



Reach for the Stars
AND JUMP START PROGRAMS
WHITTIER CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

2009-10 Evaluation Report

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Introduction to Reach for the Stars After-School Program

Reach for the Stars (RFTS), in the Whittier City School District (WCSD), is an after-school program funded by grants from the California 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC), After School Education and Safety Program (ASES) and the David and Lucille Packard Foundation. RFTS served approximately 1,300 students at nine elementary and two middle school sites in 2009-10. RFTS started in June 2000, and began full implementation in the beginning of the 2003-04 academic year. Through academic intervention and enrichment, the program seeks to improve academic performance while offering student participants extracurricular programming during after-school hours.

RFTS was formed through WCSD and the WCSD Advisory Committee in response to a needs assessment that recognized a community-wide demand for quality after-school programming. WCSD examined multiple assessments, research initiatives, and solicited input from over 4,000 parents. Based on the community assessment review, five central needs were identified for the Whittier City area:



- To increase academic achievement and literacy skills for students and parents;
- To provide quality, low cost after-school care in a safe and drug-free environment;
- To help students resist negative influences in the immediate environment;
- To create local community services centers which provide parent education; job counseling and health resource services in both English and Spanish; and
- To enhance access to technology education and enrichment opportunities.

Congress authorized the 21st CCLC through Title X, Part 1 of the Elementary and Secondary School Act. In 2002, the program was reauthorized under Title IV, Part B of the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act. The original purpose of the three-year federal 21st CCLC was to create school-based learning centers in inner-city and rural public schools that would enable them to develop, implement or expand projects that benefit community needs including education, health, social services and

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recreation. As part of the 2002 reauthorization, individual states were charged with administering the program. Thus, beginning with the 2002-2003 school year, the federal 21st CCLC program became the California 21st CCLC program.

In Fall 2006, RFTS expanded to include nine WCSD elementary and two middle school campuses – Dexter, Edwards, Hoover, Jackson, Andrews, Longfellow, Mill, Orange Grove, Phelan, Sorensen, and West Whittier. All nine sites received ASES grant funding and four schools received supplemental 21st CCLC funding. The 21st CCLC funding provided a before school, summer school and forty additional spaces for participants at Dexter, Edwards, Jackson and Sorensen school sites. RFTS's Jump Start summer program is funded jointly by 21st CCLC and the David and Lucille Packard Foundation.

Beginning in March 2007, RFTS added Dexter Middle School and Edwards Middle School to the after-school program. The two new middle school sites have programs run by the Boys and Girls Club, with a similar structure to the elementary school



sites: sign-in and snack, homework, enrichment, and physical activity. The Boys and Girls Clubs' programs offer an alternate curriculum, such as leadership, arts and character development classes (instead of Kidz Lit and Kidz Math) to meet the needs of middle school students. Another distinction between the two middle schools and the elementary schools is that the middle schools have a stronger emphasis on physical activity and sports. Depending on the season, tournaments such as basketball and baseball are also organized between RFTS sites.

This current report summarizes the findings from Public Works' seventh year of evaluating the RFTS program. Public Works is a non-profit, educational consulting firm dedicated to working with schools, government and the community in the areas of accountability, assessment, and evaluation services, including experience conducting several prior studies of after-school programs in Los Angeles County.

RFTS Program Implementation

Every year RFTS is examined based on seven components or areas that form the foundation of the program. This section provides analysis across the eleven sites in order to understand the progress of program implementation. The results are organized into the following seven component areas:

- 1) Program Management
- 2) Academic Intervention and Support
- 3) Enrichment, Extracurricular and Social Development Activities
- 4) School Linkages
- 5) Parent/Guardian Involvement
- 6) Community Involvement (Partnerships)
- 7) Safety

Area 1: Program Management

Program management includes all aspects of after-school coordination including program vision and decision-making, leadership and staffing, and day-to-day operations. The program is highly centralized through the WCSD, and is administered by a full-time District Program Director. The Program Director facilitates the decision making processes of the Steering and Advisory Committees, manages day-to-day decisions program-wide, has frequent communication with site facilitators and school principals, and facilitates relationships between the program and outside partners and service providers.

