

A World Fit For Kids! Program Evaluation Report 2012-13

Prepared by Kaiser Group, Inc.
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www.worldfitforkids.org

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I. Introduction

A World Fit For Kids! (WFIT) provides healthy behaviors and youth development programs for elementary, middle and high school students in economically disadvantaged communities in Los Angeles County. The non-profit organization's guiding mission is *preparing young people for fit and fulfilling lives*. As a part of their approach, WFIT trains their staff members and teen volunteers on healthy behaviors and physical activity leadership. WFIT also provides these trainings for other youth-serving organizations and schools throughout the county and state, and even nationally and internationally.

The WFIT approach is unique in that they intentionally start by training the adults in children's lives to identify their own health and personal goals and to learn strategies to reach those. In this process, they become role models of the healthy behaviors changes WFIT hopes to see for children. The trainings also emphasize hands-on learning so that adults experience what WFIT expects when they in turn engage youth in activities. For WFIT, a quality activity occurs when all children are included regardless of ability and when the activity is: physically and emotionally safe, meaningful and goal-oriented, and fun. These criteria apply to physical activities as well as to all types of learning and enrichment activities in which children are engaged.

This combination of fostering healthy behaviors role models who are also skilled in leading quality activities is what WFIT believes helps youth to become confident and empowered to take care of their health. Having a sense of empowerment in one key area can also help them to take charge of other aspects of their lives, such as their academic achievement and social relationships. WFIT provides this experience for youth who attend their after school sites and helps teachers and out-of-school time (OST) providers¹ to do the same for their students. The direct outcome results that WFIT aims to help youth achieve include:

- Becoming physically active
- Making healthy food and beverage choices
- Building social-emotional wellness skills
- Improving academically

The long-term expected impact is the development of healthy behavior patterns that lead to adults and youth being physically fit, healthy and successful in their school and career paths.

To assess their progress in helping participants reach those four direct outcomes, WFIT regularly conducts its own data collection and evaluation efforts and participates in related evaluation requirements by key program funders. Key findings from prior years have typically been shared in brief summary documents. This document represents WFIT's first formal evaluation report. It focuses on data findings from the recently completed 2012-13 program year. During that year, WFIT engaged in a full-scale effort to understand the program experience and benefits from the adult and youth participants' perspectives. Where relevant, this report also includes key findings from prior year data summaries.

¹ Out-of-school time providers refers to providers who serve youth during non-classroom time periods, which can include before school, after school and/or during summer.

II. Programs Overview

All of WFIT's programs for children, teens and adults integrate physical activity and healthy behaviors training. For WFIT, the concept of healthy behaviors is a holistic one that encompasses a person's physical activity and nutrition choices as well as their communication and relationship-building skills. This model stems from a strong research base that indicates young people's physical health is linked to their emotional health and academic achievement, all of which impact their future success.²

The primary WFIT programs include:

- A. Physical activity leadership workshops for WFIT staff and for teachers and other out-of-school time providers; known as Physical Activity LeadershipSM (PAL)
- B. After school program activities for elementary, middle and high school students at Title I school sites in Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD)
- C. Nutrition program series for students who participate in the after school sites
- D. Leadership and work readiness training program for high school students; known as Mentors in MotionSM (MiM)

Each of these programs is briefly described below.

Physical activity leadership training

Because WFIT operates on a role modeling philosophy, they have always trained their staff on how to lead quality physical activities and how to make and promote healthy choices. In the past few years, they began providing their core training, Physical Activity Leadership (PAL)SM, to other after school and summer school providers, schools and community-based organizations. The PAL training helps motivate and equip teachers and out-of-school time staff to provide quality physical activity on a regular basis. The training uses a hands-on approach (i.e., participants learn how to lead a quality activity by being engaged in one) so they are prepared to apply new practices with their students immediately. By the end of a session, which can be half-day or full-day, participants will have learned:

- Essential elements of a quality physical activity
- How to conduct physical activity sessions given limited time, resources and space
- Strategies for setting goals, both for student activities and for personal health choices
- Ways to integrate math and literacy into physical activity sessions

After school program

The WFIT after school program serves students in elementary school (ES), middle school (MS), and high school (HS). The program is free and provided on LAUSD public school sites for three

² The California Healthy Students Research Project. (2011). *Healthy Steps toward Student Achievement: Research-based recommendations for policy and practice*. (Funded by The California Endowment, The James Irvine Foundation, and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.)

California Education Supports Project. (2009). *The Critical Connection between Student Health and Academic Achievement: How schools and policy makers can achieve a positive impact*. (Funded by The California Endowment, The James Irvine Foundation, and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.)

