

Final Report

2009 Fun in the Sun Evaluation



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I am so grateful that this program was made available to families in our community. My favorite aspect is the genuine care, commitment and enthusiasm offered up by the staff and counselors. I think all parents can appreciate the energy it takes to produce a program that can capture the attention of so many children, for so many hours in the day!--Parent

The 2009 Fun in the Sun program continued to flourish with the support of its partners and the community. 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 2009 FITS program.

As in prior years, the evaluation of the 2009 FITS involved the collection of 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.

- ▶ 60% or more of FITS participants demonstrated gains in reading, meeting the goals of this indicator. An additional 8.5-10% 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. 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 *gains* in reading comprehension and phonics skills.
- ▶ Over 90% 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 82% indicated gains or maintenance of their enjoyment for reading.
- ▶ Likewise, over 90% 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.

- ▶ 93% 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.
- ▶ 96% of general program participants upheld or gained in their perceptions of family support (as compared to 93% obtained last year), exceeding the targeted goal of 80%.
- ▶ In addition, 94% of general program participants upheld or gained in their perceptions of community support, exceeding the targeted goal of 80%. In addition, 98% 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.
- ▶ Most of the 2009 FITS participants indicated having greater support, sense of empowerment, having boundaries and high expectations, constructive use of time, empathy, self-esteem, resistance skills and planning and decision-making skills. In addition, there was a decrease in the number of risk behaviors among this year's participants in comparison to prior years. Furthermore, and similar to last year, most of the participants indicated demonstrating the Character Counts' pillars of fairness, caring and good citizenship. In contrast, achievement motivation and positive self-control were reported as 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.

- ▶ During the 2009 program year, middle school students (in grades 6-8) were given the opportunity to participate in a special leadership group. The goals were to provide these older youth with a safe, nurturing environment where they could learn important leadership skills, how to help their community, and expose students to life skills and higher education opportunities.

Students were surveyed to obtain information on the extent to whether various leadership characteristics showed positive changes. Results showed that the areas of greatest change were in:

- Being open-minded
- Being honest with others
- Having a friendly personality
- Getting along with others

- ▶ Participants and their parents yet again overwhelmingly enjoyed being a part of the FITS program. The highest rated program components among general program participants included field trips, FITS adults and program leaders, and outdoor activities. 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.

The FITS program was again successful in meeting all of its program goals. In addition, it continues to grow and become stronger than ever 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.

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Project Background

Children in all socioeconomic groups are learning at nearly the same rate, at least when it comes to basic skills, during the school year; however, differences in achievement between poor and middle-class children are rooted in the inequities that young people experience outside the schoolhouse door. –The Nellie Mae Education Foundation

Summer time activities are paramount and for many families mean camping trips, visits to the local museum, summer camps or other enriching activities. For most working parents finding the time to oversee summer activities on a day to day basis is at best a juggling act and at worst logistically impossible. Without the safety net of an academic schedule, with it's built in childcare, healthy meals and everyday opportunities for emotional, mental and physical stimulation, summer can be a stressful time for parents who can't be at home all day. It means daily routines are wide open and they must find ways in which to provide constructive, safe and cost effective activities 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).

Overall these findings point towards a “summer loss” in which children’s educational, social and affective development can be negatively influenced. However, research has shown that assimilating a well-planned summer program into children’s yearly schedules can help reduce some of these negative outcomes (Johnson, 2000). Summer time activities that foster positive youth development and increase achievement have been linked, among other things, to: 1) higher attendance and scholastic attainment during the school year, 2) increased social and emotional development, 3) increased feelings of safety and belonging, 4) reduced incidence of violence and risky behaviors, 5) create greater involvement from parents in their children’s education, and 6) provide meaningful opportunities for children to interact with supportive adults (Fairchild, McLaughlin, & Brady, 2006).

OVERVIEW OF 2009 FUN IN THE SUN

In an effort to reduce the effects of summer loss on disadvantaged youth in Santa Barbara County, of which 52% of total youth are estimated to be of low socioeconomic status¹, 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. For the 2009 program year, United Way provided full scholarships to youth entering grades 1-6 for the general program, students in grades 7-8 for the newleadership program, and high school students in the Counselor in Training (CIT) program. As the director and primary funder of the FITS program, the United Way of Santa Barbara

¹ Based on 2007 data from the Santa Barbara County Education Office, 51.8% of children were eligible for federally funded free and reduced lunches.

County guides and works with three lead agency partners in charge of administering the FITS program: (1) Girls Inc. of Greater Santa Barbara, (2) Girls Inc. of Carpinteria, and (3) Girl Scouts of Greater Santa Barbara. In 2009, a new partnership was established with the Girls Scouts of Greater Santa Barbara who oversaw the implementation of the FITS program at La Cumbre. Girls Inc. of Greater Santa Barbara was in charge of administering the FITS program at Ellwood (in Goleta) and Franklin schools (in Santa Barbara). Girls Inc. of Carpinteria also continued to implement the FITS program in Carpinteria; however, in contrast to prior years, the program was located at the Girls Inc. facility in Carpinteria instead of the Canalino Elementary School. United Way of Santa Barbara County and these lead agencies were also provided with resources and services through collaborative relationships with 38 organizations.

The stated goals of the 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 22 to August 7, 2009), 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:

- ▶ Participants 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. The children also participated daily in 30-45 minutes worth of independent reading and journaling time.
- ▶ Afternoon activities included, but was not limited to, environmental and health/safety 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 339² children in grades 1-8. This represents an increase of 50 youth served as compared to last year. In addition, 26² CITs at the high school grade level were selected to assist program leaders in the supervision of participants. CITs also participated in activities designed to create awareness in leadership skills, sense of empowerment, higher education, 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. Selected students from the Goleta School District participated in FITS at Ellwood Elementary. Carpinteria School District students attended FITS at the Girls Inc. of Carpinteria's facilities³.

² Excludes participants who dropped out or were dropped from FITS.

³ This is in contrast to prior years in which participants attended FITS at Canalino Elementary School. In addition, unlike prior years, summer school was cancelled for the summer of 2009 and therefore, FITS programming occurred from 8-5pm each day of the seven week period.

Across all sites, 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 basis⁴.

Franklin, Ellwood, and Carpinteria sites held FITS activities Monday through Friday from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. during the 7 week period. At La Cumbre, FITS participants were in the FITS program from 8:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M.

Each site had a site coordinator and assistant site coordinator who oversaw all activities at each site and a family advocate. In 2009, the number of participants per group was decreased from 14 to 12. One program leader and 1-2 CITs led each group. Groups at Franklin and Ellwood were mostly gender and grade-based (e.g., all girls in grade 2 were in one group). The groups at Carpinteria and La Cumbre were generally gender mixed but largely based on grade/age level, though some combination groups existed (e.g., groups made up of 3rd and 4th graders).

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

⁴ As in prior years, the Goleta School District superintendent requested that all applications be distributed to principals and community liaisons for final selection of participants.

overall program goals are being realized and to inform future programming, the United Way of Santa Barbara contracted with Miriam Resendez, Director of Research and Evaluation for Planning, Research and Evaluation Services (PRES) Associates and with over 10 years of applied research experience, to conduct an evaluation of the 2009 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 youth learn in the new leadership group?
- ▶ 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 2009 evaluation was similar as compared to last year's, with one exception. Since older students (in grades 7 and 8) were eligible to participate in FITS during the 2009 program as part of the leadership group and received reading practice, the reading assessment was given to students at grades 7, in addition to students in grades 2 and 3.

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

- ▶ Background data was collected on educational and other programmatic activities, and used to inform results;
- ▶ A standardized assessment measure was used in order to enhance the sensitivity of the study to picking up effects and to inform future programming;
- ▶ Student assessments and surveys are valid and reliable as shown by technical documentation and statistical analyses performed⁵.

Based on the needs of the United Way of Santa Barbara County, the following methods⁶ were employed to evaluate FITS:

⁵ Detailed information on the reliability and validity of student surveys are provided in Appendix C of the 2006 FITS Evaluation Report. The vast majority of items were the same as those in the 2006 surveys.

⁶ The data collection for this evaluation was designed to obtain valuable information while operating within practical and fiscal constraints associated with this project.

- 1) **Pre-Post Student Reading Assessments:** Pre- and post-assessments were administered to participants during the first week, June 22nd to June 25th, and sixth week, July 27th to July 30th, of the program. Ellwood, Franklin, and La Cumbre FITS participants entering 2nd, 3rd, and 7th grade were assessed.

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 measure⁷. The publisher has extensive documentation on the validity of this measure as well. For more detailed information, the reader is referred to the ITBS Technical Manual.

- 2) **Pre-Post Student Surveys:** Surveys were administered to participants during the 1st and 6th week of the program. Three different versions were completed by students entering the 1st-3rd grades, 4th-6th grades, and those in the leadership group (7th – 8th grades) so that the survey was aligned with their development levels and programmatic activities. The survey for general program participants gathered information on: attitudes toward reading, perceptions of positive identity, self-control, family and community support, other Healthy Assets⁸, and basic background information. Post-surveys also included items regarding their

⁷ 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.

⁸ The Search Institute has identified 40 developmental assets that promote positive development among youth (see www.search-institute.org). Prior FITS evaluations included measures of these assets. Although not a focus of this evaluation, in order to describe the current population of FITS participants, and to compare them to prior FITS participants, items measuring some of these developmental assets were included.

perceptions of changes that may have occurred over the course of their participation in FITS in the aforementioned areas as well as their satisfaction with the FITS program. Reliability estimates for the 4-6th grade survey ranged from .73-.81, and for the 1-3rd 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.
- 4) **Interviews with Program Participants:** Interviews were conducted with a sample of participants in grades 2-7 (5-7 per site) during the 6th week 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 the lead agencies, with the exception of Girls Inc. of Carpinteria, 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 Cumbre served the most participants.
- ▶ Most youth were in the 2nd – 5th grade range, with 8th graders constituting the smallest proportion of FITS participants (4%). While there was a somewhat even distribution across grade levels at Ellwood, participants at La Cumbre were concentrated at the 2nd, 3rd and 5th grades, and participants at Franklin were concentrated at the 4th to 5th grades.
- ▶ There were slightly more females (54%) than males (46%) at all sites.
- ▶ Hispanics made up the vast majority of FITS participants (95%).
- ▶ There was much more variability in the schools that Ellwood youth attended. This is due to the superintendent's expanded recruitment efforts at the Goleta School District. In contrast, most of the Franklin participants attended Franklin Elementary. Similarly, most of

the La Cumbre participants attended Adams Elementary School.

