



REPORT TO COUNCIL

City of Sacramento

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Information
April 27, 2010

**Honorable Mayor and
Members of the City Council**

**Title: Sacramento Students Today Achieving Results (START) Program Annual
Evaluation Report**

Location/Council District: Citywide

Recommendation: Receive and File

Contact: Dave Mitchell, Operations Manager, 808-6076, Alan Tomiyama, Recreation
Manager, 808-8958; Brian Fitzgerald, Recreation Superintendent, 808-6196

Presenters: Not applicable

Department: Parks and Recreation

Division: Sacramento START

Organization No: 19001631

Description/Analysis

Issue: In the fall of 2009, the City of Sacramento entered into an agreement with Duerr Evaluation Resources (DER) to evaluate the program and services provided by the Sacramento START (Students Today Achieving Results for Tomorrow) school year program administered by the City of Sacramento at 61 elementary school sites. The State of California Department of Education (CDE) "After School Education and Safety" (ASES) grant and California Volunteers AmeriCorps grants require the submission of outcome data. This data includes measures for program participation, academic performance, attendance, physical fitness and nutrition knowledge. DER compiles and reports the required information for the state agencies and prepares an annual evaluation report for the START program to present to its stakeholders and partners. The 2008/09 evaluation focused on meeting the required evaluation data elements for ASES.

The evaluation focused on meeting the required evaluation data elements for ASES. The primary questions addressed by the evaluation included: 1) do participants attend school more regularly, 2) does academic performance improve for participants, 3) do participants receiving physical education instruction from AmeriCorps members show improvement in test results, and 4) what are the defining characteristics of the START program from the parents' perspective.

Noted below is a summary of the evaluation results:

- START is successful in attracting a large number participants and maintaining participation over extended periods of time.
- The majority of START students were second, third and fourth graders.
- Regular school day attendance improved slightly for 2008/09 from the prior year.
- Regular school day attendance improved from 96% in 2005/06 to 99% in 2008/09.

Comparing baseline scores from 2005/06 to 2008/09 California Standards Test scores (CST) for START participants in English Language Arts and Math revealed the following results:

- CST scores for students at Basic levels or above:
 - English Language Arts: Scores increasing
 - Mathematics: Scores increasing
- CST scores for students at proficient levels or above:
 - English Language Arts: Scores increasing
 - Mathematics: Scores increasing
- Academic performance of individuals participating in START for four years:
 - English Language Arts: Scores increasing
 - Mathematics: Scores increasing

"Get Fit Now" is the AmeriCorps component of the START program that is designed to provide nutrition information, fitness education, and resources to children and their families to live healthier lives and improve physical fitness. Comparing 2008/09 pre and post testing of participants revealed the following results:

- 88% stayed the same or improved in fitness levels
- 41% increased scores by at least 25% on fitness knowledge tests
- 48% increased scores by at least 25% on nutrition knowledge tests

Overall, 97% of parents surveyed were very satisfied with the START after school program. The program provides a safe environment, homework assistance, develops children socially, and encourages more physical activity.

Policy Considerations: Continued evaluation of the Sacramento START program allows for continued grant funding and is consistent with the City's strategic plan to enhance livability. Providing parks and recreation facilities and opportunities is consistent with the City's strategic plan to achieve sustainability and liveability and to expand economic development throughout the City.

Environmental Considerations:

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA): This reports concerns administrative activities that do not have a significant effect on the environment, and does not constitute a "project" as defined by CEQA (CEQA Guidelines Sections 15061(b) (3); 15378(b) (2)).

Sustainability Considerations: Not Applicable.

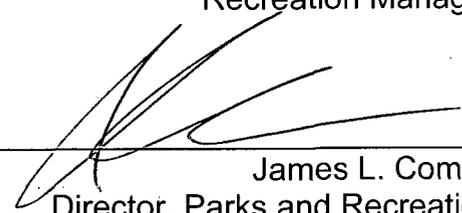
Commission/Committee Action: Parks and Recreation Commission reviewed this report on April 1, 2010.

Rationale for Recommendation: State law requires an annual evaluation of the Sacramento START program be performed by an outside evaluator. The results of the evaluation are presented to City Council for your information.

Financial Considerations: Funding for the Duerr evaluation report came from the START Fund 2501. There was no impact on the General Fund associated with the Duerr evaluation report and no additional funding was required. Sacramento START has a diversified funding base to the support various aspects of the program; the Background section elaborates on its funding sources.

Emerging Small Business Development (ESBD): Not applicable.

