



REIMAGINING
SCHOOL SPORTS

SMALL SUBURBAN PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS



boks



Sport for All, Play for Life
A Playbook to Develop Every
Student Through Sports

A Project Play initiative of the Aspen Institute Sports & Society Program, “Reimagining School Sports” recognizes the essential role that high schools play in preparing young people for life – and the cognitive, educational and health benefits that flow to students whose bodies are in motion. The initiative aims to make quality sport and physical activities accessible to all students by identifying strategies that administrators and other leaders can adopt, aligned with the mission of schools and within the context of a comprehensive education.

In the United States, school decisions are made largely at the local and state levels. Further, the ability to engage students in sports is shaped by a school’s size, mission and resources. So, Project Play launched a national search to find the trailblazers in eight school types. That way, principals, superintendents, athletic directors, coaches, physical education teachers and others can draw inspiration from their best peer fit.

The eight school types:

- [Large urban public high schools](#)
- [Small urban public high schools](#)
- [Large rural public high schools](#)
- [Small rural public high schools](#)
- [Large suburban public high schools](#)
- [Small suburban public high schools](#)
- [Private schools](#)
- [Charter schools](#)

The Aspen Institute invited any school to share their innovations and apply for recognition. A \$20,000 award will be given to one winner in each category, made possible by our project partners – Adidas/BOKS, The Dick’s Sporting Goods Foundation, and Hospital for Special Surgery. Reports on each school type are being released in 2021, followed by a final report in early 2022 that will make systems-level recommendations that can drive progress across all school types.

About Project Play

Project Play is an initiative of the Aspen Institute’s Sports & Society Program, the mission of which is to convene leaders, facilitate dialogue and inspire solutions that help sport serve the public interest. Since 2013, Project Play has shepherded the national conversation around what good looks like in youth sports. Hundreds of organizations have used Project Play frameworks and ideas to introduce programs, expand grantmaking, shape government policy, advance research, and develop tools to train coaches, empower parents and mobilize leaders.

To learn more about the value of sports and physical activities, please visit as.pn/sportsfacts



Learn more about this project and find all reports at:
as.pn/schoolsports

Challenges and Opportunities: Small Suburban Public Schools

Nationally, 70% of suburban public high schools offer interscholastic sports, more than urban (63%) and less than rural (73%), according to an Aspen Institute-commissioned analysis of 2017-18 Civil Rights Data Collection by Resonant Education.¹ The percentage of suburban students who play on high school teams is 41%, also more than urban (33%) and lower than rural (42%).

Suburban students in general often start playing their primary sport at a younger age, which can be a catch-22. Some students may enter high school with more developed skills to make a team. Athletes at suburban schools are 2.6 times more likely to belong to a sport league outside of school in their primary sport than rural students.² On the other hand, suburban students may arrive to high school burned out or injured after many years of specializing in one sport.

Some students, even in the suburbs, cannot afford to play sports. In a national survey of high school students by the Aspen Institute, males at suburban public schools were three times more likely than urban males to identify expenses as a reason they don't play school sports. Suburban females (18%) also listed costs as a barrier more than urban females (11%).

Education, labor market, income and housing metrics reveal that the suburbs have trailed the gains of urban counties since 2000. The household income gap between the suburbs (\$101,000) and urban areas (\$92,000) has narrowed in recent years,³ suggesting a common narrative that suburban families can automatically afford to pay to play high school sports is not true. This is especially the case for small suburban schools, some of which charge fees to play as a key revenue source for athletics. Small suburban schools generally have fewer families for potential booster donations and a smaller tax base for public funding.

Characteristics of Suburban Schools

For purposes of this report, the Aspen Institute defines a small suburban school as a public school with fewer than 1,000 students and classifies itself as located in a suburban area. The National Center for Education Statistics defines a small suburban school as one located outside a principal city and inside an urbanized area with a population of 250,000 or more. Today, 31% of U.S. schools are in a suburban area, and 6% of suburban schools are classified as small.⁴ A plurality of the nation's K-12 public school students (40%) attend suburban schools.⁵

For many years, suburban schools were mostly White and affluent spaces outside of city boundaries. Suburban schools in the U.S. are now majority non-White, especially in inner-ring suburbs.⁶ Changing demographics are increasingly impacting the issues these schools face, such as poverty and educational inequity.⁷ Suburban districts continue to have a massive achievement gap based on race and ethnicity.^{8,9} Poor residents in the suburbs often lack a car and are not well served by public transportation, which limits access to jobs, social and medical services, and schools, including afterschool sports.¹⁰

High school football participation has been declining across the country, leaving small suburban schools with less ticket revenue from the biggest moneymaker in high school sports. Before the pandemic, 11-man high school football declined 9% over a 10-year period while six-man football (23% increase) and eight-man football (22% increase) made gains.¹¹ Though football still has the highest participation rate among suburban students,¹² several athletic directors at small suburban schools said they increasingly see schools of their size dropping to six- or eight-man football to keep their program alive. Fear of long-term brain injuries and the suburb’s changing demographics are cited as reasons why fewer students play football.

