programmatic activities related to five areas: literature, science, sports and physiology, health awareness, and drama/art.
- ▶ At least 1 hour of reading curriculum was provided to each group, with the exception of Canalino Elementary<sup>2</sup>. The children also

---

<sup>2</sup> During the first 4 weeks of the FITS program, students 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

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 local recreational and education areas (e.g., beach).

FITS served a total of 289<sup>3</sup> children in grades 1-6 in the general program. In addition, 24 CITs who have participated in past FITS' programs 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.

Through UWSBC's partnership with the Santa Barbara School District, students within the Santa Barbara School District were able to attend FITS at two sites, Franklin Elementary and La Cumbre Junior High (new site that replaced Harding). In order to participate, students had to meet income requirements. In particular, students had to be of low socioeconomic status as defined as being eligible for free/reduced lunch as dictated by California Department of Education's financial thresholds. Following this criteria, preference was given to prior FITS participants and then participants were enrolled on a first come, first serve basis<sup>4</sup>.

La Patera was a new site as well, replacing last year's Ellwood site in the Goleta School District. At the superintendent's request, children eligible

---

being provided through FITS, Canalino participants were excluded from the reading component of this evaluation.

<sup>3</sup> Excludes participants who dropped out or were dropped from FITS.

<sup>4</sup> An exception to this was at the Goleta School District. The superintendent requested that all applications be distributed to principals and community liaisons for final selection of participants.

for summer school (because of at-risk status) could only participate in the FITS program following morning summer school at Kellogg Elementary School. As such, approximately 58 of the FITS participants at La Patera were not at-risk (as designated by their respective schools) but still of low income status; the remaining 26 FITS participants were Kellogg summer school students and did not participate in the morning reading enrichment program<sup>5</sup>.

Through UWSBC's partnership with the Carpinteria School District and Girls Inc. of Carpinteria, students in the Carpinteria area were able to participate in FITS at 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, La Cumbre, and La Patera sites held FITS activities Monday through Friday from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. during the 7 week period. At Canalino, FITS participants were required to attend summer school for the first 4 weeks (June 23-July 18) in the morning. Students participated in the FITS program from noon to 5 P.M. during this time. For the remaining 3 weeks (July 21-August 8), students participated in the full day FITS program.

Each site had a site coordinator and assistant site coordinator who oversaw all activities at each site and a family advocate from the Family Service Agency, who provided support. In addition, new to the 2008 program year, Girls Inc. of Santa Barbara hired two site aides to provide extra support at La Patera, La Cumbre, and

---

<sup>5</sup> As such, these students are excluded from the reading component of this evaluation.

Franklin. Site aides would fill in for a program leader as needed, join in field trips to provide more supervision, do lesson/activity planning, meet with individual participants, and so forth. Groups of approximately 14 youth, 1 program leader and 1-2 CITs were at each of the sites. With the exception of the Canalino site, groups were mostly gender and grade-based (e.g., all girls in grade 2 were in one group). The groups at Canalino were gender mixed but largely based on grade/age level.

## 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 10 years of applied research experience, to conduct an evaluation of the 2008 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 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

The 2008 evaluation was more expansive as compared to last year's. In particular, pre and post surveys of all participating youth were conducted, and an additional grade level was added for the reading assessment (2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>).

Specifically, the evaluation consisted of a within subjects design in which selected youth were assessed during the 1<sup>st</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> 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 performed<sup>6</sup>.

Based on the needs of the United Way of Santa Barbara County, the following methods<sup>7</sup> 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 23<sup>rd</sup> to June 25<sup>th</sup>, and sixth week, July 28<sup>th</sup> to July 30<sup>th</sup>, of the program. La Patera, Franklin, and La Cumbre FITS participants entering 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade were assessed. Due to participants general low-reading level, these students were administered a version of the test that was one-grade below current 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 and word analysis subtests. Reliability estimates are in the range of .86 to .94, which means that this is a highly reliable measure<sup>8</sup>. 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.

---

<sup>6</sup> 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 and 2007 surveys.

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

<sup>8</sup> 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.

2) **Pre-Post Student Surveys:** Surveys were administered to participants during the 1<sup>st</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> week of the program. Two different versions were completed by students entering the 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> grades and those entering 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grades, so that the survey was aligned with their development levels. The survey for general program participants gathered information on: attitudes toward reading, perceptions of positive identity, self-control, family and community support, other Healthy Assets<sup>9</sup>, 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 4-6<sup>th</sup> grade survey ranged from .73-.81, and for the 1-3<sup>rd</sup> grade survey they ranged from .58-73.

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

- For program leaders, 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.

---

<sup>9</sup> The Search Institute has identified 40 developmental assets that promote positive development among youth (see [www.search-institute.org](http://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.

- 4) **Interviews with Program Participants:** Interviews were conducted with a sample of participants in grades 2-6 (5-7 per site) towards the end of the program. Interviews with general program participants were conducted to 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 obtain descriptive information on the participants.

## 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

On the following page, 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:

- ▶ La Patera served the most participants.
- ▶ Most youth were in the 1<sup>st</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> grade range, with 6<sup>th</sup> graders constituting the smallest proportion of FITS participants (8%). While there was a somewhat even distribution across grade levels at La

Cumbre and La Patera, participants at Franklin were concentrated at the 2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> grades, and participants at Canalino were concentrated at the 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> grades.

- ▶ There were a fairly equal proportion of females and males across all sites. However, Canalino had a higher proportion of males (61% versus 39%).
- ▶ Hispanics made up the vast majority of FITS participants (94%).
- ▶ There was much more variability in the schools that La Patera youth attended. This may be due in part to the expanded recruitment efforts at the Goleta School District. In contrast, most of the Franklin participants attended Franklin Elementary. Similarly, most of the Canalino participants attended Canalino Elementary. At La Cumbre, the majority of participants attended Adams and Harding Elementary schools.
- ▶ While some participants were in their first year of FITS (37%), the majority of youth were returning FITS participants (63%).

Dropout information obtained from sites shows that a higher percentage of participants dropped<sup>10</sup> from Franklin, La Cumbre, and La Patera sites, see Table 1. With the exception of Canalino, there was an average attrition rate of 25% across these FITS sites. It should be noted that 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 significant differences between participants who dropped out and participants who remained on a number of demographic characteristics (e.g., gender, site, grade

<sup>10</sup> Students dropped from FITS for a variety of reasons including no shows, excessive unexcused absences, lack of transportation, and behavioral problems.

level). As such, it is unlikely that dropouts have biased results.

**Table 1. FITS Site and General Program Participant Characteristics\***

		Canalino		Franklin		La Cumbre		La Patera		Total	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
<b>Participants</b>	<b>Enrolled throughout</b>	58	95.1%	55	57.9%	76	75.2%	73	65.8%	262	71.2%
	<b>Added</b>	1	1.6%	15	15.8%	0	0.0%	11	9.9%	27	7.3%
	<b>Dropped</b>	2	3.3%	25	26.3%	25	24.8%	27	24.3%	79	21.5%
<b>Grade</b>	<b>1</b>	14	23.0%	7	9.6%	9	9.1%	25	23.6%	55	16.2%
	<b>2</b>	15	24.6%	13	17.8%	19	19.2%	18	17.0%	65	19.2%
	<b>3</b>	24	39.3%	10	13.7%	17	17.2%	23	21.7%	74	21.8%
	<b>4</b>	6	9.8%	20	27.4%	15	15.2%	13	12.3%	54	15.9%
	<b>5</b>	2	3.3%	19	26.0%	28	28.3%	16	15.1%	65	19.2%
	<b>6</b>	0	0.0%	4	5.5%	11	11.1%	11	10.4%	26	7.7%
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Female</b>	24	39.3%	42	47.2%	49	50.0%	52	48.1%	167	46.9%
	<b>Male</b>	37	60.7%	47	52.8%	49	50.0%	56	51.9%	189	53.1%
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>White</b>	2	3.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	1.9%	4	1.2%
	<b>Hispanic</b>	57	93.4%	72	97.3%	95	96.0%	95	89.6%	319	93.8%
	<b>African Am.</b>	2	3.3%	0	0.0%	1	1.0%	0	0.0%	3	0.9%
	<b>Asian Am.</b>	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	<b>Native Am.</b>	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	1.9%	2	0.6%
	<b>Other/Multi</b>	0	0.0%	2	2.7%	3	3.0%	7	6.6%	12	3.5%
<b>Prior Attendance at FITS</b>	<b>Yes</b>	36	59.0%	33	53.2%	62	62.0%	77	72.6%	208	63.2%
	<b>No</b>	25	41.0%	29	46.8%	38	38.0%	29	27.4%	121	36.8%
<b>School</b>	<b>Unknown</b>	0	0.0%	25	26.3%	4	4.0%	13	11.7%	42	11.4%
	<b>Adams</b>	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	51	50.5%	0	0.0%	51	13.9%
	<b>Aliso</b>	18	29.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	18	4.9%
	<b>Brandon</b>	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	9	8.1%	9	2.4%
	<b>Canalino</b>	43	70.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	43	11.7%
	<b>Cesar Chavez</b>	0	0.0%	3	3.2%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	0.8%
	<b>Cold Springs</b>	0	0.0%	1	1.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.3%
	<b>El Camino</b>	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	26	23.4%	26	7.1%
	<b>Ellwood</b>	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	2.7%	3	0.8%
	<b>Fillmore</b>	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	1.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.3%
	<b>Foothill</b>	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	8	7.2%	8	2.2%
	<b>Franklin</b>	0	0.0%	57	60.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	57	15.5%
	<b>Harding</b>	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	39	38.6%	0	0.0%	39	10.6%
	<b>Hollister</b>	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	15	13.5%	15	4.1%
	<b>Hope</b>	0	0.0%	1	1.1%	0	0.0%	1	0.9%	2	0.5%
	<b>Isla Vista</b>	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	6	5.4%	6	1.6%
	<b>Kellogg</b>	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	14	12.6%	14	3.8%
	<b>La Patera</b>	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	13	11.7%	13	3.5%
	<b>McKinley</b>	0	0.0%	2	2.1%	2	2.0%	0	0.0%	4	1.1%
	<b>Monroe</b>	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	1.0%	2	1.8%	3	0.8%
<b>Roosevelt</b>	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	1.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.3%	
<b>St. Raphels</b>	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.9%	1	0.3%	
<b>Washington</b>	0	0.0%	6	6.3%	2	2.0%	0	0.0%	8	2.2%	