- ▶ While some participants were in their first year of FITS (47%), the majority of youth were returning FITS participants (53%). It is also interesting to note that this represents a drop in returning students as compared to last year when 67% of FITS participants were returnees.

Dropout information obtained from sites shows that a higher percentage of participants dropped⁹ from Franklin and La Cumbre sites, see Table 1. There was an average attrition rate of 18% across all FITS sites, with Carpinteria demonstrating the lowest dropout rates at 7%. 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 level). As such, it is unlikely that dropouts have biased results. It is also important to note that dropout counts also include students who were accepted into the program but who did not actually attend FITS.

⁹ Students dropped from FITS for a variety of reasons including no shows, excessive unexcused absences, lack of transportation, vacations, and behavioral problems.

Table 1. FITS Site and General Program Participant Characteristics*

		Franklin		Ellwood		La Cumbre		Carpinteria		Total	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Participants	Enrolled throughout	68	68.0	77	77.0	85	65.9	72	85.7%	302	73.1%
	Dropped	21	21.0	12	12.0	35	27.1	6	7.1%	74	17.9%
	Added	11	11.0	11	11.0	9	7.0	6	7.1%	37	9.0%
Grade	1	9	9.0	11	11.0	9	7.0	Not Available		29	8.8
	2	16	16.0	15	15.0	30	23.3			61	18.5
	3	11	11.0	14	14.0	21	16.3			46	14.0
	4	23	23.0	18	18.0	10	7.8			51	15.5
	5	24	24.0	14	14.0	25	19.4			63	19.1
	6	16	16.0	15	15.0	10	7.8			41	12.5
	7	1	1.0	10	10.0	14	10.9			25	7.6
	8	0	0.0%	3	3.0	10	7.8			13	4.0
Gender	Female	53	53.0	54	54.0	70	54.3	Not Available		177	53.8
	Male	47	47.0	46	46.0	59	45.7			152	46.2
Ethnicity	White	0	0.0%	3	3.0	1	.8	Not Available		4	1.2
	Hispanic	99	99.0	89	89.0	126	97.7			314	95.4
	African Am.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	1.6			2	.6
	Asian Am.	0	0.0%	3	3.0	0	0.0%			3	.9
	Native Am.	1	1.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%			1	.3
	Other/Multi	0	0.0%	5	5.0	0	0.0%			5	1.5
Prior FITS participation	Yes	54	54.0	57	57.0	62	48.1	Not Available		173	52.6
	No	46	46.0	43	43.0	67	51.9			156	47.4
School	Adams	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	108	83.7	Not Available		108	32.8
	Brandon	0	0.0%	14	14	1	.8			15	4.6
	Brian	0	0.0%	1	1	0	0.0%			1	0.3
	Cesar Chavez	2	2	0	0.0%	0	0.0%			2	0.6
	Cleveland	1	1	0	0.0%	0	0.0%			1	0.3
	El Camino	0	0.0%	21	21	0	0.0%			21	6.4
	Ellwood	0	0.0%	11	11	0	0.0%			11	3.3
	Foothill	0	0.0%	4	4	0	0.0%			4	1.2
	Franklin	95	95	0	0.0%	0	0.0%			95	28.9
	Goleta Valley Jr. High	0	0.0%	2	2	0	0.0%			2	0.6
	Harding	0	0.0%	1	1	1	.8			2	0.6
	Hollister	0	0.0%	14	14	0	0.0%			14	4.3
	Isla Vista	0	0.0%	9	9	0	0.0%			9	2.7
	Kellogg	0	0.0%	5	5	0	0.0%			5	1.5
	La Colina Jr. High	0	0.0%	1	1	0	0.0%			1	0.3
	La Cumbre Jr. HS	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	19	14.7			19	5.8
	La Patera	0	0.0%	13	13	0	0.0%			13	4.0
	Mountain View	0	0.0%	1	1	0	0.0%			1	0.3
St. Raphael's	0	0.0%	3	3	0	0.0%	3	0.9			
Washington	2	2.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	0.6			

*The above counts and percents exclude missing data. For example, total counts by grade, gender, ethnicity, prior attendance, and school exclude Carpinteria.

As previously noted, in comparison to last year (2008), there was a decrease in the percent of students returning to FITS. That is, there were less returning participants this year (53%) in comparison to last year (63%). Table 2 shows the percent of new participants in comparison to the prior two years by comparison site. As shown, with the exception of Ellwood, enrollment of new participants are higher this year across all sites; this means there are less returning students participating at FITS in 2009. That said, a notable percentage of students are also returnees (approximately 47%). 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 2007 to 2009

	2007	2008	2009
Harding/ La Cumbre/ La Cumbre	72.3%	38%	55.3%
Franklin/ Franklin/ Franklin	70.0%	49%	55.7%
Ellwood/ La Patera/ Ellwood	67.1%	27%	43.2%
Canalino/ Canalino/ Carpinteria	67.1%	41%	unknown

COUNSELORS-IN-TRAINING

Table 3 displays the number of the 2009 CITs. 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 Cumbre had the most CITs since it had the largest enrollment of FITS participants.

Table 3. CIT Characteristics

	Total
Ellwood	4
Carpinteria	9
Franklin	10
La Cumbre	12

FITS GOAL-RELATED ACTIVITIES

In order to address each of the FITS goals, the lead agencies of Girls Scouts of Greater Santa Barbara, Girls Inc. of Greater Santa Barbara, and Girls Inc. of Carpinteria, administered a summer enrichment program that provided numerous educational, social, cultural, and creative opportunities for participants. The following provides a summary of these activities as they relate to the goals of FITS. For more detailed information on the program components and providers, the reader is referred to the lead agencies' End of Summer Reports on FITS 2009.

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. The new lead partner agency, Girl Scouts of Greater Santa Barbara, implemented a distinct reading curriculum at La Cumbre as compared to the curricula used by Girls Inc. As such, the different curricula are described below.

- **Morning literacy instruction at Franklin and Ellwood (Ready to Read)**, provided by program leaders, was based primarily on the *Summer*

Adventures in Reading. According to the publisher McGraw Hill SRA, *Summer Adventures in Reading* keeps students' interest with both fiction and nonfiction reading selections and topics which correlate to other curricular areas such as math, science, and history. The program includes: (1) 30 instructionally sound reading lessons that can span up to six weeks; (2) the same six themes for every grade level, allowing for school-wide correlated activities; (3) detailed concepts, skills review, and practice activities for each lesson; and (4) teacher tips, suggestions, and strategies for targeting the special needs of English-language learners. At the 1st and 2nd grade levels, focus was placed on phonics, phonemic awareness, and vocabulary, with some comprehension. At the 3rd and 4th grade levels, students read stories and worked on comprehension and fluency skills. At the 5th through 6th grade level, the program emphasizes fluency, word study, vocabulary development, and comprehension skills/strategies.

Reading kits for students in grades 1-5 were purchased and instruction lasted 60 minutes per day. It should be noted that there were high school volunteers at Franklin and Ellwood to assist the program leaders during the morning academic component of the program¹⁰.

- **Morning literacy instruction at Carpinteria** provided by program leaders was based primarily on the *Summer Success: Reading program*. According to the publisher Great Source,

¹⁰ These consisted of high school students who participated in Rein Tours, a volunteer program that partnered with UC Santa Barbara. These students were with the program leaders for 3 weeks at Franklin and 4 weeks at Ellwood and were able to provide the one on one attention that some of the children required.

Summer Success: Reading is a complete and comprehensive program designed to help struggling learners become fluent readers through the use of current research and time-tested best practices from successful reading teachers. Instruction in word-identification skills and oral and silent reading help develop students' independence in decoding and an ability to read fluently. Instruction in comprehension strategies promotes independent understanding and appreciation of books and stories. Girls Inc. of Carpinteria purchased 1st – 6th reading level kits from *Summer Success: Reading*. In addition, each program leader was provided with a copy of the teachers guide and a group set of 12 student packets. Instruction lasted 60 minutes per day and it was reported that program leaders provided 7 weeks of reading instruction.

- **Morning literacy instruction at La Cumbre** provided by program leaders was based primarily on the *Read Naturally program*. According to the publisher, *Read Naturally* reinforces the five essential components of reading, as determined by the National Reading Panel: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The core steps of the Read Naturally program incorporate the strategies of teacher modeling, repeated reading, and progress monitoring to maximize reading fluency and comprehension. According to information obtained from Girls Scouts of Greater Santa Barbara, there are several reading activities within each story that students engaged in. Key vocabulary words were introduced at the beginning of the reading, and students made a prediction about the story based on the reading. The stories were meant to be read first by the individual then

together as class, and finally individually once more (repeated reading). A fluency test was also conducted which consisted of a timed reading selection, with results noted on a graph to show each students' progression. The lesson closed with reading comprehension questions. Instruction lasted 60 minutes per day and it was reported that program leaders provided 7 weeks of reading instruction.

- ▶ **Reading activities for older students** (grades 6-8 at most sites) consisted of reading novels silently and/or aloud as a group and discussing their reading. Novels were either provided to students (e.g., "Marley and Me") or were brought from home by participants. At this grade level, focus was on comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency.
- ▶ **Additional reading/writing activities** were conducted daily for about 30-45 minutes in the afternoon at all sites. During this time, participants read from a book selected from the book mobile, library, site 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, other academic areas were emphasized as well (e.g., math, arts, sciences).

In order to prepare program leaders, the lead agencies provided them with training on the reading program prior to the start of FITS. In addition, program leaders were encouraged to speak with site coordinators

and other staff to discuss any issues encountered with the reading program.

FITS Positive Identity and Self-Control Goals¹¹

In order to maintain and improve upon participants' positive identity (i.e., self-concept and esteem, personal power, sense of purpose, and positive view of personal future) and their self-control (i.e., expressing emotions appropriately, respecting others, engagement in positive behaviors, and disengagement in negative behaviors), the lead agencies implemented a number of activities during the 2009 FITS.