Still, higher-income families are more often found in the suburbs than urban and rural areas – and that continues to carry advantages in high school sports. Researchers found that U.S. high school athletes were much more likely to play sports in college if they came from higher-income families with well-educated parents and attended wealthier schools.¹³ About 14% of students whose families were in the top 20% in terms of socioeconomic status played sports in college, compared to fewer than 4% of those in the bottom 20% of socioeconomic status. The study showed that, even for Black students, those who come from more advantaged backgrounds were more likely to play sports in college.

The chase for the college scholarship is not what most students want. When asked in the Aspen Institute’s national survey why they play sports, suburban students were almost twice as likely to identify having fun and getting exercise compared to trying to earn a college scholarship. Yet 29% of suburban students who don’t play sports said their school does not offer sports opportunities that interest them – higher than urban (26%) and rural (23%) students. Some ideas in this report can help refresh the high school sports model for small suburban schools.



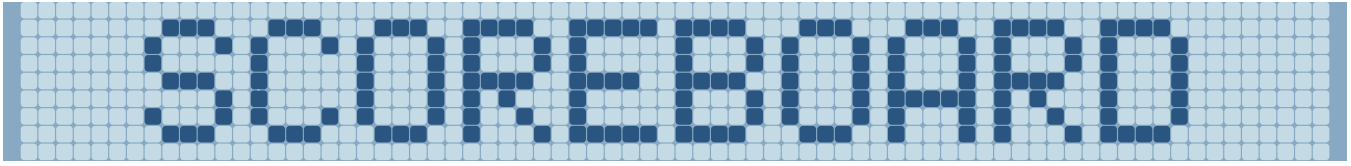
26%
OF HISPANIC SUBURBAN STUDENTS WHO DON'T PLAY HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS SAY IT'S BECAUSE NO OFFERINGS INTEREST THEM ¹⁴
(vs. 13% each for Hispanic students at urban and rural schools)

3.67
AVERAGE SCORE SUBURBAN STUDENTS GIVE THEIR SCHOOL IN PREVENTING BULLYING WITHIN TEAMS
(1-5 scale, with 5 the best; rural and urban students rated their schools better)

79%
OF SUBURBAN STUDENTS SAY THEY'RE MOTIVATED TO PLAY SPORTS TO HAVE FUN

41%
SAY THEY PLAY SPORTS FOR A COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP

SMALL SUBURBAN PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS



The Aspen Institute conducted a national survey of ninth- to 12th-graders between September 2020 and March 2021. The sample represented students from public, charter and private schools across the country. The survey was conducted via an online platform and results were analyzed by Resonant Education. Here is what suburban students told us.

Top sports suburban students plan to play this year

At School

25%	Track and Field
20%	Basketball
17%	Tackle Football
16%	Volleyball
13%	Baseball
13%	Soccer
8%	Cross Country
7%	Tennis
7%	Wrestling
6%	Golf
6%	Softball
6%	Swimming

Outside School

18%	Basketball
15%	Soccer
13%	Volleyball
13%	Baseball
10%	Softball
7%	Tackle Football
6%	Track and Field
5%	Wrestling
5%	Dance Team
4%	Swimming
4%	Bowling
4%	Skiing
4%	Weightlifting



Other physical activities suburban students participate in outside school

Suburban Students	All Students	
45%	46%	Walking/hiking
38%	36%	Workout at gym
31%	32%	Riding bike
29%	32%	Pickup games/free play
26%	30%	Jogging
20%	21%	Swimming

Suburban Males	All Males	
44%	44%	Workout at gym
40%	43%	Pickup games/free play
36%	36%	Walking/hiking
32%	32%	Riding bike
27%	30%	Jogging
18%	19%	Swimming