\*The above counts and percents exclude missing data.

In comparison to last year (2007), there was an increase in the percent of students returning to FITS. That is, there were more returning participants this year (63%) in comparison to last year (23%). Table 2 shows the percent of new participants in comparison to the prior two years by comparison site. Again, it should be noted that sites have changed over the years so comparisons should be made with this caveat in mind. As shown, enrollment of new participants are lower this year across all sites; this means there are more returning students participating at FITS in 2008. Given that a high proportion of FITS participants were returnees, this meant that it likely took *less* time for participants to get into the routine of FITS and accustomed to its procedures, rules, and expectations.

**Table 2. Percent of New Participants in FITS from 2006 to 2008**

	2006	2007	2008
Adams / Harding/ La Cumbre	23.3%	72.3%	38%
Ortega / Franklin/ Franklin	52.3%	70.0%	49%
Hollister / Ellwood/ La Patera	56.8%	67.1%	27%
Canalino/ Canalino	--	67.1%	41%

### **COUNSELORS-IN-TRAINING**

Table 3 displays the number of the 2008 CITs<sup>11</sup>. Of note is that the number of CITs at each site is determined, in large part, by the number of participants at each site. Therefore, La Patera had the most CITs since it had the largest enrollment of FITS participants.

<sup>11</sup> Unlike prior years, only Canalino provided demographic information on CITs. Therefore, this information is excluded.

**Table 3. CIT Characteristics**

	Total
La Patera	9
Canalino	5
Franklin	4
La Cumbre	6

### **FITS GOAL-RELATED ACTIVITIES**

In order to address each of the FITS goals, Girls Inc. of Greater Santa Barbara and 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 Carpinteria Final Reports on FITS 2008.

#### **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.

- **Morning literacy instruction (Ready to Read)**, provided by program leaders, was based primarily on the *Summer Adventures in Reading*. It should be noted that there were high school volunteers at La Cumbre, Franklin, and La Patera to assist the program leaders during the morning academic component

of the program<sup>12</sup>. Instruction lasted 60 minutes per day and in total, program leaders provided 5 weeks of reading instruction.

At the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade levels, focus was placed on phonics, phonemic awareness, and vocabulary, with some comprehension. At the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade levels, students read stories and worked on comprehension and fluency skills. At the 5<sup>th</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grade level, the program emphasizes fluency, word study, vocabulary development, and comprehension skills/strategies. All participants had their own reading materials that were grade appropriate.

As previously noted, after the 4<sup>th</sup> 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 a thematic approach (tried to relate reading to theme of the week). Program leaders provided direct literacy instruction for 30-45 minutes during weeks 5-7.

- ▶ **Additional reading/writing activities** were conducted daily for about 30-45 minutes in the afternoon. During this time, participants read from a book selected from the book mobile, library, FITS collection, or one brought from home. Participants were encouraged to choose books that were engaging and that would challenge them. Students engaged in silent reading or student/program leader read alouds. 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, program leaders used Girls Inc curricula designed to engage students in interactive activities while teaching them, for example, about science.

In order to prepare program leaders, Girls Inc. provided them with 90 minutes of training on the reading components prior to the start of FITS. Each program leader was provided a copy of the teachers guide and a group set of 15 student readers. In addition, they were encouraged to speak with site coordinators and other Girls Inc. staff to discuss any issues encountered with the reading program.

### **FITS Positive Identity and Self-Control Goals<sup>13</sup>**

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), Girls' Inc. implemented a number of activities during the 2008 FITS. At the backbone of FITS is Character Counts!<sup>14</sup>, a program that promotes character development in the areas (or pillars) of trustworthiness, respect,

---

<sup>12</sup> These consisted of East Coast high school students who participated in Rein Tours, a volunteer program that partnered with UC Santa Barbara. These students offered tutoring to FITS youth as well.

---

<sup>13</sup> More detailed information on the FITS activities designed to instill positive identity and self-control is provided in the Girls Inc. 2008 FITS Final Report.

<sup>14</sup> 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](http://www.charactercounts.org).

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 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 (e.g., creating paper chains reflecting the pillars demonstrated by children and recognizing two children each Friday for exemplary demonstration of pillars). Additionally, during Dancing Drums and Santa Barbara Dance Academy, 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.

Girls Inc. curricula were also designed to help students learn cooperative play and responsibility. They also engaged in thematic activities each week. For example, during International week, students discussed various cultures and were encouraged to dress up to celebrate Fiesta in Santa Barbara. Other themes included Zoo,

Under the Sea, Colors, Olympics, and Red, White and Blue (week of July 4<sup>th</sup>).

Other activities focused on health and safety. Examples include: *Kid Ability*, a sexual abuse prevention program; *Action for Safety*, a self-defense and violence prevention program; *My Friend Z*, a program designed to teach children about essential organs and systems of the body; *Rollercoaster*, a program that teaches scientific thinking skills; *Wildlife Kids*, a program to teach youth how to interact safely with the outdoor environment; and *RAYS*, a program which promotes sun safety. In addition, participants attended a variety of field trips to expose children to recreational and educational activities that they may otherwise, not experience; examples include trips to the beach, Watershed Resource Center, the zoo, Lake Casitas, and Art from Scrap.

There were also many programmatic activities designed to teach participants about art (including dance and theatre). Examples include 3D Art, Art Expedition, Theatre Games, and Theatre FX.

In sum, these activities aim to provide an enrichment experience that is engaging, while also teaching them, among other things, how to be responsible, interact cooperatively, be healthy and safe, and appreciate the arts—all of which should contribute to positive identity and self control.

## **FITS Family and Community Support Goals<sup>15</sup>**

There was a family night at each site designed to encourage 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.

New to the 2008 program, the Foodbank of Santa Barbara provided the Backpack Program. Each Friday, approximately 290 backpacks were filled with free food for participants' families and distributed to all to help ensure that no child would go without food.

At the Santa Barbara and Goleta sites, parents were invited to Health and Wellness workshops provided by Santa Barbara Neighborhood Clinics. The focus was on providing information on good nutrition, diabetes, cancer and obesity prevention,

---

<sup>15</sup> 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. 2008 FITS Final Reports.

health insurance for uninsured children, and resources available from the SB Neighborhood Clinics.

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. 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<sup>16</sup>. 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 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

---

<sup>16</sup> Note that these are the same targets as those originally proposed in 2006. Since FITS participants change from year to year, it was deemed as not feasible to create a moving target that increases each year.

leaders and parents 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 2008 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 and phonics 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.

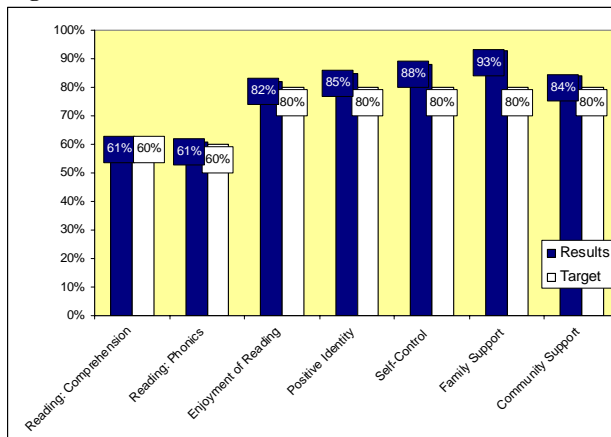
## SUMMARY OF RESULTS

**How effective was FITS in accomplishing its intended goals? Did this vary with different types of participants (e.g., grade, gender, years at FITS) and sites?**

The figure below shows the results of the targeted outcomes. As shown, FITS general program participants met ALL of the targeted goals. Moreover, results show that participants made significant learning gains in reading, including comprehension and phonics skills. Given that summer *loss* in reading is a typical finding among this group of students, these are impressive findings.