Respectfully Submitted by: 
Alan Tomiyama
Recreation Manager

Approved by: 
James L. Combs
Director, Parks and Recreation

Recommendation Approved:

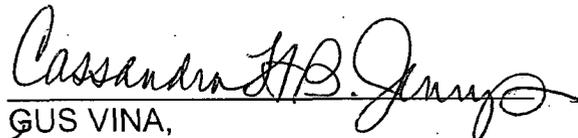

GUS VINA,
Interim City Manager

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Attachment 1

Background

Sacramento START began in 1996 operating 20 after school programs. Today the program has grown to operate 61 after school program in five school districts (Elk Grove, Natomas, Robla, Sacramento City, and Twin Rivers). START served 8,595 students last year, with approximately 5,000 students attending programs daily.

State law requires an annual evaluation of the Sacramento START (Students Today Achieving Results for Tomorrow) program to be performed by an outside evaluator. The five school districts that partner with START rely on the evaluations to continue to justify the operation of the afterschool program at their elementary schools. Duerr Evaluation Resources (DER) was determined to meet the needs of START.

Sacramento START has a diversified funding base to support the various aspects of the program.

- START receives \$7,494,238 in funding from California Department of Education to operate 58 after school programs through the ASES grant.
- START receives \$650,739 from AmeriCorps/California Volunteers to support the AmeriCorps Get Fit Now! Program for fitness and nutrition education.
- START receives up to \$550,000 in funding from the CDE to provide a daily nutritious snack for the participants.
- START receives up to \$325,810 in reimbursements from sub-contracts with school districts to operate three after school programs for which the school districts are the fiscal agent.
- START receives \$552,700 from the General Fund. This allocation is used by both the After School Education and Safety (ASES) and AmeriCorps grants to satisfy the required match portion.

The Sacramento START Program Evaluation Report is available for review in the City Clerk's Office.

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Background

The City of Sacramento administered the Sacramento Students Today Achieving Results for Tomorrow (START) program in 2008/09. The START program coordinates after school programs in 62 elementary schools in Sacramento County. The City of Sacramento has one primary funding source for its after school programs.

After School Education and Safety (ASES) Program

The After School Education and Safety (ASES) Program is the result of the 2002 voter approved initiative, Proposition 49. This proposition amended *The California Education Code* 8482 to expand and rename the former After School Learning and Safe Neighborhood Partnerships Program. The ASES Program funds the establishment of local after school education and enrichment programs. These programs are created through partnerships between schools and local community resources to provide literacy, academic enrichment and safe constructive alternatives for students in kindergarten through ninth grade.

The ASES Program leaders work closely with school site principals and staff to integrate both components with the school's curriculum, instruction, and learning support activities. Before and after school programs consist of two components:

1. An educational and literacy component to provide tutoring and/or homework assistance in one or more of the following subject areas: language arts, mathematics, history and social science, or science, and;
2. An educational enrichment component, which may include but is not limited to, recreation and prevention activities. Such activities might involve the visual and performing arts, music, physical activity, health promotion, and general recreation; career awareness and work preparation activities; community service-learning; and other youth development activities based on student needs and interests.

ASES Programs are required to submit annual student outcome data. These data include measures for program participation, academic performance, and attendance. The California Department of Education may consider the results of these evaluations when determining eligibility for three year grant renewal.

In addition, the City of Sacramento also receives AmeriCorps funding to recruit and place AmeriCorps members in the after school programs to deliver nutrition and physical fitness instruction to students.

2008/09 Sacramento START Evaluation Report
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**Evaluation Questions**

The 2008/09 evaluation focused on meeting the required evaluation data elements for ASES. The primary questions addressed by the evaluation include:

1. Do participants attend school more regularly?
2. Does academic performance improve for participants?
3. Do participants receiving physical education instruction from AmeriCorps volunteers show improvement in test results?
4. What are the defining characteristics of the START program from parents' perspective?

Evaluation Highlights*Academic Achievement*

Academic enrichment is a key component of the START after school program. Participating students receive academic enrichment activities on a daily basis as part of the program. This chapter examines the California Standards Test (CST) data for participating students to determine whether changes occurred on the academic achievement test between the baseline year and the current year (2008/09). The ASES baseline year is the school year prior to the participants' enrollment into the START program. The baseline year for the one 21st Century funded site is the school year prior to the reporting year. It should be noted that CDE does not recommend the linking and analysis of these data for students across school years, since there is no normative data for the scale scores that are used to indicate performance levels across years and grade levels. Even so, CDE requires that these scores be used to show year-over-year progress.

Overall, the percentage of START participants who scored at Basic (level 3) or above in English Language Arts increased from 71 percent in the baseline year to 73 percent in 2008/09. In addition, the percentage of scoring at Proficient (level 4) or above increased from 36 to 40. These data also showed that the current average scale score increased by four points over the baseline year for 2008/09 participants. The percentage of START participants who scored at Basic (level 3) or above in Math remained the same at 76 percent across years. The percentage of scoring at Proficient (level 4) or above decreased slightly, from 51 percent at baseline compared to 50 percent in 2008/09. In addition, the average scale score for Math increased two percentage points to 355 from 357.

