

Starlight Elementary

After School Academic Enrichment Program, Fitness 4 Life
Pajaro Valley Unified School District, Student Services

Starlight Elementary
225 Hammer Drive
Watsonville CA, 95076

Contact: Jennifer Bruno
Jennifer.Bruno@pvusd.net
work cell: (831) 750-5469

Fitness 4 Life Mission: Youth developing skills for a healthier future.

Site Background

Starlight afterschool program serves students from Starlight Elementary in the Pajaro Valley Unified School District, located in the community of Watsonville, California. The program serves over 250 students from Kindergarten through the fifth grade .

- Starlight began operation in the fall of 2002, after receiving both ASES and 21st Century funding.
- In September 2009, PVUSD was named Central Coast Governor's Challenge District of the Year, in large part due to the healthy contributions of *Fitness4Life*.
- In the fall of 2011, Starlight was certified as a Healthy Behaviors Learning Center. More information about the Healthy Behaviors Initiative is available at <http://www.afterschoolsolutions.org> or by calling (916) 567-9911, ext 19.



Students are recruited by the after school program site coordinator or can be recommended by school nurses, teachers or guardians. Participation in Starlight afterschool is free. Eligible students are identified through many agencies and avenues. Some of those are: the California Standards Test results, Accelerated Reader STAR results, teacher recommendations, parent requests, those students identified by intervention, and open enrollment. Starlight serves a high poverty student population (over 80 percent are eligible for Free and Reduced Lunches) that is 95.6 percent Hispanic, and 3.2 percent White not Hispanic. Seventy-three percent are English learners.

Starlight is staffed by one full-time Site Coordinator, and assisted by 23 part-time credentialed staff members and 19 classified staff members. Academic support includes tutoring, interventions, enrichment classes, and help with homework, with an academic student ratio of 1:10. The staff to student ratio is 1:20. Assistance from volunteers is also provided by local high schools. Starlight is open to students from the end of the school day until 6:00 p.m.

Making a Difference

Starlight is a well-rounded, comprehensive after school wellness program with three focus areas: Academic Intervention, Enrichment and Healthy Environment. Students take part in both physical activities and nutrition-based programs designed to promote healthier lifestyles. Physical activities include swimming, biking, salsa and hip-hop dance, sports, soccer, exercise and fitness, and table tennis. We are dedicated to developing skills in youth for a healthier future.

Overall, the integration of nutrition and physical activity into the after school program has positively impacted the students. Reports from students indicate greater confidence, improved physical abilities and a more positive outlook on life.

What We Do

Some of the Starlight students are bused each week to the local high school to work out in the gym, swim, play table tennis, and learn nutrition education. Since 2007, over 2000 students have taken part in the six-year history of the District's Annual *Fitness 4 Life Triathlon* event. We have on average over 300 students a year take part in what has come to be a two-day triathlon festival.



Three times per week students train with *Fitness 4 Life* in a variety of physical fitness activities. They explore biking, swimming, table tennis, sports, dance, and games as well as experience hands-on nutrition education. As a result, *Fitness 4 Life* students are becoming more physically fit and adopting healthy eating patterns. Physical activities are integrated into program components throughout the year to help students prepare for the triathlon experience and encourage them to adopt healthier lifestyles. Starlight also encourages students to take advantage of the opportunity to explore nutrition in the Starlight Life Lab Garden.

After reviewing results of a school-wide BMI screening in 2010, that indicated a large percentage of students classified as overweight or obese, the Starlight Community Project began. Students now receive support through annual BMI screening, with follow-up as needed. They are provided with daily healthy snacks, and participate in a myriad of activities including gardening, cooking, organized sports, fitness, and health incentive programs. The Project focuses on providing education, resources, and outreach to students, families, staff and community members to create and sustain a healthier community.

Families and community members are encouraged to participate in bi-monthly nutrition education nights for which they receive a bag of fresh produce. Families and community members are also trained and utilized to be leaders in the community to assist with creating sustainable nutrition programs.

The Project has collaborated with a variety of community partners to provide students with comprehensive programs to meet their needs. These partnerships include:

- Ecology Action
- Healthy Start
- Mariposas Art
- Education, Training and Research Associates
- Second Harvest Food Bank
- Salud Para la Gente
- Diabetes Center
- Alba Farms
- Live Earth Farm
- United Way Santa Cruz County
- Go for Health!