At the backbone of FITS is Character Counts!¹², a program that promotes character development in the areas (or pillars) of trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship. It is built into all aspects of the program, including language, rules, guidelines, and program policies. While at certain times of the week, pillars are made explicit and emphasized (e.g., on Monday, the week's pillar is announced and modeled and on Friday, it is celebrated via awards), 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 pillar¹³. Visual

¹¹ More detailed information on the FITS activities designed to instill positive identity and self-control is provided in the lead agencies' 2009 FITS Final Report.

¹² 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.

¹³ As an example, students would be presented with a Character Counts certificate and prizes during the Friday assembly at Carpinteria.

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. Students were provided with Character Counts curriculum.

The new lead agency, Girl Scouts, integrated Character Counts! with Girl Scouts philosophy at La Cumbre. Their summer program theme was titled “*I will do my best to be...*” It is the beginning statement of the Girl Scout program and was expanded to teach the Girl Scout character traits. Each week was devoted to learning a Girl Scout character trait with the corresponding pillar in the Character Counts program. The following list includes information on the pillars and corresponding Girl Scout traits focused on each week of FITS.

“I will do my best to be...”

- Week 1: Fairness
 - “Honest and Fair”
- Week 2: Trustworthy
 - “Friendly and Helpful”
- Week 3: Caring
 - “Courageous and Strong”
- Week 4: Responsibility
 - “Responsible for what I say and do”
- Week 5: Respect
 - “Respect Myself and Others”
 - “Respect Authority”
- Week 6: Citizenship
 - “Respect Authority”
 - “Use Resources Wisely”
- Week 7: “Make the World a Better Place”

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 and adding to a Character Counts paper chain when a student exhibited positive behaviors, recognizing children for exemplary demonstration of pillars).

The FITS programming was also designed to help students learn cooperative play and responsibility. Students engaged in thematic activities each week that among other things, exemplified the pillars and helped promote positive self-esteem and sense of empowerment. For example, Dancing Drum, in addition to teaching students musical instruments, it promoted teamwork and helped reinforce positive values. As another example, Adventures at Peacemaking and Peacemakers at the Ellwood and Franklin sites focused on peaceful conflict resolution skills.

Other activities focused on health and safety. Examples include¹⁴: *Action for Safety*, a self-defense and violence prevention program, *Kid Ability*, a sexual abuse prevention program; *Kids Can!*, a program that teaches children to be assertive, identify unsafe situations (including drugs and alcohol), and how to identify helpful adults; *Good Manners Matter*, a program designed to teach children about respectful behavior; *Eat Right Stay Healthy*, a program that teaches healthy eating habits; *Zoo Smart*, a simulation program to teach youth about proper care of animals and logistics of zoos; 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

¹⁴ Some of these activities varied by site. For detailed information on programmatic activities performed at each site, the reader is referred to the End of Summer reports by each of the lead agencies.

they may otherwise, not experience; examples included trips to the beach, Watershed Resource Center, Salt Marsh, community pools, Santa Barbara Dance Arts, Farmer's Market, and local colleges/universities.

There were also many programmatic activities designed to teach participants about art (including dance and theatre). Examples include Art from Scrap, Theatre Games, Dance Arts, Art Essentials and Paint Power.

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

There was a family night at each site designed to encourage family involvement in the FITS program. The evening, organized by family advocates and staff, typically consisted of a potluck and performances by the participants in order to showcase their talents. In addition, site coordinators introduced the FITS program and all the various experiences and services provided to their youth. The family night brought families together and provided an opportunity for families to spend time with their children and show their support.

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, referrals to multiple community agencies (e.g., for dental, medical, housing, etc) 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.

Like last year, the Foodbank of Santa Barbara provided the Backpack Program. Each Friday, 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 Franklin and Ellwood sites, parents were invited to two Health and Wellness workshops provided by Santa Barbara Neighborhood Clinics and Diabetes Resource Center. The focus was on providing information on good nutrition, diabetes, cancer and obesity prevention, health insurance for uninsured children, and resources available from the SB Neighborhood Clinics. At Carpinteria, a workshop on nutritional issues was also provided. Another workshop concerning drugs, alcohol, and gang prevention and facts was also highly attended.

To further promote 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, numerous other services and resources provided by community organizations and individuals also exposed youth to caring adults (e.g., Dancing Drums, guest speakers, United Way volunteers, Cornelia Moore Dental Foundation, Assistance League of Santa Barbara, Friendship Center GOLD program, Paul Mitchell School, various local fishing clubs, Santa Barbara Eyeglass Factory, Wells Fargo, and many other local organizations). 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.

Leadership Group Activities

As part of the United Way's efforts to expand the FITS program (and youth served), this year recruitment efforts included youth in middle grades (7-8) to be part of a special leadership group at FITS. While specific activities that these students engaged in varied across the sites, the focus was to assist these students with leadership skills, such as communication skills and conflict resolution, as well as expose them to higher education, life skills (e.g., banking), teamwork, and citizenship skills. In order to promote these skills and knowledge, students took field trips to local colleges and universities (e.g., UCSB, Westmont College), and were provided with guest speakers (e.g., at Carpinteria and La Cumbre, a college representative spoke to them about financing higher education). They also were exposed to financial management (e.g., how to balance checking accounts.) In addition, these students participated in regular FITS programming activities (e.g., reading, journaling, Dancing Drums, etc).

EVALUATION RESULTS

Through consultation with United Way of Santa Barbara County, targets were set for each of the FITS' goals¹⁵. Figure 1 displays the goals with targets. To facilitate comparability to prior and 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 leaders and parents to supplement information obtained from the participants.

The following presents the results of the evaluation. Detailed results are organized by the key evaluation questions and targeted goals. In addition, statistical analyses conducted are provided in Appendix A.

¹⁵ 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.

Figure 1. Targeted Outcomes for 2009 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.

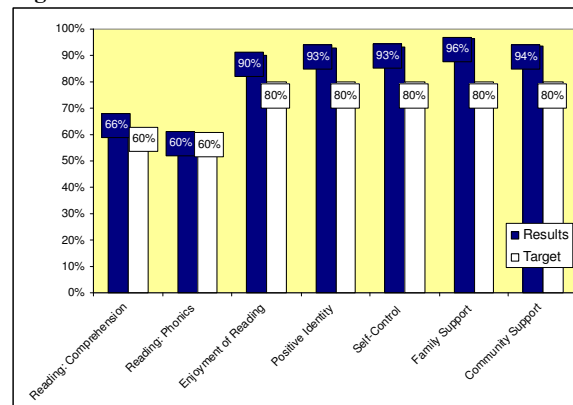
- **Target #6** –80% of participants will maintain or display a gain in their ability to identify caring, supportive, non-parental adults.
- **Target #7** - 80% of participants will maintain or display a gain in their perceptions of caring and support from non-parental adults.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

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. 2009 FITS Evaluation Results



DETAILED RESULTS

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

Target #1 – 60% of participants will display gains in reading comprehension, and phonics.

I really liked the reading program. It helped me to read more and learn the words in our book.—2nd grade FITS Participant

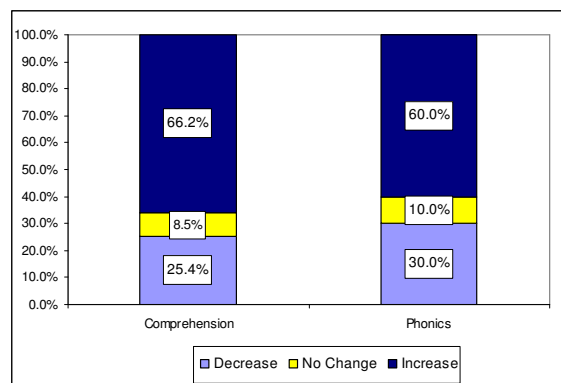
As previously noted, students entering the 2nd, 3rd, 7th grades were included in the evaluation of reading outcomes. After review of the intended literacy instruction to be provided to FITS participants (prior to program inception), it was determined that literacy instruction would primarily target, among elementary students, 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. At the middle school level, focus would be placed on comprehension and vocabulary. Thus, these areas were assessed for 7th graders. However, since the FITS goal pertains to comprehension skills, the vocabulary results from 7th graders were viewed as exploratory¹⁶.

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.

¹⁶ Indeed, these data are presented but were not factored into the calculations of attainment of goals.

Results showed a significant increase in the reading comprehension skills and a marginally significant increase in phonics skills of FITS participants from pre- to post-testing, $t(72)=3.51, p=.001$ and $t(68)=1.75, p=.08$, respectively. Furthermore, for both targeted reading skills, 60% or more participants tested showed improvement in test scores, see Figure 3. 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, 60% or more of FITS participants demonstrated gains in reading and an additional 8.5-10% 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.

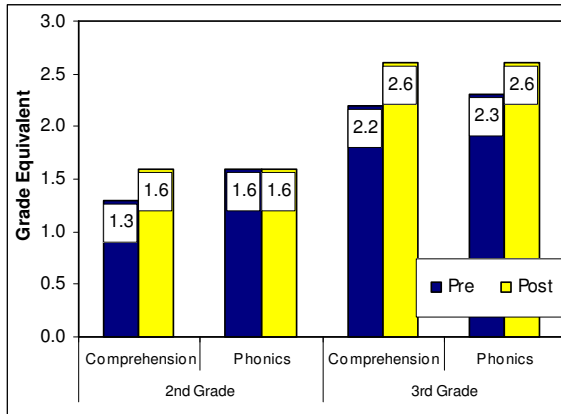
Goal 1 was met. 60% or more of participants showed improvement in comprehension and phonics from pre- to post-testing. In addition, reading comprehension gains were significant.

