



July 18, 2007

To: CEI Funders and Board Members

Re: CEI Final Program Report for 2006-2007:

As Executive Director of Children's Empowerment, Inc. (CEI), I am pleased to provide the enclosed Final Report for our programs in Daly City, California for the 2006-2007 school year. CEI is an independent non-profit working closely with the Jefferson Union High School District and the Jefferson Elementary School District to provide in-school and after-school academic assistance to underachieving students. The programs described are financed by the generous grant awards of a number of local Foundations and are directed by CEI.

The enclosed report covers our activities from August 2006 to July 2007. This year's activities included our School Within a School (SWAS) program for 120 at-risk freshmen and sophomore students, our after-school Grad Zone and Learning Zone centers for students at Jefferson High School and our after-school Learning Center at Pollicita Middle School for 6, 7 and 8th grade students. A number of our funders have requested we shorten our reports, so this year I have attempted to be as concise as possible. I hope most of you will agree with this shorter format.

Without your assistance, over 500 students would not have had the opportunity to experience and benefit from our successes this past year. If I can answer any questions or provide any additional information, please feel free to contact me anytime. We continue to appreciate your support and interest in our efforts.

Sincerely,

Spencer Holeman  
Executive Director

## Children's Empowerment, Inc. 2007 Annual Report

Children's Empowerment, Inc. (CEI) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation that provides in-school and after-school academic programs to at-risk middle and high school grade students in Daly City, California. Founded in 1999, we have been working in Daly City since 2000 in partnership with local school districts. CEI focuses on students in underperforming Daly City public schools who want to achieve but face formidable economic, cultural, and linguistic barriers to their educational success.

### CEI's Program Activities

CEI's programs provide a continuum of support for local at-risk students at Jefferson High School and at Pollicita Middle School, which is Jefferson's principal feeder school. In addition, CEI provides a wealth of horizon-expanding enrichment activities for students and financial support for students who cannot afford the fees for college entrance exams. CEI's program activities currently include the following components:

Program	Program Type/Beneficiaries
(1) Pollicita Learning Center	After-School Program for Pollicita Middle School Students
(2) Jefferson Learning Center	After-School Program for Jefferson High School Students (especially those experiencing difficulty passing the California High School Exit Exam [CAHSEE])
(3) School Within A School (SWAS)	Smaller Learning Community Program for Jefferson High School Students
(4) Club Jeff	Physical Education and Healthy Living Program for Jefferson High School and Pollicita Middle School Students

### This Year's Program Highlights

This report contains details of what each CEI program has achieved during the recently-concluded 2006-07 academic year follow below, but the following are this year's exceptional program accomplishments:

- The Pollicita Learning Center Program achieved across the board increases in students' performance, in all three grades and in both math and English language skills.
- Thanks to their work in the Jefferson Learning Center's Grad Zone, 18 students (including 3 special ed students) passed the CAHSEE this year who had previously failed to do so.
- Our sophomore SWAS students passed both the English language arts and the math parts of the CAHSEE this year at greater rates than their non-SWAS classmates at Jefferson and three other high schools in the district.
- Sophomore SWAS students achieved an average Grade Point Average (GPA) higher than the average for all students in all grade levels at Jefferson.
- Equipped with \$115,000 of new gym equipment, Club Jeff opened in March 2007, and has already served 115 students.
- All of our programs *without exception* have shown increases in student performance on standardized skills tests, GPAs, or the CAHSEE.

## 1. Learning Center Program Thomas R. Pollicita Middle School, Daly City, California

**Program Description.** This was the third year of operations for CEI's Learning Center at the Thomas R. Pollicita Middle School in Daly City. The Learning Center offers underperforming students the only place they have after school that is a safe environment in which to learn. Besides tutoring, CEI challenges these younger students with educational games that help develop their self-esteem and their ability to work with others. CEI also provides a variety of healthy sandwiches, snacks, fruits and drinks each day. The tutoring program at Pollicita is carried out by a team of advanced placement and honors students from Jefferson High School, the destination school for most of the Pollicita Middle School students. All of them are themselves ethnic minority students who have successfully overcome adversity in their pursuit of academic accomplishment.

**Program Goals.** The goals of this program are to provide one-on-one and group tutoring to at least 50 students per day and to provide all participants with a healthy, after-school snack.

**Recent Program Developments.** The program served 110 unduplicated students this academic year, approximately 50 of whom were regular attendees. This year, we have stepped up our assessment of students' progress, using the Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) form G-6 for English language skills and a grade-appropriate math pretest that includes arithmetic problems, basic geometry, fractions, and basic statistic problems, for mathematical skills. The test scores of the students who took these tests in the beginning and at the end of this school year have shown the following percentages of students who have improved:

Test	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	7 <sup>th</sup> Grade	8 <sup>th</sup> Grade
Math	25%	33%	20%
English	25%	33%	60%

As can be seen, there were impressive improvements across the board, both in math and English language skills. Particularly notable was the high percentage (60%) of eighth graders in the program who improved in English. This is significant because all of these students come from homes where English is spoken by their parents as a second language or not at all.