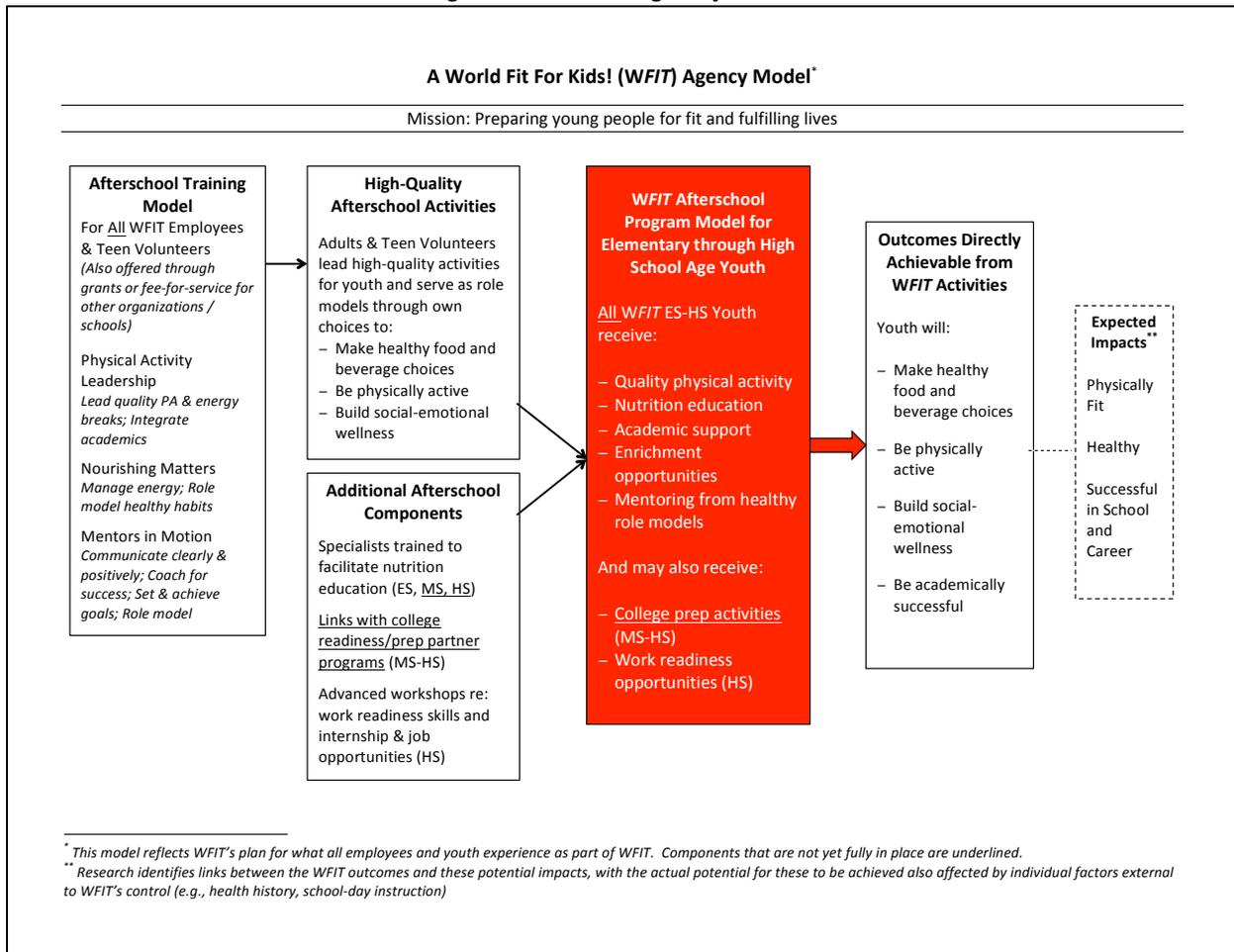
U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2010). *The Association between School-based Physical Activity, Including Physical Education, and Academic Performance*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

hours a day, five days a week. The WFIT coach mentors on each site, along with teen interns, engage the students in a variety of daily structured and supervised activities. These include:

- Physical activities, such as sports, fitness, dance
- Nutrition promotion &/or formal workshop series
- Homework assistance and other academic support
- Enrichment opportunities, such as art, music, science
- Mentoring from coach mentors and teens on healthy behaviors

The WFIT after school program differs from most other after school programs because of their emphasis on daily physical activity and maintaining an environment where healthy and nutritious habits are integrated into activities and reinforced through role modeling from the trained staff. Physical activity and nutrition are not addressed as a program side note, rather they are the vehicles through which WFIT engages and motivates students to make positive choices in all areas of their lives. The PAL trained coach mentors and MiM teens are essential to the success of this model. See Figure 1 below for the WFIT model that the WFIT formally documented and agreed upon as a team.