Individual sites are managed by a Site Facilitator. The role of the Site Facilitator is to ensure that the day-to-day program runs smoothly. The Facilitator manages staff, replenishes supplies and is responsible for taking and monitoring daily attendance. Ideally, the Site Facilitators also sometimes work at the site during the regular school day. This type of site facilitator knows the participants and has stronger connections with the principal and school staff. However, it is difficult to retain this level of quality for such staffing at all sites.

RFTS program staffing has evolved from program inception, with more responsibility being handed to program staff and fewer certificated teachers working in the program. Group Leaders manage all aspects of their group's time at RFTS: homework assistance as well as all enrichment/extracurricular activities. The Group Leaders are either instructional aides from the district or staff from the program partners that have continued to participate in RFTS, primarily the YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, The City of Whittier and the International Center for Education and Sports. Sites vary in their mix of staffing, some being more heavily staffed by program partners while others having more district aides or college students working as Group Leaders. All staff are NCLB qualified.

Utilizing Outside Partners to Manage: Boys & Girls Club, YMCA and ICES

Whittier City School District has used outside partners to help run the after school programs with great success. The YMCA and the International Center for Education and Sports (ICES) help Whittier City to staff Reach for the Stars at the elementary schools, assisting RFTS staff in physical education and enrichment activities.

Boys and Girls Club has a more unique partnership with RFTS, in that they fully staff the participating middle schools, from the Site Coordinators to the coaches and group leaders. They run the homework assistance, physical education activities and enrichment classes, from dance and arts to cooking classes. In this way, the community is directly involved at the school level.

Vision

The RFTS vision is to develop the program into an integral extension of the regular school day. The program aims to further students' academic, social and physical development through homework help, enrichment, and drug prevention/ social skills lessons.

The WCSD After School Program Advisory Committee and the WCSD After School Program Steering Committee serve as the key governance structures for setting the vision and coordinating the direction of the program. While the committees serve slightly different purposes, together they represent all stakeholders in the RFTS program including school and district staff, community partners and private organizations. Both committees meet regularly (bimonthly) to review the evolving needs of RFTS. Information on implementation of the RFTS program is shared at these forums and used to make program decisions, adjustments and plan for the future. In addition to the above committee meetings, weekly meetings of the Program Coordinator and site facilitators have continued similarly to years previous.

These meetings generally provide an opportunity to share necessary information with site facilitators, and in turn, for site facilitators to share ideas and solve problems.

Program Design and Organization

RFTS is organized similarly across sites and has stayed fairly consistent in its ten years of implementation. The program is divided into four sessions of equal length and all sites follow the same session calendar. Each site serves students a minimum of three hours, until 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The slight differences in hours of operation by school site are caused by the varying school dismissal times at each site. Additionally, all sites serve students for an extended period on the scheduled Tuesday minimum day and during parent conference weeks.

The RFTS program serves students in grades K-8, corresponding to the grade levels served in the regular school day. RFTS does not serve students on days when school is not in session including weekends, holidays, pupil-free days and vacations. Students continue to be organized in grade level groups, depending on the size of the program. Additionally, many sites combine grade levels (e.g., K-1st, 2nd-3rd, 4th-5th) while others serve populations large enough to organize single grade level groups. At middle school levels, grades 6-8 were combined in their programming. The grant parameters require the student-to-staff ratio to be no more than 20:1 and all sites have been able to maintain this ratio.

While the program start time varies slightly from site-to-site depending on school dismissal, the after-school day at each site is organized around a documented daily schedule. The day begins with a check-in and snack period. Students know where to meet and staff await the arrival of students, ready to begin the program day.

