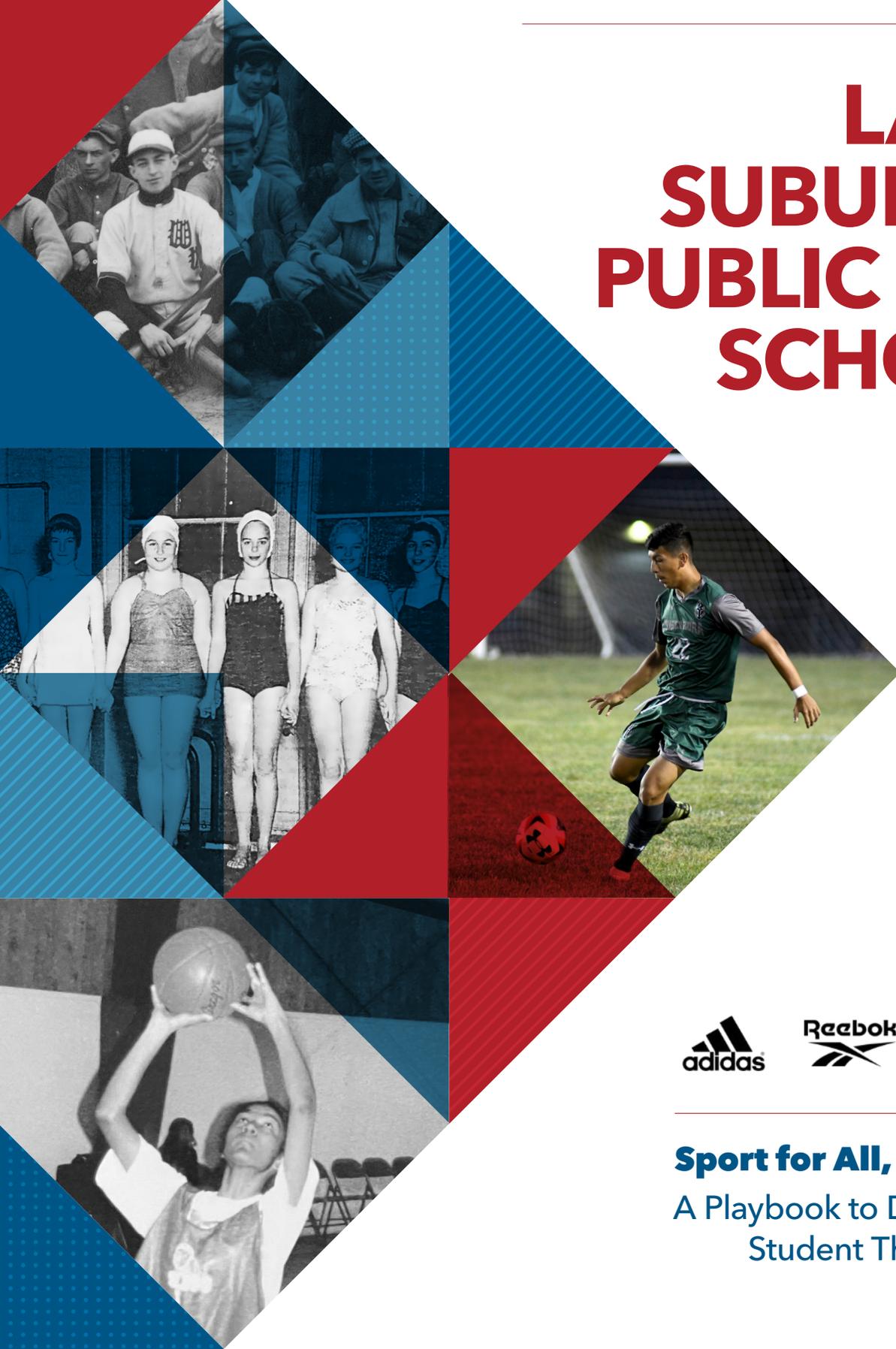




REIMAGINING  
SCHOOL SPORTS

# LARGE SUBURBAN PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS



**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/Reebok, 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](https://as.pn/sportsfacts)



Learn more about this project and find all reports at: [as.pn/schoolsports](https://as.pn/schoolsports)

## Challenges and Opportunities: Large Suburban Public Schools

Nationally, 70% of suburban public high schools offer interscholastic sports, a higher rate than urban (63%) and a lower rate than rural (73%) schools, according to an Aspen Institute-commissioned analysis of 2017-18 Civil Rights Data Collection by Resonant Education.<sup>1</sup> 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 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.<sup>2</sup> 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%). Among all suburban students, more Whites (18%) said sports are too expensive than Hispanics (15%) and Blacks (5%).