Figure 1. WFIT Agency Model



Within the overall framework, the after school program has deliberate variations to address the differing developmental level of participants. At elementary schools, the schedule is structured

to include time for all of the key activities to occur, with physical activities, homework assistance and enrichment occurring on a daily basis and nutrition workshops on a weekly basis. Students are expected to attend every day of the week, and their parents need to sign them out each day.

At the middle and high school sites, students have more flexibility to choose the after school activities in which they want to participate. For example, one student may choose to participate in soccer activities and another to participate in a science club. All students are expected to participate in homework time activities, and WFIT provides access to additional academic support and leadership opportunities. Students can choose how many days a week they attend based upon their activities, and are encouraged to attend at least three days.

In order to offer students of this age as many activity options as possible, WFIT staffs specific activities with coach mentors or teachers and provides support to teachers who volunteer to lead after school activities in which they have an expertise. The coach mentors hired by WFIT participate in all WFIT trainings so they implement the program according to the healthy behaviors model. Teacher activity leaders can choose to attend these trainings or not.

Nutrition program

WFIT staff is trained on a holistic approach to health and nutrition, one that focuses on food choices as part of a set of “key regulators” that affect physical energy, focus and emotional well-being. The staff then promotes these same concepts with their students and encourages healthy choices by example. Throughout all sites, only healthy snacks are allowed and water is encouraged as the drink of choice.

At the elementary school level, WFIT also implements a formal nutrition series for students during the after school program. Nutrition education occurs weekly and consists of classroom lessons and hands-on food preparation experiences designed by the WFIT nutrition director. The program helps students to understand the four key energy regulators of food, exercise, sleep and relationships. Specific to food nutrition, students learn about living foods (aka fruits and vegetables), vitamins and minerals, serving sizes and food labels.

Youth leadership and work readiness program

WFIT’s youth leadership program, Mentors in Motion (MiM)SM, is a healthy behaviors leadership and work readiness program offered to high school students as part of its after school program. The program begins with a 32-hour training series designed to promote their personal development and leadership skills. The training includes sessions on each of these areas: Physical Activity Leadership (PAL), Nourishing Matters (WFIT’s nutrition training for staff and teens), Personal Empowerment, Mentoring/Leadership, Work Readiness, and First Aid/CPR.

As with all WFIT trainings, participants actively practice what they learn as they learn it. The teens gain skills to address their own health – physical, emotional and social – and for modeling and teaching the same to younger students. They then practice these skills as intern mentors in WFIT elementary programs. After the internship period, MiM teens who reach the required minimum grade point average can apply to become a paid teen coach-mentor to assist WFIT staff. Throughout all phases of the year-long program, teens receive support with college and career preparation.

III. Methodology

This evaluation report focuses on data findings from the recently completed 2012-13 program year. During that year, WFIT focused on understanding the program experiences and benefits from the adult and youth participants' perspectives. Figure 2 below lists the data collection instruments used this year along with the purpose, timeline and respondent numbers.

Figure 2. Summary of 2012-13 Data Collection

Data Instrument	Primary Purpose	Timeline	Respondents Description	#
PAL Training: End of Session Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prior experience & confidence in leading physical activities - Satisfaction and participation benefits of WFIT's PAL training 	At the end of each 3-hour training provided between Nov 2012 & June 2013	OST staff and teachers who attended PAL training	825
PAL Training: Follow-Up Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Current experience & confidence in leading physical activities - Changes made to activities - Benefits for students 	A minimum of 8 weeks following PAL training participation (via surveymonkey)	OST staff and teachers who attended PAL training as of April 2013	204
MiM Follow-Up Study Interview Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High school completion - Post high school academic choices - Participation benefits 	December 2012	HS participants who completed MiM at some point in past 7 years	142
After school Participant End-Year Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Current behaviors related to activity, nutrition and school - Participation benefits 	Spring 2013	Students who regularly attend WFIT after school:	ES 151 MS 277 HS 314
Nutrition Check-In Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knowledge of key concepts addressed in nutrition program - Participation benefits 	Fall 2012, and again Spring 2013	Fifth grade after school participants at two sites	24

For 2012-13, WFIT worked with an evaluation consultant from Kaiser Group, Inc. to design these data collection instruments for each of the programs and provide administration guidelines and timelines to the staff. This process of combining program expertise with evaluation expertise helped to ensure the instruments represent valid measures of what the program aims to do. The instruments were also designed to be consistent with research-based expectations of positive youth development outcomes and healthy fitness and nutrition habits. Several methods were used to ensure the data collected were reliable: instruments were written at a student-reading level (typically 8th grade, younger for the elementary students); instruments used with elementary students were verbally administered; instruments had a companion administration guide that provides instructions on how to appropriately and consistently administer the survey, and staff was trained on how to administer the surveys.

