Healthy U

Healthy U is a program of the New Jersey YMCA State Alliance with funding from the Horizon Foundation. Healthy U has been implemented in all 21 NJ counties and reached 40,000 children at more than 490 YMCA and school sites. The program incorporates the Coordinated Approach to Childhood Health (CATCH) curriculum, an evidence-based intervention, which has been shown to reduce the risk of obesity in elementary and middle school children by 11% (1). Furthermore, research suggests that regular physical activity and healthy eating can improve children’s academic performance, behavior, attention, and memory.

Policy and Environmental Changes Implemented at Healthy U Sites
As Reported by YMCA Executives and School Principals in 2016

- **82%** Stated that healthful beverages (e.g., plain water or low-fat milk) will be among the beverages offered at student parties, after-school programs, and/or snack time.
- **82%** Stated that fruits or vegetables will be among the foods served whenever food is offered at student parties, after-school programs, and/or snack time.
- **62%** Stated that children cannot be seated for longer than 45 minutes at a time.

Program Sustainability

**Needs**

Findings from the 2016 Healthy U evaluation suggest that several factors help to maintain the program. Some of these factors include those below.

- Partnerships with Like-Minded Organizations
- Continuous Program Review and Staff Training
- Plan for Program Maintenance
- Visibility and Marketing

**Did You Know?**

The YMCA Healthy U program incorporated the Healthy Eating Physical Activity (HEPA) standards to teach children to make healthy food choices and enjoy physical activity.

In 2015-2016, some children and families in the Healthy U program were asked about being active and eating healthy. They reported that:

- **83%** of children ate fruit at least one time per day
- **81%** of children drank water each day at least one time per day
- **79%** of children did exercises that made their heart beat fast and breathe hard for 30 minutes or more the day before

Sources:
1. www.catchinfo.org

*Preschool caregivers were not included in this data. Preschool caregivers reported that on average, their children exercised for 54 minutes/day outside of school.*