Suburban Females	All Females	
53%	54%	Walking/hiking
33%	30%	Workout at gym
30%	32%	Riding bike
25%	30%	Jogging
22%	23%	Swimming
20%	23%	Pickup games/free play

Non-sport activities suburban students participate in at school

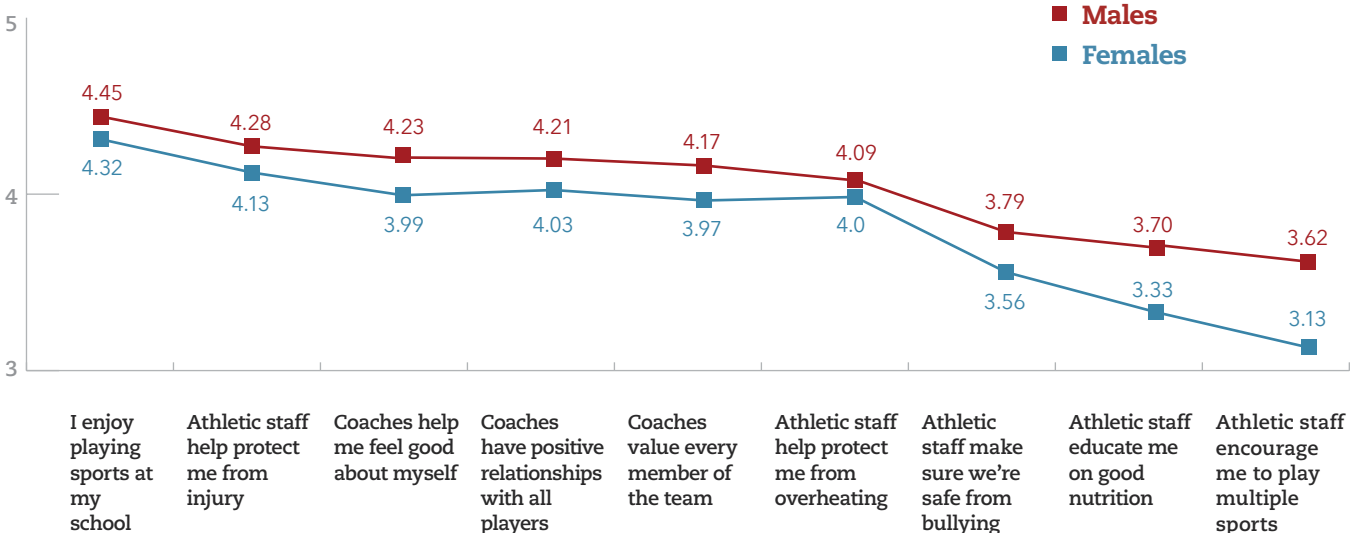
Suburban Students	All Students	Suburban Males	All Males	Suburban Females	All Females
11%	11% Band	12%	12% Band	14%	16% Academic club
10%	12% Academic club	6%	8% Academic club	14%	13% Choir
10%	10% Choir	4%	5% Choir	11%	9% Student council
6%	6% Community service club	3%	5% Robotics/STEM	10%	10% Band
6%	6% Student council	2%	3% Student council	10%	9% Community service club
4%	5% Yearbook/newspaper	2%	2% Yearbook/newspaper	6%	8% Yearbook/newspaper
2%	4% Robotics/STEM	2%	3% Speech and debate	3%	5% Art club
2%	4% Speech and debate	2%	2% Art club	2%	3% Robotics/STEM
2%	3% Art club				

What suburban students say about high school PE

Students	Suburban	All
Enjoyed PE	68%	62%
Did not enjoy PE	13%	12%
Have not taken high school PE	14%	22%
PE increased interest to play high school sports	5%	5%



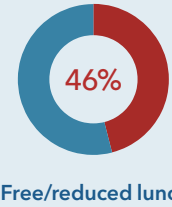
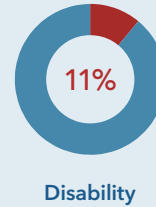
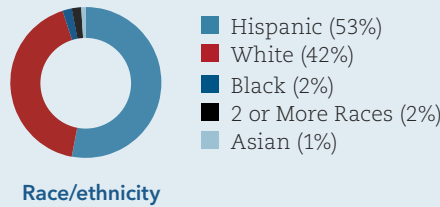
What suburban students say of high school athletic staff (1-5 scale with 5 being most favorable)



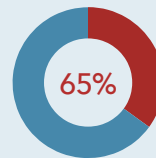
WINNER: SMALL SUBURBAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