This report aims to assess how well the WFIT model is being implemented by looking at how many surveyed participants indicate experiencing the direct outcomes WFIT strives to promote. This participant-focused evaluation was employed this year because while data collection and evaluation occurred over the past several years, there has not been a full-scale effort to understand the program experience and benefits from the participants' perspective. Having formalized the WFIT model and outcomes a year ago, this evaluation effort is an attempt to identify if what the program believes it does and accomplishes, is what participants experience. Thus, the data included in this report purposefully rely on participant self-report.

For all WFIT programs included in this report, data were collected from participants who attended enough to fully experience the planned WFIT program. Thus, responses represent a sub-set of total participants but are reflective of those who experienced the program as intended. Both quantitative and qualitative data are collected in order to identify cross-participant trends and gain a deeper understanding of program experiences.

IV. Training Program Results

Because WFIT's approach to youth development is predicated on how adults interact with students and engage them in fitness related activities, this first outcomes section reviews the changes and benefits for adults who participate in WFIT training. Data from prior years show the effectiveness of WFIT training for its own staff. For example, 83% of the staff made improvements in their physical activity and/or nutrition practices in order to become role models of healthy habits.³ As one staff member described after participating in WFIT trainings, *"I gained the knowledge to make changes and [knowing I am] a role model to children helped me make the changes."* Another noted, *"Learning the qualities of physical activities was great. I've been learning alongside with my kids. They are always excited about checking their heart rates."*

With the support of two foundations, WFIT expanded its core staff training, Physical Activity LeadershipSM (PAL), to teachers and OST providers throughout LA County at no cost to the participants. A total of 835 teachers, after school staff and summer school staff attended WFIT's PAL training between November 2012 and June 2013.⁴ Trainings were held at 21 different host organizations. Of the trainees, the majority (89%) work with elementary and/or middle school students. Data from this year's training participants⁵ confirms that the WFIT training model works for others beyond the WFIT staff. The rest of this section summarizes this year's results from this larger group of PAL training participants according to the expected outcomes.

Outcome: Increased knowledge and competency in conducting quality physical activities

By the end of the session, the vast majority of the 835 participants agreed that the training helped to increase their knowledge, confidence and strategies for leading quality physical activities. Specifically:

- 97% increased their knowledge of a quality physical activity

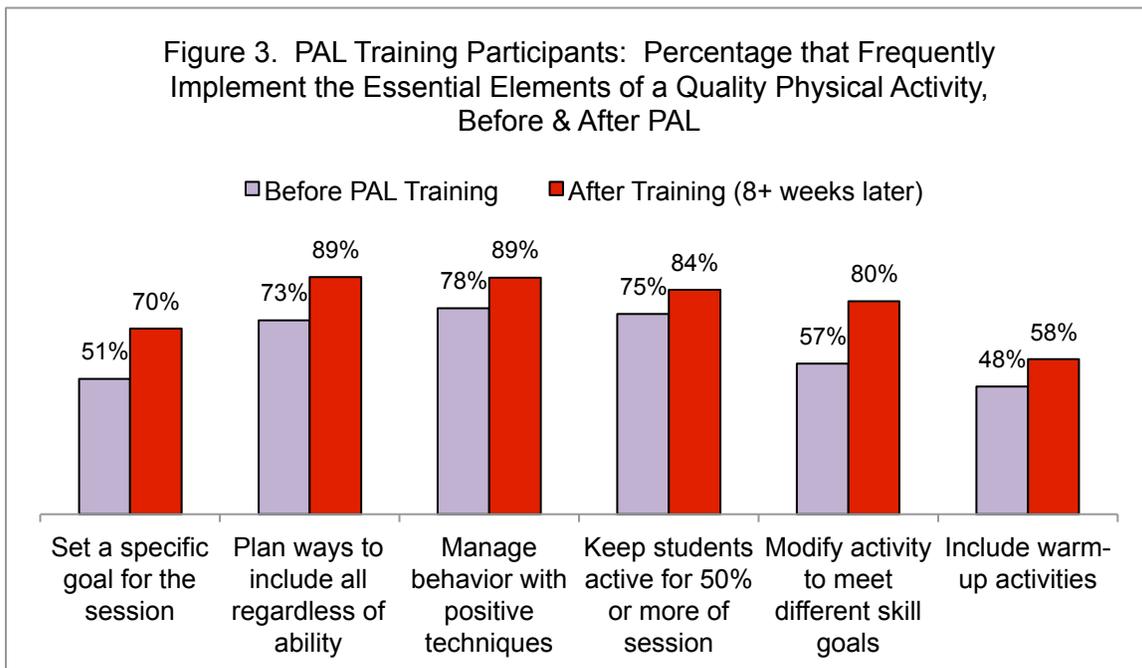
³ WFIT Team Fitness/Nutrition Survey Spring 2011, completed by 83 of 124 staff members.

⁴ This report includes data from PAL participants as of the end of June, however, the program continued through the August 2013. By then, a total of 29 agencies and 1,090 participants participated in PAL.