The evaluation found that many students experienced increases in academic achievement performance levels in English Language Arts and Math compared to the baseline year. Thirty percent of participants increased at least one proficiency level in English Language Arts over baseline. In Math, 27 percent increased at least one proficiency level. Overall, about half of the students remained at the same performance level in either subject.

Analyses for participants who attended after school programs for three years over a four-year span from 2005/06 (baseline) to 2008/09, found the number of participants who scored at Basic (level 3) or above in English Language Arts increased from 67 percent in 2005/06 to 75 percent in 2008/09 and Math decreased from 75 percent in 2005/06 to 74 percent in 2008/09. The percentage of scoring at Proficient (level 4) or above increased for English Language Arts from 36 to 41. However, Math decreased from 50 percent to 48 percent over the same period.

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The average Scale score increased seven points, from 331 to 338, in English Language Arts, and one point for Math from 356 to 357.

Analyses by program participation days indicated there was not a strong correlation between scale score increases and days of participation in after school programs. However, there was a statistically significant improvement for both subjects among students who attended for the full year (150-180 day range), which was the majority of participants.

Regular School Day Attendance

School attendance is an important predictor for academic success. Participating students receive enrichment activities on a daily basis as part of the after school program, but one of the key elements of START is providing a mix of activities that promotes positive school adjustment. This factor may also help promote attendance during the regular school day as well, since students must attend the regular school day in order to attend START after school programs. As a result, one of the evaluation measures is regular school day attendance for students participating in the START program.

Regular school day attendance improved slightly for 2008/09 START program participants over the baseline year and also showed an increase among students participating in START program for at least two years, with attendance rates improving from 96 percent in 2005/06 to 99 percent in 2008/09. The improvement of three percent provides a meaningful impact on school district budgets. However, some caution should be exercised in interpreting these results due to changes in student information systems likely affected accuracy of the above results.

Participation Levels

Program attendance is a key measure of program success. The program is designed to reach large numbers of students and to maintain participants over long periods of time in order to maximize the impact of the academic and enrichment activities. Longevity is a key to meeting the overall goals of the START program.

On average, sites were in operation for a total of 189 days during the year. Programs appeared to be very successful in serving large numbers of students based on the fact that 8,595 students received services at 62 sites throughout the five districts served by START. Perhaps more importantly, students participated in after school programs an average of 111 days throughout the year. In addition, 84 percent of the participants completed at least 30 days of program participation. These figures indicate that after school programs were successful in attracting large numbers of participants and in maintaining participation over extended periods of time. Overall, START programs served an average of almost 5,000 students on a daily basis.

Demographic data was analyzed for START participants compared to the START sites and it was found that the split by gender was evenly divided at 50 percent. The highest percentages of participants were 3rd, and 2nd, and 4th grade students; 19 percent, 17 percent, and 17 percent, respectively. The lowest percentage served were kindergarten students with only five percent. Hispanic students were the largest ethnic group being served at 36 percent, followed by African American students who made up 27 percent of the participants, and Asian American students at 15 percent. American Indian, Filipino and Pacific Islander had the smallest percentages of participating students, at between two and three percent. This ethnic breakout is

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comparable for the most part to START sites actual student population percentages. Forty-nine percent of START participants were categorized as EL compared to 34 percent of those at the START sites. The Free and Reduced Meal participation rates were comparable for START participants in comparison to the general student population.

Physical Fitness Information

The "Get Fit Now!" AmeriCorps program has 74 AmeriCorps members that serve in 37 Sacramento START after school sites to provide nutrition and fitness education and resources that will help community children and their families live healthier lives and improve the participants FITNESSGRAM[®] scores. Each school district is required to administer this physical fitness test annually to all students in grades five, seven, and nine. There are three components that are tested: the FITNESSGRAM[®], which is a test of physical ability and two written assessments that test the students' knowledge of fitness and nutrition. The FITNESSGRAM[®] test assesses six major fitness areas, including aerobic capacity (cardiovascular endurance), body composition (percentage of body fat), abdominal strength and endurance, trunk strength and flexibility, upper body strength and endurance, and overall flexibility.

The FITNESSGRAM[®] results were tracked for START participants who concurrently participated in the AmeriCorp Get Fit Now! program. The evaluation data showed that 88 percent of the students that participated in the Get Fit Now! program stayed the same or showed improvement in their fitness levels from pre-to-post in the statewide FITNESSGRAM[®] Assessment. In addition, 41 percent of the 2,283 students with matched pre- and post-test data improved by at least 25 percent on the Fitness Knowledge test. On a similar note, 48 percent of participants showed improvements on the Nutrition Knowledge test of at least 25 percent. Those students who entered the Get Fit Now! program as meeting standards improved their scores by 44 percent, likewise, students who were below standards showed an average of 69 percent improvement.

