



STAR Afterschool Program
at Jefferson Elementary School
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Paramount, CA 90723
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Site Background

Success Through Academics and Recreation (STAR) is a free, quality after-school program that ensures children a stimulating environment and safe haven while parents are working. This program provides students in grades 1-8 with academic assistance and recreational activities using a proven curriculum. STAR operates every day of the week from the end of the school day until 6 p.m. in each Paramount Unified School District (PUSD) K-8 school, with a capacity of 100 students per campus.

The Healthy Behaviors Learning Center at Jefferson Elementary is one of 15 STAR after school sites. Jefferson serves students in 1st through 5th grade. The staff to student ratio is 1:20. Currently, this school has a waiting list to enter our program. Student demographics are: 7.7% African American; 4.0% Asian; 1/3% Filipino; 87.5% Hispanic; 0.4% Pacific Islander and 1.1% White. Free and reduced lunches are offered to 91.4% of the student population.

The students are provided healthy snacks, fresh fruit, and the opportunity to learn about healthy cooking through demonstrations offered in our clubs. Thanks to some of these new recipes and our extended physical activity, our kids have become aware of the risks of unhealthy eating and lack of exercise. Our students overall, have lost weight, become fit and have more endurance. We have a few kids who have gone from being overweight, to being at a healthy weight. We can see a difference in their confidence as a result of this significant change. Students have had the opportunity to taste new fruits and vegetables some of them didn't even know existed. It is amazing how the kids not only have gained knowledge about becoming fit, but the staff has also become aware, and are continuing the healthy behavior in their personal lives. We have had one of our own staff incorporate this change into his daily life and he has noticed a significant change in how he felt.

Making a Difference

Over the past five years, STAR has served over 8,200 students in our afterschool program. By offering this program free of charge, we have saved parents approximately \$11 million in childcare costs and made it possible for many single parents to enter and remain in the workplace while providing a safe environment for their children. Some of the students "thought they were fit" and "knew enough", but there is always more to learn, including how to work out safely and correctly. The children put to use everything they learn, and tell other students who are not in our after school program about everything they are learning. Those students and their parents are asking questions about the program and want to learn more about how to participate. One child who had behavior

problems during the regular school day, turned around her behavior within the first few weeks. Parents noticed the good behavior was continued at home as well. Many parents have commented that their kids no longer want to stay home because they enjoy the physical activity, cooking and technology clubs offered in the after school program. One parent commented that she had to purchase new clothes for her daughter because she had lost weight. Other parents have expressed their child's new and positive viewpoints on fruits and vegetables when they go grocery shopping. For example, a student asked his mom to buy kiwis and she was surprised that he had learned about them in our program. Our staff is no longer bringing in sodas to work, but water bottles, setting an excellent example for our students. We believe in modeling behavior so that the kids do as we do. We enjoy our new garden where our students have planted, corn, peppers, tomatoes, grapes, radishes and much more. They have the opportunity to use their harvested fruits, vegetables, and spices to create healthy meals. Parents enjoy the opportunity to take home produce from our garden.

What We Do

Students in our program engage in a minimum of 45 minutes a day of physical activity. We are currently utilizing CATCH (Coordinated Approach to Child Health), along with *Children's Power Play!*, primarily to teach students nutrition education through classroom lessons and interactive activities. We incorporate all aspects of Harvest of the Month, Clever Crazes, and *Children's Power Play* to emphasize the importance of eating fruits and vegetables, and the importance of physical activity. Harvest of the Month includes topics on healthy eating, physical activity, and how this affects students' behavior as well as their performance in school. The students' favorite part is preparing a recipe from the selected fruit/vegetable of the month. Clever Crazes is an on-line enrichment program that provides learning and physical activity with drills to improve test taking strategies. It also promotes good citizenship and rewards top-scoring students with gift cards for items like: Nike shoes, pedometers or flashlights.

We offer academic and enrichment opportunities utilizing LitART, a hands-on activity-based curriculum, that engages and motivates students in reading, writing, mathematics, and recreation. Students receive help with their homework. Our clubs offer a variety of academic subjects that meet State standards, and have been designed with the assistance of our Academic Coaches, who are regular day teachers.

First semester we offer Culture which includes a few recipes in the curriculum. We teach the kids nutritional facts on the ingredients that are being used and the benefits they get from them. Second semester we have fitness club which includes both physical activity and nutritional information which the kids benefit from and love.

We will be having demonstrations by the students about what they cook, so that they can show their parents how easy these recipes are. The recipe will be handed out and students will go step by step, explaining how they put it together. This will be set up as a booth so that the parents can watch and taste a sample of what their kids make in the STAR program.

We offer our parents brochures about eating healthy, applications for CalFresh and information on local food banks. Allowing privacy to parents is important, so we provide a bulletin board containing pertinent information to meet parents' needs so they don't feel uncomfortable asking for it. We provide recipes to encourage students to share with their parents the skills they have learned in class. In addition, we provide parents with upcoming activities in our community to encourage walking, and participation in the community events.

Our Partnerships

Center for Collaborative Solutions
City of Paramount, Parks & Recreation Department
Network for a Healthy California
Paramount Unified School District administrators, teachers, and staff