In addition, learning gains in reading tended to be higher than in prior years. Among the remaining targets, results show that participants either had similar gains/maintenance in targeted behaviors and perceptions or had slightly higher levels this year.

**Figure 2. 2008 FITS Evaluation Results**



**To what extent do FITS participants possess Healthy Assets (e.g., empowerment, social competencies, etc.) and Character Counts! pillars?**

The majority of this year's FITS participants indicated possessing family support, empathy, positive identity, and being in a supportive community (FITS) that values children. In addition, there was a decrease in the number of risk behaviors among this year's participants in comparison to last year. Furthermore, most of the participants indicated demonstrating the Character Counts' pillars of fairness, caring and good citizenship. In contrast, planning and decision-making, resistance skills, and safety are the most problematic 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.

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

As in previous years, participants and their parents overwhelmingly enjoyed being a part of the FITS program. The highest rated program components among general program participants included field trips and FITS adults and program leaders. Parents also commented that they liked the opportunity their children had to interact with others, the field trips that their children attended, and the quality of care that was being provided. Parents were very thankful for having the opportunity to participate in FITS -- having a safe, fun, and nurturing environment for their child during the summer was clearly noted as important for their children and they were very grateful for this opportunity.

## 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, and phonics.**

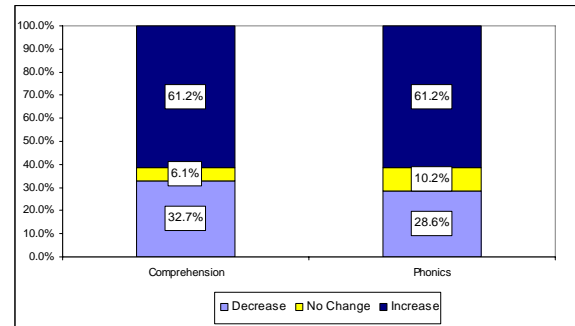
*[FITS] has helped me a lot [with reading]. The best is learning stuff that I should learn. It's hard reading hard books sometimes. The reading was sometimes fun and the journal is always fun. They have helped me a lot.*  
--2<sup>nd</sup> grade FITS Participant

As previously noted, students entering the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> 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. However, as a result of the limited time available for testing and to avoid test burnout, only comprehension and phonics skills were tested. 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.

Results showed a significant increase in the phonics skills of FITS participants and a marginally significant increase in reading comprehension skills from pre- to post-testing,  $t(48)=2.84, p=.01$  and  $t(48)=1.78, p=.08$ , respectively. Furthermore, for both reading skills, more than 60% of participants tested showed improvement in test scores, see Figure 3.

Across all measures, 61% of participants demonstrated gains in reading. Thus, this goal was met. Moreover, given that summer *loss* in reading is a typical finding among this group of students, the gains observed among these students is quite an impressive finding.

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



- Across both measures, over 61% of FITS participants demonstrated gains in reading and an additional 6-10% showed maintenance of their reading levels. Given that summer *loss* in reading is a typical finding among this group of students, these are impressive findings.

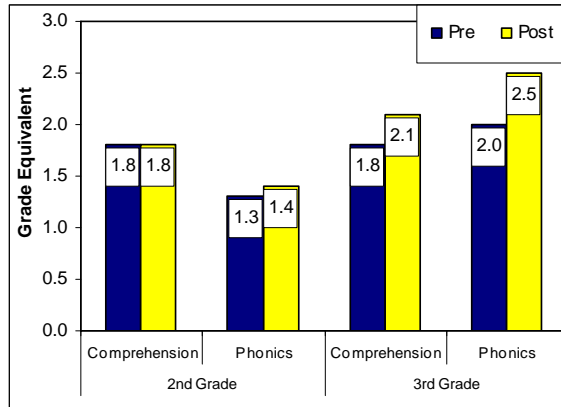
***Goal 1 was met. More than 60% of participants showed improvement in comprehension and phonics from pre- to post-testing. In addition, reading gains were significant.***

*I can read faster. It's fun because you learn to write neater. I like to write fancy with cursive.*  
-- 3<sup>rd</sup> grade FITS Participant

Examination of the grade equivalents shows that over the summer, 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students gained approximately one month of knowledge in phonics skills. Among 3<sup>rd</sup> graders, students demonstrated approximately 4 months of knowledge gains in comprehension and phonics. Given that

summer *loss* is the typical outcome, these gains are notable.

**Figure 4. Grade Equivalents at Pre and Post-testing by Grade**

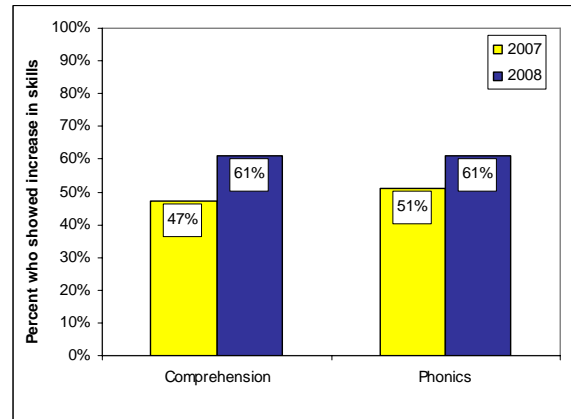


- 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students showed a one month gain in phonics skills over the course of FITS. In addition, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students showed an average of 4 month gains in phonics and comprehension.

Since the same assessment was used last year as this year, comparisons can be made with regard to the reading levels of participants. That said, of note is that last year's sample included 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade<sup>17</sup> students whereas this year, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students were tested. With this caveat in mind, Figure 5 shows the percent of prior year FITS participants (2007) and current year participants (2008) who showed increases in their reading skills. As shown, there was a higher percent of students (approximately 10%) who demonstrated learning gains in 2008 as compared to the prior year 2007.

<sup>17</sup> While 3<sup>rd</sup> graders were tested at Harding and Ellwood in 2007, 4<sup>th</sup> graders were tested at Franklin.

**Figure 5. Increase in Reading Skills by Year**

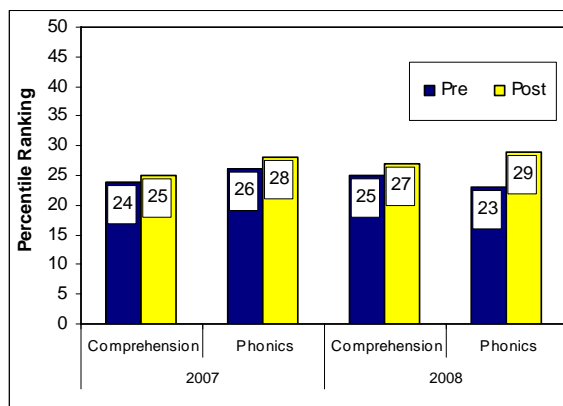


- A higher percentage of FITS participants showed reading learning gains in 2008 as compared to 2007.

Differences in performance can also be observed by examining percentile rankings<sup>18</sup>. As shown in Figure 6, while 2007 and 2008 participants showed growth in their percentile ranking relative to the national norm sample that took the ITBS, the 2008 participants showed more increases in percentile rankings. The general low reading levels of FITS participants is also of note. Indeed, there is a clear need to continue with this programmatic effort to improve participants' reading skills.

<sup>18</sup> 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 6. Reading Skills: Percentile Rankings at Pre and Post-testing by Year**



- Whereas 2007 participants showed gains of 1-2 percentile rankings, 2008 participants showed 2-6 percentile gains over the course of FITS.

In order to understand if results varied by subgroups, growth among different subgroups of participants was examined. The subgroups included gender and grade level<sup>19</sup>. Results showed no significant differences between males versus females. However, differences were observed between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders. Namely, and as demonstrated in Figure 4, 3<sup>rd</sup> graders showed greater growth than 2<sup>nd</sup> graders in comprehension,  $F(1, 47)=19.97, p<.05$ , and phonics,  $F(1, 47)=3.32, p=.08$ .

*Analysis by subgroups showed that changes in performance were consistent among females and males. However, differences existed by grade level with 3<sup>rd</sup> graders demonstrating greater reading gains than 2<sup>nd</sup> graders.*

<sup>19</sup> 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.

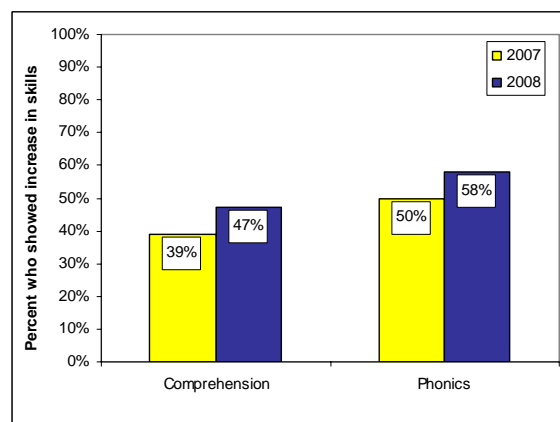
### Are there differences in reading skill changes between the various FITS sites?