Reading helped me because it teaches me more about things. Things that I have never seen. Through stories, I learned

about the world.—4th grade FITS Participant

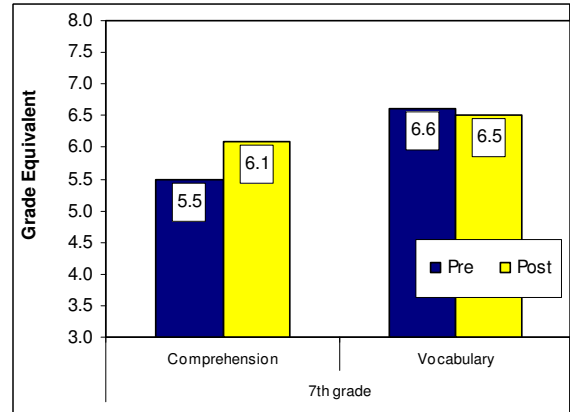
Examination of the grade equivalents shows that over the summer, 2nd grade students gained approximately three months of knowledge in reading comprehension skills and no change on phonics skills. Among 3rd graders, students demonstrated approximately 4 months of knowledge gains in comprehension and gains of 3 months on phonics. Among 7th graders, students demonstrated 6 months of gains in reading comprehension and 1 month decline in vocabulary. Of note is that given that summer *loss* is the typical outcome, the gains observed are noteworthy.

Figure 4. Grade Equivalents at Pre and Post-testing by 2nd and 3rd Graders



- 2nd grade students showed three month gains in comprehension skills over the course of FITS. In addition, 3rd grade students showed an average of 3-4 month gains in phonics and comprehension.

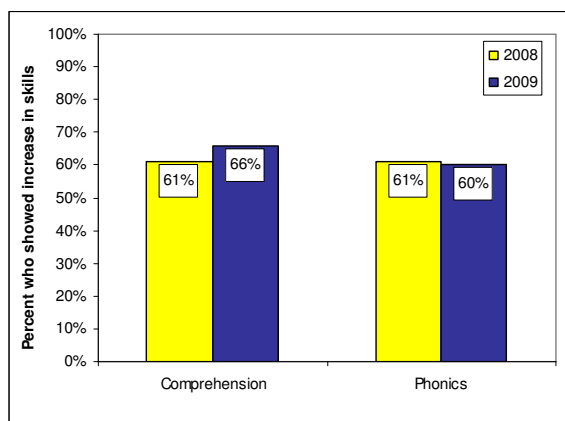
Figure 4. Grade Equivalents at Pre and Post-testing by 7th Graders



- While 7th grade students showed a 1 month decline in vocabulary skills, they showed 6 month gains in comprehension over the course of FITS.

Since the same assessment was used last year as this year, comparisons can be made with regard to the reading levels of participants. Figure 5 shows the percent of prior year FITS participants (2008) and current year participants (2009) who showed increases in their reading skills (note that to ensure comparability, 7th graders are excluded from this sample since they were not tested last year). As shown, there was a higher percent of students (approximately 5%) who demonstrated reading comprehension gains in 2009 as compared to the prior year 2008. In the area of phonics, there was little difference between the percent of students who demonstrated gains in 2008 as compared to 2009.

Figure 5. Increase in Reading Skills by Year

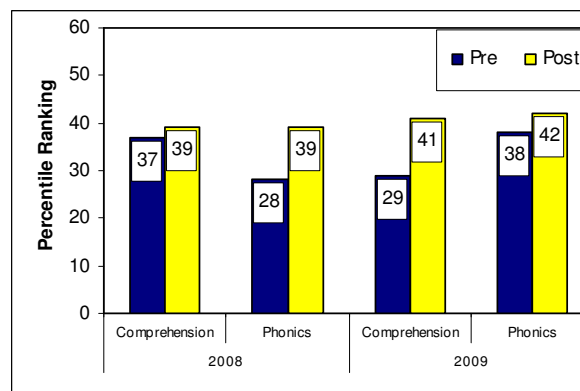


- In the area of comprehension, a higher percentage of FITS participants showed learning gains in 2009 as compared to 2008. There was little difference in the area of phonics.

Differences in performance can also be observed by examining percentile rankings¹⁷. As shown in Figure 6, while participants in both years showed growth in their percentile ranking relative to the national norm sample that took the ITBS, the 2009 participants showed greater increases in percentile rankings in comprehension (gain of 12%). 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.

¹⁷ 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



- 2008 participants grew by 2-11%. In comparison, 2009 participants grew by 4-12% over the course of FITS.

To examine whether results varied by subgroups, growth among different groups of participants was examined. The subgroups included gender and grade level¹⁸. Results showed no significant differences between males versus females or by grade level. That is, growth in test scores was not dependent on the student's gender or grade.

Analysis by subgroups showed that changes in performance were consistent among females and males, and across grade levels.

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 2009 FITS program as well as findings from last year. It is important to note that whereas comprehension results include data from 7th

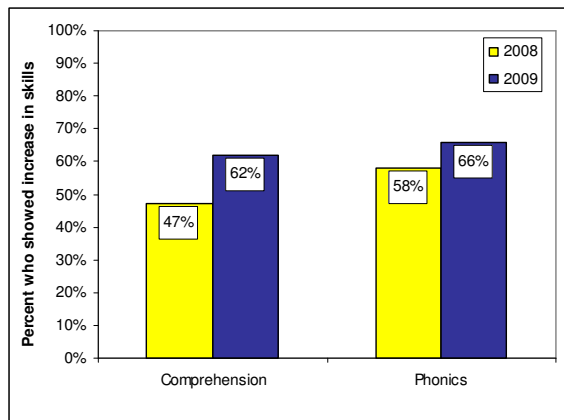
¹⁸ Note that there was very little variability by ethnicity and as such, comparisons between Hispanics and non-Hispanics could not be made.

graders at La Cumbre and Ellwood¹⁹, the phonics test was taken exclusively by 2nd and 3rd graders.

La Cumbre (Santa Barbara – Girl Scouts)

At La Cumbre Junior High School, greater improvement was observed in the areas of reading comprehension and phonics among 2009 participants than 2008 participants, see Figure 7. In addition to exceeding the established target of 60%, significant gains were also observed among 2nd and 3rd graders in the area of phonics.

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



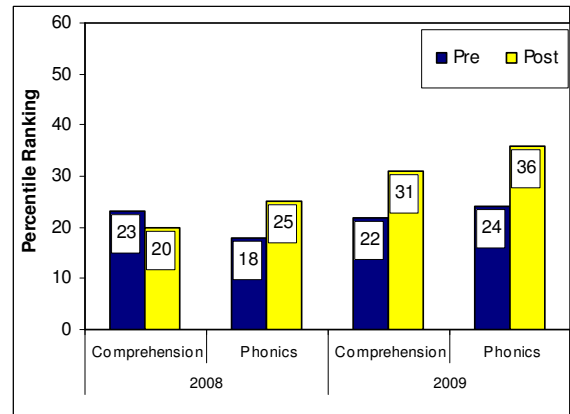
*2008 results based on 19 2nd and 3rd grade students tested and 2009 results based on 29 2nd and 3rd graders tested in phonics and 34 2nd, 3rd, and 7th graders testing in comprehension.

Examination of percentile rankings reveals FITS participants at La Cumbre showed increases in phonics skills from pre- to post-testing during both years, with greater improvement this year (12%) than last year (7%). However, in the area of comprehension, current year participants showed notable gains (9%) whereas last year, students showed a decline of 3% (see Figure 8). Of note are the participants’ low literacy skills; compared to the national

¹⁹ There was only one 7th grader in Franklin and therefore, no testing of 7th graders occurred at Franklin.

sample who took the ITBS, 2009 La Cumbre participants were ranked at the 22nd and 24th percentile indicating that these students are in need of reading intervention services.

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



Targeted goals were met at La Cumbre. In addition, there was a significant increase in phonics skills observed among FITS participants.

Franklin (Santa Barbara – Girls Inc. SB)

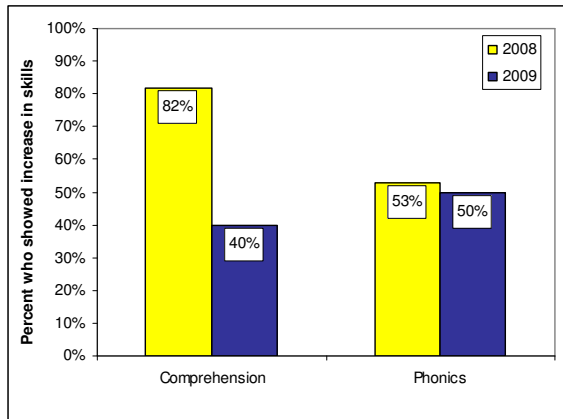
It should be noted that at Franklin, testing of 2nd graders was cut short during post-testing. Only the phonics test was administered at post-testing because these students complained that they were tired and lacked motivation²⁰. As such, while results for phonics includes 2nd and 3rd graders, reading comprehension results only include 3rd graders.

With this in mind, results showed that the reading goals were not met in the areas of phonics and reading comprehension, see Figure 9. Specifically, 50% of 2nd and 3rd graders tested showed increases in phonics skills, and 40% of 3rd graders showed

²⁰ Since this would affect reliability of the data, the researcher decided to end testing.

increases in reading comprehension skills from pre- to post-testing. In comparison, 82% of 2nd and 3rd graders demonstrated increases in comprehension last year, while 53% showed increases in phonics.

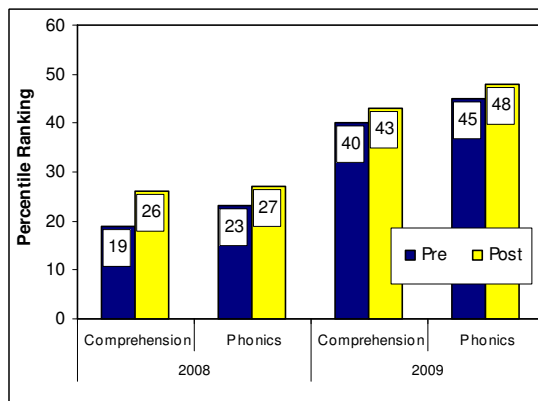
Figure 9. Change in Reading Skills from Pre- to Post-testing: Franklin by Year



*2008 results based on 17 2nd and 3rd grade students tested and 2009 results based on 18 2nd and 3rd graders tested in phonics and 10 3rd graders tested in comprehension.