East Hampton High School

East Hampton, NY



Sports program costs: **\$1,314,551¹⁵**
 Percentage of total school costs: **10.1%**



Students who play interscholastic/intramural sports or participate in school clubs involving physical activity (out of 900 students)

Interscholastic

- Baseball
- Basketball
- Bowling
- Cheerleading
- Cross Country
- Dance
- Field Hockey
- Football
- Golf
- Lacrosse
- Soccer
- Softball
- Swimming
- Tennis
- Track and Field
- Volleyball
- Wrestling

Intramural

None

Club

- Surfing
- Yoga

Website

easthamptonschools.org/schools/high_school

Contact

Joe Vasile-Cozzo, athletic director,
 vasilecozzo@ehschools.org



OUR WINNING SCHOOL RECEIVES
\$20,000 AWARD

COURTESY OF



WINNER'S INNOVATION: EAST HAMPTON HIGH SCHOOL

Engage Latino families to increase participation

Let it out, Lorenzo Rodriguez tells his East Hampton High School football players when pulling them aside at practice because they're frustrated and struggling mentally.

"If you have to cry, go ahead and cry," says Rodriguez, an East Hampton assistant coach. "Tell me what's happening."

Many of these players are Latino. Rodriguez, a first-generation American of Puerto Rican and Dominican descent, recognizes the challenges for these players just to be on the field. He's had players who are gay and can't come out because of their culture. He's coached players who need to work part-time jobs to pay their family rent. He's seen players bottle up whatever pressures they're facing.

"Our Latino community is very masculine – be strong and show no emotions," Rodriguez says. "We don't think about mental health and therapy. A lot of them see it as a bad thing, and it's not, but it's sad. We tell ourselves, 'Throw some dirt on it and keep moving.' Football kind of did that for me when I was younger. However, as a father, I've changed."

The Hamptons are not simply the Long Island resort area where wealthy, privileged families spend the summer in second homes. East Hampton is also a blue-collar community heavy on service jobs like housekeepers, fishermen, landscapers and carpenters.

The Latino population of East Hampton Township nearly doubled to 26.4% between 2000 and 2010; it was 5% in 1990. Today, more than half of East Hampton High School students are Latino, a massive shift that caused the school to completely change how it engages Latino students and parents, including in sports. Sports participation mirrors the color of the students – about 60% of East Hampton athletes are Latino, and it's not just due to soccer. Football, baseball, track and field, cross country, swimming and field hockey are other



sports that school officials say have, to varying degrees, added more Latino students.

Nationally, fewer Latino youth ages 13-17 (40%) play sports on a regular basis than White (44%) and Black (41%) youth.¹⁶ For its ability to entice more Latino students to play high school sports and engage with their families, East Hampton is recognized as the Aspen Institute's Project Play winner in the Small Suburban Schools category of our Reimagining School Sports initiative.

About eight years ago, the East Hampton Union Free School District recognized it had a serious problem. Three students committed suicide within three years. All of them were Latino.¹⁷ "You have immigrant families coming in who don't have access to bilingual services and are very reticent to take advantage of mental health services, and you have the perfect storm for a horrible situation," says East Hampton Superintendent Adam Fine, the high school's former principal. "And that's exactly what happened to us."



The suicides also highlighted a division between the school’s relatively economically comfortable population of White families, who were established in the township, and the newer, poorer Latino residents. Administrators noticed Latino families feeling alienated as their children struggled to adjust in school and without a way to truly voice their concerns.

“Many years ago, the school was the institution – you don’t question the school, everything they do is right,” Fine says. “At some point on Long Island, our White, entitled parents said, ‘Wait, I’m paying taxes and I’m going to tell the school what to do.’ We needed a little bit of balance. We had a group of Latino families that felt in the shadows, and there were definitely immigration concerns where people thought we’d call (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement) on them, which isn’t the case. What I found is the Spanish-speaking community is just as much an advocate for their own children as the White and African-American communities.”

The school district created a community liaison position to communicate directly with Latino parents. Now, every school email goes out bilingually. For athletics, that means parents who only speak Spanish can read what sports are offered, how and when to complete forms, and who to contact for more information.

As the demographics of the U.S. continue to change, many high schools may have no choice but to find new ways to engage Latino students or risk being unable

to field teams. The advice from Teresita Winter, East Hampton’s community liaison, for other schools: Go to where Latino families are to give them information. She visits local community settings and churches where they gather, even speaking at the end of Catholic Mass to introduce herself and invite families to school events.