Pay-to-play policies have become a staple for high school sports, especially suburban schools. Thirty-three states documented districts utilizing pay-to-play fees.<sup>3</sup> In many cases, state legislatures have limited the amount of money that schools can generate through local property taxes, and states have struggled to maintain past levels of funding to education. "Although pay-to-play fees may negatively impact participation rates, these policies can generate the necessary revenue needed to help save sports from elimination," wrote Scott Grant, a professor who researched pay-to-play practices of almost 500 Ohio high schools.<sup>4</sup>

### Characteristics of Suburban Schools

For purposes of this report, the Aspen Institute defines a large suburban school as a public school with more than 1,000 students and classifies itself as located in a suburban area. The National Center for Education Statistics defines a large 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 eight of 10 suburban schools are classified as large.<sup>5</sup> A plurality of the nation's K-12 public school students (40%) attend suburban schools, with some high schools serving several thousand students.<sup>6</sup>

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.<sup>7</sup> Changing demographics are increasingly impacting the issues these schools face, such as poverty and educational inequity.<sup>8</sup> Suburban districts continue to have a massive achievement gap based on race and ethnicity.<sup>9</sup> <sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup>

Nearly half of high schools in Ohio implemented a pay-to-play policy, with annual fees in some sports reaching \$1,600 per family. Six of 10 athletic directors with these policies could not specify exactly how the funds were used. Over time, the policy goals, implementation strategies and measurements for success related to pay-to-play fees can get lost if they are not regularly communicated to athletic directors and the public. “If a pay-to-participate policy is a necessity within a district,” Grant wrote, “then it is the responsibility of the athletic administrator, school administrators, and school board to fully understand every component of its development, implementation, and evaluation to ensure it provides the students with the most opportunities to develop.”

Six of 10 surveyed Ohio high schools offered some sort of waiver program. But some suburban ADs told the Aspen Institute that students may not try out for teams to avoid the social stigma of asking for financial help. For instance, when the New Albany school district, an affluent suburb of Columbus, Ohio, raised its fees from \$50 to \$625, sports participation dropped 16% even with financial help for 100 students.<sup>12</sup>

Some suburban students get priced out at young ages to play on organized teams or receive private training, so they later lack the skills needed to make the high school team. This can be an especially daunting challenge in large schools that draw far more students to tryouts than there are roster spots. “High schools that allow their name to be a feeder option for younger kids risk sending the message that if you don’t make that youth team with the school name on it, you may not be able to make the high school team,” said Paul Neidig, Indiana High School Athletic Association commissioner.

Several suburban ADs told us they worry about the future of the educational-based, school sports model given demands by some parents to see their child succeed at all costs. As one frustrated AD put it, “The thinking by parents is if you’re not spending every waking minute or every extra dollar you have to make your kid be a champion, what’s the point?”

That is not what students want. When asked in the 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 – even though suburban schools traditionally sponsor the largest number of sports.

Also, 43% of suburban ninth graders said they don’t play school sports because sports aren’t enjoyable – higher than all surveyed ninth graders (34%). This suggests some students may have played sports too much at younger ages, resulting in negative experiences. With creativity and commitment, large suburban schools have an opportunity to send healthy messages about sports to younger children. Then they can provide many pathways to physical activity, such as intramurals and sport-related clubs, offering as many teams in each interscholastic sport as there is demand for them, and innovative approaches to physical education. Some ideas in this report can help refresh the high school sports model.