Sites varied in terms of how they organized the order of each of the three periods. The program ends with parent sign-out. Figure 1 provides an example of a typical daily RFTS schedule.

The RFTS program requires students to stay for at least three hours. Most recently, sign-out time has been less of a challenge for sites compared to previous years of implementation, when many parents wanted to pick up their child before 6:00 p.m. Site Facilitators reported that the beginning of the school year requires an adjustment period for some parents to learn to adhere to the checkout policy. However, in general, parents appeared to understand the program policies for picking up children at the scheduled time.

Figure 1: Typical daily RFTS schedule

2:30-2:45	Sign-in and snack
.....	
2:45-3:45	Physical activity
.....	
3:45-4:45	Homework assistance
.....	
4:45-5:30	Enrichment class
.....	
5:30-6:00	Sign-out

Area 2: Academic Support

All RFTS students participate in homework assistance four days each week for a minimum of 60 minutes each day, with most students involved in a weekly average of four hours of homework assistance. The format of the homework assistance time has remained consistent since inception of the program. Group Leaders, with the occasional assistance of volunteers, oversee the homework assistance period, which takes place in a focused classroom environment. Most sites continued to place an emphasis on finishing homework during the after-school program based on input from parents.

In general, the quality of homework assistance was consistent among Group Leaders. While the program strives to check the homework of each student, the extent to which this was done varied across sites. Group Leaders seek to provide participants with assistance and are generally busy during the entire period. As a result, and in light of the often large student-staff ratios, staff do not always have time during the homework period to check every student's homework. In addition to volunteers from local

Academic Lesson Plans: Reader's Theater and Math Party

Reader's Theater and Math Party are two research-based programs adopted by Reach for the Stars for use with after-school kids.

Reader's Theater is designed to increase literacy and build character through reading, art and drama. RFTS staff helps students act out stories the students read, adding arts enrichment to reading skills reinforcement. Math Party, a DVD series, uses music and songs to reinforce basic math skills. Students are pre- and post-tested to demonstrate improvement on the math topics the DVDs cover. In conjunction with the existing Kidz Lit and Kidz Math curricula already in place, RFTS continues to look for new ways to improve student scores.

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high schools providing support during the homework hour, some sites utilized a peer support system, where students work together to resolve questions to their homework.

After students complete homework, Group Leaders initial the assignment to let parents and teachers know that the assignment has been spot-checked by the Group Leader. Packets of backup work are prepared in advance for students who have completed their homework. At the middle school levels, student complete Power Hour¹ packets or read independently. RFTS continues to use Kidz Lit and Kidz Math curricula to increase literacy and develop mathematically. RFTS has also implemented Readers Theater and Math Party to aid in these goals. Readers Theater utilizes both reading skills and drama to increase literacy, while Math Party uses music and song to teach math skills. In addition to math and literacy programs, RFTS also uses two science programs, Animal Science and Science Explorer, to help reinforce science education. Animal Science teaches students about animals through a study of animals native to each of the seven continents. Science Explorer is a teacher-led curriculum that allows groups of students to conduct hands-on, age-appropriate science experiments.

The H.E.A.R.T. Program

Reach for the Stars uses the research-based H.E.A.R.T. program to help staff, students and their families to live and stay healthy for life.

H.E.A.R.T. relies on a variety of programs to help teach everyone involved in RFTS, including students, staff, parents and families, about how to live safely and healthfully.

SPARK is a physical activity program to keep RFTS students active, and Peaceful Playgrounds helps RFTS make the most of their play spaces. Perceptual Motor Development helps to develop basic motor coordination among growing children. Food is Elementary is a nutrition curriculum provided by Presbyterian Intercommunity Hospital (read more on page 9).

Beginning in the 2007-2008 school year, an Academic Specialist was hired for the RFTS program to create and write academic lesson plans, which the Group Leaders are responsible for implementing. The Academic Specialist's responsibility does not include lesson planning for enrichment and physical education activities, which remain under Group Leader responsibilities.

