



In a time of year where football is in full swing and basketball is preparing to tip off, the traditional Chinese sport of dragon boat racing is not a common activity for most students. However, students from 12 CIS sponsored programs at Pasadena ISD schools; San Jacinto Intermediate, Miller Intermediate, Southmore Intermediate, Jackson Intermediate, Queens Intermediate, Pasadena Memorial High, Pasadena High and Alvin ISD schools; Fairview Junior High, Harby Junior High, Manvel Junior High, and also Galena Park Cunningham Middle and a charter school, the RYSS Tejano Center spent the past month training in preparation to compete at the 7th Annual Gulf Coast International Dragon Boat Regatta and Festival in Sugar Land on Saturday October 16, 2010.

The young paddlers' hard work paid off as Southmore Intermediate returned home with a 3rd place finish, Manvel Junior High took 2nd place and San Jacinto Intermediate captured the U14 championship. In the U18 category, both Pasadena Memorial High and Pasadena High improved their times with each heat and placed in the top five.

The Communities In Schools and CIS 21st Century - ACE staff organized, sponsored and coached the young paddlers as they experienced a traditional Chinese sport with competitions dating back over 2000 years. A typical dragon boat measures 40 feet in length, 4 feet in width and on

average weighs 500 pounds. Each boat usually carries 20 paddlers, 1 drummer and 1 steersperson down a course of approximately 1000 meters.

The key to successful dragon boat racing is synchronicity. The teams spent multiple hours in the weeks leading up to the competition learning how to work together effectively. Each team traveled to Sugar Land for a brief training session on the water.

Dragon Boat racing was just a small part of the experience for the students at the festival. The Communities In Schools and CIS 21st Century - ACE programs at each campus utilized this opportunity to offer their students a chance to enrich their academic environment as they learned about dragon boat racing and Asian culture at the festival. When the teams were not racing, they participated in multiple demonstrations including dragon dancing, kung fu, belly dancing and Okinawa drums.