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Requests for Fruits and Vegetables After Participating in an After-School Nutrition Education Program

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Requests for Fruits and Vegetables After Participating in an After-School Nutrition Education Program

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Background:

The Akron YMCA Thrive program is an after-school program for low-income school-aged children that utilizes elements of the Coordinated Approach to Child Health (CATCH) evidence-based model.¹ Unique to the Akron Area YMCA Thrive program is the inclusion of a healthy treat each week, which incorporates exposure to a fruit or vegetable with nutrition education. Sometimes, these produce items are new to the children, and this program gives them the opportunity to try produce outside of their zone of familiarity. Additionally, the kids get to take home a produce bag each week that includes a few servings of a fruit or vegetable.

Purpose and Objectives:

This descriptive research investigated whether differences existed in fruit- and vegetable-related behavior between Thrive and non-Thrive groups.

Objective 1: Determine if children participating in the Thrive program are asking to purchase fruits and vegetables when they accompany a parent to the grocery store

Objective 2: Determine the frequency of requests for fruits and vegetables at home during meals and snacks from program participants

Objective 3: Describe requests for specific produce between students who participate in Thrive and are sent home with produce versus those who do not

Methods:

This data was originally collected using a cross sectional approach. A caregiver questionnaire was created as part of a YMCA program evaluation project and was administered at the childcare sites either in person or online. For a family to qualify for subsequent inclusion in this research, they must have reported having at least one school-age child attending an after-school program at a participating YMCA location.

References:

1.Coordinated school health programs. Coordinated Approach to Child Health Web site. <https://catchinfo.org/>. Accessed September 24, 2020.

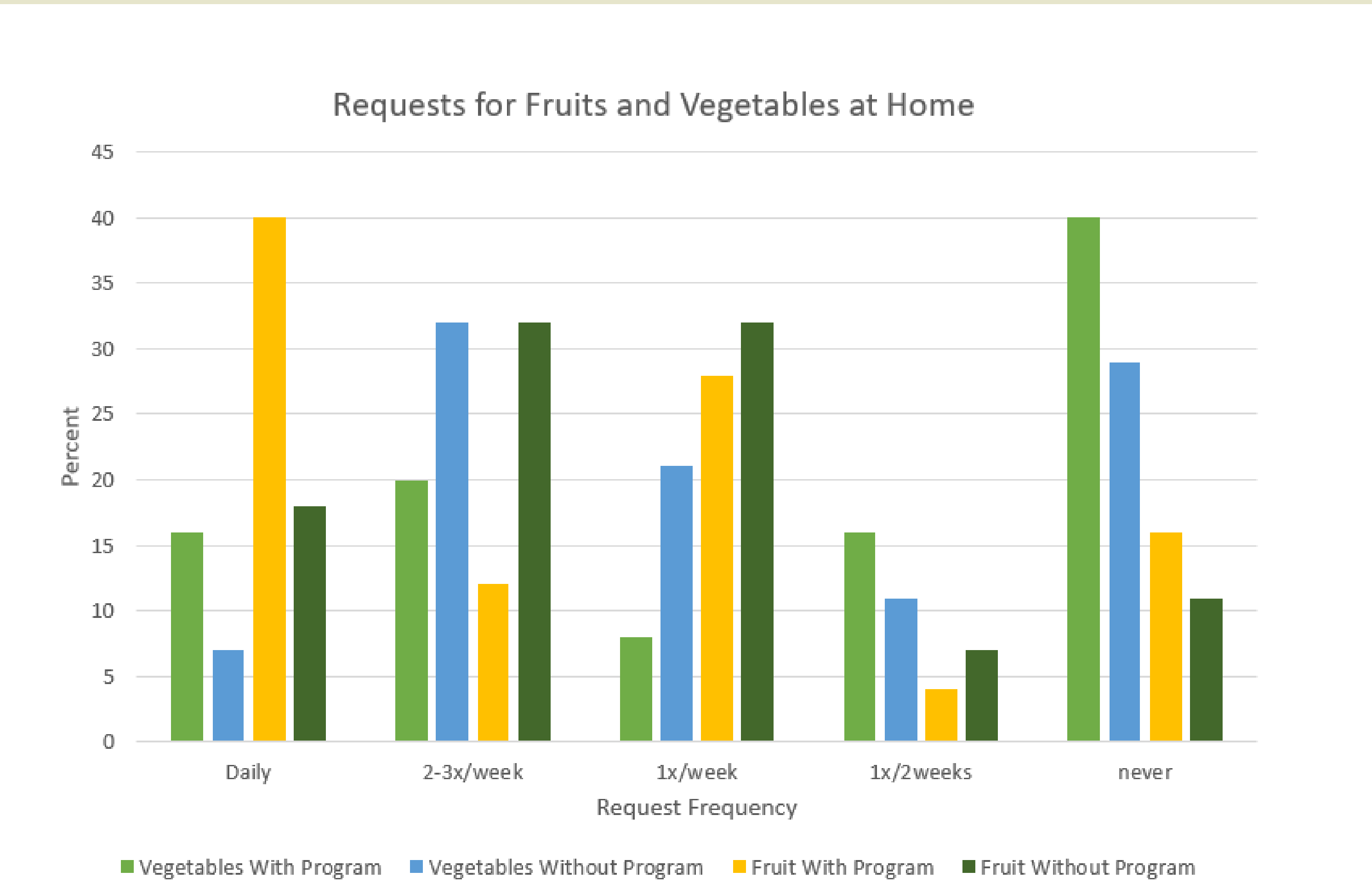
Results:

- A total of 53 survey responses were collected, 25 of which represented the group who participated in the Thrive program.
- Of the responses that reflected participation in the program, 64% of the children were male, 80% were African American, 16% were white, and 4% were other. The age range for this group was kindergarten through 5th grade, with the most kids being in 1st grade (8 kids).
- Of the respondents that did not participate in the Thrive program, 64% were males, and all but 2 respondents were white. The age range for this group was kindergarten through 6th grade, with the most kids being in first grade (9 kids), closely followed by 3rd grade (8 kids).