Analyses were also performed to examine changes in reading performance within each site. The following presents the findings for each site for the 2008 FITS program as well as findings from last year. However, since there were two new sites (La Patera and La Cumbre) that replaced sites used during the previous year (Ellwood and Harding), and as previously noted, the grade levels tested varied, comparisons should be made with caution.

#### La Cumbre

At La Cumbre, greater improvement was observed in the areas of reading comprehension and phonics among 2008 participants than 2007 participants (from Harding), see Figure 7. However, in comparison to the established target of 60%, participants at La Cumbre did not achieve the reading goal.

**Figure 7. Change in Reading Skills from Pre- to Post-testing: La Cumbre by Year**

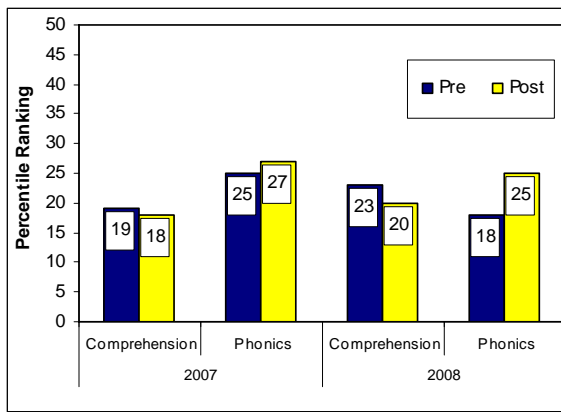


\*2008 results based on 19 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students tested and 2007 results based on 14 3<sup>rd</sup> graders tested.

Examination of percentile rankings reveals FITS participants at La Cumbre showed decreases in reading comprehension skills from pre- to post-testing during both

years. However, current year participants showed significant gains in phonics skills, and these gains were greater than those observed last year (see Figure 8). Of note are the participants' low literacy skills; compared to the national sample who took the ITBS, 2008 La Cumbre participants were ranked at the 18<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> percentile indicating that these students are in need of extensive reading intervention services.

**Figure 8. Percentile Rankings (PR) from Pre- to Post-testing: La Cumbre by Year**

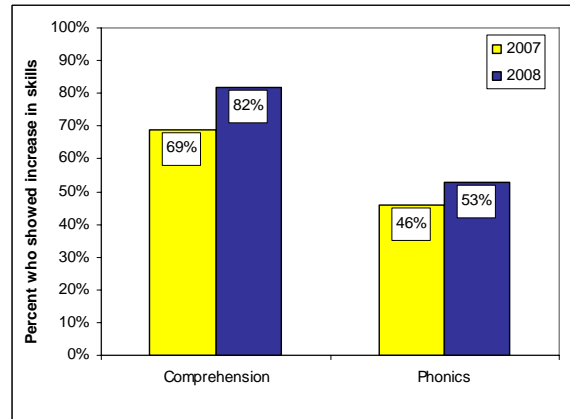


*While targeted goals were not met at La Cumbre, an increase in phonics skills was observed among FITS participants.*

**Franklin**

At Franklin, results showed that the reading goal was met in the area of reading comprehension, see Figure 9. Specifically, 82% of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders tested showed increases in reading comprehension skills from pre- to post-testing. In comparison, 69% of 4<sup>th</sup> graders demonstrated increases last year. Moreover, the percent of students who showed reading comprehension gains were the highest observed among tested FITS sites.

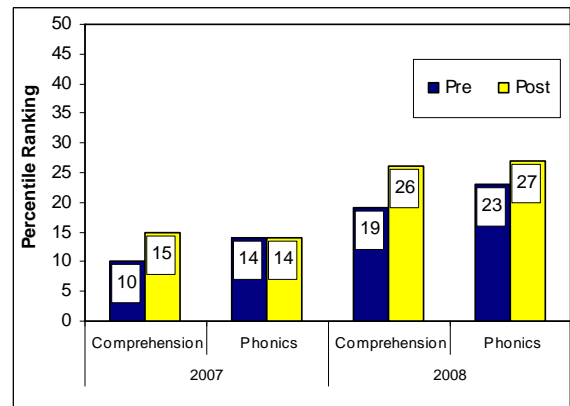
**Figure 9. Change in Reading Skills from Pre- to Post-testing: Franklin by Year**



\*2008 results based on 17 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students tested and 2007 results based on 13 4<sup>th</sup> graders tested.

Furthermore, there were notable increases in the percentile rankings of 2008 FITS participants at Franklin. As shown in Figure 10, in the area of comprehension, students grew by 7 percentiles (as compared to 5 last year), and grew by 4 percentiles in phonics (as compared to 0 last year). Again, the low literacy levels of students at this site are also of note.

**Figure 10. Percentile Rankings (PR) from Pre- to Post-testing: Franklin by Year**

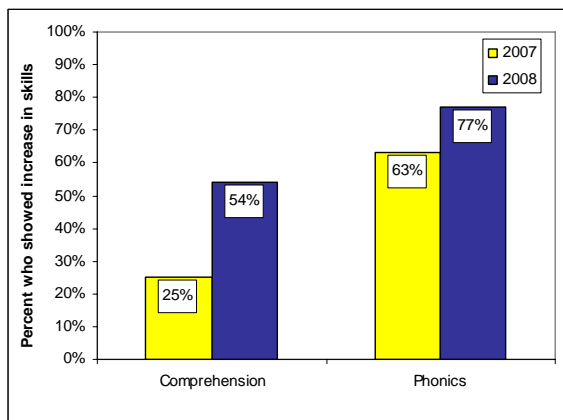


*At Franklin, reading comprehension goals were met. That is, over 60% of 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> grade participants at Franklin demonstrated gains in this area, though not on phonics. Furthermore, students showed greater increases in both comprehension and phonics as compared to 2007 participants.*

## **La Patera**

Results showed that goals *were* met in the area of phonics, see Figure 11. Furthermore, there was a higher percentage of students who showed improvement in phonics and comprehension during the 2008 FITS program as compared to last year. Thus, there was improvement in students reading performance as compared to 2007.

**Figure 11. Change in Reading Skills from Pre- to Post: La Patera by Year**

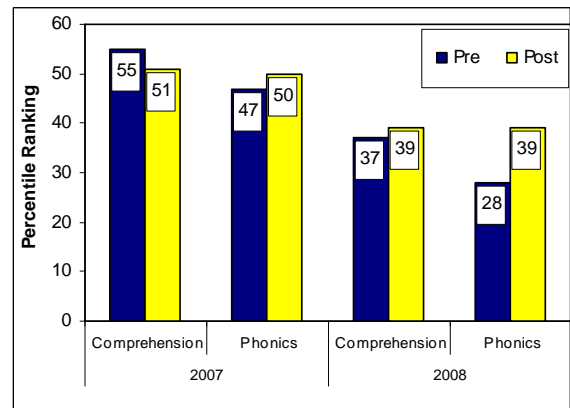


\*2008 results based on 13 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students tested and 2007 results based on 9 3<sup>rd</sup> graders tested.

Figure 12 shows the percentile rankings for Goleta area FITS participants in 2007 (from Ellwood) and 2008. While last year, FITS participants showed a decline in their percentile rankings in comprehension skills, this year, participants demonstrated gains of 2 percentiles. Percentile gains were even more marked in the area of phonics. In comparison to the other sites, the higher

literacy levels of students at this site are also of note; this is consistent with the types of students that were to be served at La Patera.

**Figure 12. Percentile Rankings (PR) from Pre- to Post-testing: La Patera by Year**



\*Note: Students are entering 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

*At La Patera, the phonics goal was met; over 60% of participants at La Patera demonstrated gains in phonics skills. Additionally, learning gains were observed in both comprehension (2 percentile points) and phonics (11 percentile points).*

In summary, the results show that gains observed depended on the site and the literacy skill being measured. Franklin FITS participants showed the greatest percentage of gains, with improvement in both comprehension and phonics. At La Patera, improvement was also evident in both phonics and comprehension. At La Cumbre, increases in performance was only observed in the areas of phonics. Of note is that at each site, the 2008 FITS participants showed more improvement (i.e., there was a higher percentage of students who demonstrated gains) as compared to last year's participants. Such findings suggest that the FITS program is doing well at reaching and teaching important literacy skills to

students—particularly those who are in need of reading intervention.

Perceived changes in literacy ability were also obtained from parents and program leaders. In general, parents were more likely to indicate that they perceived improvement in reading ability. In contrast, program leaders tended to perceive less improvement, see Figure 13. That said, approximately 20% also indicated that while they did not perceive any gains or improvements in reading ability, they also felt that this is because the students did well before and continued to do so.