RFTS has also continued to ensure that academic standards are embedded in enrichment activities. The Lego Bricklab curriculum is a hands-on learning program with 200 activities and lessons at various grade levels teaching four topic strands including Construction Engineering, Mathematics, Physics and Communications. Other activities such as cooking and nutrition require students to understand measurements, read recipes, and understand nutritional information on labels.

Area 3: Enrichment, Extracurricular and Social Development Activities

In addition to providing academic support, RFTS seeks to offer students enrichment programming, technology education, leadership and healthy living opportunities otherwise unavailable to the student body. The Health, Education,

¹ Power Hour supplemental packets are organized by the district and are aligned with state standards.

Activity, Recreation, Training Program (H.E.A.R.T.) Program has enabled all sites to implement a structured sports and recreation curriculum using Sports Play and Active Recreation for Kids (SPARK Active Recreation), Food is Elementary, Perceptual Motor Development Program, and Peaceful Playgrounds.

RFTS staff utilizes several methods to help parents and students determine which enrichment activities to participate in. At the beginning of the academic year, each RFTS site holds a meeting for parents and students to learn about programming choices and program policies. Within this context, parents and students learn about enrichment activities such as band, dance, choir, cooking and nutrition, which also tend to be the most popular activities among parents and students. RFTS also use flyers, surveys, and informal contact (conversation with parents during pick-up) to discuss enrichment activities.

Despite the centralized nature of RFTS, individual sites have flexibility in their schedule, content, and structure. Site facilitators at several sites reported encouraging their Group Leaders to lead activities in a skill area in which they specialize. Additionally, sites have experimented with rotating schedules by which student groups rotate to different Group Leaders, sometimes two or three times during a program session. By doing this, Group Leaders are able to teach what they feel most comfortable with and only need to prepare to teach one or two activities, while participants continue to receive a variety of enrichment activities. A secondary benefit of such a rotation format is that Group Leaders are able to familiarize themselves with more of the participants instead of being limited to their own group of students.

Physical Education

The District's physical education program is called the Health, Education, Activity, Recreation, Training Program (H.E.A.R.T.) and incorporates several research-based programs² that teach students, staff, and families how to live and stay healthy for life. The combination of a structured curriculum, extensive training for program staff, and the purchase of new equipment as part of the grant have contributed to well-run physical activity programming at all sites.

In conjunction with the physical education hour and a partnership developed with Whittier Presbyterian Intercommunity Hospital, RFTS has made strong efforts to lower students' body mass index (BMI). Staff from Presbyterian Hospital comes to RFTS sites two times per year to measure and weigh students to assess the progress of lowering students' BMI. Through BMI testing, RFTS discovered that 40% of students were at risk for developing diabetes. Students at risk for juvenile diabetes or obesity were referred to health care professionals. RFTS has since aggressively been working to lower their students' BMI scores through the physical fitness program and cooking and nutrition activities targeting both parents and students. Classes are held during the evening to teach parents about healthy cooking and nutrition. As an

² *S.P.A.R.K. Active Recreation, 5 A Day Nutrition program,*

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interactive class, parents learn about topics such as reading package labels, preparing nutritional meals, and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Leadership and Gang and Drug Prevention Initiatives

Helping students resist negative influences in the immediate environment such as gangs, violence, and substance abuse is one of the central goals of the RFTS

Friday Night Live (FNL)

RFTS sites participate in the Friday Night Live program, which is administered through the Los Angeles County Office of Education and which is designed to promote healthy lifestyles among youth. Through FNL, Reach for the Stars seeks to foment a culture of leadership among after-school students.

Each site selects a number of students to undergo one-hour leadership and activity-planning training from FNL. The students learn to plan and organize, as well as to incorporate various ideas from diverse groups of their fellow students.

program. For this reason, the program has attempted to employ multiple strategies across sites. Fourth and fifth grade participants have participated in the Gang Awareness Prevention Program (G.A.P.P.), which is offered by the Helpline Youth Counseling Agency, a local community partner, and provides students with lessons in gang prevention, peer pressure and conflict resolution.