⁵ A survey was completed by all 835 participants on the day of their training. Follow-up surveys were then sent to 608 of the participants for which at least 8 weeks had passed since their training date (8 weeks had not yet passed for the other participants). One third of those completed that survey, however, this summary only includes the 173 that could be matched to the training date survey.

- 96% gained confidence in their physical activity planning skills and learned specific strategies and tactics to use with their students

When following up with participants after they had been back on their sites at least 8 weeks after the training, data show they improved in implementing the essential elements of a quality physical activity. Almost two-thirds (61% of 173 follow-up respondents) had made changes to how they engage students in physical activities. For example, before attending the training, about half (51%) would often or always set a specific goal to be achieved for a physical activity. After they attended PAL and had time to make changes to their approach, that percentage increased to 70%. Another element that a much greater percentage now implements is modifying an activity to meet the different development skill goals of their students. That increased from 57% of respondents before training to 80% at follow-up. (See Figure 3.)



Note: Only includes respondents with surveys from both timepoints. # respondents per item ranges from 164-166

Outcome: Provide more opportunities for students to engage in quality physical activity in order to improve the health and fitness of youth

By the end of the session, 96% of the 835 participants felt motivated to engage their students in physical activities more often. Combined, the PAL training participants work with more than 30,000 youth across LA County, which greatly amplifies WFIT’s potential to impact student engagement in physical activities.

Notably, follow-up data shows that participants do make changes when they return to their sites. For example, before training, 56% of participants engaged their students in physical activities at least 4 times a week, and that improved to 65% at eight-week follow-up. Almost two thirds also made specific changes to their physical activities as a result of attending PAL, with the most commonly described changes including: 1) Integrate core subjects into physical activities, primarily math, 2) Include / engage students at all levels, and 3) Clarify rules, directions and boundaries.

**Quotes from PAL Training Participants
on Changes They Made to Physical Activities for Students**

“Since the training session, I’ve purchased soft medium sized balls and have used them to teach time using a physical activity of throwing to count hours and bouncing to count out minutes. I’ve also taken the class out several times to play the game we tried during the training, and used the team ball tossing/catching game to practice counting by 5s, 10s and 20s.”

“I made the activities more engaging for those students who are too timid to participate and not as active in playing with a large group. ”

“I no longer have team captains. Instead, I number off the children either 1 or 2 so they can automatically be in a team without feeling left out or being last. ”

“I made it part of our routine to explain to students what our physical activity for the day will be while we are still in the classroom. I go over the rules of the activity and give students the opportunity to ask questions if they have any.”

Of those who made changes to their physical activities, the majority observed changes to their students’ willingness to be involved in physical activities (91%), and even to their fitness levels (75%). They attribute these student changes to changes in the frequency with which they engage students in physical activities, the changes they made to make sure all are engaged, and/or to the personal changes they made themselves. One participant even reiterated the WFIT role model philosophy when they said *“The best way to get students active is to lead by example. Adult behavior and motivation is key!”*

**Quotes from PAL Training Participants
on Students’ Physical Activity and Fitness Changes**

“With more exposure [to physical activities] students have become more fit and willing to participate as they notice their own improvement.”

“Students are engaged and look forward to the fitness activities. I think it is a result of the training on setting the structure up ahead of the activity and following the guidelines set in the training.”

“I have noticed that the students, endurance levels, along with my own, have increased.”

“Some of the times my students are tired and don’t want to be active, but what gets them motivated is seeing me participate in their activities and get engaged. In the long run we’re all students and we are all learning from each other.”

Outcome: Increase the number of adults who advocate for quality physical activity

Almost all (94% of the 835 training participants) increased their awareness of the importance of physical activity for students. After returning to their sites, two-thirds (66% of 173) had already formally shared some of what they had learned with their colleagues.

Other Program Results

Almost all (96%) of the training participants said they would recommend the PAL training to other organizations. They particularly liked the interactive, hands-on approach WFIT uses, which includes keeping participants active throughout the training and playing the suggested

games. Many of their comments about what they enjoyed most about the training included the word “fun” and reflected exactly what WFIT hopes to see them implement with students.

**Quotes from PAL Training Participants
on What They Enjoyed Most about the WFIT Training**

“I liked playing as a group and practicing the techniques we were learning during the training.”

“It was a fun training, we were engaged in all activities.”

“I enjoyed how interactive and intentional everything was.”

“I liked how everyone was always participating in every game, no one was left out.”

“I liked playing the games in a non-critical atmosphere.”

“I had fun and exercised at the same time.”

“There was great energy from both trainers. I was never bored and always engaged.”

The most common suggestion for improvement was to provide more trainings or lengthen the training, particularly in order to provide more games and activity examples. Other suggestions also related to ways to provide even more information than was possible in a half-day training, such as handouts and/or a web site page with more games and activities and links to other game resources.