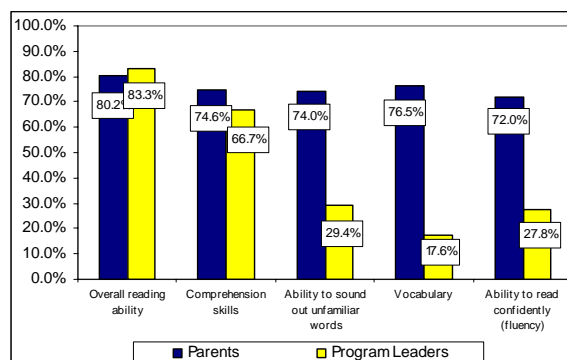
*I think many of my children improved at reading.*

--Program Leader

*I see a lot of change in reading. They know they can do it so they do it [more].*

--Parent

**Figure 13. Percent of Parents and Program Leaders Indicating Improvement in Reading Skills**



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

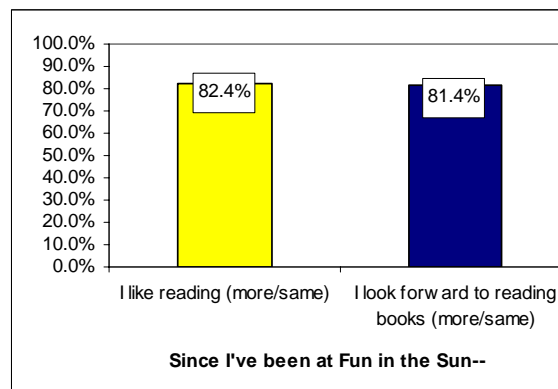
**Target 2: 80% of general program participants will maintain or display a gain in positive perceptions of reading**

*I like chapter books and I can read 5th grade books! I like reading,*

--3<sup>rd</sup> grade FITS Participant

A retrospective measure was included in the student survey in which 1<sup>st</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grade 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, 82% of program participants gained or maintained an appreciation for reading over the course of FITS, see Figure 14. That is, these participants indicated that since being at FITS, they liked reading more or about the same. In addition, this is an increase from the prior year in which 77% of participants indicated liking reading more or the same<sup>20</sup>.

**Figure 14. Percent of Participants' Showing Improvement or Maintenance in Liking for Reading**



- Across both measures, over 81% of FITS participants showed gains or maintenance of their attitudes towards reading. Moreover, this is an increase in positive reading attitudes in comparison to last year (average was 77%).

<sup>20</sup> That said, this year, ratings were obtained from all participants whereas last year, ratings were obtained from 4-6<sup>th</sup> graders only.

**Goal 2 was met. Over 81% continued to like reading or showed gains in their attitudes towards reading.**

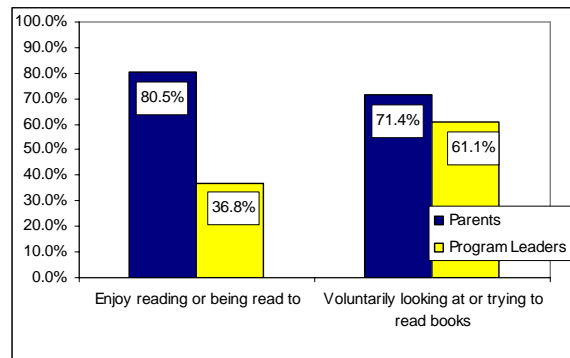
Furthermore, analysis of gains by subgroups of grade levels, years at FITS, and sites showed that liking for reading was consistent across all sites. However, a relationship was observed by grade level. Specifically, older participants (in grades 5 and 6) tended to indicate more of a maintenance of attitudes whereas younger participants (in grades 1 through 4) tended to indicate that they liked reading more.

As shown in Figure 15, parents and program leaders also perceived positive changes in participants' liking for reading ("some to much improvement"). However, the extent to which program leaders noted "some to much improvement" was less as compared to parents.

*It's had a positive impact on my daughter. She reads more at the house. She likes to read and also is very positive with other children in Fun In The Sun.*  
--FITS Parent

*I've seen greatest improvement in interest in reading! They wanted to read things they liked, such as scary stories..*  
--Program Leader

**Figure 15. Percent of Parents and Program Leaders Indicating Improvement in Enjoyment of Reading**



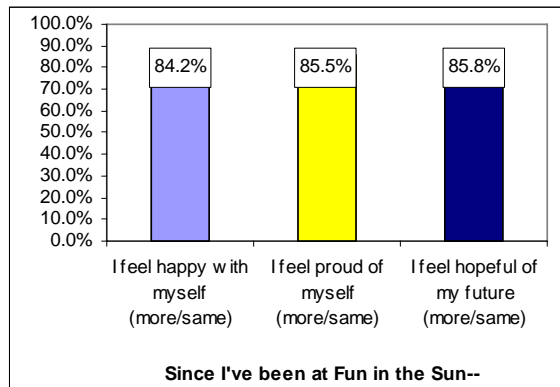
- A higher percentage of parents perceived some to much improvement in participants' enjoyment of reading as compared to program leaders. Parental attitudes were also more in line with those of participants.

**Target 3: 80% of general program participants will maintain or display a gain in positive identity**

*FITS has helped me feel better about myself because I have so much friends and they pay attention to me. I have been telling my mom that I really like it here. And nobody has been fighting with me since I've been here.*  
--3<sup>rd</sup> grade FITS Participant

Students were also asked about perceived changes they observed in themselves as it related to positive identity (i.e., feeling happy, proud, and hopeful of the future). Results showed that, on average, 85% of participants in grades 1-6 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 16. Note that this percentage is similar to last year's result of 86.5%.

**Figure 16. Percent of Participants' Indicating Maintenance or Gain in Positive Identity**



- Across all measures, approximately 85% of FITS participants showed gains or maintenance of their positive identity.

*The positive identity goal was met. Approximately 85% of participants showed gains or maintenance in their positive identity.*

Furthermore, analysis by subgroups of grade levels, years at FITS, and sites showed no consistent relationship between these subgroups and increases in positive identity.

*FITS is a good program. I has taught my child to be more independent, to be more positive, to develop more, to lose some fear, developed more with others, thoughts of moving forward, being more responsible, and wanting to continue going to school. Thank you for all the help that you have offered. Thank you to all.*

--Parent

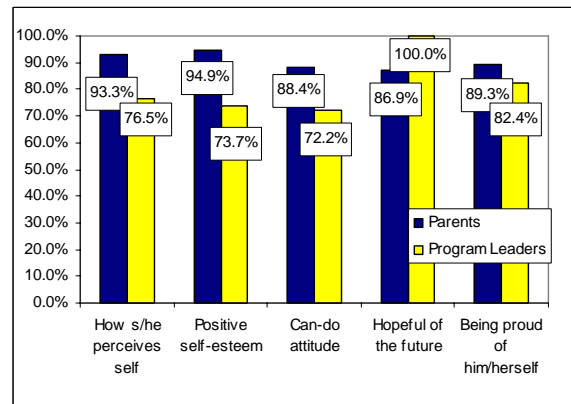
*She feels more sure of herself. She does things more for herself now with desire. Everyday her intentions are better. She's happy that she went to Fun In The Sun.*

--Parent

*Character Counts facilitated many introspective conversations about the girls' personal experiences which developed positive communication practices and lots of self-esteem talks!*  
--Program Leader

These findings are supported by parents and program leaders as well. As shown in Figure 17, both parents and program leaders perceived improvement (a little to much) in participants' positive identity. 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 17. Percent of Parents and Program Leaders' Indicating Improvement in Positive Identity**



- Both parents and program leaders perceived positive changes in the positive identity of participants.

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

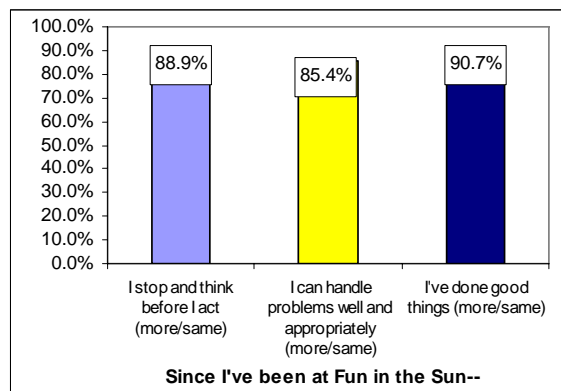
**Target 4: 80% of general program participants will maintain or display a gain in self-control**

*I think FITS is good, I'm doing a good job of respecting people and respecting adults.*

*--4<sup>th</sup> grade FITS Participant*

Participants in grades 1<sup>st</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> were asked to make judgments about perceived changes in their self-control since being at FITS. Results showed that approximately 88% of general program participants indicated that they gained or maintained their level of self-control over the course of FITS, see Figure 18. This represents a similar percentage as compared to last year's figure of 87%. Furthermore, these results were consistent across gender, site and years at FITS.

**Figure 18. Percent of Participants' Indicating Maintenance or Gain in Self-Control (and engagement in positive behaviors)**



- Across all measures, 88% of participants indicated that they showed gains or maintenance of their self-control since being at Fun in the Sun during the 2008 program year.

*The goal for self-control was met. Approximately 88% of participants indicated maintaining or gaining in the area of self-control.*

As shown in Figure 19, approximately 72% to 94% of program leaders and parents perceived a little to much improvement in self-control, as measured by being able to stop and think before acting, handling disagreements positively, and interacting with others in a positive manner.

*My son is very positive and likes the program. He cooperates, listens, and understands better how to follow rules. Now he goes to the library and gets books to read and he enjoys it.*

*--Parent*

*I've seen the greatest improvement in their ability to handle problems with other children. They learned to work together and see the importance in being kind to others. They found respect for each other and helped each other's self-esteem.*

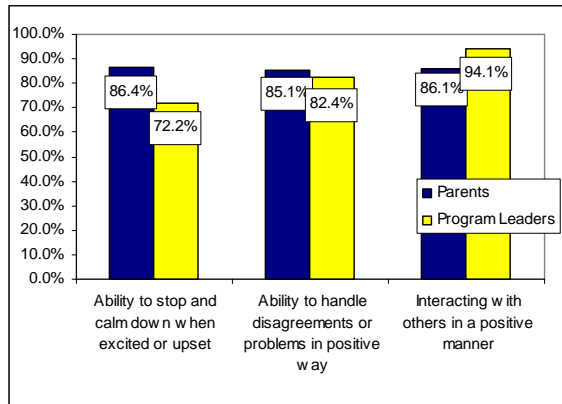
*-- Program Leader*

However, and as in prior years, *qualitative* feedback obtained by program leaders indicated that self-control was the least improved area among participants (along with reading). When asked for the area in which participants showed the least improvement, the majority of program leaders (10 out of 17 surveyed) indicated lack of self-control (e.g., bullying, teasing, being disrespectful, not listening, etc.).

*'Respect was a problem. It was hard to get them to understand that you shouldn't bully people.'*

*-- Program Leader*

**Figure 19. Percent of Parents and Program Leaders' Indicating Improvement in Self-Control**



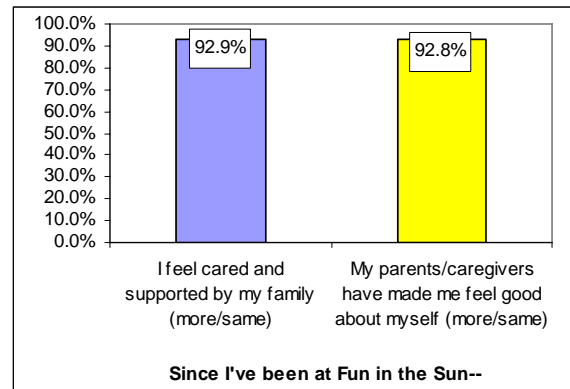
- Both program leaders and parents perceived some positive changes in self-control.

*While most parents and program leaders indicated that FITS participants showed improvements in self-control, program leaders also 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**

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

**Figure 20. 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 93% 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**

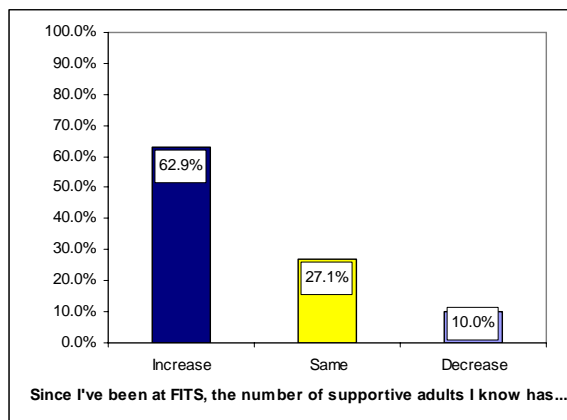
*I like spending more time here because there's a lot more people here and there's not a lot of people at my house...there's only three. Yeah, because I like being here, I don't like being at home because at my house sometimes I have to be lonely.*  
 --3<sup>rd</sup> grade FITS Participant

Participants 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, 63%, perceived an increase in the number of adults they thought were supportive, and another 27% perceived a maintenance in their ability to identify supportive adults, see Figure 21. Thus, this

goal was met. These results were also consistent across all subgroups, including grade levels, years at FITS, and sites, and are comparable to last year's figure of 93%.

*I really liked that the children have a chance to interact with the community and do a lot of different activities.*  
 --FITS Parent

**Figure 21. Percent of Participants Indicating Supportive Non-Parental Adults Identified by FITS Participants**



- 90% of participants surveyed perceived an increase or maintenance 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.*

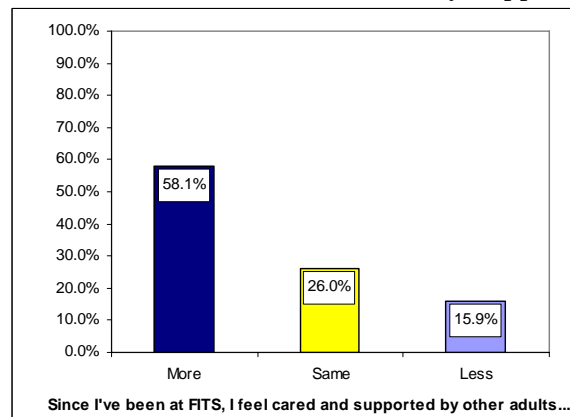
**Target 7: 80% of youth will maintain or display a gain in their perceptions of caring and support from non-parental adults**

*[I like [program leader]...she helps me and encourages me to try new things. She cares about me and makes me feel better.*  
 --4<sup>th</sup> grade FITS Participant

*The people at Fun in the Sun were very helpful...by being nice and talking to me.*  
 --4<sup>th</sup> grade FITS Participant

Examination of changes and maintenance of perceptions of community support among the 1<sup>st</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grade FITS participants revealed that approximately 84% of participants showed maintenance or gains, see Figure 22. This is the same figure that was obtained last year on the measure of community support. Thus, this goal was met. It should be noted that these results were consistent across all subgroups, including grade levels, years at FITS, and sites.

**Figure 22. Percent of Participants' Indicating Maintenance or Gain in Community Support**



- Approximately 84% of FITS participants in grades 1-6 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.*

*Most encouraging was the sense of community the girls made within the group, exemplifying citizenship and*

*caring about more than self  
regularly.  
-- Program Leader*

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

*Their greatest improvement came in their respect for others and their willingness to help out others. They also became more open about their feelings.*  
--Program Leader

*They are more aware of the character counts and therefore they handle conflicts and problems better.*  
--Program Leader

*I feel great about [Character Counts] because it's something that I've never done before, so I feel great about it. I feel good and love to share because I know the six pillars now. I know what it means, to be kind and caring and all that is important.*  
--3<sup>rd</sup> grade FITS Participant

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 trends<sup>21</sup> of current participants in comparison to prior participants, participants were asked about the extent to which they displayed key assets.

Table 4 displays the assets measured and the percent of current and prior year FITS

participants that displayed these assets. Note that in order to facilitate comparisons over the years, only results from 4-6<sup>th</sup> graders are included. It is important to note that some items designed to measure a particular asset may have changed over the years. As such, comparisons should be viewed with caution.

With this caveat in mind, in general there is a decreasing trend in comparison to last year for the majority of assets, though in most cases, decreases were small. Compared to last year, a higher percentage of this year's FITS participants indicated possessing greater service to others, empathy, positive self-control, personal power, and delay of gratification skills. In addition, there was a decrease in at-risk behaviors.

Furthermore, examination of this information reveals that planning and decision-making, resistance skills, and concerns about 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.

---

<sup>21</sup> 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.

**Table 4. Percent of Participants (Grades 4-6) Who Agreed to Healthy Asset Items**

Asset Category	Asset	Item	2008	2007	2006	2005
<b>External Assets</b>						
Support	Family Support <sup>a</sup>	I get along with my family.	85%	89%	88%	84%
		My parents/caregivers show me in lots of ways that they love me.	91%	99%	93%	91%
		My parents/caregivers give me help and support.	93%	99%	93%	90%
	Positive Family Communication	If I'm worried about something, I can talk to my parents/caregivers about it.	71%	74%	74%	--
	Adults at FITS <sup>a</sup>	Adults at FITS really care about me.	70%	74%	75%	67%
		Adults at FITS make me feel good about myself. (rev)	78%	69%	81%	80%
Empowerment	Community Values Children	Adults at FITS make me feel important.	71%	75%	73%	77%
		Adults at FITS listen to me when I have something to say.	78%	89%	78%	72%
		Adults at FITS tell me when I do something good.	80%	83%	88%	77%
	Service to Others	I try to help other people. (rev.)	81%	75%	83%	65%
	Safety	Sometimes I am afraid that someone might hurt me. (rev.)	73%	59%	24%	15%
Boundaries and Expectations	High Expectations	Adults at FITS want me to do the best I can. (rev.)	87%	89%	83%	86%
		My parents/caregivers expect me to be the best I can.	93%	94%	91%	74%
	Adult Role Models	My parents show me what is right and wrong.	95%	99%	93%	--
	Family Boundaries	My parents know what I'm doing most of the time.	80%	83%	76%	--
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.	52%	58%	59%	--
Commitment to Learning	Achievement Motivation	I try as hard as I can to do my best work. (rev)	68%	85%	92%	--