Additionally, RFTS has begun implementing Great Kids Club (offered through Helpline also) at elementary school sites. This program helps students in grades two through five learn about social skills, decision-making (including regarding gangs, drugs, alcohol and tobacco), peer pressure, and conflict resolution. All sites also sponsor a Friday Night Live (FNL) program. This program, administered through the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) provides alcohol, tobacco and other substance abuse

prevention education. A team of students at each site is selected to help facilitate education activities at school. This leadership team receives training from FNL to help plan and facilitate school activities.

Area 4: School Linkages

RFTS has experienced increased support from school staff and a form called the After-School Program Communicator continues to be utilized at sites. The After-School Program Communicator allows school day teachers to send or request information about a particular student to program staff. The After-School Program Communicator is a more formal process than what existed previously. The level of communication between school day teachers and RFTS staff varied across sites. Additionally, at the beginning of the school year, RFTS asks teachers to complete a survey on each RFTS student indicating proficiency level in language arts and mathematics, as well as homework completion, classroom behavior, and participation. In past years, RFTS Site Facilitators were better able to communicate with the schools if they were part of the regular-day staff. RFTS's longevity has allowed for such good communication and relationships that this is no longer necessary.

Relationships with Principals

Site facilitators continue to report support and availability from the host school principals.³ Site facilitators reported frequent and open communication with principals through formal and informal meetings as well as via e-mail. There continues to a varied level of principal involvement from site to site. Some principals are only involved when student behavioral issues and/or facility issues arise, while others are more involved in the ongoing operations of the program. Principals are able to step back as the program runs smoothly and are confident in their site facilitators and the district to know that their site's program will be well run.

Shared Staffing

The presence of District instructional aides at some sites continued to have an impact in establishing continuity, particularly at sites where the Site Facilitator is not a regular school day employee. These aides were able to enforce behavioral expectations from the school day and were often familiar with teachers' homework assignments and/or curricula. They also serve as a resource to Group Leaders who are not from the host site.

Communication and Interactions

Site facilitators generally felt teachers' awareness and support of the program have continued to improve over time. In spite of the After-School Program Communicator form described above, communication between the regular school day and after-school program continues to be informal. In addition to this, the after-school group leader fills out a Student Progress Report at the end of each trimester. This form is sent to the child's home just as a report card is. This has reportedly led to increased interaction between both RFTS and the family as well as between the after-school teacher and school staff.

Area 5: Parent/Guardian Involvement

RFTS has a variety of ways of communicating and collaborating with parents. Parents continue to receive information about the program schedule through occasional flyers, as well as the bulletin boards displaying program and job information that are utilized by some sites. Checkout time at the end of the day is the primary way in which communication occurs between staff and parents. RFTS Student Participation Summary Forms, which are sent home during report card time, are also used to

Presbyterian Intercommunity Hospital

Presbyterian Intercommunity Hospital (PIH) has partnered with Reach for the Stars to reduce the incidence of obesity and Juvenile Diabetes in Whittier. Twice a year, at the beginning and end of the school year, Presbyterian performs Body Mass Index testing on all the students in RFTS.

For the past three years, PIH has also trained the RFTS staff on the curriculum "Food is Elementary", a nutrition course in which the students in RFTS participate. The students are taught about healthful food and how to cook it. The hospital also provides classes to parents on how to select more nutritious foods.

PIH also dispatches a Care Force One mobile health clinic to the schools so students and families can have access to free or low-cost primary medical care.

³ At Dexter and Edwards Middle Schools, the site facilitator's primary contact was with either the school counselor or vice principal.

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communicate. The summary forms describe how the student performed during each trimester and are distributed to teachers as well as parents.