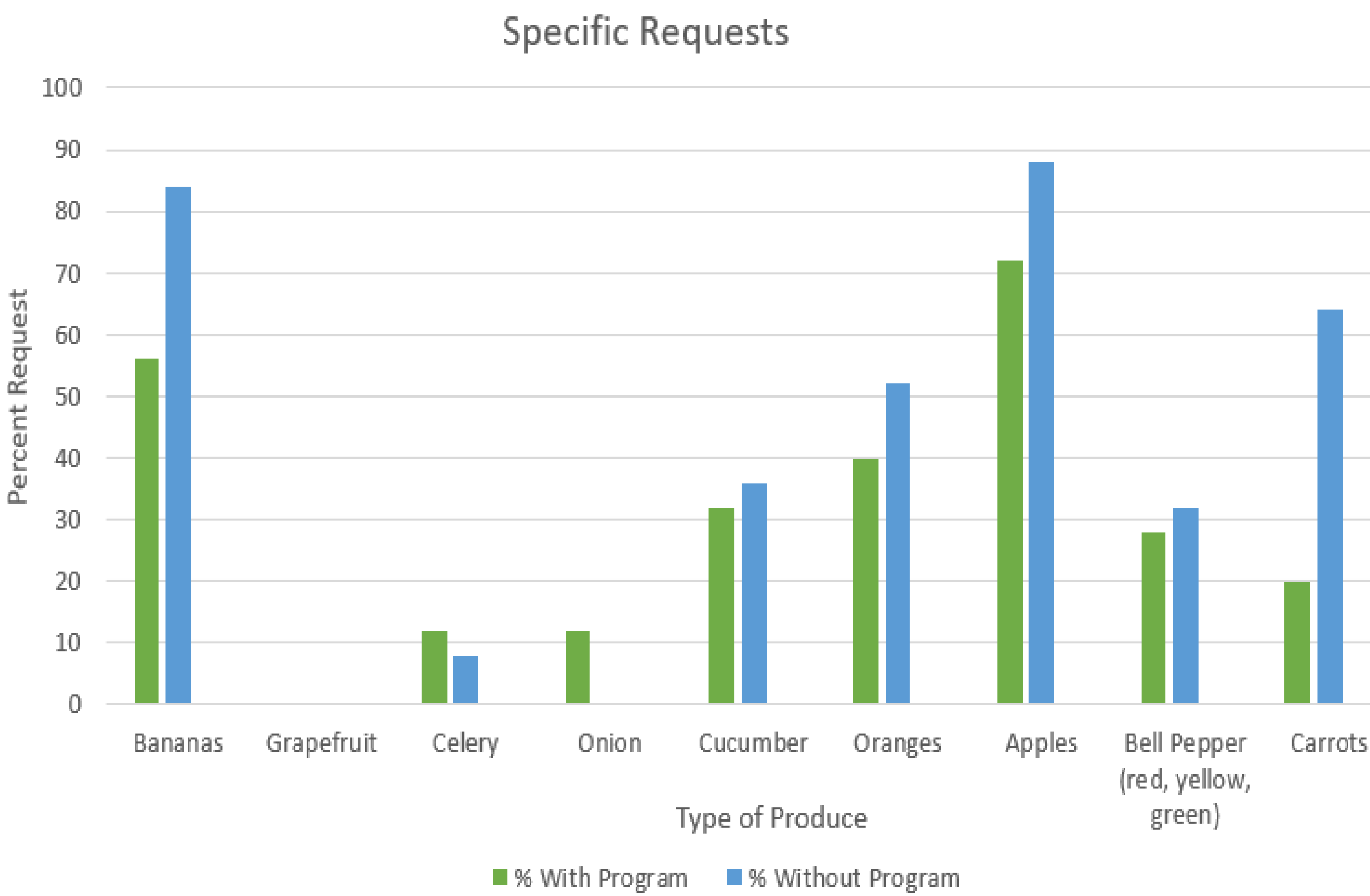
Objective 1

The last time you went shopping with the child you care for, did they ask to buy...	With Thrive Program	Without Thrive Program
Fruit	44%	79%
Of the “yes” response, average number of fruits requested	2.5	2.35
Vegetables	20%	46%
Of the “yes” response, average number of vegetables requested	2.2	1.7

Objective 2



Objective 3:



Discussion:

When looking at requests made at the store, more kids who did not participate in Thrive programming requested to buy fruits and vegetables. Despite this, the Thrive participants that did make a request asked for a slightly higher average amount of fruits and vegetables. Looking at requests made at home, more kids who had the Thrive programming asked to eat fruits and vegetables daily when compared to the group without programming. Even with these higher requests, there were still 40% of the Thrive sample who never asked to eat vegetables. Finally, the most popular foods requested from both groups were bananas and apples. A greater proportion of the Thrive children asked for celery and onion, which are foods included in the lessons, while the rest of the produce had a greater intake from the non-Thrive group.

Conclusion:

This data demonstrates that the Thrive program may have some efficacy, especially regarding daily fruit and vegetable requests. Areas for improvement in the Thrive program revealed from this study include teaching kids to increase their self-efficacy to ask for fresh foods at the grocery store and request specific foods that they liked in the Thrive program.