# 7 in 20

SUBURBAN STUDENTS SPECIALIZE IN ONE SPORT  
VS. 1 IN 7 RURAL<sup>13</sup>

# 43%

OF SUBURBAN NON-ATHLETES SAY THEY  
DON’T LIKE SPORTS BY 9TH GRADE

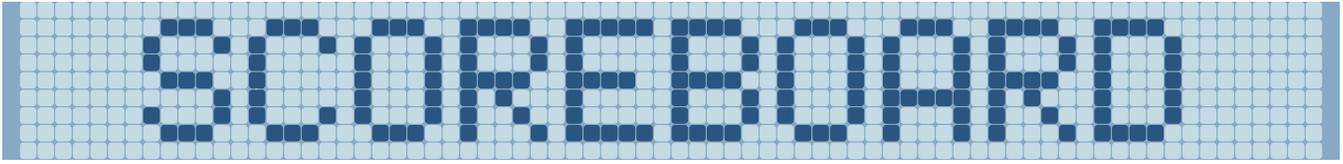
# 41%

OF ALL SUBURBAN STUDENTS SAY THEY  
PLAY FOR A COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP

# 79%

SAY HAVING FUN IS WHY THEY PLAY<sup>14</sup>

## LARGE 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 play at school

*(played at least one full season on team since 9th grade)*

#### Female

	<b>28%</b>	Volleyball
	<b>19%</b>	Track and Field
	<b>17%</b>	Basketball
	<b>15%</b>	Soccer
	<b>13%</b>	Softball
	<b>13%</b>	Cross Country
	<b>11%</b>	Swimming
	<b>10%</b>	Tennis
	<b>9%</b>	Cheerleading
	<b>5%</b>	Golf
	<b>5%</b>	Dance

#### Male

	<b>43%</b>	Tackle Football
	<b>24%</b>	Baseball
	<b>22%</b>	Basketball
	<b>21%</b>	Track and Field
	<b>13%</b>	Wrestling
	<b>12%</b>	Soccer
	<b>12%</b>	Cross Country
	<b>9%</b>	Golf
	<b>4%</b>	Bowling
	<b>3%</b>	Tennis
	<b>3%</b>	Weightlifting

#### All

	<b>21%</b>	Tackle Football
	<b>20%</b>	Track and Field
	<b>19%</b>	Basketball
	<b>16%</b>	Volleyball
	<b>14%</b>	Soccer
	<b>13%</b>	Baseball
	<b>12%</b>	Cross Country
	<b>7%</b>	Wrestling
	<b>7%</b>	Swimming
	<b>7%</b>	Golf
	<b>7%</b>	Tennis

### Top sports that suburban students wish their school offered

#### Female

	<b>12%</b>	Archery
	<b>7%</b>	Gymnastics
	<b>6%</b>	Lacrosse
	<b>6%</b>	Ice Hockey
	<b>6%</b>	Dance Team
	<b>4%</b>	Badminton

#### Male

	<b>12%</b>	Archery
	<b>8%</b>	Ice Hockey
	<b>6%</b>	Lacrosse
	<b>5%</b>	Ultimate Frisbee
	<b>5%</b>	Skiing
	<b>5%</b>	Weightlifting
	<b>4%</b>	Bowling
	<b>4%</b>	Tackle Football

#### All

	<b>13%</b>	Archery
	<b>7%</b>	Ice Hockey
	<b>6%</b>	Lacrosse
	<b>4%</b>	Badminton
	<b>4%</b>	Skiing
	<b>6%</b>	Gymnastics
	<b>4%</b>	Weightlifting
	<b>4%</b>	Dance Team
	<b>4%</b>	Bowling

## Other physical activities suburban students want to try

### Female

	33%	Dance
	33%	Yoga
	28%	Strength Training
	22%	Skateboarding
	21%	Biking
	21%	General Fitness Classes
	16%	Climbing
	14%	Outdoor Recreation

### Male

	41%	Strength Training
	25%	Biking
	19%	Parkour
	18%	Skateboarding
	17%	Climbing
	15%	General Fitness Classes
	13%	Adventure Racing
	11%	Outdoor Recreation

### All

	34%	Strength Training
	23%	Biking
	21%	Yoga
	20%	Skateboarding
	20%	Dance
	18%	General Fitness Classes
	17%	Climbing
	13%	Parkour

## Why suburban students play sports

Reason	Female	Male	All
Have fun	85%	74%	79%
Exercise	80%	74%	77%
Playing with and making new friends	71%	55%	63%
Learn and improve skills	66%	60%	63%
Competing	53%	58%	56%
Emotional/mental health	59%	43%	52%
Winning games/championships	45%	57%	51%
College scholarships	38%	45%	41%
Improve college application	44%	38%	41%
Getting away from problems	40%	39%	39%

## What prevents suburban students from playing sports

Reason	Female	Male	All
Too much schoolwork	44%	35%	41%
I don't enjoy sports	34%	30%	33%
No offered sports interest me	25%	34%	29%
Work schedule	24%	22%	23%
Didn't try out/not good enough	27%	16%	22%
Family responsibilities	21%	16%	18%
Too expensive	18%	12%	15%
My friends don't play	18%	10%	14%
I don't feel welcome	12%	9%	11%
Fear of injury/illness	9%	9%	10%
Previous injuries	11%	3%	7%