In addition to one-on-one interaction, typically with after-school staff at checkout time, parents provide feedback through an RFTS-administered survey in regard to their preferences for the program's activities and content. With the increasing concerns of childhood obesity and juvenile diabetes, RFTS has focused its efforts on cooking, nutrition, and healthy lifestyles. Sixty cooking and nutrition classes were held revolving around the theme of "Healthy Kids." In addition to learning about healthy eating and lifestyles, nurses from Presbyterian Intercommunity Hospital helped parents sign up for health insurance and provided access to free services and medical assessments. Parent responses to these services have been extremely positive. As discussed previously, these parent education workshops were offered based on parent feedback. Finally, two RFTS families (parents and students) serve on the RFTS Advisory Committee, which gives them a formal voice in the program's decision-making processes.

Area 6: Community Involvement (Partnerships)

The RFTS program has established a network of partners and service-providers connected to the after-school program who continue to actively staff and support the program, and are involved in the regular Steering Committee meetings. The majority of partners involved since inception have stayed active over time. Partners helping to staff the program include the YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, the City of Whittier and Helpline Youth Counseling. The role of Boys and Girls Club has expanded as their staff coordinates the after-school programs at the middle school sites. Overall, the improved quality of staff has resulted in a higher quality program in all areas, and the gaps in quality seen between District aides and program partner staff have diminished.

Referrals to Health and Social Services

There are no formal avenues for referring parents or students needing health and social services. Generally, such referrals are made during the regular school day through school day staff. When a need does arise, site facilitators generally refer the individual(s) to the RFTS Program Director or the site principal. The RFTS Program Director has long-standing relationships with many of the health and social service agencies in the area and makes referrals to the appropriate organization.

Tutoring and Mentoring Partnerships

Local educational institutions at high school and college levels provide student tutors to some sites at various times during the year. This year, a large number of junior high, high school, and college students volunteered with the RFTS program. Volunteer hours and high school senior projects are completed through working with

the after-school program. Most sites have volunteers working on campus through the duration of the year, with Mill as the exception lacking a strong volunteer base

Area 7: Safety

Across sites, RFTS provides students with a safe environment that promotes school pride and student learning, with safety continuing to be one of the program's strongest areas. All sites have formalized the check-in and check-out procedures. The program day begins with check-in and attendance, which occurs during the snack period. Once the Group Leader takes attendance, the site facilitator collects attendance and double-checks the list of absent participants with the absentee list from the school day. If a student is absent from the program but was not absent from school that day, the Site Facilitator calls the emergency contacts to locate the student.

At the end of the program day, parents sign out their students. The continued efforts of Site Facilitators to enforce the three-hour rule (i.e. parents cannot check out their child until a certain time, typically 5:30 p.m. at most sites) has resulted in overall parent acceptance of the policy, with few exceptions. Check-



out across sites has become a streamlined process, although sites still varied in the way they conducted check out. To help ensure an efficient check out process, parents are asked to meet their student in the school's multi-purpose room or other central room, where students sit with their group and Group Leader for sign-out. This format is ideal because parents and Group Leaders have the opportunity to get know one another and communicate about student progress and behavior.

Monitoring During the Program

Students are accounted for at all times during the program at each site. Because a Group Leader accompanies each group of students at all times and physical transitions between locations are limited, students have little opportunity to separate from their group. Most sites allow students to use the restroom utilizing a buddy system. Site facilitators stated that, overall, students respected the procedure and did not spend extra time in the bathrooms or around campus.

Emergency Procedures and Staffing

As part of the regular school day procedures, most campuses lock down after-school. Custodial staff lock all entrances save one at most sites. As a program, RFTS has established formal lock-down procedures in the case of an emergency or incident. For

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other emergencies, the Site Facilitator and program staff utilizes the school's disaster plan.

Finally, as the after-school staff is hired directly through the district or a partner agency, they are pre-screened for appropriate clearance and testing. Additionally, all RFTS staff are certified annually for Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and first aid.