V. Youth Participant Outcomes

During the 2012-13 year, WFIT provided its after school program at 11 LAUSD schools through a sub-contract agreement with the district’s Beyond the Bell office. (See Figure 4.) All 11 sites are Title I schools, which indicates the majority of students are low-income. The student population at all of the schools is primarily Hispanic, ranging from 60% to 95% across sites.

Figure 4. WFIT After School Sites

Elementary	Middle	High
Frank Del Olmo	Virgil	Belmont Senior High [^]
Norwood Street	Patrick Henry	Miguel Contreras Learning Complex
Betty Plasencia	Salvador Castro	Santee Education Complex
	Eagle Rock [*]	Eagle Rock High School [*]

^{*} Part of the same school

[^] Also includes students from LA Teacher Prep

WFIT’s after school program is a voluntary program, which means attendance expectations have been established but a student can attend as often and as long as they or their family chooses. As a result, WFIT served more than 7,000 students during 2012-13 but more than half of those attended less than a month (i.e., fewer than 20 days). This is more typical at the middle and high school level because students can choose to attend for only as long as a specific activity runs or may drop by an activity a couple of times and choose not to continue. It

is far less common at the elementary school level, which has a more structured schedule and requires parents to sign their child out. (See Figure 5.)

Figure 5. WFIT Participant Attendees, by Site Type

WFIT Site Type	Total Students Attended in 2012-13	Of Total Attended, # by Category	
		Short-term Participants (1-19 days)	Regular Participants (20+ days)
Elementary school	594	77	517
Middle school	2,320	1,255	1,065
High school	4,557	2,972	1,585
All WFIT Sites	7,471	4,304	3,167

Because the WFIT model is intentional, students need to be engaged in the program for longer than a month before it is realistic to expect that the program outcomes will be seen. WFIT served 3,167 students for at least 20 days in 2012-13. This group of students is referred to in this report as “regular participants.” On average, regular elementary school participants attended the program for 124 days, equivalent to about three-quarters of the school year. Because the middle and high school programs are more permissive, the average days attended by regular participants is lower than found at elementary school. On average, regular middle school participants attended 68 days and regular high school participants attended 52 days.

In addition to the after school program, elementary students receive a formal nutrition program series and high school students are eligible to participate in the Mentors in MotionSM (MiM) leadership program (See Section II for a description of each). This section presents data from all three types of participants – after school, nutrition participants and MiM participants – to identify WFIT’s progress in reaching its direct outcomes for regular attendees, which include:

- Youth are physically active
- Youth make healthy food and beverage choices
- Youth build social-emotional wellness skills
- Youth improve academically

A. Youth are physically active

Evaluation of WFIT participants’ physical activity is based on not only the occurrence of physical activity but also on the quality in terms of whether it was: recent and regular, moderate to vigorous, and self-motivated for the majority of participants. While national trends show that children become less active as they become teens, this is not the case for WFIT participants.

Result 1: The majority of participants are physically active.

- Research shows physical activity decreases in the teens. At WFIT, 54% of MS & HS students engaged in moderate-vigorous activity at least 5 of 7 days – compared to 8% of teens nationally.⁶

⁶ Trust for America’s Health. (2011). *F as in Fat: How Obesity Threatens America’s Future*. Washington D.C.: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

- 86% of elementary participants report they engaged in physical activities the day prior to the survey, a much higher percentage than the 59% watching television or playing on the computer.
- WFIT starts teaching children how to know if they are doing moderate-vigorous activity in elementary school. At the end of the year, 76% of ES participants knew “check your heart rate” was how to know.

Result 2: Students who participate in physical activities that use WFIT’s quality approach are more willing and motivated to be active. This is true for WFIT after school participants and for students served by teachers or other OST programs that attended WFIT’s PAL training.

- 77% of participants say WFIT helped them feel motivated to do physical activities. This is the case even for students who have enrichment priorities other than sports. For example, one of the 7th graders said, *“Exercising more can help your lung capacity which can help you sing.”* Many of them also talk about the health benefits they learned about through WFIT, such as *“I’ve learned that you need physical activity to be physically and mentally healthy”* and *“I learned that doing exercise is important for our health.”*
- 91% of teachers and staff from other organizations that changed their physical activity leadership after WFIT training saw changes in their students’ willingness to participate in physical activities. As one PAL training participant described after making activities more inclusive, *“I find that they are more engaged in the games because they know that they won’t be out of the game for long.”*

B. Youth make healthy food and beverage choices

Part of WFIT’s core messages about healthy nutrition habits is: consume living foods (i.e., fruits and vegetables) and drink water often and soda rarely. The staff also teaches and mentors the students about WFIT’s holistic concept of health. This includes those specific nutrition messages as well as an emphasis on the other areas that impact a person’s energy, including exercise, rest and social relationships.