After School Program Parent Survey

The after school program parent survey showed overall the parents are very satisfied with the START program. There were three surveys that were distributed throughout the year; when the student enrolls in the program, midway through the program to capture their experiences with the program, and at the end or when the child is leaving the program to capture their satisfaction with the program. The majority of parents surveyed considered the after school program helpful in regard to providing a safe, dependable environment for their children after school, school work/homework, and improving their children's ability to make friends and become more physically active in a place that provides fun and enriching activities in a supervised environment with staff that knew and made their children feel welcome. Overall, parents were very satisfied with the after school program and wished for it to continue for years to come.

**2008/09 Sacramento START Evaluation Report
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY****Conclusions**

Overall, 8,595 students participated in START program services. On average, students attended the after school programs a total of 111 days during the year and 84 percent participated for 30 days or more. These figures indicate that after school programs were successful in attracting large numbers of participants and in maintaining participation over extended periods of time. Overall, START programs served an average of almost 5,000 students everyday. Demographic data was analyzed for START participants compared to the START sites and it was found that the split by gender was evenly divided at 50 percent. The majority of students were third, and second and fourth grade students and the fewest students served were kindergarten students. Hispanic students were the largest ethnic group being served, followed by African American students. American Indian, Filipino and Pacific Islander had the smallest percent of students in the program. This ethnic breakout is comparable for the most part to START sites actual percentages. Those receiving Free and Reduced Meals were also comparable. However, a larger percent of START participants were categorized as EL compared to those at the START sites.

Comparing baseline to 2008/09 CST scores for START participants' revealed mixed results in both English Language Arts and Math. The percentage of students at Basic or above was mixed with English Language Arts increasing and Mathematics remaining the same. Similarly, the percentage of students at scoring at Proficient or above was mixed with the Math decreasing and the English Language Arts scores increasing. In addition, in both subjects, the average scale scores increased across years. Furthermore, for Math, the percentage of students who had increased at least one proficiency level was the same as the percentage of students who scored at least one level lower. However, the percentage of students who had increased at least one proficiency level was seven percent larger than the percentage of students who scored at least one level lower in English Language Arts.

Analyses of third year START participants' revealed mixed results in both English Language Arts and Math. The percentage of students at Basic or above was mixed, as was the percentage of students scoring at Proficient or above with English Language Arts increasing and Mathematics decreasing slightly. The average scale scores increased for both English Language Arts and Mathematics. Additionally, for both subjects the percentage of students who had increased at least one proficiency level was slightly larger than the percentage of students who scored at least one level lower.

The regular school day attendance rate increased for 2008/09 START participants by three percent overall, from 96 percent in the baseline year to 99 percent in 2008/09. Additionally, there was the same positive change in regular school day attendance rate for multiple year participants over a four-year span from 96 percent in 2005/06 to 99 percent in 2008/09.

The majority of parents surveyed considered the after school program helpful in regard to providing a safe, dependable environment for their children after school, school work/homework, and improving their children's ability to make friends and become more physically active in a place that provides fun and enriching activities in a supervised environment with staff that knew and made their children feel welcome. Overall, parents were very satisfied with the after school program and wished for it to continue for years to come.

The FITNESSGRAM[®] results were tracked for START participants who concurrently participated in the AmeriCorp Get Fit Now! program. The evaluation data showed that 88 percent of the students that participated in the Get Fit Now! program stayed the same or showed improvement in their fitness levels from pre-to-post in the statewide FITNESSGRAM[®]

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Assessment. In addition, 41 percent of the participants improved by at least 25 percent on the Fitness Knowledge test, and 48 percent showed at least a 25 percent improvement on the Nutrition Knowledge test. Those students who entered the Get Fit Now! program as meeting standards improved their scores by 44 percent, likewise, students who were below standards showed an average of 69 percent improvement.

Based on the results of the qualitative evaluation data provided by program staff, the START program appears to be successful! In addition, the availability, the high quality enrichment activities, integration with regular school, and staff development appear to be indicators of an excellent program for which parents were grateful.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made by the evaluator.

Improve Data Collection Procedures: The first recommendation is to improve the data collection procedures, which will improve the quality and quantity of the evaluation data and provide more precise evaluation. The evaluator once again had difficulty in obtaining complete data from some districts for the 2008/09 report. Duerr Evaluation Resources was only able to obtain Attendance and CST data for students after getting the Sacramento START project coordinator involved and data being submitted to CDE a month after the due date.

Implement a measure to collect data regarding student behavior: The second recommendation is to implement a measure to collect data on the impact of the START program on student behavior. The CDE is developing a survey but it is unknown when it will be available.