WINNER: LARGE SUBURBAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS



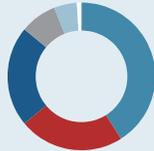
REIMAGINING SCHOOL SPORTS

# Tuscarora High School

Frederick, MD

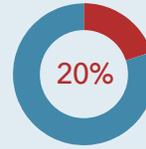


Location

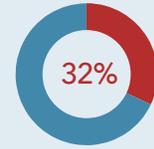


Race/ethnicity

- White (41%)
- Hispanic (23%)
- Black (22%)
- Asian (8%)
- Two or more races (5%)
- Other (1%)



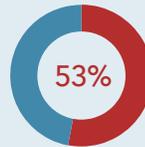
Disability



Free/reduced lunch

Sports program costs: **\$572,158<sup>15</sup>**

Percentage of total school costs: **2.8%**



Students who play interscholastic/intramural sports or participate in school clubs involving physical activity (out of 1,641 students)

### Interscholastic

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

### Intramural

- Basketball
- Volleyball

### Club

- Archery
- Badminton
- Dance
- Ice Hockey
- Outdoor Hiking
- Strength Training

Website  
[education.fcps.org/thhs/home](http://education.fcps.org/thhs/home)

Contact **Howie Putterman**, Athletic Director,  
howard.putterman@fcps.org



OUR WINNING SCHOOL RECEIVES  
**\$20,000 AWARD**

COURTESY OF



## WINNER'S INNOVATION / TUSCARORA HIGH SCHOOL

## Make Intramurals, PE Co-Curricular Needs

As a freshman, Jackson VanTassell was ready to transfer from Tuscarora High School to a private school. He had his baseball career mapped out – travel ball tournaments up and down the East Coast, high school success and then college baseball. His plan did not account for a struggling baseball team at Tuscarora.

When a PE teacher was hired as the new baseball coach, VanTassell decided to stay. He's thankful he did, given friends he made at Tuscarora from so many different backgrounds, whether through his role coaching special-needs students in sports, playing with less-talented classmates in physical education class and intramurals, or building lasting relationships with his PE teachers.



**Somehow along the way we lost the notion that kids in high school don't want to play or be physically active, and that's not accurate.**

Christopher Berry, Tuscarora High School Principal



"Tuscarora's diversity made me into the person I am today," says VanTassell, a senior who will play baseball at Radford University starting in 2021. "I will never judge anyone by what they look like because of what I learned here. Playing with all kids at PE and intramurals is a big part of that."

Tuscarora High School, located in Frederick, Maryland, embraces physical activity during school hours as a co-curricular asset tied to education. Intramural volleyball and basketball activities, plus table tennis, badminton and strength training clubs, are periodically available during daily flex periods. Unified sports teams in tennis, bocce and track and field



allow Tuscarora students with disabilities and general education students to play and learn together.

These efforts are led by a group of PE teachers who students say possess a unique ability to relate to them in ways very few teachers can. For its ability to find joy, relief and meaning through physical activity during the school day, Tuscarora is recognized as the Aspen Institute's Project Play winner in the Large Suburban Schools category of our Reimagining School Sports initiative.

"Somehow along the way we lost the notion that kids in high school don't want to play or be physically active, and that's not accurate," Tuscarora Principal Christopher Berry says.

Too often, Berry says, high schools incorrectly assume that interscholastic sports teams meet the needs of students to be active, when in reality many students arrive in high school without a competitive sports background and thus won't make their team. "This leaves kids with this belief that sports are not for me, and therefore exercise in school is not for me, and that's too bad," he says.



Parents also play a role in creating this misperception by believing every activity must have a purpose and firm structure, Berry says. “What you’re doing by offering an extension of PE class is giving kids an opportunity to just have fun,” he says. “It doesn’t have to be something you put on a resume. Learn something new and hang out with your friends in a way that allows you to burn off some energy, and maybe you’re more focused in class.”

Research shows physically active children score up to 40% higher on test scores and are 15% more likely to attend college.<sup>16</sup> Nationally, 68% of suburban high school students report they enjoy PE class and 13% say they dislike it, according to a survey by the Aspen Institute. Another 14% have never taken high school PE.

At Tuscarora, a school of 1,600 students, the only required PE section is a health and fitness course. But before the pandemic, students regularly signed up for more than one course. Usually, about one-third of the students takes PE at any given time, says Howie Putterman, the school’s athletic director and a PE teacher.