“I became a familiar face to them,” Winter says. “I met them where they were. I didn’t ask them to come to this big, intimidating building. I said, let me go to them first and then they’ll come, and that’s exactly what happened.”

“ **The Spanish-speaking community is just as much an advocate for their own children as the White and African-American communities.**

Adam Fine, Superintendent/Former Principal

” A couple years ago, the East Hampton High School athletic department hired a bilingual assistant to help translate. “She’s a big, big help,” says Athletic Director Joe Vasile-Cozzo. “If someone calls my office, they’ll get a translator if needed.”

Not surprisingly, soccer is the school’s most popular sport for Latino students. On the girls team, 21 of the 24 players are Latino. Many speak both English and Spanish, but not all.



“My coaches are very, very inclusive,” says Melanie Luque, a bilingual soccer and lacrosse player. She enjoys lacrosse as her favorite sport – not soccer, her father’s favorite – after learning lacrosse from her older sister. “The coaches try to organize lists of Spanish terms, so all the kids understand – terms like ‘shoot the ball’ and ‘offsides.’ It’s a little difficult during games when coaches give out commands to the whole team. It gets lost in translation.”

Cara Nelson, the girls soccer coach, says she knows just enough Spanish to communicate with players who only speak Spanish. “What’s wonderful is so many girls on the team are bilingual and they will translate for their teammates,” Nelson says. “You can explain things by showing them how to correctly kick a ball or pass it, and they understand your gestures. That becomes trickier in a game situation and trying to explain a tactical perspective.”

Robert Velez, who played soccer at East Hampton until 2021, says his coach, Don McGovern, also understands Spanish well enough to communicate with his Ecuadorian-born parents while Velez served as the intermediary for his mom. “Schools should encourage more coaches to have some understanding of Spanish or be bilingual,” Velez says. “That really opens up opportunities. A lot of very talented kids in sports are Hispanic. Sometimes they’re shy or walk away because they’re scared and don’t know how to communicate.”

The girls soccer team, which has 50 players this year, has never made cuts in Nelson’s five years as coach. That’s more difficult for the boys soccer team, which

some years has more than 80 students try out for 56 varsity and JV spots. Students who are cut are encouraged to try playing another sport.

The biggest beneficiary is football. About 20% of the team is Latino, lower than the overall student population. But the increase in Latino players – they’re often soccer players who get cut and play defensive back or wide receiver – saved football at East Hampton, which struggled with participation as the Black population decreased and Latino students increased.

“**Schools should encourage more coaches to have some understanding of Spanish or be bilingual.**”

Robert Velez, East Hampton Athlete

Three years ago, football participation was down to 22 students so East Hampton temporarily ended the varsity program while maintaining a JV team. The varsity team simply stopped during that season due to safety concerns. Because of how conference alignment worked based on student enrollment, East Hampton was playing larger-roster teams while losing badly and suffering injuries.

“Kids start seeing that and stop playing,” Fine says. “At that point our board was like, ‘We’re done. Why are we even trying to field a team?’ We knew the participation numbers nationally were declining due to head injuries. It was exponentially worse in East Hampton. Even myself as the principal, I’m seriously like, ‘Why are we even pushing this?’ We were close to dead.”

East Hampton now has 60 players through a shared program with two other nearby school districts. School officials credit the sport’s survival to the hiring of new coaches under head coach Joe McKee who live in the community and relate to kids in the hallways. It also helped that Vasile-Cozzo, the athletic director, successfully appealed to Section XI of the New York State High School Athletic Association for East Hampton to drop down to a less-competitive conference.

“We were allowed to come in as a new program, giving us time to rebuild,” Vasile-Cozzo says. “There’s no youth tackle program out here. We really are a developmental team. Next year we’re supposed to go back up (to a more competitive conference). That’s going to be the tell-tale sign if we survive. We’re not ready. I’m going to petition to stay where we are. I think it will be denied.”

Vasile-Cozzo acknowledges that football is a very expensive sport and places the price tag at about \$250,000 annually – \$4,200 per participant – to operate at East Hampton. There’s no gate revenue from home games; tickets are free. Why still play?

“When we didn’t have football, the energy in the school building was different,” Vasile-Cozzo says. “For me, athletics is worth it. Thankfully, the board allowed me to not give it up.”

