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## BUILDING THE EVIDENCE BASE for Creating Healthy Schools and Healthy Students

GENYOUth's flagship program, Fuel Up to Play 60 has been the subject of peer-reviewed articles that examine the program's approach and impact in a variety of contexts, as highlighted below.

### 1) Flexible program design and student engagement matter

Student-level eating and physical activity results from a Fuel Up to Play 60 pretest/posttest with about 30,000 students in 72 middle schools, during the 2009-2010 school year, in diverse areas across the U.S. were reported in ***International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity***.

#### Key takeaways:

- A low-intensity, flexible program like Fuel Up to Play 60 – which allows schools to customize the program based on their strengths, needs, interests, resources, and values – can lead to small but significant improvements in students' healthy eating and physical activity behaviors.
- Student awareness of and engagement in the program is a key factor linked to positive behavioral changes.
- Results are consistent in various school settings and with diverse student populations.

See: Hoelscher, DM, et al. (2016). Evaluation of a student participatory, low-intensity program to improve school wellness environment and students' eating and activity behaviors. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, 13:59. DOI: [10.1186/s12966-016-0379-5](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12966-016-0379-5). Available [here](#).

### 2) Adaptability and alignment are keys to success

An observational study examining barriers and facilitators of Fuel Up to Play 60 implementation was conducted over 20 months in four schools in metropolitan Denver, as reported in ***Health Behavior & Policy Review***.

#### Key takeaways:

- Fuel Up to Play 60's adaptability helps schools implement the program and meet their wellness policy goals.
- The student-centric approach of Fuel Up to Play 60 is a major strength and facilitator of program adoption, implementation, and maintenance.
- Fuel Up to Play 60 can also serve as a platform for implementing other school-based health-promoting programs.

See: Beck J, et al. (2015). Implications of Facilitators and Barriers to Implementing Fuel Up to Play 60. *Health Behavior & Policy Review*, 2(5), 388-400. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14485/HBPR.2.5.7>. Available [here](#).

### 3) Program leader, student involvement, and external support improve program implementation

A cross-sectional study using a survey instrument to assess adoption and implementation of Fuel Up to Play 60 “Plays” among school stakeholders nationwide (during two school years 2010-11 and 2011-12) was reported in *Health Behavior & Policy Review*.

#### Key takeaways:

- Several characteristics of Fuel Up to Play 60 were associated with implementing a Healthy Eating or Physical Activity Play (best-practice action strategy), including schools that: have a registered adult Program Advisor involved with the program; complete a school wellness investigation (environmental assessment tool based on the CDC School Health Index); receive a grant; and have other wellness initiatives.
- Additionally, schools are more likely to implement Plays when: a high percentage (>50%) of its students are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals; and more than half of its students are involved with the Fuel Up to Play 60 program.
- Taken together, these may represent “best practices” for schools working toward changing their environments and are supported by theoretical constructs of institutional change.

See: Graziose M, et al. (2017). Adoption and Implementation of the Fuel Up to Play 60 Program in Schools. *Health Behavior & Policy Review*, 4(5), 436-445.

### 4) Student aerobic capacity and BMI improve in NFL Play 60/Fuel Up to Play 60 schools

Data from the NFL Play 60 Fitnessgram Partnership Project, a large participatory research project with K-12 children and adolescents implemented under real-world school conditions, calculated the percentage of students who met the Healthy Fitness Zone over a four-year period, as reported in *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*.

#### Key takeaways:

- NFL Play 60/Fuel Up to Play 60 physical activity promotion programs help improve youth aerobic capacity and potentially help to reverse the prevalence of overweight and obesity.
- Annual improvement in aerobic capacity among girls and boys was significantly greater in schools that participated in NFL Play 60/Fuel Up to Play 60 programming.
- Annual improvements in BMI Healthy Fitness Zone achievement was also higher in girls and boys from schools that participated in NFL Play 60/Fuel Up to Play 60 programming versus non-participating schools.
- Schools that implemented NFL Play 60/Fuel Up to Play 60 programming for the entire four-year study period tended to have better improvements in student aerobic capacity than schools enrolled for only two or three years.

See: Bai Y, et al. (2017). The Longitudinal Impact of NFL Play 60 Programming on Youth Aerobic Capacity and BMI. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 52(3), 311-323. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2016.10.009>. Available [here](#).

## 5) Youth empowerment helps foster sustainable health reforms

Qualitative research in a U.S. elementary school implementing a youth-led health reform program\* over the course of an academic year was reported in **Health Education Journal**.

\*Although a specific program is not named in the paper, the study was based on an active Fuel Up to Play 60 school.

### Key takeaways:

- Student-led health reform processes can significantly impact students' life and leadership skills and health behaviors.
- Youth-led health programs may encourage students to feel empowered and act as health role models as a way of reaching the student body in a more acceptable way than conventional adult-led programs.
- Providing students with the tools to create change in their environment can lead to progressive reforms – and may increase sustainability of changes because of student buy-in.

See: Gutuskey L, et al. (2016). The role and impact of student leadership on participants in a healthy eating and physical activity programme. *Health Education Journal*, 75(1), 27-37. Available [here](#).

## 6) Fuel Up to Play 60 mini-grants help shift physical activity practices in schools

Pre/post data from schools (from October 2013 to August 2014) that received mini-grants through Fuel Up to Play 60 and ChildObesity180 (CO180) – two partners in the Let's Move! Active Schools initiative (now known as Active Schools) – is the basis of this report in **Preventive Medicine**, which looks at the impact of funding on physical activity and physical education practices in U.S. schools.

### Key takeaways:

- Schools receiving a Fuel Up to Play 60 grant reported statistically significant improvements from pre to post testing across five practices for physical education (PE) and physical activity (PA). Schools across both grant programs (FUTP 60 and CO180) reported the largest increases for promoting PA via messaging, implementing classroom PA breaks, and providing PA before and after school.
- Schools can shift physical activity practices over the course of a school year.
- Offering small grants to support school adoption of PA practices appears feasible.
- Programmatic changes may be faster to implement than policy or scheduling shifts.

See: Miller GF, et al. (2018). Evaluation of Let's Move! active schools activation grants. *Preventive Medicine*, 108, 36-40. Available [here](#).

**Fuel Up to Play 60, the flagship program of GENYOUth**, was founded by the National Dairy Council and the NFL, in collaboration with USDA. It empowers students to take charge in making small, everyday changes at school. Students can win cool prizes, like an NFL player visit or Super Bowl tickets, for choosing good-for-them foods and getting active for at least 60 minutes every day. We want kids to make a difference not only in their lives, but also their community. Now in 73,000 schools enrolling more than 38 million students, Fuel Up to Play 60 is the nation's largest in-school wellness program.

For information on your organization's sponsorship of any aspect of FUEL UP TO PLAY 60, contact GENYOUth by phone at (212) 225-8421, or email [info@genyouthfoundation.org](mailto:info@genyouthfoundation.org).

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