In 2019-20, 1,108 Tuscarora students enrolled in PE, taking 90-minute courses like health and fitness (414 students), strength training (275), team sports (90), basketball (80), sports medicine (63), volleyball (60), soccer (40), coaching (23) and Unified (15). In addition, school officials estimate about 300 students participated in intramurals or clubs involving physical activity, many of which are led by PE teachers Mike

O’Brien, Dean Swink, Mark Angleberger, Jess Valentine and Putterman.

“PE is popular with students because of the teachers,” VanTassell says. “They’re the most personable people in the building by far and they’re always willing to go the extra mile for you. They’re so interested in your success and not their own agenda. It’s such a healthy relationship with all of them.”

Rachel Nichols, a senior lacrosse player, enjoys talking with O’Brien (or Coach OB, as he’s called) about how to be a leader and handle problems within her team. It doesn’t matter that O’Brien isn’t her coach. “They all really understand where you’re coming from,” Nichols says.

When a Tuscarora student died a couple years ago, senior Mallory Brown remembers Swink was the first person to comfort her and calm her down. “Anything you ever need to talk about, the PE teachers are the people everybody goes to,” Brown says. “I think of them like family.”

Many times, the conversations between students and PE teachers dive into difficult issues. Politics, college choices, financial trouble at home, sexual orientation, and boyfriend/girlfriend trouble get discussed.

“That probing, that interest in what’s on the kids’ mind, is what draws the kids to the PE teachers,” says Putterman, noting that more Tuscarora students ask to be classroom helpers in PE than any other subject. “Kids’ lives are controlled for seven hours a day.

We still have a curriculum, rules and things we have to do in PE. But they're dying to be adults, and we give them some freedom and the ability to have adult conversations."

Sometimes, conversations between Tuscarora PE teachers and students lead to new intramural sports or clubs. The strength training club started after a student asked a PE teacher to lift at school since he lacked access to a gym. That became a club with 20-50 students working out each day, many of them non-athletes.

In the pre-COVID era, intramurals were very popular during flex period, a county-wide time designed for students to receive tutoring, make up schoolwork and participate in clubs. It's a 35-minute daily window, usually from 10:35-11:10 am, that the Tuscarora PE department turned into an opportunity for physical activity.

There have been seven-week volleyball tournaments in which students selected teams based on class (two teams each for the freshman, sophomore, junior and senior classes). Two or three games were played each flex period. The final four teams played at the winter pep rally, with the winning student team advancing to play a staff team in front of the whole school.

Each March, Tuscarora usually holds a three-on-three intramural basketball tournament during flex period. There's an NBA division for advanced players and an NCAA division for less-skilled students playing for fun. Badminton and table tennis clubs plus flag football powderpuff preparation have also occurred during flex period. If anything, some students say they wish Tuscarora had more intramurals, such as capture the flag, handball, dodgeball and cornhole.

The school's English Language Learners use physical activity during the day to recharge their minds. They often visit the gym once a week to play soccer.

“

**My best friend is my bocce partner since freshman year. She has Down syndrome. Everybody gets to benefit from playing Unified sports.**

Mallory Brown, Tuscarora High School Senior

”

Learning for Life, a structured classroom for students with developmental and cognitive disabilities, also regularly takes its students to shoot baskets, play hockey or just go for a walk in the gym.

"My best friend is my bocce partner since freshman year," says Brown, a senior. "She has Down syndrome. Everybody gets to benefit from playing Unified sports."

Tuscarora, located about one hour northwest of Washington D.C. and Baltimore, in some ways represents how suburban schools are evolving. The days of suburban schools being predominantly White are changing. Although Frederick County, where the school is located, is 81% White, only 41% of Tuscarora's students are White. Tuscarora pulls from inner-city Frederick with gang violence, rural communities with farms, and affluent families with single-family homes.

"There are students on public assistance and students living in million-dollar homes," says Berry, the principal. "As an educator, you have to really understand who the kids are in front of you because there's not a typical Tuscarora kid."

PE can be a safe haven. Some students with behavioral issues in academic classes excel in PE – and later boost grades in other classes – because it's an opportunity to let loose and gain confidence, O'Brien says.

Some students want nothing to do with PE, so O'Brien keeps those conversations positive and the goals attainable. He doesn't require those students to change into gym clothes, which can be a barrier to participate.

“

**PE is popular with students because of the teachers. They're the most personable people in the building by far and they're always willing to go the extra mile for you.**

Jackson VanTassell, Tuscarora High School Senior

”

He tells those students just try the activity today to see if they like it, and tomorrow they can try something else.