RFTS Quantitative

In addition to the qualitative data collected about the program for the evaluation each year, RFTS is examined based on program participation and student outcomes such as school attendance and performance on the English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics California Standards Tests (CST). As part of the annual evaluation, a subset of participants who frequently attend the program were matched and compared to non-participants who are similar in terms of demographic characteristics and prior performance on the ELA and Mathematics CSTs.

RFTS Program Participation

Out of a total student enrollment of 6,556 across all RFTS school sites, 26% or 1,674 students participated in RFTS in the 2009-10 school year. Table 1 presents information about program participants and compares it to the overall composition of students at RFTS schools. There were no major differences between RFTS participants and the overall student population on any demographic characteristic. The majority of students who participated in RFTS are Hispanic (95%), 25% are English Learners, 73% qualify for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), and 10% are enrolled in Special Education, which are comparable to overall student demographics.

Table 1: Students participating in Whittier RFTS by subgroup, 2009-10

	All Students (n=6,556)	All Participants (n=1,674)
Hispanic	93%	95%
Other Race/Ethnicity	6%	4%
EL	23%	25%
NSLP	70%	73%
Special Ed.	11%	10%

Table 2 provides information about program participation in 2009-10 for each of

the 11 RFTS sites. The number of participants ranged from 85 at West Whittier to 293 at Edwards Middle School. There was also a large range of participation as a percentage of total school enrollment in 2009-10, from a low of 16% at Longfellow to a high of 42% at Jackson. Overall, RFTS program participation has increased as a percentage of total school enrollment—up 6% from 20% in 2008-09 to 26% in 2009-10. Several sites increased the percentage of students participating in the program—most notably Jackson, which increased 22% from 20% of enrollment in 2008-09 to 42% of enrollment in 2009-10. Both middle school sites increased enrollment both in terms of total numbers (110 more participants at Dexter and 51 more participants at Edwards) as well as a percentage of school enrollment (both increased by 6%).

Table 2: RFTS participation by school site, 2009-10

School	# Students Enrolled	# Participants	% of School Enrollment	% of Participants who were Frequent Participants
Andrews	464	97	21%	80%
Hoover	465	106	23%	83%
Jackson	519	220	42%	48%
Longfellow	629	103	16%	84%
Mill	389	100	26%	90%
Orange Grove	422	120	28%	88%
Phelan	523	103	20%	87%
Sorensen	419	164	39%	62%
West Whittier	424	85	20%	76%
Dexter (MS)	1,334	283	21%	45%
Edwards (MS)	968	293	30%	38%
<i>Total/Average</i>	<i>6,556</i>	<i>1,674</i>	<i>26%</i>	<i>71%</i>

Table 2 indicates what percentage of RFTS participants attended the program frequently, defined as students who have attended more than 90 out of a potential 180 days (total instructional days in a school year). **Overall, 71% of RFTS participants in 2009-10** are considered frequent participants, which is an increase of 6% from 65% in 2008-09. Seven of the eleven RFTS sites had very high percentages of frequent participants (more than 75% of participants at these sites were frequent participants). At the two middle schools (where participants are not required to attend every day), 45% and 38% of participants were frequent participants in 2009-10, down slightly from 2008-09. Finally, the average number of days that participants

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attended RFTS was 121 in 2009-10, up from 113 days in 2008-09.

RFTS Outcomes

As shown in Table 3, of the 1,046 students classified as frequent RFTS participants in 2009-10, 46% scored proficient or advanced on the CST ELA in 2009-10, and 48% scored proficient or advanced on the CST Mathematics. One-quarter of students improved at least one proficiency level on the CST ELA from 2008-09 to 2009-10 (25%), and 21% improved one or more levels on the CST Mathematics. The average school attendance rate among frequent participants was 97% in 2009-10.

