Summary of Key Findings

September 2012

The HealthPartners yumPower School Challenge four-week pilot program was designed to encourage elementary school students and teachers to increase intake of fruits and vegetables by tracking how many fruits and vegetables they eat each week.

Why bring yumPower to our schools?

• Lifelong habits start at a young age
• National adult and childhood obesity and diabetes rates on the rise
• One-third of U.S. children overweight or obese

Key Findings

1. Sixteen extra tons of fruits and vegetables were consumed overall by students over a four-week period as a result of the yumPower School Challenge.

2. The yumPower School Challenge increased the amount of fruits and vegetables eaten by students over four weeks by 11 percent.

3. The yumPower School Challenge increased the amount of fruits and vegetables eaten by students on the weekends by 22 percent.

4. The rate of engagement in tracking fruits and vegetables was high among students, with the highest overall rate of student participation at 76 percent.

5. Ninety-three percent of teachers and school staff would recommend the HealthPartners yumPower School Challenge to other schools.

Approximately 15,000 students in 32 elementary schools participated in the program, including nine St. Paul Public Schools and more than 10 Minneapolis Public Schools.
More about HealthPartners yumPower

HealthPartners yumPower was created to help members of our community eat better and, in turn, help improve health. We know a major factor in preventing many chronic diseases is improving the food choices that we make. HealthPartners yumPower is designed to be a catalyst in creating a social movement around eating better.

Get tips and tools at yumpower.com and like yumPower on Facebook for updates on events, recipes and more.

Key Findings

Sixteen extra tons of fruits and vegetables were consumed overall by students over a four-week period as a result of the yumPower School Challenge.

- The average number of fruits and vegetables eaten on a daily basis by students increased by 1/3 of a serving per day over the course of the four-week pilot program.
- As a result, 16 extra tons of fruits and vegetables were consumed overall in one month.
- This increase in servings per day is significant because it shows children developing healthy lifestyle habits. By eating the recommended five servings of fruits and vegetables each day, a person can increase their healthy life expectancy by two years.

“Be sure to warn food service before you start because we ran out of fruits and vegetables and needed to order more!”

– Food service from Afton-Lakeland Elementary, Stillwater Area Public Schools.

![Average number of fruit and vegetable servings consumed by students overall](chart-image)
The yumPower School Challenge increased the amount of fruits and vegetables eaten by students over four weeks by 11 percent.

This program was great. It raised awareness, and kids began consciously choosing more fruits and vegetables from the salad bar.

- Teacher from Garlough Environmental Magnet School, School District 197

Parents said that they talk about this program at home and their kids now are open to trying new fruits and vegetables.

- Teacher from Lake Harriet Community School, Minneapolis Public Schools

The yumPower School Challenge increased the amount of fruits and vegetables eaten by students on the weekends by 22 percent.

Students reported increasing their fruit and vegetable intake on the weekend by a 1/2 serving more over a four-week time period, as a result of the program.

These results show the program was able to influence students at school AND at home — potentially positively impacting the eating behaviors of the whole family.
Ninety-three percent of teachers and school staff would recommend the HealthPartners yumPower School Challenge to other schools.

Upon completing the HealthPartners yumPower School Challenge, participating teachers and school staff were asked to complete a post-program survey and offer any additional feedback.

- Ninety-three percent of survey respondents felt that the HealthPartners yumPower School Challenge helped promote healthier eating behaviors within their school.
- Most schools agreed the program made their students more aware of the number of fruits and vegetables they were eating on a daily basis.

The rate of engagement in tracking fruits and vegetables was high among students, with the overall highest rate of participation at 76 percent.

- More than three out of four students completed and returned trackers in week one. The participation rate decreased some over the four week period, yet more than 60 percent of students continued to participate at week four.

"The students loved this program! After the final week, students were asking where their next tracker was!"

- Nurse from Adams Spanish Immersion, St. Paul Public Schools
What leads to a successful school program around healthy eating?

Make the program ‘cool’ for students by having a fun, visible and engaging kick-off event. Radio Disney kicked-off the HealthPartners yumPower School Challenge with a 45-minute, high-energy, fun school assembly. The special event made eating fruits and vegetables cool and encouraged high participation.

The student trackers and materials need to be colorful and interactive. Students received a four-week supply of fruit and vegetable trackers with colorful stickers and information. Students used the stickers to track how many fruits and vegetables they ate each day. The information packet was an important to get engage parents and gain their support too.

Award prizes for students who fill out their trackers. Each week, students received small prizes (pencils, note pads, etc.) for turning in the completed trackers. It’s important to have a variety of prize giveaways so students stay motivated and interested in the trackers. Consistent communications and promotion to students creates the biggest impact.

School support to promote and encourage program participation is critical. Schools won grants of $300 to $500 to use for the school’s nutrition services based on the percentage of trackers turned in for the four-week period. School leadership, teachers, school nurses, food service employees and school volunteers were essential in making this pilot program a success.

“This program has helped motivate us to start up some new healthy lifestyle programs! With the help of the prize grant, we will begin offering yoga classes for all ages at our school.”

- Nurse from L’Etoile du Nord French Immersion School, St. Paul Public Schools
Why track fruits and vegetables?

Fruit and vegetable intake is of particular importance, as studies suggest that replacement of energy dense foods, such as soft drinks, chips, candy and cookies, with fruits and vegetables may help to reduce obesity. Additionally, research shows that those with high fruit and vegetable intake have a healthier lifestyle and a 25 percent lower risk of becoming obese.

With the current prevalence of childhood obesity trend at 21 percent for 2010, over four times higher than the healthy target goal of 5 percent, significant work is needed to control and reduce this childhood trend. Minnesota children consume far less than the recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables. In 2007, only 20 percent of 6th graders, 18 percent of 9th graders, and 16 percent of 12th graders consumed the recommended levels.

The impact of food tracking

A 2008 American Journal of Preventative Medicine article documented that the behavior of food tracking has a direct impact on food intake behavior change. HealthPartners 2010 health assessment data showed that less than 11 percent of our adult members actually met the USDA recommendation of five servings of fruits and vegetables per day.

Similarly, National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys data show that less than 15 percent of American children under age 19 are consuming the age-appropriate daily serving amounts of fruit and vegetables. Even more concerning is that french fries and fruit juice (both energy dense) are the most frequently consumed sources. This is particularly concerning for children, as micronutrients, such as those found in fruits and vegetables are very important for healthy growth and development.

Citations: