



# COACHING FOR IMPACT

An Evaluation of Up2Us Sports  
Conducted by the Louisiana Public  
Health Institute

**UP2US**  
**SPORTS**

## **ABOUT UP2US SPORTS**



Up2Us Sports is a national coalition of organizations committed to using sports to provide youth with opportunities to live healthier lives, increase academic success, and reduce risky behavior using the sports-based youth development (SBYD) model. Up2Us Sports believes that all children, regardless of socioeconomic status, should have access to a highly-trained coach who can inspire their success on and off the field. The flagship program of Up2Us Sports, formerly known as Coach Across America, identifies, trains, and supports coach-mentors to serve in youth sports organizations, often in their own communities.

## **ABOUT THE EVALUATION**



The Louisiana Public Health Institute (LPHI) conducted an external evaluation of the efficacy of the Up2Us Sports program in New Orleans during the 2015-2016 program year. The evaluation measured the extent to which Up2Us Sports contributes to improved fitness and the development of positive attributes for youth. Data was collected from youth participants in the Up2Us Sports program and a comparison group of youth not involved in Up2Us Sports programming.

LPHI found that youth who work with Up2Us Sports coaches improve fitness levels and improve in some high impact attributes when compared with youth not working with Up2Us Sports coaches. LPHI also found that higher Up2Us Sports coach skills resulted in more positive changes for youth.



# DATA WAS COLLECTED ON UP2US SPORTS PARTICIPANTS AND A COMPARISON GROUP

## UP2US SPORTS GROUP

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

**1353**

AVERAGE AGE

**12.45**

GRADES

**3-12**

GENDER



50.3% - male  
49.7% - female

ETHNICITY



91.9% - African-American  
3.4% - Hispanic  
3.3% - White  
2.4% - Other

## COMPARISON GROUP

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

**827**

AVERAGE AGE

**12.59**

GRADES

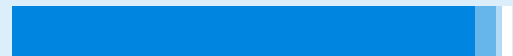
**3-12**

GENDER



47.4% - male  
52.6% - female

ETHNICITY



92.7% - African-American  
4.2% - Hispanic  
1.1% - White  
2.0% - Other



# IMPROVED PHYSICAL FITNESS

Up2Us Sports aims to promote youth physical activity and increase physical fitness. Up2Us Sports measures physical fitness of participants using the PACER fitness test, a widely used multistage aerobic capacity test.

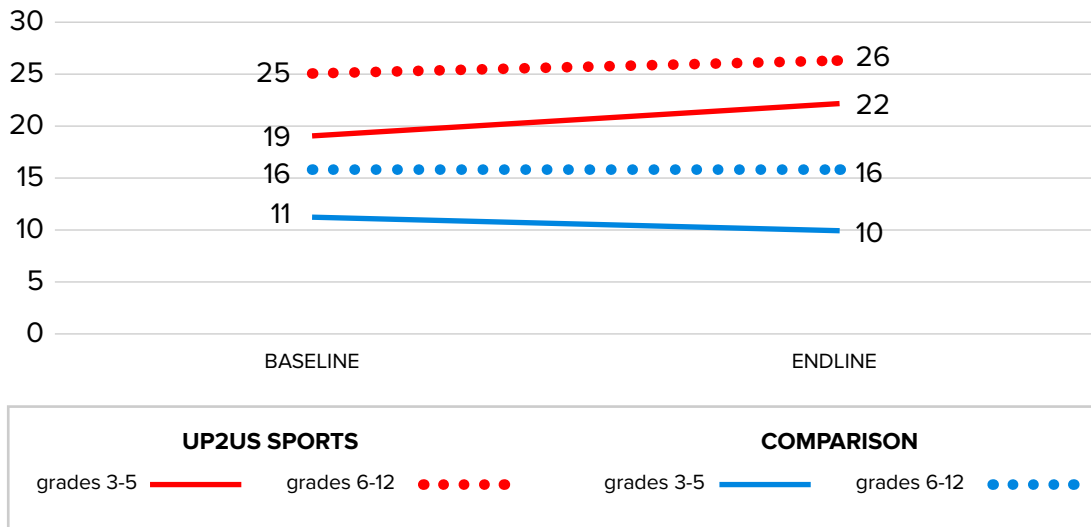
**MORE HOURS WITH A COACH LED TO GREATER IMPACT**

**Youth in the Up2Us Sports program had statistically significant increases in their physical fitness as measured by the PACER test during the 2015-2016 program year ( $p < .05$ ) while youth in the comparison group had a statistically significant decrease ( $p < .05$ ).**

Youth who worked with Up2Us Sports coaches who scored higher on the coach skill measure experienced the largest improvements in their physical fitness ( $p < .05$ ). Similarly, youth in programs that offered more hours with the Up2Us Sports coach experienced larger improvements in physical fitness compared to youth in programs with fewer hours ( $p < .05$ ).

	<b>UP2US SPORTS</b>	<b>COMPARISON</b>
<b>GRADES 3-5</b>	<b>+3 LAPS</b>	<b>-1 LAPS</b>
<b>GRADES 6-12</b>	<b>+1 LAP</b>	<b>NO CHANGE</b>

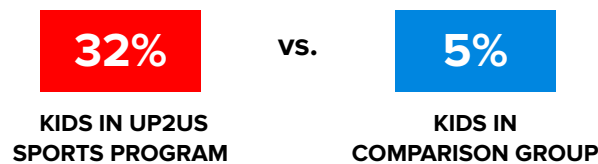
## Mean PACER Scores



## HEALTHY FITNESS ZONE

The Healthy Fitness Zone is set of standards for how many laps youth, ages 10-18, should be able to complete on the PACER test to be considered at a healthy fitness level. If a participant meets that standard for their age, they are considered to be in the Healthy Fitness Zone. **In this study, only 5.2% of youth in the comparison group (those who didn't have an Up2Us Sports trained coach) were in the Healthy Fitness Zone for their age at endline. Conversely, at the end of their time working with an Up2Us Sports coach, almost a third of youth (32.4%) were in this Healthy Fitness Zone.** At both baseline and endline, Up2Us Sports participants were significantly more likely to be in the Healthy Fitness Zone ( $p < .01$ ).

### Kids in the Healthy Fitness Zone at Endline



## PACER SCORES AND GENDER

Females in the Up2Us Sports group experienced no significant change in PACER fitness scores from baseline to endline, but females in the comparison group experienced a statistically significant decrease in PACER fitness scores ( $p < .05$ ). This suggests that working with Up2Us Sports coaches protects female participants from declining in fitness, which is especially common with young girls as they get older.





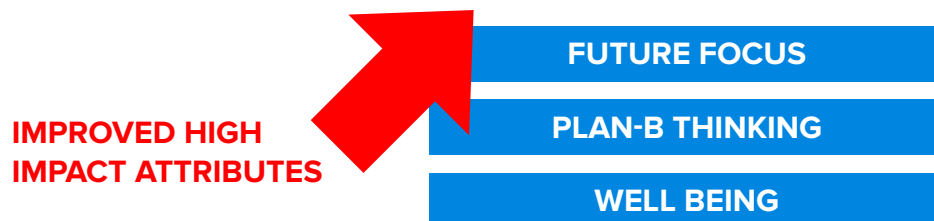
# IMPROVED LIFE SKILLS

## HIGH IMPACT ATTRIBUTES

Up2Us Sports coaches are trained to help youth to develop positive internal attributes, or High Impact Attributes (HIAs), that are connected to positive life outcomes related to health, education, and delinquency prevention. Up2Us Sports uses a validated survey to measure these High Impact Attributes in youth grades 3-12.

LPHI found that youth in the Up2Us Sports program scored high on the HIA measures at both baseline and endline, making it difficult to capture positive change.

**Older participants (6th to 12th graders) working with Up2Us Sports coaches had significantly higher future focus/plan B thinking scores at endline than youth in the comparison group ( $p < .05$ ).** For older participants, participating in a program that offered more hours with the Up2Us Sports coach was associated with higher HIA scores ( $p < .05$ ).