**Table 4 continued. Percent of Participants Who Agreed to Asset Items**

<b>Internal Assets</b>						
Social Competencies	Empathy	I care about other people's feelings.	75%	63%	74%	82%
	Positive Self-Control <sup>a</sup>	I can calm myself down pretty quickly when I get mad.	68%	48%	60%	56%
		I stop talking when adults tell me to stop.	81%	65%	63%	67%
	Planning & Decision Making	Most of the time, I think carefully about what to do before I decide things.	65%	65%	71%	--
	Affiliation	I can easily make and keep friends.	72%	72%	71%	--
	Resistance Skills	I am able to say no when someone wants me to do things that are wrong or dangerous.	56%	63%	83%	--
		I can stay away from people who will get me in trouble.(rev)	85%	62%	74%	--
Positive Identity <sup>a</sup>	Self-Esteem	Most of the time, I like myself	74%	83%	88%	74%
		Most of the time, I am glad to be me.	85%	89%	89%	--
	Personal Power	If I set a goal, I feel as if I can reach it.	85%	77%	84%	--
	Positive View of Personal Future	I feel as if I will be happy and successful as I grow up.	85%	92%	83%	--
		I feel hopeful when I think about my future.	89%	89%	88%	--
<b>Thriving Indicator</b>		It's easy for me to wait for something I want.	72%	60%	63%	--
<b>Risk Behavior Patterns</b> <i>(% of 4-6<sup>th</sup> grade students who indicated doing these activities at least once in the past month)</i>		Damaged property just for fun (e.g., breaking windows, scratching car, spraying paint on buildings or sidewalks, etc.)	12%	34%	18%	18%
		Hit or beat someone up	32%	48%	33%	47%
		Felt really sad or depressed	57%	68%	64%	73%
		Smoke cigarettes	6%	8%	2%	5%
		Have alcohol to drink (not including for religious ceremonies)	12%	11%	8%	23%
		Used illegal drug. (rev.)	--	--	3%	6%
		Bullied or teased someone	30%	--	--	--
		Stole something	24%	--	--	--
		Told rumors/lies	36%	--	--	--

<sup>a</sup>These items do not constitute the entire scale used to measure attainment of goal.

(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 5 provides the results of these surveys. In addition, to ease comparisons over the past three years, results from 2005-2008 are

provided. Results show that most of the participants (over 70%) indicated demonstrating fairness, caring, and good citizenship. That is, most participants indicated that they possessed these pillars.

**Table 5. Percent of Participants Who Agreed to Character Counts! Pillar Items**

Pillars	Item <sup>a</sup>	Grades 1-3*		Grades 4-6		
		2008	2006	2008	2007	2006
	Since I've been at FITS, I feel like I am a Character Counts! kid more.	75%	72%	54%	56%	46%
Trustworthiness	I tell the truth, even when its hard.	66%	66%	66%	62%	60%
	I stand up for what I believe in, even when others don't agree with me.	--	--	77%	74%	74%
Respect	I am respectful to others.	76%	--	66%	77%	71%
Responsibility	I do what I am supposed to do.	76%	--	69%	77%	68%
	I stop and think before I act.	59%	77%	65%	66%	57%
	I admit when I make a mistake or get into trouble.	--	--	65%	76%	63%
Fairness	I play by the rules.	75%	--	77%	84%	69%
	I share and listen to what others have to say.	70%	70%	82%	81%	77%
Caring	I care about people's feelings	76%	66%	75%	74%	63%
	I help other people.	77%	81%	81%	84%	75%
Citizenship	I speak up for others who are being taken advantage of.	--	--	72%	76%	77%

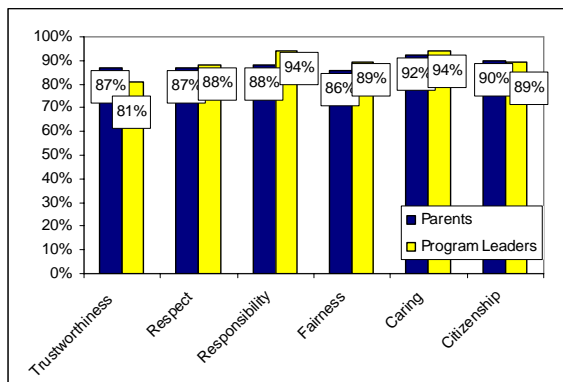
<sup>a</sup>It should be noted that some items listed in the assets table can also apply to these pillars. In addition, items listed here are similar to those in the Positive Values Healthy Asset. However, because in the original Search Institute survey, these items are preceded with "My parents tell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

\*During the 2007 program year, surveys were not administered to students in grades 1-3.

*The Character Counts component has been the most successful. As a site, we created a character counts paper chain. This chain has the six colors of the 6 pillars. For example, when a child would pick up trash without being asked they would receive a green strip for being responsible. They would place their name on the strip and it would be added in front of everyone to the chain. This increased the children's awareness of the pillars and made them important. I saw a tremendous change in all the kids to try and earn a strip, to try and do the right thing*  
 --Program Leader

Furthermore, parents and program leaders were asked about perceived improvements on Character Counts! pillars. As shown in Figure 23, most parents and program leaders saw the greatest improvement in the areas of responsibility, caring, and citizenship.

**Figure 23. Perceived Improvement on Character Counts! Pillars-Parents and Program Leaders**



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

*I liked best when lunch bunch came over, when I got to meet new friends, and I like the leaders a lot.*  
 --3<sup>rd</sup> grade FITS Participant

FITS participants and their parents were asked about their satisfaction with the entire 2008 FITS program and with specific elements of FITS. As shown in Figure 24, the highest rated items among general program participants included field trips and FITS adults and program leaders.

*I like going to fieldtrips and doing art. Playing with the lunch people. I like the hats.*  
 --4<sup>th</sup> grade FITS Participant

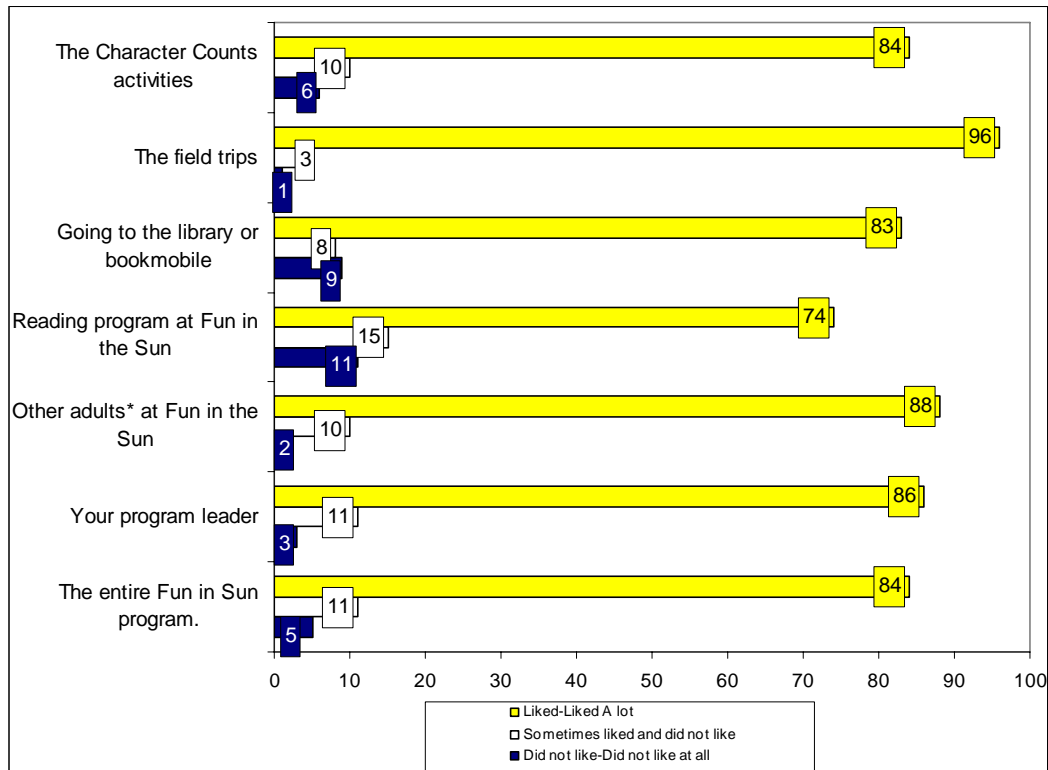
Among participants, reading activities were liked least (11% did not like). However, it should be noted that this represents a significant decrease in comparison to last year when 29% indicated that they disliked the reading component of the program.

Parents also commented that they liked the opportunity their children had to interact with others, the field trips that their children attended, and the quality of care that was being provided, see Figure 25.

