



HARMON JOHNSON HEALTHY BEHAVIOR LEARNING CENTER

HARMON JOHNSON START PROGRAM



Harmon Johnson Elementary School
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Sacramento START was launched in January 1996 and now serves 40 sites. START's mission is the belief that children should be given every opportunity to be successful. START fosters enthusiasm for learning by engaging children in fun, literacy-focused activities, in a safe and caring environment. START expands the school day and supports district goals.

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START's vision is a public/private collaboration that is working to build the capacity of all children to succeed academically and socially while reconnecting families and neighborhoods with their schools.

Site Background:

Harmon Johnson Elementary was certified as a Healthy Behaviors Learning Center in March 2013. The learning center is one of START's 40 afterschool program sites in the Greater Sacramento Area. It serves as one of multiple Healthy Behaviors Learning Centers throughout the State of California established to work with other afterschool programs, helping them to improve students' eating habits and physical fitness by intentionally integrating physical activity and nutrition education with youth development principles and practices.

Sacramento START at Harmon Johnson Elementary School serves a high poverty student population that is 69 percent Hispanic, 13 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, 10 percent African American, 6 percent Caucasian, and 2 percent American Indian/Alaskan Native. The learning center is in the Twin Rivers School District located in the northern area of Sacramento County. Over the past year, Sacramento START at Harmon Johnson Elementary School has served 100 plus students. The program has a consistent attendance of 90 percent, with an on-going waiting list.

The program operates Monday through Friday from the end of the school day until 6 p.m. The staff to student ratio is 20:1, with a minimum of one program leader per grade. This ratio is enhanced by consistent adult and teen volunteers, plus an academic coach, who each support every grade level cluster of students. Free and reduced lunches are offered to 90 percent of students.

Making a Difference

Harmon Johnson's goal is to support students and family in developing healthier life styles by eating healthy foods and becoming physically active. They are guided by their motto: Learning and Leading Healthy Lives!

What We Do

Activities offered include:

- **Physical Activity:** Students participate in a variety of activities designed to help them develop their physical as well as social and emotional skills. Students engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily throughout the program week.
- **Nutrition Education:** Students receive nutrition education that includes true life experiences with food. They learn how food affects their academic, physical, emotional and social well-being, and understand how it can impact their behavior. Parent nutrition classes are also offered through the family involvement component of the program.

- **Academic and Enrichment Opportunities:** Students participate in academic enrichment activities designed around the visual and performing arts, STEM, and a variety of community involvement projects. Students receive help with their homework through the assistance of an on-site academic coach. Age appropriate activities for each student are collaboratively offered through site teams comprised of the on-site coordinator, four support staff, one Para-educator, and many volunteers.
- **Coaching and Mentoring** by positive and supportive role models inspires and educates teens, college students and adults to build both personal and academic success, often resulting in future staff members of the program.
- **Staffing for Success** and staff development includes leadership training, physical activity and nutrition training. It is provided to prepare staff to design, plan and implement quality physical activities and nutrition programming for students. The program also provides physical activity and *FITNESSGRAM* training through *Get Fit Now! AmeriCorps Program*. Additional resources are provided through community partnerships which support extended training in nutrition and fitness to parents.

Our Partners

A collaboration of partners has contributed to the success of the program through giving generous support to community events, training of staff and volunteers, coaching and financial donations. They include the Center for Collaborative Solutions; *Network for a Healthy California*, Health Net, Twin Rivers School District, Youth Services Division; local Farmers Markets; Harmon Johnson's Healthy Start, American Heart Association; City of Sacramento Department of Parks and Recreation, school administrators, teachers, staff, parents and guardians.

Additional Impacts of Our Program

Changes in students' physical activity, nutrition knowledge, and access to healthy food have resulted in healthier behaviors. This consistently demonstrates that the program does change student lives and that it has made significant impact on the students and the school community.

Our assessment and evaluation processes showed:

- Students increased their practice of making healthier food and drink choices to meet their nutritional needs.
- All students demonstrated becoming more physically active through daily physical activities offered in the program.
- Students consistently reported improved leadership skills, self-confidence and self-efficacy.
- Parents verified that their children demonstrated an increased awareness and knowledge of healthier habits and are demonstrating those through their behavior choices. They are taking responsibility to motivate their families to eat healthier and become more physically active. These achievements have been supported by increased parent involvement in healthy behaviors educational experiences which include creative and healthy cooking classes, team sports and family fitness events for both students and their families.