



Clayton, Students Fuel Up to Play 60

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The students at Bay Point Middle School embraced the NFL's health initiative so thoroughly that they scored the most points in the program of any school in the state of Florida



Nine months ago, the students at Bay Point Middle School in St. Petersburg made a commitment to get healthy. On Tuesday, they were rewarded for achieving that goal.

Bay Point accumulated the most points in the state of Florida for the inaugural Fuel Up to Play 60 program, a health initiative launched this year by the National Dairy Council and National Football League. In recognition of their accomplishment, Tampa Bay Buccaneers wide receiver **Michael Clayton** visited the school on Tuesday to help the Dairy Council of Florida congratulate the students' efforts.

Fuel Up to Play 60 is a student-led school wellness program that empowers young people to get healthy and be active by implementing lifestyle changes. The goal of the program is to encourage students to "fuel up" with nutrient-rich foods such as low-fat or fat-free dairy, fruits, vegetables and whole grains and then use that fuel to exercise for at least 60 minutes each day.

Students and schools competed in the program by tracking their points on www.FuelUpToPlay60.com. In Florida, 2,179 schools took part in the initiative, which saw more than 60,000 participate nationwide. Enslow Middle School in Huntington, West Virginia, was the top-scoring school in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

“We’re talking about the health and wellness crisis that is sweeping the nation,” said Clayton. “The youth are creating a situation right now where their life expectancy is shorter than their parents. When you mention crisis in the terms of youth, that’s something that we can do better as mentors in the community. We can get the message across that this is something serious, this is something that is doing damage to our kids and it’s something also that can be avoided.”

In Florida, Bay Point was one of 15 schools in a three-county region (Pasco, Pinellas and Palm Beach) that participated in a specific Fuel Up to Play 60 pilot program during the school year. Each school received grants of \$5,000 to promote healthy eating and physical activity. Bay Point administrators and faculty said students immediately embraced the Fuel Up concept.

“We had a 100 percent participation rate at our school,” said Ashley Grimes, a Bay Point physical education teacher who served as the school’s Fuel Up program advisor. “It really changed their behavior, both with their nutrition and physical activity levels. You would see better choices on their trays in the cafeterias. They would have a piece of fruit, they would have milk, they would have whole grains and they would have a vegetable.

“You really can’t fail in this program. The improvements I’ve seen school-wide, not just with the students but with faculty and staff, have been immense. This is a program that actually makes a difference.”

On Tuesday, Clayton emphasized the program’s message of eating healthy and enjoying physical activity by leading students in a few exercises of his own. After speaking on the importance of diet and fitness, the wide receiver led the group in jumping jacks and toe touches before challenging one student in a push-up competition. The Council also presented the school with a HOPSports Training System designed to further enhance its fitness efforts.

“The numbers that support the Fuel Up to Play 60 have been tremendous to me because I have kids,” noted Clayton. “As a parent, sometimes you don’t make a conscious effort to know what your kids are eating, what they are putting into their bodies. But it’s very important for kids to understand that while they’re at school they can tackle the problem.”

As a private-public partnership effort, Fuel Up to Play 60 shares the ambitious yet attainable goals outlined in First Lady Michelle Obama’s childhood obesity platform “Let’s Move!” which aims to curb childhood obesity within a generation. Together with the involvement of supporting organizations – including Action for Healthy Kids, American Academy of Family Physicians, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Dietetic Association, National Hispanic Medical Association, National Medical Association and School Nutrition Association – the Fuel Up to Play 60 program will further its progress by aiming to reach even more schools in the years ahead.

“To solve childhood obesity, parents, schools and business leaders must come together and address the fact that while a ‘healthy change’ may not be the same in every community, we can make a big difference by providing the right tools to make small changes,” said Jennifer Whittaker Sills, Director of School Marketing for the Dairy Council of Florida. “That’s the thinking that drives Fuel Up to Play 60 and the partnership among the NFL, NDC and the USDA.”

To learn more about Fuel Up to Play 60 or to sign up for the 2010-2011 program, visit www.FuelUpToPlay60.com.

URL: <http://www.buccaneers.com/news/article-1/Clayton-Students-Fuel-Up-to-Play-60/c0ee2d7c-e43a-4ad4-ae74-614eded896c1>

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