

The Play Ball! Foundation Fact Sheet



History

In the fall of 2009, the only team sports offered by the Boston Public Schools to its 11,300 middle school age students were basketball and track. These limited offerings stood in stark contrast to the wide variety of opportunities offered by suburban school systems, which had thriving after school leagues in multiple sports. Pay-to-play fees were also not an option, with approximately 78% of Boston Public School students eligible for free lunch.

Michael Harney, Chairman of the Play Ball! Foundation and a graduate of Georgetown University where he played Division I lacrosse, founded Play Ball! to provide Boston's middle school age youth the chance to receive the same opportunities and benefits that athletics provided him as a child. *"Play Ball! began with the simple goal of getting more feet on the field year in and year out."*

Mission

The mission of the Play Ball! Foundation is to create and expand team sports opportunities for middle school age urban youth who are at a pivotal time of physical and emotional development. Through the experience of team sports, Play Ball! seeks to inspire young athletes to succeed in school, become engaged in their school communities and develop life skills that will make them better prepared to enter high school.

Model

Play Ball! partners with public school districts to fund team sports opportunities for underserved populations. Play Ball!'s privately raised funds go directly into a 501c(3) to secure fields and gyms, hire and train coaches, and provide transportation, officials, uniforms, and equipment. The unique private/public partnership model is designed for scale, with a goal of meeting demand in the school communities it serves.

Impact

Today, Play Ball! provides competitive sports to over 1,171 Boston Public Middle School athletes in 22 schools with 57 teams offering boys football and baseball, girls volleyball and Double Dutch, boys and girls soccer, and a new ice hockey pilot for boys and girls.

Evidence Play Ball! Works

Positive results from Play Ball!'s quantitative and qualitative research pilot in three Boston Public Middle Schools showed that Play Ball! students had a significant improvement in academic performance and demonstrated positive self-reports about physical and emotional growth. This is consistent with numerous national research studies supporting the positive impact of sports and physical activity on youth.

The Expansion Opportunity

Despite its success, Play Ball! serves only 11% of the 11,300 Boston Public Middle School students. Demand for Play Ball! in Boston far exceeds funding and waiting lists are long to add teams and schools. Additionally, the first Play Ball! program outside of Boston is being piloted in the Lawrence Public Middle Schools. Lawrence demographic statistics are consistent with Play Ball!'s target audience of the most underserved urban youth.

Core Values

- We believe that all middle school students should have the opportunity to play team sports.
- We believe that being a member of a sports team can positively change lives.
- We believe team sports are FUN.
- We believe that everything we do needs to meet our high standards for quality and excellence.
- We believe that through passionate commitment, bold innovation, and creativity, we can be the catalyst for change and create opportunities where none existed before.