Robert Rivera (middle school), Jaron Greenidge (high school JV) and Rodriguez (varsity assistant) have added Latino representation for potential football players to see and hear. In 2017, Rodriguez started a youth flag football league to replace the Police Athletic League tackle football program that discontinued due to parents’ fears about injuries.

There are now 155 kids in the flag program from pre-kindergarten through sixth grade. Tackle football in East Hampton doesn’t start until the seventh grade. Since some parents remain scared, Rodriguez encourages them to have their child wait until high school to start tackle.

“Look, it is a violent sport,” Rodriguez says. “However, I explain how it relates to our community. See, a lot of Latinos are blue collar and work multiple jobs and bust our butt to try to get to the suburbs and survive. Football is like that with all the hard work you have to do. Once the game slows down for them, they’re like, ‘I got this.’”

Why still play football at East Hampton? Perhaps the answer can be found in essays that many former players wrote about Rodriguez, who works as a warehouse manager during the day and also subs as a custodian.

One player didn’t have a good relationship with his father when he met Rodriguez. “Lorenzo filled those shoes like nobody else could’ve, and honestly, I wouldn’t want it to be any other person,” the player wrote. “He just talks to you like a human and doesn’t try to downgrade you.”

Another player came to East Hampton knowing no English after living for 11 years in Colombia. He was very skinny and couldn’t communicate to teammates. It was Rodriguez who was “always pushing me and trying to make me take out the best of myself and believe in me,” the player wrote. “All of those words – ‘you can’ or ‘you can do better’ – were some of the things that were always in my head and made me the person I am today.”

Then there was a player who came to America after many emotional traumas and lived on his own starting at age 15. He never had a chance to be a kid and have fun. He met Rodriguez in the hallway and joined the football team. “I eventually turned to him for help, talking about how to manage money, what career to choose, what adulthood is like, and just the usual girl problems,” he wrote. “Basically, I saw him as a father or a big brother.”

By letting it out, East Hampton players stay true to who they are, and the school evolves as the country’s demographics continue to change.



HONOR ROLL IDEAS

Strategies that East Hampton High School uses that stood out as exemplary to the Aspen Institute and our project advisory board:

Engage students through personal workouts

In our national youth survey of high school suburban students, 44% of males and 33% of females said they work out at a gym. The older they are, the more suburban students say they work out – 28% in ninth grade vs. 44% in 12th grade. East Hampton has a fitness center with an instructor who helps athletes and non-athletes alike. “The kids really like it because the instructor will do a program specifically for you,” Athletic Director Joe Vasile-Cozzo says.

Go bowling for more athletes

Some students don’t want to run and sweat a lot. How can a school still keep them engaged? East Hampton offers bowling with 15 participants. The sport dried up for a while when the community’s bowling alley closed and picked up when a new location opened. “It’s a sport you can grab all kinds of different kids – not necessarily your athletes, but kids that really love competition,” Vasile-Cozzo says.

Use the power of triathlons to inspire girls

What if every girl believed she was brave, strong and capable? The East Hampton Union Free School District’s mental health coordinator runs an initiative called i-tri, which trains middle-school girls to complete a youth-distance triathlon as a metaphor for life’s journey in order to achieve big goals. The focus is on middle school because i-tri says research shows that the largest drop in self-esteem occurs during early adolescence (69% of elementary school-aged girls reported being “happy the way I am” vs. 29% for high school girls).

Tool for School Leaders

Did you know: High school athletes who played their primary sport 10 to 12 months per year scored significantly higher on personal/social skills, cognitive skills, goal setting, initiative and health than athletes who focused on their primary sport less. However, the year-round athletes also reported higher negative experiences. Learn more from the Healthy Sport Index, a data-driven project of the Aspen Institute and Hospital for Special Surgery that analyzes the relative benefits and risks of playing each sport.

Visit: healthysportindex.com



Healthy Sport Index

Powered By  HOSPITAL FOR SPECIAL SURGERY

Get Kids Moving

BOKS is a free physical activity program for kids of all ages and abilities. The BOKS program includes lesson plans, training, and support needed to get kids moving for up to 45 minutes a day. It also includes shorter movement breaks, games, and activities tailored to the needs of an educator or parent.