Despite not meeting the targeted reading goals, there *were* notable increases in the percentile rankings of 2009 FITS participants at Franklin. As shown in Figure 10, across all students tested, they grew by 3% in both areas (as compared to 7% in comprehension and 4% in phonics last year).

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

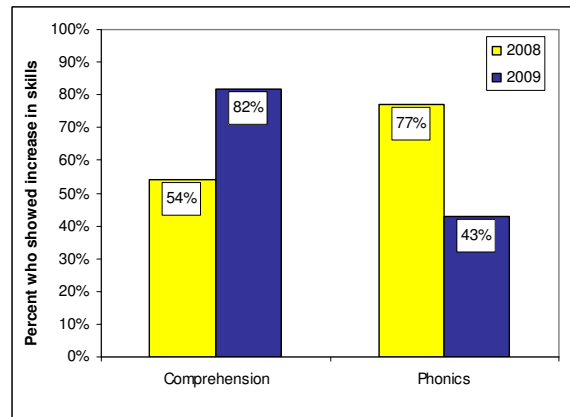


At Franklin, literacy goals were not met. However, on average, gains in percentile rankings were observed among these participants.

Ellwood (Goleta – Girls Inc. SB)

Results showed that goals *were* met in the area of comprehension (82%) but not in phonics (43%), see Figure 11. Moreover, the gains in reading comprehension were statistically significant. Furthermore, while there was a higher percentage of students who showed improvement in comprehension during the 2009 FITS program as compared to last year, there was a decrease in the area of phonics between 2009 and 2008.

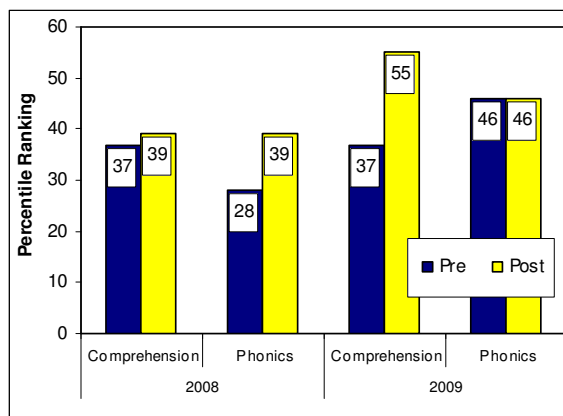
Figure 11. Change in Reading Skills from Pre- to Post: Ellwood by Year



*2008 results based on 13 2nd and 3rd grade students tested and 2009 results based on 21 2nd and 3rd graders tested in phonics and 27 2nd, 3rd, and 7th graders tested in comprehension.

Figure 12 shows the percentile rankings for Goleta area FITS participants in 2009 and 2008. Percentile gains were quite large in comprehension (18%) but there was no significant change in phonics (0%). That said, it is important to keep in mind that even maintenance in these skills is considered a success.

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



*Note: Students are entering 3rd grade.

At Ellwood, the comprehension goal was met; over 60% of participants at Ellwood demonstrated gains in this area. In phonics, the goal was not met.

In summary, the results show that gains observed depended on the site and the literacy skill being measured. La Cumbre FITS participants met targets in *both* comprehension and phonics, and gains were statistically significant in the area of phonics. At Ellwood, the goal was met in comprehension, and students showed the greatest improvement in this area (18%). At Franklin, the reading goal was not met; however, on average, there were increases of 3% in both phonics and comprehension. These 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.

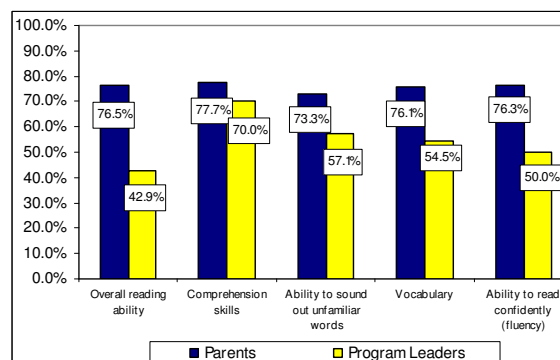
Opinions about changes in literacy ability were also obtained from parents and program leaders. In general, parents were more likely to indicate that they perceived some to much improvement in reading ability than parents, see Figure 13. That said, the vast majority of the remaining program

leaders and parents 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.

Reading comprehension- I focused on it in my reading class and they have improved very much. Before they would not look back in the story to find answers but with lots of practice and coaxing they all (mostly) have the capacity to read and comprehend and answer simple questions about a story.
--Program Leader

My son didn't like to read and now he tries to read a bit more and has learned new words. --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.

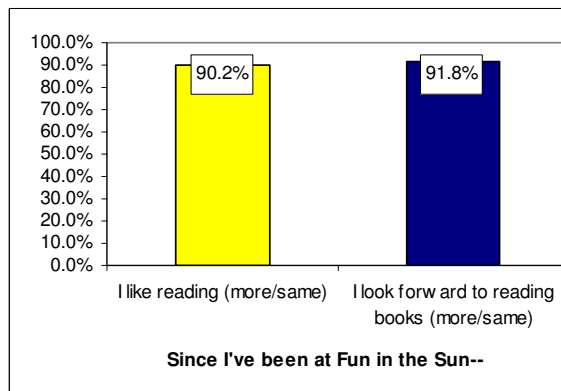
Target 2: 80% of general program participants will maintain or display a gain in positive perceptions of reading

It was fun because we read aloud and our program leader helped us say the words. We talked about the story and what was in the story and what

*happened. It also helped me read better.
—4th grade FITS Participant*

A retrospective measure was included in the student survey in which 1st through 8th 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 over 90% 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 82% of participants indicated liking reading more or the same.

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



- Across both measures, over 90% 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 82%).

Goal 2 was met. Over 90% continued to like reading or showed gains in their attitudes towards reading.

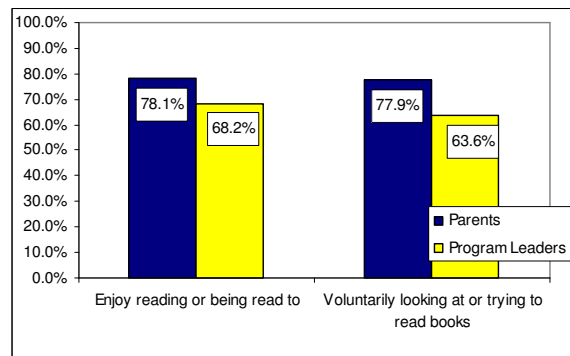
Furthermore, analysis of gains by subgroups of grade levels, years at FITS, and sites showed that liking for reading was consistent across all sites.

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.

My daughter has improved on reading, now she wants to go to the bookstore every day and read 24/7. --FITS Parent

My group's interest in reading improved. I read over 35 books to them and two of our older students would ask if they could read to our group. The older girls were always available to help the younger group with spelling and writing sentences. We learned about the continents and the kids learned they could get so much information about so many countries by reading books. We wrote to an author, Pay Brisson and she answered our email. We were all so excited.--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'

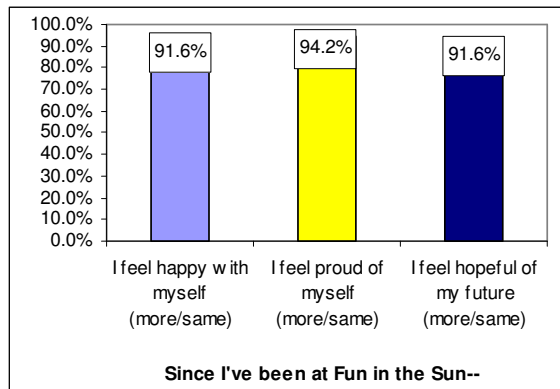
enjoyment of reading as compared to program leaders.

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

*I made new friends and met new people who made me feel better about myself.
--3rd 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 over 90% of participants in grades 1-8 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 higher than last year's result of 86%.

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



- Across all measures, over 90% of FITS participants showed gains or maintenance of their positive identity.

The positive identity goal was met. Over 90% 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.

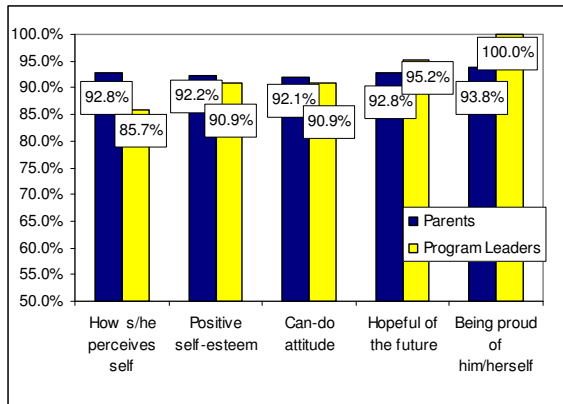
My son was very shy before he started the program, "Fun in the Sun" this 2009. And the day that was "Family Night" he showed an open side, he expressed his emotions, he even danced with no fear of being criticized.--Parent

I would like to give thanks for having these educational programs that teach kids to interact with others and be social and gives each child a sense of worth. -- Parent

The children really have opened up in talking to me. Some wouldn't even speak the first week of camp, now talk to myself, talk with the other campers and even play with others. Their self-consciousness has lessened [and self-confidence increased]. They are more trustworthy of those around them.-- 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.

Parents and program leaders perceived positive changes in participants' positive identity.

Character counts really helps with self-esteem because kids feel good about themselves when they've done something good. – Program Leader

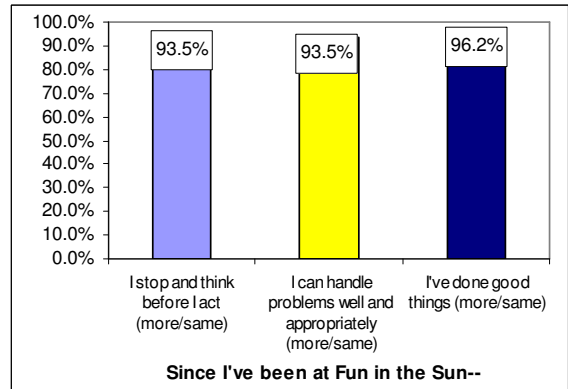
Target 4: 80% of general program participants will maintain or display a gain in self-control

*I've learned to listen more and to be more respectful.
--2nd grade FITS Participant*

Participants in grades 1st through 8th were asked to make judgments about perceived changes in their self-control since being at FITS. Results showed that approximately 93% 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 higher percentage as compared to last year's figure of 88%. 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, over 93% of participants indicated that they showed gains or maintenance of their self-control since being at Fun in the Sun during the 2009 program year.