Younger participants (3rd to 5th graders) working with Up2Us Sports coaches had a statistically significant increase in a measure of overall well-being during program participation ( $p < .05$ ) while youth in the comparison group had no significant change. Youth in both the Up2Us Sports group and the comparison group had a statistically significant increase in discipline ( $p < .01$  and  $p < .05$ , respectively).

## COACH SKILL

The Up2Us Sports program provides coaches with skills on how to apply youth development concepts to the sport experience and how to build positive relationships. Up2Us Sports and LPHI created a Coach Skill measure to quantify positive coach characteristics and behavior and to examine the relationship between these coach skills and positive changes in youth. This measure included data on coaching confidence, coaches' High Impact Attributes, coaching priorities, coach knowledge retention from training, observations of coaches during programming, and youth reporting on their relationships with coaches.



**LPHI found that youth working with coaches who scored higher on the Coach Skill measure had significantly higher PACER scores than those working with coaches who scored lower on this measure ( $p < .05$ ).** Both of these groups had higher scores than the comparison group ( $p < .05$ ).

## HOW DO WE MEASURE COACH SKILL?

1

### RELATIONSHIPS

Youth report on their relationships with coaches

2

### CONFIDENCE

Coaches report on their confidence in their coaching abilities

3

### BEHAVIORS

Up2Us Sports staff observe coaches during programming

4

### ATTRIBUTES

Coaches report on High Impact Attributes

5

### PRIORITIES

Coaches report on their priorities when working with youth

6

### KNOWLEDGE

Up2Us Sports tests coaches on retention of materials learned in training





# FOCUS GROUP RESULTS

Up2Us Sports conducted focus groups and interviews with coaches, youth participants, and host site supervisors (the people who most closely oversee the work of coaches within their programming sites on a daily basis). LPHI uncovered three major findings:

## 1

### **Training provided coaches with an established culture where youth development was given first priority over other outcomes**

A Host Site Supervisor praised the Up2Us Sports training explaining the value of **“the emphasis that CAA [Up2Us Sports] places in their training and their ongoing attitude with how life lessons can be learned and applied through sports programs.** That every day is an opportunity – this is not just about playing basketball or dancing. It’s about learning a life lesson and learning about relationships.”

Some youth participants appreciated the emphasis on building positive characteristics as well as on winning, saying, **“They want to see us get better, but overall they want to make sure even if we don’t win, that we give a perfect effort.** That no matter what...as long as you try your hardest and they know that you gave it your all, that’s all they can ask for.”



## 2

### **Establishing a strong relationship between coach-mentors and youth is critical to positive outcomes in youth**

Host Site Supervisors acknowledged that Up2Us Sports coaches were different from their non-Up2Us Sports peers, noting, for example, a positive difference “in how [they] handled stress and how [they] handled conflict with the students.” One host site supervisor reported: **“I just find my CAA [Up2Us Sports] coaches are more willing to go the extra mile for the kids if they need help.”**

Host site supervisors also recognized that positive relationships between Up2Us Sports coaches and youth led to improvements in youth performance in the PACER, with one Host Site Supervisor alluding to a visible “difference in [his] kids’ overall health, stamina, and outlook” after working with his Up2Us Sports coach.

One host site supervisor praised the relationship building skills of her Up2Us Sports Coach, speaking to an **“incredible ability to build relationships and ability to create a level of unity within the students that they work with.”**

## 3

### **Trauma-sensitive training provided coaches with knowledge and practical tools for addressing the unique or sensitive challenges that youth in Up2Us Sports service areas face**

Coaches praised the youth development focus and holistic approach of Up2Us Sports training. One coach explained, “a lot of the issues in school are not just with physical health. And **talking to these kids and having them open up about some of the situations that are going on at home**...as advocates for that, we can help a lot of children. Because some of the coaches don’t sit down and learn the kids. And if you don’t learn your kids, you don’t know why they’re coming to school acting the way they’re acting.”

Discussing context and the importance of Up2Us Sports and sports programs for kids, one host site supervisor said “It doesn’t always feel like they’re winning. There are a lot of things going on at home that don’t feel like wins. There’s a lot of academic fight. Fighting, fighting, fighting to get better. But they have a long ways to go. **They don’t always feel like they’re winning. So they have the opportunity to come out and be good at something and win.**”