Learn more at:
bokskids.org

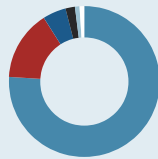
MORE HONOR ROLL IDEAS

Strategies that our other three finalists use that stood out to us as exemplary:

Center Moriches High School | Center Moriches, NY

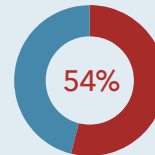


Location



Race/ethnicity

- White (76%)
- Hispanic (15%)
- Black (5%)
- American Indian/ Native American (2%)
- Other (1.8%)
- Hawaiian Native/ Pacific Islander (0.2%)



Students who play interscholastic/ intramural sports or participate in school clubs involving physical activity

Interscholastic

- | | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| Baseball | Soccer |
| Basketball | Softball |
| Cheerleading | Swimming |
| Cross Country | Tennis |
| Football | Track and Field |
| Golf | Volleyball |
| Lacrosse | Wrestling |

Intramural

- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| Baseball | Soccer |
| Basketball | Softball |
| Cross Country | Weightlifting |
| Golf | Wrestling |
| Lacrosse | |

Club

- | | |
|-------------------|------|
| Strength Training | Yoga |
|-------------------|------|

Give coaches basic training to help athletes with mental health

Jeremy Thode is not only the athletic director and associate principal at Center Moriches High School. He also oversees the school’s counseling and school psychologist program. Mental health challenges “are rampant” for students,” Thode says. “I think a lot of it has to do with social media and electronics. We coined a phrase that the phone is a message of mass destruction for kids. They’re locked into this virtual world that isn’t real.”

Thode intentionally balances every sports team with a coach familiar with social and emotional learning, in case another coach on the team may be more old-school. Center Moriches plans to create a “decision tree” with basic training for coaches to help any athletes struggling with mental health. “You want to give coaches some training without it being overbearing and making sure coaches don’t make a mistake,” Thode says. “You can easily trip yourself up, even as a trained professional, and cause more damage than good.”

Website

cmschools.org/schools/highschool

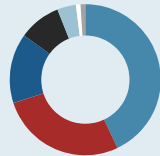
Contact

Jeremy Thode, associate principal/athletic director,
jthode@cmschools.org

Florida Atlantic University High School | Boca Raton, FL

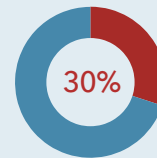


Location



Race/ethnicity

- White (43%)
- Hispanic (27%)
- Black (15%)
- Asian (10%)
- 2 or More Race (5%)
- American Indian/Alaska Native (0.3%)
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (0.1%)



Students who play interscholastic/intramural sports or participate in school clubs involving physical activity: **30%**

Interscholastic

- Basketball
- Cheerleading
- Cross Country
- Golf
- Soccer
- Tennis
- Track and Field
- Volleyball

Intramural

- Flag Football
- Spirit Squad

Club

- Biking
- Dance
- Yoga/Fitness

Find sports and competitive levels for all kids in PE

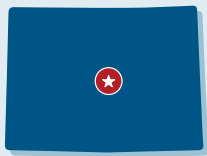
Besides teaching students some traditional sports, Florida Atlantic University High School also exposes them to badminton, cricket, dodgebee, pickleball, tchoukball, team handball, Ultimate frisbee, and water polo. Florida Atlantic breaks down PE activities into modified games so students can choose to play at a competitive or noncompetitive level. “You’d be surprised how many go noncompetitive because they like that the other kids aren’t taking it seriously,” PE teacher Christopher Childs says. “When you teach a lot of games that most kids have never played before, it’s an equal playing field for everybody.”

As a final PE project, ninth graders create their own fitness video and develop a new game to share with the class. “They are so detailed and enjoy it,” Childs says. “They get to do something they find fun and it’s making them think.”

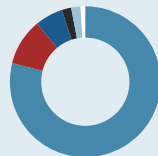
Website
fauhigh.fau.edu/

Contact
 Christopher Childs, athletic director/PE teacher, cchilds2@fau.edu

Sheridan High School | Englewood, CO

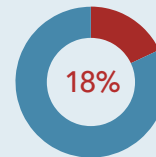


Location



Race/ethnicity

- Hispanic (79%)
- White (10%)
- Black (6%)
- Other (2%)
- Asian (2%)
- 2 or more races (1%)



Students who play interscholastic/intramural sports or participate in school clubs involving physical activity: **18%**

Interscholastic

- | | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| Baseball | Soccer |
| Basketball | Softball |
| Cheerleading | Track and Field |
| Cross Country | Volleyball |
| Football | Wrestling |

Intramural None

Club None

Website

ssd2.org/sheridanhighschool1.aspx

Contact

Leslie Gomez, athletic director,
lgomez2@ssd2.org

Adopt an athlete for financial support

Finances are challenging for Sheridan High School and many of its families (93% free or reduced lunch). As it is, Sheridan charges \$55 per sport for a student to play. Lots of parents lost their job during the pandemic, leaving their child unable to afford uniforms and equipment needed to play their sport. So, a number of administrative staff members have “adopted” an athlete through the school’s athlete scholarship fund, buying items needed to play the sport.