*My son enjoyed everything about the program especially being exposed to different places in the community during field trips.*  
 --Parent

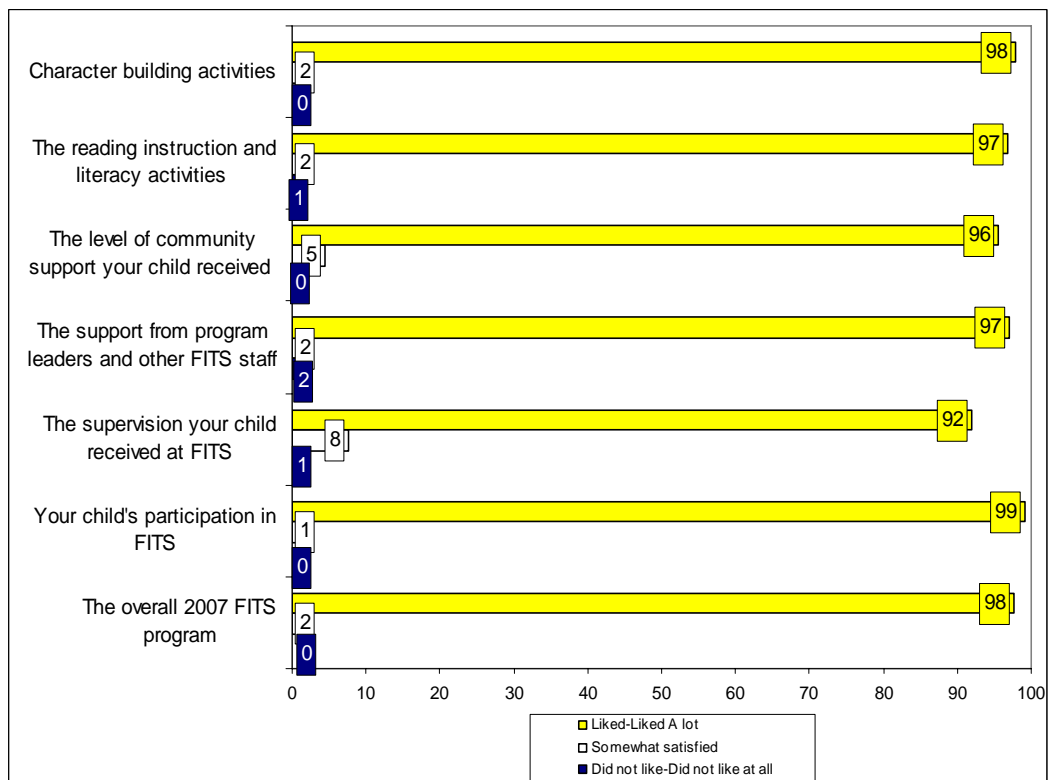
*I really liked the care and responsibility that the staff had for our children.*  
 --Parent

**Figure 24. General Participants' Satisfaction with FITS**



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

**Figure 25. Parents' Satisfaction with FITS**



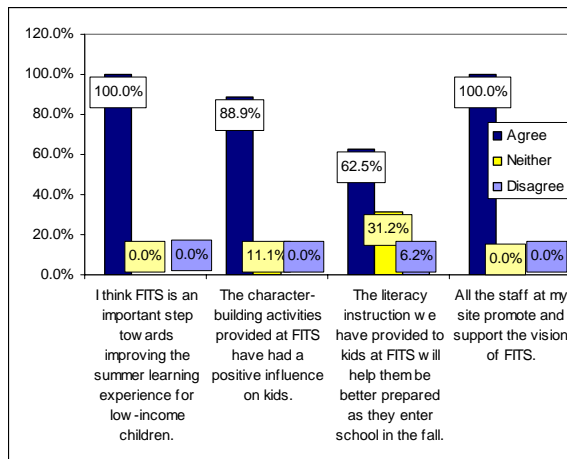
When parents were asked for things that they least liked about FITS, the vast majority indicated that they thought the program was good just the way it is. A few parents did note the quality of lunch provided (food was cold and/or did not taste good and their children did not like), and the late release of their children. Specifically, at times, students were late returning from their field trips and parents had to wait until 5:30 for their children to arrive.

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, and (2) all staff promoted and supported the vision of FITS. In addition, most (89%) felt that the character building activities provided at FITS had a positive influence and 63% agreed that the literacy instruction students received would help children be better prepared for school, see Figure 26.

In summary, participants and their parents were generally quite satisfied by the FITS program. The vast majority of participants thought the program was fun and look forward to the upcoming year. Likewise, parents were very thankful of the opportunity to participate in FITS--having a safe, fun, and nurturing environment for their child during the summer was clearly noted as important for their children and they were very grateful for this opportunity.

*This is the first time my daughter has attended this program but it's the best thing that could have ever happened to her. She was very happy about it. She can't wait to return next year. Everything was absolutely good.*  
 --Parent

**Figure 26. Program Leaders' Perceptions of FITS**



- All program leaders thought the program had a positive impact on the participants' character development and summer learning experience.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

---

The 2008 FITS program met its targets for ALL goals, see Figure 27. Specifically, targets were met for general program participants in the areas of reading achievement and enjoyment of reading, positive identity, self-control, family support and community support.

Moreover, 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 *significant gains* (1 to 4 month gains) in reading achievement, particularly in comprehension and phonics.

**Figure 27. 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 3<sup>rd</sup> grade will display gains in reading comprehension, phonics, and vocabulary skills.
- **Result #1** – 61% of participants demonstrated gains in reading (average across comprehension, and phonics)
- **Target #2** – 80% of participants will maintain or display a gain in positive perceptions of reading.
- **Result #2** – 82% 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** – 85% 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** – 88% 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** – 93% 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** – 90% 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***

It is important that the United Way, along with key partners and stakeholders, continue to clearly articulate what they envision for the future. Indeed, 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 continued to be challenging for FITS, particularly at the Goleta and La Cumbre sites. In particular, late distribution of applications and budgetary concerns at the Goleta site precluded Girls Inc. from being able to fulfill a sufficient number of slots at Kellogg. As a result, only one FITS site was used in the Goleta area (La Patera). At La Cumbre, there was some miscommunication in terms of the number of slots open to students at Adams Elementary. This resulted in late enrollment of students during the first week of FITS. However, strategic recruitment efforts ultimately produced the targeted number of FITS participants (with additional youth on waiting lists). As a result of these recruitment challenges, it is important that there be better communication among partners and agencies, and that recruitment efforts begin even earlier given the more unique population of students being targeted.
- As was true last year, self-control and related-behavioral issues were most problematic over the course of FITS as noted by program leaders. It is again recommended that program administrators continue to research and try other structured, research-based approaches to improving upon this area as well as promote a consistent approach to behavioral consequences (some program leaders noted a lack of consistency). In addition more time and focus to the training of program leaders in this area is recommended. As was done in the past, parental informational sessions on positive discipline and communication, may also be useful in promoting positive behaviors among children.
- Some program leaders noted that they had difficulty with the reading curriculum. Recommendations included:
  - ▶ Program leaders need more training in literary instruction (especially for younger groups),
  - ▶ Sites need more reading books (one program leader noted that “we were only given 5 of the "Adventures in Summer Reading" books for a class of 14”)
  - ▶ Use certified teachers to help children with reading/writing/comprehension skills.
- It is also recommended that there be better coordination of field trips and that hiring efforts be increased in order to ensure that there are sufficient drivers to take children to planned field trips. This year, there were 2 van drivers for the three sites in Santa Barbara and Goleta. This resulted in less field trips and delays in students return from their trips

(as noted previously, this was a concern for some parents).

- The quality of the food was also an issue this year. Many participants (along with some staff and parents) complained about the food.
- Finally, FITS should continue to move toward a thematic approach in its programming. This year, there was a greater emphasis on thematic programming as compared to prior years (note that Canalino did this last year as well). This is important because use of thematic programming has been shown to encourage: (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.

## **CONCLUSION**

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. It is clear from this evaluation that Fun in the Sun continues to meet the vast majority of these important components.

### **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 FITS program was again successful in meeting all of its program goals. In addition, it continues to grow and become stronger due to ongoing support from partners and the community. As a result, FITS continues to flourish in meeting the needs of children in the South Coast.

## 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.
- Durlack, J. & Wiessberg, R. (2007). *The Impact of After-School Programs That Promote Personal and Social Skills*. Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). Department of Psychology (MC 285) University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL.
- 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.
- Cooper, H., Nye, B., 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.
- 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			
	Phonics	-6.63	16.38	2.34	-11.34	-1.93	-2.835	48	.007
	Reading Comprehension	-2.59	10.22	1.46	-5.53	.34	-1.776	48	.082

**Table A2. Results for Reading: Paired t-tests – La Patera**

		Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Phonics	-8.77	13.27	3.68	-16.79	-0.75	-2.383	12	.035
Pair 2	Reading Comprehension	-1.54	8.24	2.29	-6.52	3.44	-.673	12	.514

**Table A3. Results for Reading: Paired t-tests – La Cumbre**

		Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Phonics	-6.79	18.26	4.19	-15.59	2.01	-1.621	18	.122
Pair 2	Reading Comprehension	-0.58	12.38	2.84	-6.54	5.39	-.204	18	.841

**Table A4. 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	-4.82	17.04	4.13	-13.58	3.94	-1.167	16	.260
Pair 2	Reading Comprehension	-5.65	8.62	2.09	-10.08	-1.21	-2.700	16	.016