The goal for self-control was met. Over 93% 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.

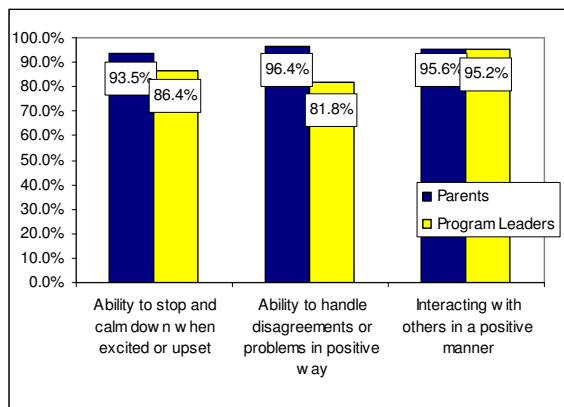
*[What I liked best was that] my son has learned to share with others more and has learned to give more respect.
--Parent*

[I saw improvement in] showing self respect and respect towards others. The kids became nicer to each other and apologized to each other without having to be told. – Program Leader

Consistent with prior years, *qualitative* feedback obtained by program leaders indicated that self-control was the least improved area among participants (the second least improved area was reading). When asked for the area in which participants showed the least improvement, over half of the program leaders (15 out of 26 surveyed) indicated lack of self-control (e.g., bullying, teasing, being disrespectful, not listening, etc.).

Probably the area of least improvement would be their self-control. Many times, after doing something that they knew was wrong/inappropriate, I would ask them why they did not what they did and they would usually respond something to the tone of "I don't know".
 -- Program Leader

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



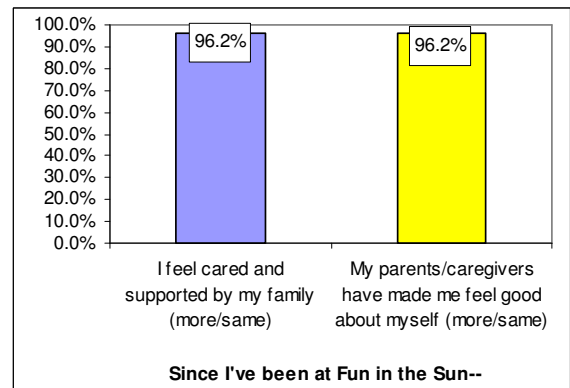
- Both program leaders and parents perceived some positive changes in self-control.

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

Information on participant perceptions of family support were also examined. Results revealed that approximately 96% of participants felt that they were supported by their families. Thus, this goal was met. In addition, this percentage is only slightly higher than that obtained last year (93%). 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, 96% of FITS participants showed gains or maintenance of their perceptions of family support.

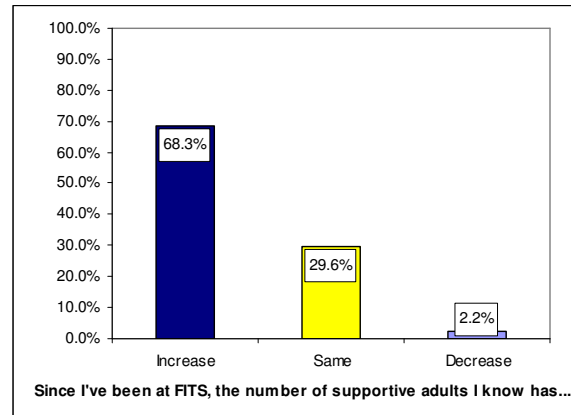
The family support goal was met. Approximately 96% of participants maintained their perceptions of family support.

Target 6: 80% of youth will maintain or display a gain in their ability to identify caring, supportive, non-parental adults

We have fun and they [adults at FITS] play games with us. Some kids ask them to play with them and they say yes. They are always positive and helpful. Sometimes they show us stuff to do too. They showed us the inside of the tree. The volunteers -- we learn from them. -- 5th 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, 68%, perceived an increase in the number of adults they thought were supportive, and another 30% 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 was higher than last year's figure of 90%.

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



- 98% 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

The program leaders are supportive and nice. They listen to us when we need to talk. --7th grade FITS Participant

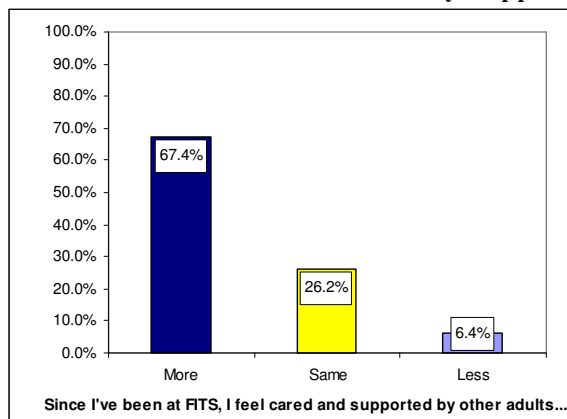
They [adults at FITS] were nice to us and they taught us how to do stuff. They helped us with reading. --2nd grade FITS Participant

Everyone is very caring, loving, and are very friendly and positive. --FITS Parent

Examination of changes and maintenance of perceptions of community support among the 1st through 8th grade FITS participants revealed that

approximately 94% of participants showed maintenance or gains, see Figure 22. This represents an increase from last year (84%) 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 94% of FITS participants in grades 1-8 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.

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

The FITS program does an incredible job of providing an environment that fosters learning and positive activities and opportunities for the participants. Teaching the character counts and continually encouraging good behavior was a great way to improve self-esteem

and positive character development.-- Program Leader

Character Counts is awesome, the kids have grown more caring and can name all 6 traits (usually). Definitions still murky though...--Program Leader

Evaluators also 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 trends²¹ 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 4-6th graders are included.

In general there is an increasing trend in comparison to last year for the majority of assets. Compared to last year, a higher percentage of this year's FITS participants indicated possessing greater support, sense of empowerment, having boundaries and high expectations, constructive use of time, empathy, self-esteem, resistance skills and planning and decision making skills. In addition, there was a decrease in at-risk behaviors.

Furthermore, examination of this information reveals that constructive use of

²¹ 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.

time, achievement motivation, and positive self-control are the most problematic in terms of the percent of participants (65% or less) showing these assets. Thus, these are

areas that should continue to be targeted and addressed by future FITS programs.

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

Asset Category	Asset	Item	2009	2008	2007	2006
External Assets						
Support	Family Support ^a	I get along with my family.	95%	85%	89%	88%
		My parents/caregivers show me in lots of ways that they love me.	95%	91%	99%	93%
		My parents/caregivers give me help and support.	96%	93%	99%	93%
	Positive Family Communication	If I'm worried about something, I can talk to my parents/caregivers about it.	84%	71%	74%	74%
	Adults at FITS ^a	Adults at FITS really care about me.	80%	70%	74%	75%
		Adults at FITS make me feel good about myself.	85%	78%	69%	81%
Empowerment	Community Values Children	Adults at FITS make me feel important.	79%	71%	75%	73%
		Adults at FITS listen to me when I have something to say.	85%	78%	89%	78%
		Adults at FITS tell me when I do something good.	84%	80%	83%	88%
	Service to Others	I try to help other people.	93%	81%	75%	83%
	Safety	Sometimes I am afraid that someone might hurt me.	82%	73%	59%	24%
Boundaries and Expectations	High Expectations	Adults at FITS want me to do the best I can.	88%	87%	89%	83%
		My parents/caregivers expect me to be the best I can.	92%	93%	94%	91%
	Adult Role Models	My parents show me what is right and wrong.	93%	95%	99%	93%
	Family Boundaries	My parents know what I'm doing most of the time.	82%	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.	58%	52%	58%	59%
Commitment to Learning	Achievement Motivation	I try as hard as I can to do my best work.	62%	68%	85%	92%

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

Internal Assets						
Social Competencies	Empathy	I care about other people's feelings.	86%	75%	63%	74%
	Positive Self-Control ^a	I can calm myself down pretty quickly when I get mad.	54%	68%	48%	60%
		I stop talking when adults tell me to stop.	73%	81%	65%	63%
	Planning & Decision Making	Most of the time, I think carefully about what to do before I decide things.	83%	65%	65%	71%
	Affiliation	I can easily make and keep friends.	66%	72%	72%	71%
	Resistance Skills	I am able to say no when someone wants me to do things that are wrong or dangerous.	64%	56%	63%	83%
		I can stay away from people who will get me in trouble.	87%	85%	62%	74%
Positive Identity ^a	Self-Esteem	Most of the time, I like myself	74%	74%	83%	88%
		Most of the time, I am glad to be me.	86%	85%	89%	89%
	Personal Power	If I set a goal, I feel as if I can reach it.	83%	85%	77%	84%
	Positive View of Personal Future	I feel as if I will be happy and successful as I grow up.	80%	85%	92%	83%
		I feel hopeful when I think about my future.	86%	89%	89%	88%
Thriving Indicator		It's easy for me to wait for something I want.	69%	72%	60%	63%
Risk Behavior Patterns <i>(% of 4-6th 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.)	5%	12%	34%	18%
		Hit or beat someone up	20%	32%	48%	33%
		Felt really sad or depressed	56%	57%	68%	64%
		Smoke cigarettes	2.5%	6%	8%	2%
		Have alcohol to drink (not including for religious ceremonies)	4%	12%	11%	8%
		Bullied or teased someone	21%	30%	--	--
		Stole something	17%	24%	--	--
		Told rumors/lies	34%	36%	--	--

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

-- 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 2006-2009 are provided. Results show that most of the participants (over 80%) indicated

demonstrating fairness, caring, and good citizenship. That is, most participants indicated that they possessed these pillars. In addition, in all areas, there were increases in the percent of students who indicating demonstrating the pillars as compared to prior years.