Table 3: CST performance and school attendance among RFTS frequent participants, 2009-10

Frequent Participants (n=1,046)	
% Proficient or Advanced on CST ELA	46%
% Proficient or Advanced on CST Mathematics	48%
% improved on CST ELA from 2008-09	25%
% improved on CST Mathematics from 2008-09	21%
School Attendance Rate	97%

When frequent participants and non-participants were compared by grade level, more 8th grade frequent participants increased a level on the CST ELA from 2008-09 to 2009-10 than did non-participants in 8th grade (39% compared to 27%). Fifth grade frequent participants were more likely to increase a level on the CST ELA than 5th grade non-participants (13% compared to 7%).

When frequent participants and non-participants were compared at each school, Jackson's RFTS program stands out as having had a positive impact on frequent participants as compared with non-participants with respect to school attendance (96% compared to 93%), CST ELA improvement (30% compared to 24%), and CST Mathematics improvement (32% compared to 18%).

Other schools showed differences between the two groups as well: Hoover frequent participants had a higher school attendance rate than non-participants (97% vs. 94%), Orange Grove frequent participants were more likely to increase a level on the CST ELA (33% vs. 19%), and frequent participants at Edwards, Orange Grove, and West Whittier were more likely to increase a level on the CST Mathematics than non-participants (27% vs. 22%, 25% vs. 18%, and 31% vs. 25%).

Matched Analysis

In order to identify the impact of RFTS on student outcomes, the outcome analysis incorporated a “virtual twins” approach that utilized a statistical procedure called Coarsened Exact Matching (CEM)⁴ to match a group of treatment students (those who frequently participated in RFTS) with a group of comparison students (non-participants in RFTS). For this comparison, frequent participants were matched to non-participants by grade level, ethnicity, English Learner status, participation in NSLP, gender, and performance level on the English Language Arts CST or the Mathematics CST in the prior year.⁵ This match resulted in balanced distributions of academic achievement for both groups (treatment and comparison) and a total match of 510 students in each group.

When the treatment and comparison groups are balanced using prior CST performance in this way, any difference in outcomes that may have been associated with differences in past performance on the CSTs can instead be attributed to the effects of participation in RFTS or to other observed or unobserved factors that did not affect past academic performance but may have affected academic performance in the year of interest (2009-10). For example, motivation or parental involvement may have exerted influence on students’ academic achievement and attendance in 2009-10, but not in the previous year, 2008-09. However, to the extent that factors were similar for students from year to year, the design of this evaluation accounts for them by taking prior academic achievement into account.

While there are slight differences between the two groups related to performance on the CSTs in Mathematics and ELA (Table 4), the differences are not statistically significant. However, school attendance, as measured by the percentage of days (out of 180) that students attend school, is a small but statistically significant difference between the two groups—with RFTS frequent participants having an attendance rate of 97% compared to 96% for the matched group of non-participants.

Table 4: RFTS impact on student achievement, matched frequent

4 Iacus, Stefano M., Gary King and Giuseppe Porro. 2008. “Matching for Causal Inference Without Balance Checking.” <http://gking.harvard.edu/files/abs/cem-abs.shtml>.

5 Prior performance level was calculated as a percentile rank for each student using that student’s prior year CST scaled scores relative to the scaled scores of his or her grade-level peers in PUSD for the prior year.

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participants and matched non-participants, 2009-10

	Matched Frequent Participants (n=510)	Matched Non- Participants (n=510)
% Proficient or Advanced on CST ELA	50%	53%
% Proficient or Advanced on CST Mathematics	48%	50%
% improved on CST ELA from 2008-09	22%	25%
% improved on CST Mathematics from 2008-09	40%	36%
School Attendance Rate	97%*	96%

* $p < .05$

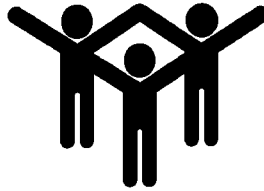
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