## 2. Learning Center Program Jefferson High School, Daly City, California

**Program Description.** This was the fourth year of operations for CEI's after school Learning Center at Jefferson High School. The mission of the center is to assist all of Jefferson High School's students in all academic classes with homework assistance, tutoring, a place to study and all the support needed in order for students to succeed in the classroom. Jefferson High School has provided the school's cafeteria for the operation of the Learning Center. The room is very large with sufficient seating for students to spread out and sufficient lighting for studying. The center was open from Monday through Thursday, from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m., providing a good, safe environment to learn and offering a variety of healthful sandwiches, snacks, fruit and drinks each day at no cost to the students. We also offered the Grad Zone in Jefferson's library, where we provide specially tailored assistance to students who are experiencing difficulty passing the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE).

**Program Goals.** The overall goals for the Learning Center at Jefferson High School are to provide one-on-one and group tutoring to at least 50 students per day and a healthy after-school snack to all participants. For the CAHSEE students, in the Grad Zone, our goal is to serve at least 50 juniors and seniors who have not yet passed one or both parts of the state test.

**Recent Program Developments.** The Learning Center and the Grad Zone worked together this year with Jefferson's administrators and classroom teachers to provide a supportive and resource-rich environment in which students can study for their classes, review material in preparation for standardized tests, and receive support and encouragement after school. The average daily attendance, 63 students, exceeded the program's attendance goal this year. Twenty-five students who experienced difficulty passing the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) received special assistance in the Grad Zone. The CAHSEE students worked on 25 computers equipped with *Plato*, an award-winning self-instructional software program designed to help students pass high school exit exams. CEI tutors have provided one-on-one assistance. Thanks to their work in the Grad Zone, 18 students (juniors and seniors) passed the CAHSEE this year. Typically, special education students have a very hard time passing CAHSEE and graduating on time. The Grad Zone made a special effort to help them. Three special education students passed the CAHSEE and five graduated this year thanks to assistance from the Grad Zone's tutors.

### 3. School Within a School (SWAS) Program Jefferson High School, Daly City, California

**Program Description.** The 2006-07 school year was the fifth time the SWAS program has been offered at Jefferson. The program focused on equipping 40 freshman and 80 sophomore students with the personal and academic tools they need to successfully complete high school and pursue higher education. To do this, SWAS supported small teams of teachers who provide personalized but challenging instruction in the core curriculum (English, mathematics, social studies, and science) in small classes (maximum of 20 students each) four times daily throughout the school year.

**Program Goals.** Our goals for the SWAS program are enrolling 40 freshman and 80 sophomore students who are high risk for failing to graduate from high school, providing reduced-size classes in four core subjects, after school homework assistance, and team building and enrichment services throughout the year.

**Overall Program Accomplishments.** An impressive number of SWAS students increased their Grade Point Averages (GPAs) in both math (57% improved) and English (50% improved) this year. We had planned to fold our SWAS programs into the new, partially federally-funded Jefferson High School Smaller Learning Community Program next year, but Jefferson Union High School District (JUHSD) superintendent Michael Crilly has asked us to continue Sophomore SWAS for at least one more year because the students' performance has helped the school improve its state performance ranking from a 2 to a 3 this year.

**Recent Program Developments for Our SWAS Freshmen.** The 2006-2007 school year marks the second year of the expansion of our SWAS program into the freshmen class. A group of 42 freshmen were selected to participate, some randomly selected and others placed in the program based on their previous participation in CEI's Learning Center Program at Pollicita Middle School. It's worthwhile to note that the overall reading level of the 289 freshmen students entering Jefferson High School was pretty low: on average, they tested in August 2006 as reading at a level appropriate for students in the second month of the seventh grade. Our SWAS freshmen tested at an even lower level: the seventh month of the sixth grade. That means they started off with us in SWAS this year reading more than two years below appropriate levels for freshmen in our state. Although progress was slow and uneven, we are happy to report that our freshmen SWAS students increased their GPAs from an average of 1.63 in September 2006 to 1.99 at the end of the academic year in 2007 (unlike other Jefferson students, SWAS students do not receive credit for grades of D). The success we had this year was due to the reduced class size we were able to offer students, individual interventions, rigorous coursework, our outreach efforts to parents, and frequent parent conferences. We had well-attended drop in nights for parents every grading period. Students whose parents made the effort to come in seemed to stay more involved in their school work and take it more seriously. We had many notable individual successes. One student who came to us completely turned off and refusing to do work turned around and became enthusiastically involved in his classes. Another special education

student (15% of the SWAS freshmen are special ed) was able to pass most of his classes due to an individual intervention and learned some self-discipline in the mean time. Even students who did not improve had to recognize their shortcomings and face the difficult fact that life in high school is much more serious than it was for them in middle school. The freshmen SWAS students also enjoyed the benefits of a visit to San Francisco State University, the Ropes Course, cultural and artistic tours such as the Precita Eyes Mural tour in San Francisco's Mission District, and a visit to a bookstore in downtown San Francisco.