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

Pillars	Item ^a	Grades 1-3*			Grades 4-6		
		2009	2008	2006	2009	2008	2007
	Since I've been at FITS, I feel like I am a Character Counts! kid more.	80%	75%	72%	60%	54%	56%
Trustworthiness	I tell the truth, even when it's hard.	81%	66%	66%	83%	66%	62%
	I stand up for what I believe in, even when others don't agree with me.	--	--	--	82%	77%	74%
Respect	I am respectful to others.	84%	76%	--	80%	66%	77%
Responsibility	I do what I am supposed to do.	88%	76%	--	88%	69%	77%
	I stop and think before I act.	83%	59%	77%	83%	65%	66%
	I admit when I make a mistake or get into trouble.	--	--	--	77%	65%	76%
Fairness	I play by the rules.	82%	75%	--	86%	77%	84%
	I share and listen to what others have to say.	75%	70%	70%	84%	82%	81%
Caring	I care about people's feelings	87%	76%	66%	86%	75%	74%
	I help other people.	88%	77%	81%	93%	81%	84%
Citizenship	I speak up for others who are being taken advantage of.	--	--	--	75%	72%	76%

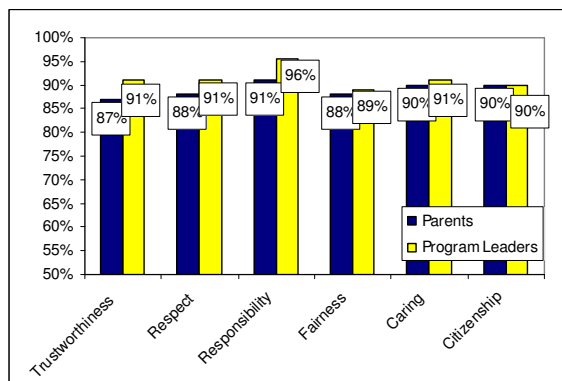
^aIt should be noted that some items listed in the assets table can also apply to these pillars. In addition, items listed here are similar to those in the Positive Values Healthy Asset. However, because in the original Search Institute survey, these items are preceded with "My parents tell me it is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

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

Although getting the kids to be receptive to the Character counts activities was difficult, I think that they had a significant positive impact on the kids. The activities would often stimulate good discussion about how to exhibit character and modeling concrete examples of character. --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 YOUTH LEARN IN THE NEW LEADERSHIP GROUP?

I really enjoyed being part of the leadership group because we were like CITS in a way and we learned more leadership skills. – FITS Leadership Group Participant

During the 2009 program year, middle school students (in grades 6-8) were given the opportunity to participate in a special leadership group. The goals

were to provide these older youth with a safe, nurturing environment where they could learn important leadership skills, how to help their community, and expose students to life skills and higher education opportunities.

Students were surveyed to obtain information on the extent to which various leadership characteristics showed positive changes. These items are based on a survey developed by New Mexico State University researchers who were interested in examining youth leadership development. They identified these areas as being key aspects of youth leadership²².

Table 6 shows the percent of middle school students in the leadership group who indicated that they experienced an improvement in these areas or no change. Results showed that the areas of greatest change were in:

- Being open-minded
- Being honest with others
- Having a friendly personality
- Getting along with others

Table 6. Leadership Characteristics

Area	% indicating improvement	% indicating no change
Being open-minded	77%	20%
Being honest with others	71%	26%
Having a friendly personality	71%	23%
Getting along with others	71%	26%

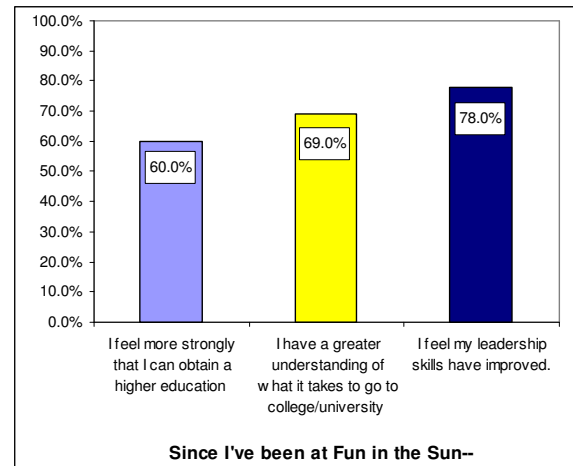
²² Documentation obtained shows that this measure is valid and reliable. Chronbach's alpha is .98 which means that this scale is very reliable. In addition, the original New Mexico survey contained more items but were dropped from the FITS survey because the items were not as applicable.

Being sensitive to others	69%	29%
Considering the needs of others	69%	26%
Handling mistakes	69%	20%
Solving problems	68%	27%
Having a positive self-concept	66%	31%
Showing a responsible attitude	66%	26%
Setting goals	65%	26%
Being enthusiastic.	65%	32%
Communicating well with others	63%	20%
Respecting others	63%	29%
Being cooperative.	60%	31%
Taking initiative to get things done.	60%	31%
Expressing feelings	59%	29%
Listening effectively	57%	37%
Having good manners	57%	40%
Trusting other people	51%	34%

We participate more and have responsibility as part of the leadership group. We kind of help out the other little kids. – FITS Leadership Group Participant

Leadership group youth were also asked the extent to which they felt that they had a greater understanding of leadership skills overall and higher education over the course of their FITS participation. The results are shown in Figure 24.

Figure 24. Perceived Improvement Among Leadership Participants



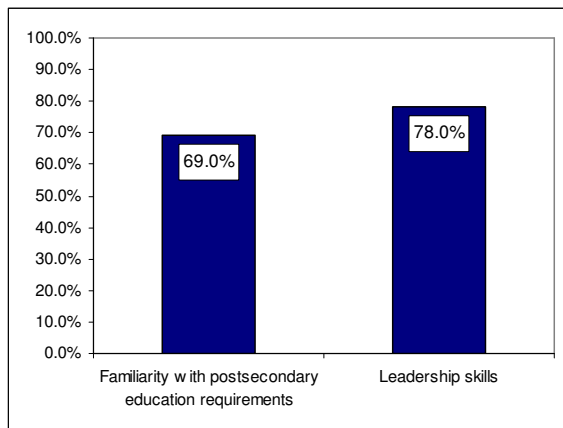
- The majority of leadership group participants felt that they could achieve a higher education, understood what it took to get into college, and felt their leadership skills had improved, since participating in Fun in the Sun.

The area which my [leadership] group improved most was ability to think about their futures in regards to college and careers. We did 3 college visits where they learned what is required to get into college and pursue career goals. – Program Leader

The kids are beginning to look into what careers there are out there and how to get to that career. More kids are beginning to be more open about the choices they have regarding school and life. – Program Leader

Information obtained from program leaders concur with the aforementioned findings. That is, a higher percentage of program leaders perceived improvement (some to much) in leadership skills and familiarity with postsecondary education requirements, see Figure 25.

Figure 25. Percent of Program Leaders Indicating Some to Much Improvement Among Leadership Group



As previously noted, leadership group participants also were exposed to ways to improve their communities. Unfortunately, during interviews it was noted that while the original intent was to complete a community service project, they were unable to obtain sponsors. Nevertheless, they had guest speakers and engaged in other activities designed to get them to think about ways to improve their community. Students were asked via survey what they had learned in this respect. Below are the most common responses:

- Reduce Reuse Recycle
- Helping those in need (e.g. food bank)
- Community clean-up
- Volunteering
- Being a good citizen (respectful of others)

I learned that you can help your community by volunteering and helping people in it. You can also pick up garbage around your community. You can also be friends with everyone in your community. – FITS Leadership Group Participant

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

I like the games we played. The field trips were awesome!!! Everyone was really nice to everyone. –7th grade FITS Participant

FITS participants and their parents were asked about their satisfaction with the entire 2009 FITS program and with specific elements of FITS. As shown in Figure 26, the highest rated items among general program participants included field trips, FITS adults and program leaders, and outdoor activities.

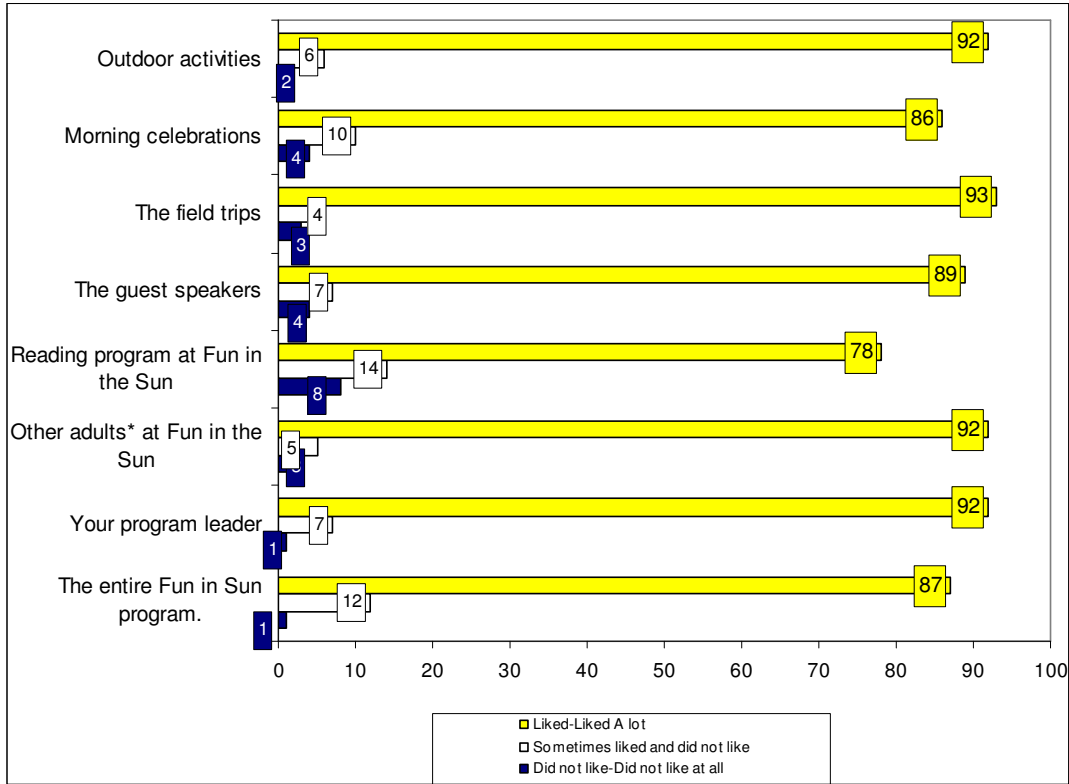
I liked being a role model to little kids because they look up to you. I also liked learning about other countries, and I really liked going to the colleges.--6th grade FITS Participant

Among participants, reading activities were liked least (8% did not like). However, it should be noted that this represents a decrease in comparison to last year when 11% 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 27.