Almost every athlete receives some type of item. Usually, a staff member donates about \$50. People ranging from the superintendent on down pick an athlete to adopt. Players are pleasantly surprised when they receive their new equipment. “It is very rewarding to see the smile on the athletes’ faces as they are thanking that special person who helped them participate and be successful in their sport,” Sheridan Athletic Director Leslie Gomez says.

ENDNOTES

1. Analysis of 2017-18 Civil Rights Data Collection conducted by Resonant Education. The participation rate represents the percentage of roster spots compared to the total population of students that year, rather than the percentage of students who were participating in sports. Some students, of course, participated in more than one sport. For schools which reported single-sex athletics information, there were some omissions of urbanicity and Title I status. However, 81% of urbanicity data and 93% of Title I data were able to be reconciled, and any analysis referring to this information used only complete data entries. Another point of context: In the Aspen Institute's survey of students in 2020-21, 49% of ninth- to 12th-graders in suburban schools said they had played at least one season of a sport with a school team, at any point during high school.
2. [Sport Specialization Characteristics Between Rural and Suburban High School Athletes](#). David R. Bell, Eric G. Post, Stephanie M. Trigsted; Orthopaedic Journal of Sports Medicine, 2018.
3. ["Prior to COVID-19, Urban Core Counties in the U.S. Were Gaining Vitality on Key Measures."](#) Pew Research Center, July 29, 2020.
4. [National Center for Education Statistics](#).
5. ["Education Statistics: Facts About American Schools."](#) Education Week, Feb. 22, 2021.
6. ["Suburban Public Schools are Now Majority Non-White. The Backlash Has Already Begun."](#) Education Week, March 17, 2021.
7. [Reframing Suburbs: Race, Place, and Opportunity in Suburban Educational Spaces](#). John B. Diamond, Linn Posey-Maddox, Maria D. Velazquez; SAGE Journals, Nov. 23, 2020.
8. ["Black and Hispanic Students in Philly Suburbs are Disciplined More Harshly Than White Peers, Underrepresented in AP Classes, Report Finds."](#) The Philadelphia Inquirer, March 25, 2021.
9. [Challenging the Achievement Gap in a Suburban High School](#). John B. Diamond, William J. Corrin, Judith Levinson. Learning Point Associates, 2004.
10. ["Suburban Schools: The Unrecognized Frontier in Public Education."](#) Sean Gill, Jordan Posamentier and Paul T. Hill, Center for Reinventing Public Education, May 2016.
11. Aspen Institute analysis of 2018-19 and 2008-09 [high school sports participation data from the National Federation of State High School Associations](#).
12. Aspen Institute survey of high school students, 2020-21.
13. ["The Making of a College Athlete: High School Experiences, Socioeconomic Advantages, and the Likelihood of Playing College Sports."](#) Sociology of Sport Journal, James Tompsett and Chris Knoester, August 2021.
14. Aspen Institute survey of high school students, 2020-21.
15. Information was provided by East Hampton High School. Most of the sports costs come from coaching stipends (\$594,398) and transportation (\$462,165). Additional expenses are for Section XI/officials fees (\$101,852), uniforms/supplies (\$59,910), contractual expenses for awards, facility uses, medical and invitationals (\$38,360), equipment (\$24,890), timers/scorers (\$17,256), and insurance (\$15,720). The total annual expenses for the entire high school are approximately \$13 million.
16. Data from Sports and Fitness Industry Association, 2020.
17. ["Ethnicity, Class and Suicide Lead a Hamptons School to Reach Out."](#) The New York Times, June 10, 2013.

CREDITS

Jon Solomon, editorial director of Aspen Sports & Society Program, was principal investigator of this report. Tom Farrey, executive director, edited the report. Staff including Funmi Animashaun, program assistant, provided project management. Members of the Reimagining School Sports Advisory Committee, representing perspectives from education, youth sports, health, academia, government, and philanthropy, contributed to the development of this report. Photos were provided by Center Moriches High School, East Hampton High School and Florida Atlantic University High School.

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