**Recent Program Developments for Our SWAS Sophomores.** This year, the sophomore SWAS program was doubled in size, expanding to serve 80 sophomores working with 8 different teachers. There are two sophomore cohorts grouped by their math and science placements. Our sophomore SWAS students increased their GPAs from an average of 1.75 in September 2006 to 2.19 at the end of the academic year in 2007, thus besting the average GPA for all students in all grade levels at Jefferson, which was 2.17. But the achievement of our sophomore SWAS students of which we are most proud was their ability to pass both the English language arts (ELA) and the math parts of the CAHSEE this year at greater rates than their non-SWAS classmates as shown in the table below:

	<b>Passing ELA</b>	<b>Passing Math</b>	<b>Passing Both Tests</b>
SWAS Students	60 (88%)	52 (75%)	48 (71%)
Other Jefferson Students	169 (71%)	173 (72%)	148 (62%)

Jefferson's sophomore SWAS students also outperformed sophomores in two other high schools in JUHSD, Oceana and Westmoor, that have smaller numbers of minority and more middle-income students, as well as those in Thornton High School, the district's alternative school. After these results were announced, sophomore SWAS students were walking around school with their chests bursting with pride . . . and with every good reason!

Because of the close relationships between SWAS students and their teachers, several students were discovered to have previously unidentified learning disabilities. SWAS has enabled these students to succeed with smaller classes, tutoring, and consistency, and has succeeded in moving these students into the special education programs at Jefferson so that they will continue to thrive and get assistance when they move back as juniors into the regular school program. At-risk students like ours also require support that goes outside the classroom, since left unaddressed, non-academic problems inevitably have a negative effect on academic performance. We were able to provide critical assistance to several students in crisis this year, including conflict mediation, family referrals to Child Protective Services, and student referrals to counseling services, anger management, and drug and alcohol treatment.

Finally, like their freshmen SWAS counterparts, sophomore SWAS students benefited this past academic year from a range of enrichment activities including bookstore and college campus visits, the Ropes Course, and the Bay to Breakers Race.

#### 4. Club Jeff Jefferson High School, Daly City, California

**Program Description.** CEI's Club Jeff is a U.S. Department of Education-funded Carol M. White Physical Education Program at Jefferson High School. These grants are intended to help students make progress toward meeting state standards for physical fitness through healthy exercise and nutrition education. Club Jeff operates during the school year from 3:15 to 5:15 p.m., Mondays through Thursdays. In addition to making a substantial contribution to the health and physical fitness of participating Jefferson High School students as well as some students from Pollicita Middle School, the grant has made it possible for the school district to purchase modern gymnastic, cardio, weight room, swimming, tennis, and yoga equipment for the first time in many years.

**Program Goals.** Club Jeff's program's goals are to serve 200 youth per year on a gender equitable basis, assure that at least 75% of the youth served will meet all ten state fitness standards, and that there will be a 20% increase over baseline performance for certain specific fitness measures.

**Recent Program Developments.** Because there was a need for some remodeling of facilities after new equipment was purchased and installed, Club Jeff's grand opening was delayed till March 6, 2007. Even though this was relatively late in the school year, 115 have been served. On a pro-rated basis, we are actually running ahead of our target number of 200 students. Participating students met requirements in 7 out of 10 state fitness standards, and achieved an average personal improvement of 20% on specific fitness benchmarks.

### **Enrichment Activities**

In addition to what are by now our "routine" extracurricular activities like bookstore visits, Ropes Courses, and reward dinners for exceptional student performance, CEI sponsored a number of exciting, special events this past academic year. In conjunction with the Close Up Foundation, CEI sent a Jefferson honors student to Washington, D.C. to visit the U.S. Congress, the Smithsonian Institution, and meet his elected representatives. Another honors student who participated in a Sojourner Civil Rights Tour of sites in the southern United States associated with the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. In May 2007, CEI sponsored 15 SWAS students on a trip to Los Angeles where they visited the Simon Wiesenthal Center's Museum of Tolerance. We also offered a number of activities this year designed to get students thinking seriously about higher education. Campus visits were offered to Stanford University, University of California Santa Cruz, San Francisco State University, and Skyline Junior College. All honors and advanced placement (AP) students in Jefferson's freshmen, sophomore and junior classes visited at least one University of California campus as part of this program. The schools visited were U.C. Berkeley, U.C. Davis and U.C. Santa Cruz. Finally, CEI paid \$555 for honors students and \$1,155 for SWAS sophomores to take the PSAT and \$555 for honors students to take the SAT. These students would otherwise not have been able to afford to pay for these tests.

### **Conclusion**

This was an exciting year for CEI, its students, and their families, with satisfying program outcomes. We are looking forward to working with school district officials, teachers, and in particular, Mr. Lou Silberman, the new incoming principal of Jefferson High School, as the Smaller Learning Community model (based on our SWAS program) begins to be implemented there. Next year will also see the institution of a comprehensive after-school program at Jefferson High offered by a collaborative of community based organizations led by CEI. CEI would like to thank you for your continued interest in an invaluable financial support of our programs. Thank you!

Spencer Holeman  
Executive Director  
Children's Empowerment, Inc.