SUMMARY OF
Coach Across America Evaluation

CONDUCTED BY THE AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH EVALUATION
ABOUT THE EVALUATION

American Institutes for Research (AIR) conducted an external data analysis to evaluate the impact of the Coach Across America (CAA) program on underserved youth nationwide during the 2013-2014 school year. Specifically, AIR examined changes in youth outcomes concerning their physical activity levels, nutrition habits, and manifestation of attributes shown to contribute to sports and life skills (high impact attributes).

CAA is the flagship program run by Up2Us Sports, a national coalition of more than 1,000 youth sports organizations committed to using sports for social change. Up2Us Sports recruits, trains, and places CAA coaches with its affiliates, preparing the coaches to work with underserved youth who are the primary participants in the affiliates’ programs.

According to the evaluation, youth with Coach Across America coaches saw increases in physical activity, positive gains in relationships and decision-making and reduced their consumption of unhealthy foods.

THE COACHES

The coaches in our Coach Across America program are trained to use sports in a new way. Each coach receives over 50 hours of training in youth development and mentoring strategies—including sports-based youth development (SBYD) foundations, the brain and trauma, behavior management and culture—to help them cultivate caring, trust-based relationships with youth, and to foster SBYD outcomes.

GENDER

While traditionally 90% of youth sports coaches are men, nearly half of our coaches are women, and especially situated to inspire young girls and keep them participating in sports.

AGE

Coaches in the Coach Across America program come from every stage of life, but the majority of them are between 18 and 24.

RACE

We strive to ensure we have coaches of all backgrounds and races, which helps them relate to all types of youth.

COMMUNITY

Most of our coaches are serving in their home communities, giving them a better understanding of community assets and the challenges faced by the youth they work with.
THE YOUTH

Coach Across America coaches work with youth all over the country in a variety of traditional and non-traditional sports. This evaluation surveyed kids from 80 youth sports programs across the country. The youth in these programs come from underserved communities and benefit greatly from having a Coach Across America coach in their lives.

6,288 youth participated in this survey

MOST WERE BETWEEN GRADERS 3 AND 8

GENDER

Our sample was split evenly between boys and girls who worked with our coaches. This gave us a better idea how our work impacts both genders.

RACE

Our coaches work predominantly with African American and Hispanic youth in urban communities that are often underserved.

THE OUTCOMES

Coach Across America measures its impact through evaluations on coach efficacy and behavioral change experienced by the youth served by CAA Coaches. The AIR evaluation found statistically significant improvements in youth in physical activity, nutrition, and high impact attributes.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

At a time when schools are losing physical education and sports programs due to budget cuts, getting kids active outside of school is more important than ever. Youth in the Coach Across America program develop valuable skills through physical activity, which encourages them to lead a more active lifestyle, even after completion of the program.

Overall, youth had a statistically significant increase in their level of physical activity from a mean of 3.11 at baseline to 3.21 at endline (p < .001).

*Notably, youth that spent more hours with a Coach Across America coach saw a steeper increase in physical activity.
**NUTRITION**

Coach Across America coaches are trained to encourage healthy eating habits in kids in the program. Youth in the survey reported drinking less soda and eating fewer french fries and potato chips, a great step in decreasing childhood obesity.

**HIGH IMPACT ATTRIBUTES**

Research shows that developing certain characteristics can help youth be successful and better navigate challenges. The Coach Across America program provides a context particularly suitable for developing these high impact attributes. The program provides youth with opportunities for competency building, coaches who are able to connect sport to life skills, and a supportive environment in which youth can practice new skills and improve over time.

**Mean scores on soda and fried potatoes consumption, for youth participating in programs.**

*Nutrition behavior was measured on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 indicates infrequent consumption of a food or beverage and 5 indicates frequent consumption.*

Youth showed improvements in:

- **RELATIONSHIPS**
- **DECISION MAKING**

Additionally, there was a statistically significant improvement in three of the five decision-making items: decrease in feeling helpless when having to make a hard decision (p=.003), decrease in making decisions based on what will make others like me (p=.005), and increase in resisting peer pressure (p=.001).

For more information about Up2Us Sports or to receive the full report, email info@up2us.org.