Reimagining Youth Sport in the City of Chicago

**Background**

- **Only 10%** of elementary students participate in school sports.
- Students are **cut** as young as age 11.
- Elementary athletics programming was heavily impacted by **budget** challenges.
- **Community challenges** necessitate that we maximize after-school programs.

**Vision**

- We need a **culture shift** in how we think about athletics programming.
- We should focus on increased participation with an **inclusive** policy.
- Expanded sports programming will foster individual and academic **achievement**.
- We have the opportunity to **strengthen communities** through league play.
**Elementary School Sports Program Goals**

We aim to increase student participation and improve academics, while strengthening communities.

1. **Improving academics.** Support academic achievement by capitalizing on the benefits that participation in athletics programs provides to student-athletes, such as improved attendance, increased parental involvement, and expanded social experiences to learn critical life skills.

2. **Increasing participation.** Provide a safe, structured sports experience for all 5-8th grade elementary school students who want to participate on a team, and introduce youth to caring coaches to instill lifelong skills and positive values.

3. **Strengthening communities.** Create conferences of neighboring elementary schools and use the local high school for weekend games to create a safe community social center that attracts the entire family and promotes stronger linkages between elementary and high schools.

4. **Expanding partners.** Develop a public-private partnership that promotes collaboration between CPS and alumni, sister agencies, sports organizations, professional sports teams, and the corporate community to create a lasting, life-changing impact for students and to allow CPS to keep tax dollars in the classrooms.
Key Tenets of the New Program

- Ensure the program is **inclusive** and provides all interested 5-8th grade students the opportunity to play and practice (e.g., minimum playing time requirements).

- Build a **conference structure** to foster a sense of community between schools that are geographically near each other.

- Host contests at neighborhood **high schools on Saturdays** to drive engagement and involvement.

- Solicit **student, family and community volunteers** to serve as game day staff (e.g., scorekeepers, timekeepers).

- Promote the long-term success of the program by making it the **only framework for interscholastic league play** between elementary schools at CPS.

- Leverage **public-private partnerships** to facilitate the implementation, administration and funding of the program.
A Successful Pilot in the 2015-16 School Year

“"I was admittedly skeptical about the new basketball format. I have received outstanding feedback from schools about how it has transformed some student behaviors and engagement.”
~ Network Administrator

Taft Junior Eagles

Sport: Basketball
Location: Taft High School
Schools: Canty, Hitch, Palmer, Smyser, Solomon, and Taft
Community: High school student coaches, scoreboard operators, and scorekeepers

Dunbar Junior Athletes

Sport: Basketball
Location: Dunbar High School
Schools: Beasley, Carnegie, Hendricks, Ray, Reavis, and Till
Community: Local music, cheerleading, Dunbar career programs fair

La Villita Athletes

Sport: Soccer
Location: La Villita Park & Gary Elementary Schools
Schools: Castellanos, Corkery, Gary, Kanoon, Spry, Saucedo, and Telpochcalli
Community: Chicago Park District

“I can’t say enough about this program. My students were more focused and did better on assessments and in their classes”
~ Sandee McDonald, principal of Thomas A. Hendricks Elementary Community Academy
Thank You!