Result 1: Participants choose water more often than soda.

- When asked about how much water and soda they drank the day prior to the survey, 83% of participants chose water more often than soda. On average, participants drank soda less than once and water three or more times.
- 80% of participants also say WFIT helped them to drink water more often. A few of the fifth grade nutrition program participants describe learning about the importance of water over soda and changing their behaviors:

“I learned I need to eat fruits, and I don’t drink coca cola.”

“I learned to eat healthy food, exercise every day, and drink water everyday.”

“You should look at food labels to see how much sugar does something have, like soda.”

Result 2: Participants are choosing fruit and healthy snacks.

- 67% of participants ate fruit at least twice the day prior to the survey, and that same percentage indicate WFIT helped them to eat more fruit.
- 76% of the elementary participants say they like to eat healthy snacks, and accurately identified a healthy snack when they described their favorite. Almost all identified fruit,

while other also identified vegetables and protein-based items. Some of their favorite healthy snack comments include:

"I eat banana with peanut butter."

"Fruits and yogurt."

"I like cheese, vegetable salad, and fruit. Also pineapple."

"My favorite snack is oranges because they taste good."

"A salad with cucumber and jicama."

Result 3: The nutrition program helps students gain knowledge to help them make healthier choices.

- Attendees in the 5th grade nutrition class significantly increased their knowledge of healthy foods. At the start of the year, only 33% could define the term "living foods." At the end, 92% were able to say what it meant and 71% could give an example.
- The nutrition program also teaches three key things to look at on a food label to determine if it is a healthy choice or not. At the beginning, just 14% of the 5th graders could identify one of these elements, and by the end, 88% could pinpoint at least one.
- Some of the nutrition participant comments on what they learned or changed include:

"I learned that if I don't eat healthy I won't have all the vitamins I need."

"Now I know what foods have in them and how they help me."

"I didn't like to eat vegetables like broccoli asparagus and spinach but now I eat it."

"I used to not care about what I eat and now I know how to read food labels."

"When we go to the store, I always look at the ingredients."

C. Youth build social-emotional wellness skills

As mentioned, the WFIT understanding of health is holistic. It is not just about food choices and exercise, but also about the social and emotional skills youth need to make positive choices. Self-efficacy is based on a sustained feeling of confidence and worth. It is more than *feeling* able, it is also *being* able to do the things that lead to personal achievement, such as knowing how to set goals, solve problems and relate well with peers, family and other adults. Because social-emotional wellness becomes critically at risk during the pre-teen and teen years, this section focuses mostly on middle (MS) and high school (HS) participants, including MiM teens.

Result 1: MS & HS participants improve their relationships with peers.

- When identifying what was helpful about being in WFIT, middle and high school participants most often identified *get along better with other students* from a list of 12 potential ways (88% HS, 79% MS).
- Similarly, two of the top three ways in which MiM graduates say the program helped them was in gaining teamwork skills and skills for working with other students of all ages. One of the MiM Students, now attending college at UC Santa Barbara, said, *"I learned how to talk to kids. I am currently volunteering tutoring elementary kids. MiM inspired me to it. I know how much having a role model helped me and I want to become that to them."*

Result 2: MS & HS participants improve their sense of self-efficacy – the feeling that they can and have the skills to succeed at what they want to achieve in school or life.

- More than 80% of HS school participants and three-quarters of middle school participants say WFIT involvement helped them to: *feel more confident, keep trying even when something is hard, and think about goals for the future.* These are all key components of self-efficacy, which refers to a person's belief that they can do what it takes to reach their goals. These skills are also key to preparing for graduation and college as well as a future career.
- Similarly, one of the top three ways in which MiM participants say the program helped them was in developing a sense of confidence and belief in themselves. One of the graduates, now attending UCLA, said, *"MiM taught me to lead and leave my comfort zone. The success strategies apply to daily life. I have the strength to study abroad and leave my comfort zone."*

Result 3: Elementary participants gain a better understanding of wellness and share it with others.

- Among the 5th grade nutrition class students, the holistic understanding of health reached almost all. Participants learned about the four key "energy regulators" – food, activity, sleep and relationships. At the start of this year, only 29% of the 5th graders could identify these four regulators. By the end of the year and after repeated discussion in nutrition sessions and feedback from coaches, 92% could name all four.
- 68% of elementary participants shared what they learned about being healthy with family or friends. For example, one student said, *"I eat healthier because I told my dad what to eat healthy and now we have healthy dessert"* and another said, *"The after school program has taught me to be healthy and show other people to be healthy too."*

Result 4: Students who participate in physical activities that use WFIT's quality approach also begin to improve their relationship and behavior skills.

- 88% of the PAL trainees who responded at 8-week follow-up said they had seen changes in their students' behavior or focus as a result of the changes they had implemented in how they lead physical activities.