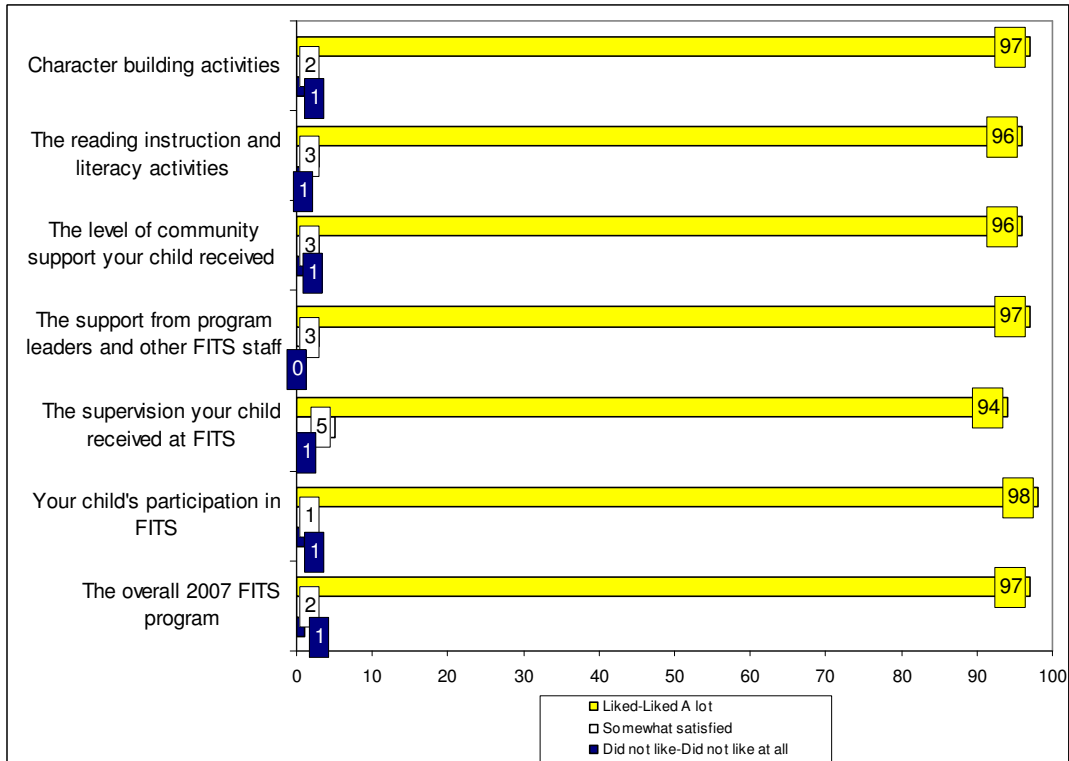
FITS has been a fantastic summer program for my son. He has enjoyed making new friends, going on field trips and learning new songs and games. He always had positive comments regarding his group counselor and especially the site coordinator.--Parent

Figure 26. General Participants' Satisfaction with FITS



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

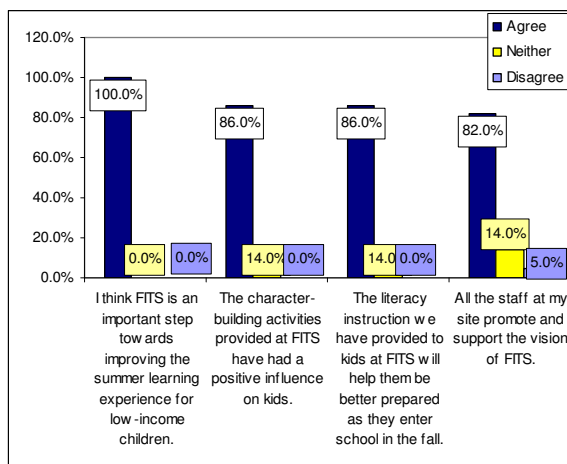
Figure 27. Parents' Satisfaction with FITS



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. The only consistent theme among parents that listed an issue was that it was over too soon.

Further information obtained from program leaders via surveys indicated that they all thought the program was an important step towards improving the summer learning experiences of children. In addition, 86% of staff felt that the character building activities provided at FITS had a positive influence and that the literacy instruction students received would help children be better prepared for school, see Figure 28.

Figure 28. Program Leaders' Perceptions of FITS



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

I think the field trips are a great component of the FITS program. It broadens their view of where they live and they are excited to learn about the different places. You can also incorporate a lot of things into field trips such as teaching them self control if they want to go, character counts, and

rewards for positive behavior. – Program Leader

To summarize, participants and their parents were generally quite satisfied by the FITS program. When asked if they would rather be home than at FITS, 100% of students interviewed indicated they would rather be at Fun in the Sun. The vast majority of participants thought the program was fun and would recommend the program. Overwhelmingly, 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.

I like all of the activities, but the most important thing is that the children remain busy in something and not only watching television in the house when they can be doing something positive.— Parent

For us this is a very educational and fun program. The kids enter the program with enthusiasm and they keep the enthusiasm throughout, I like to see the children happy. I also like all the important topics that are given to the children and help that you've given our family. —Parent

I would like to give you thanks for all the good things our children learned. This is the first time that they participated in this program and they are so happy. They didn't want the program to finish because they experienced many positive things. Thanks, we hope that the proximate year everything works out to keep my children in the program because I think it's a big help for the kids. Overall, thanks. -- Parent

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The 2009 FITS program met its targets for **ALL** goals, see Figure 29. 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* in phonics (12%) and marginally significant gains in comprehension (4%).

Figure 29. FITS Outcome Targets and Results

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

- **Target #1** – 60% of participants in 3rd grade will display gains in reading comprehension, phonics, and vocabulary skills.
- **Result #1** – 63% 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** – 90% 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** – 93% 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** – 93% 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** – 96% 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** – 98% 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** – 94% of participants displayed maintenance or improvement in perceptions of community support.

In summary, the program was again 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

Through continued advanced, collaborative planning and funding, the United Way's Fun in the Sun program will undoubtedly continue to flourish. For the past four years of our evaluations of FITS, the program has been successful in meeting the needs of disadvantaged youth in the community. While expansion can oftentimes complicate programming, the United Way and its partners have done well in addressing issues that have arisen. Nevertheless, there is always room for improvement and the following represents recommendations communicated by partners, program leaders, and parents.

- Lack of retention of FITS staff from prior years was an issue. Since it takes time to learn the FITS programming and consistency in staff would likely have a positive impact on children, it would be advantageous to focus on the recruitment staff with prior experience in FITS.
- As has been true in prior years, behavioral issues continue to be the most problematic concern among 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.

- Although increasing the age requirements of Counselors-in-Training to high school age youth, there were still some problems noted (e.g., ditching, not setting a good example for youth, etc.). A more stringent selection process (e.g., application and interviews) may assist with these concerns as well as more extensive training. For example, the Girl Scouts suggested a week-long training prior to FITS based on their Program Aid: Core Training (a first course in basic leadership).
- Transportation services and better coordination of field trips was also noted as a need. Some youth indicated that they had less field trips this year. Given that youth really enjoy the field trips and new experiences that these enable, it will be important to plan ahead and coordinate so as to allow these trips to occur.
- Again, there were complaints about the food. That said, some parents also indicated that they were willing to send their children with lunch.
- 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),
 - ▶ Provide or make available newer chapter books that would be interesting to older students.

- ▶ Make it fun by incorporating more reading *games*.
- Some program leaders would have liked the programming to be more organized. To facilitate this, they recommended having a prep/planning period at least once a week in order to plan out the week's activities.
- Other recommendations noted by program leaders included having more male program leaders so that youth would be exposed to positive interactions with males (most program leaders were females), and having mixed gender groups.
- FITS should continue to move toward a thematic approach in its programming. 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

Simply put, an effective summer learning program is one that successfully accelerates learning and supports positive youth development as part of a proactive approach to stemming summer learning loss. The program achieves and maintains high-quality programming through strong leadership, careful planning, extensive staff development, strategic partnerships, continual evaluation, and a focus on sustainability. (National Summer Learning Association, 2009)

Based on extensive research, the National Summer Learning Association identified 9 areas that are critical for effective summer programs. It is clear from this evaluation that Fun in the Sun continues to meet the vast majority of these important components.

Approach to Learning

1. Intentional focus on accelerating learning
2. Firm commitment to youth development
3. Proactive approach to summer learning

Program Infrastructure

4. Strong, empowering leadership
5. Advanced, collaborative planning
6. Extensive opportunities for staff development
7. Strategic partnerships
8. Rigorous approach to evaluation and commitment to program improvement
9. Clear focus on sustainability and cost-effectiveness

To conclude, 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.

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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	-3.17	15.04	1.81	-6.79	.44	-1.754	68	.084
	Reading Comprehension	-6.55	15.94	1.87	-10.27	-2.83	-3.510	72	.001

Table A2. 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	-7.03	16.80	3.12	-13.42	-.65	-2.255	28	.032
Pair 2	Reading Comprehension	-3.24	13.89	2.38	-8.08	1.61	-1.358	33	.184

Table A3. 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	-.89	14.82	3.49	-8.26	6.48	-.254	17	.802
Pair 2	Reading Comprehension	-2.40	14.06	4.45	-12.46	7.66	-.540	9	.603

Table A4. Results for Reading: Paired t-tests – Ellwood

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Phonics	.14	12.21	2.66	-5.41	5.70	.054	20	.958
Pair 2	Reading Comprehension	-11.74	18.37	3.54	-19.01	-4.47	-3.321	26	.003