**Quotes from PAL Training Participants
on Changes They Observed for Students
after Implementing WFIT Approaches to Quality Physical Activities**

"I noticed that students' behavior changed. Everyone tries to help each other to complete their task."

"Because the students are constantly being involved in the activity regardless of how key their position is, it keeps them busy, moving, and focused. Due to the change, there are less behavioral issues during our fitness times."

"The students are more willing to encourage each other as well."

"I noticed that my children are always excited to play games since they will automatically be put into teams rather than feeling nervous and anxious waiting to be picked. The activities run a lot smoother and my children are engaged."

"Through incorporating the classroom yoga, my students are better able to focus."

D. Youth improve academically

National research shows that physically active youth achieve better school grades and test scores than those who are not.⁷ In alignment with this research, WFIT participants continue to improve academically even while being physically active. Importantly, the vast majority of WFIT participants come from low-income, Hispanic families and are considered to be one of the student groups at highest risk for school failure.

Result 1: Participants improve their school performance.

- 71% of participants say being involved in WFIT helped them to get their homework finished on time.
- 81% of the MS & HS participants say participating helped them to get better grades in school. Students who participated in physical activities were more likely to feel a positive impact on their grades than were those in any of the other types of activities.
- A series of findings from prior year evaluations⁸ indicates that children and teens experience academic improvements while participating in WFIT programs.
 - The more often high school students attended the after school sports programs, the more they improved their grade point average from one year to the next.
 - Teens in the MiM program were significantly more likely to improve their grade point average than a demographically matched group of teens who did not participate – 64% of WFIT teens improved versus 47% of the non-participants.
 - 4th and 5th grade students with high levels of after school program participation tended to perform better on the end-year standardized math tests than expected for similar students at their school.
 - The percentage of high school participants that reached the proficient/advanced level on the English Language Arts standardized test was higher than the percentage of non-participants, and the percentage proficient/advanced improved more over time for participants than it did for non-participants.
 - The graduation rate was higher for seniors who participated in the after school program at least one of their four school years than it was for seniors who never participated while in high school.
- 88% of teachers and staff from other organizations that changed their physical activity leadership after WFIT training saw changes in their students' behavior and focus.

Result 2: Mentors in Motion (MiM) teen participants are more likely to finish high school and go on to college than is typically expected given that the majority are Hispanic and live in low-income, high-risk communities.

- 96% of surveyed MiM teens completed high school (91% graduated plus 5% completed their GED). This is much higher than the rate for LAUSD, which was 61% in 2011.
- 76% of the surveyed MiM teens are currently enrolled in or completed community college or a four-year college. This is higher than the rate for Hispanic students

⁷ U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2010). *The Association between School-based Physical Activity, Including Physical Education, and Academic Performance*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

⁸ WFIT Academic Results Summary, January 2012

nationally, with a recent study finding that 69% of Hispanic high school graduates enrolled in college.⁹

- MiM participants identify many different skills they gained from their program experience, all of which directly impact their confidence to continue their education beyond high school and their skills to succeed once there. This list includes:
 - Teamwork
 - Work with students (of all ages)
 - Self-Confidence
 - Professional job skills (work experience, resumes, appearance)
 - Leadership
 - Initiative and Goal-Setting
 - Responsibility / Commitment / Persistence
- Most of the MiM students describe learning a combination of several of these skills, along with learning to be healthy. They also mention they still volunteer and try to be positive role models. Many of them have the potential and interest to become tomorrow's health and education professionals.

Quotes from MiM Graduates on Becoming Mentors

"I learned to be healthy and tutor and share that knowledge with others."

-- MiM Graduate now attending Cal State LA

"I learned the value of providing guidance to young students."

-- MiM Graduate now attending Pasadena Community College

"Don't give up on your dreams and help and motivate others."

-- MiM Graduate now attending Smith College

"I learned how to mentor others and have continued to do that. WFIT changed my perspective - it's a great program!"

-- MiM Graduate now attending Cal State Northridge

VI. Summary

This report shows clear signs that WFIT programs are being implemented as planned and that participants gain the intended skills from them. It provides input from almost 2,000 adult, teen and child participants that identifies WFIT programs are facilitating knowledge and behavior changes necessary for being healthy and successful. WFIT's belief is that these personal changes help create shifts in the health, fitness and success of the wider community. This report, plus research being done on a national level, shows that physical activity is an essential element of both health and academic success. Yet, physical education and physical activity continue to be diminished and isolated from people's everyday experiences. The WFIT approach is increasingly important to consider because it integrates physical activity with everyday experiences in safe and fun ways for all abilities.

⁹ Fry, R., & Taylor, P. (2013). Hispanic High School Graduates Pass Whites in Rate of College Enrollment. Washington D.C.: Pew Hispanic Research Center.