“We have kids used to middle school where you have to change and play basketball for three to four weeks,” O'Brien says. “We can find something that's a little niche and it develops into something they didn't realize they would like. It's all about talking to a student, because there are kids who don't hear anything positive throughout a school day, and that positive comment can light a spark.”

Putterman is concerned about Tuscarora's immediate future with PE. Not surprisingly, enrollment in PE plummeted during COVID as the school went remote and then reopened. “Hybrid PE is unfortunately a joke,” Putterman says. “No one signed up for PE to write papers on researching the Premier League. That's work, not play. We teach you things through PE, but it's through play.”

The PE department lost two sections of strength training and one section each on volleyball, soccer, and coaching (a class in which students learn coaching philosophies and financial budgets and also coach classmates during intramurals). Because fewer students registered for PE in 2021-22, Tuscarora lost the equivalent of half a PE teacher, dropping to five-and-a-half positions among six staff members. The 2021-22 student PE enrollment numbers will probably be the lowest since Tuscarora opened in 2003, a concern of school officials who know they will inherit more mental health challenges due to the pandemic.

“Half of the school won't know us,” Putterman says. “I think kids haven't signed up for PE because they didn't get to know our teachers. They're just not drawn to come down to us at any moment like they used to be.”

Sometimes students find their way back to PE. Nichols, a highly competitive senior lacrosse player, says she had no time for PE as a sophomore and junior due to college-level classes and club lacrosse during pivotal recruiting years.

Then Nichols got appendicitis that knocked her out of club tournaments. Then COVID hit. Suddenly, she had not committed to a college yet by the summer before her senior year. “All of that led to massive burnout (on sports),” says Nichols, who will play lacrosse at Frostburg State University. “Burnout is for real.”

As a senior, she took a PE strength training class. “It was my chance to be active and just decompress.”

Often, that's all students need from physical activity during school hours – a chance to breathe.



## HONOR ROLL IDEAS

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

### Let kids shadow high school athletes

To grow fan attendance and encourage younger children to play sports, Tuscarora allows students in grade school to occasionally shadow varsity players before a game. The child experiences the pre-game meal, player warmups and the coach’s speech. Athletic Director Howie Putterman says the event works especially well for girls’ teams. “For a 10-year-old girl to go into a team room, that’s like you or I walking into Ravens Stadium,” he says.

### Create “Free Play Friday” in PE

On Fridays at Tuscarora, every PE section mixes together so students participate in whatever sport or activity they want. Some play basketball, volleyball, badminton or soccer. Some toss a football. Some lift weights or do cardio exercises. Some fast walk around the gym. Some dance to Just Dance videos on the TV. The point: Students, not adults, choose what they want to play.

### Use team practices to promote academics

One in three Tuscarora students are academically ineligible, often due to lack of educational support at home, trauma in their life, or periods of interrupted education. Ineligible students cannot play games or travel with their team, but unlike the policy of a neighboring county, they can still practice. “At first I wasn’t sure I liked this policy,” Putterman says, “but it’s a huge carrot and it keeps some kids engaged.”

## Tool for School Leaders

Among the top 10 sports played by boys and girls in high schools nationally, soccer (boys) and basketball (girls) deliver the most social and emotional benefits. That’s one of many findings in 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.

Learn more at:  
[healthysportindex.com](http://healthysportindex.com)



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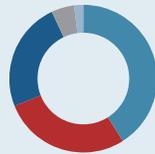
## MORE HONOR ROLL IDEAS

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

### Alexandria City High School | Alexandria, VA

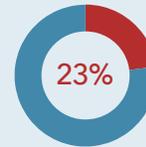


Location



Race/ethnicity

- Hispanic (41%)
- Black (28%)
- White (24%)
- Asian (5%)
- Two or more races (2%)



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

#### Interscholastic

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

Intramural      None

#### Club

- |            |            |
|------------|------------|
| Ice Hockey | Rugby      |
| Rowing     | Volleyball |

#### Website

[acps.k12.va.us/tcw](https://acps.k12.va.us/tcw)

#### Contact

**James Parker**, athletic director,  
james.parker@acps.k12.va.us

#### Partner with community providers to create a home for athletes who get cut to still play

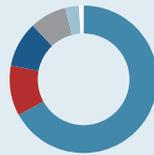
A school of 4,100 students, Alexandria City High School often has 300 students try out for 45 soccer spots, resulting in players who get cut having nowhere to play or lacking interest to try out again. So, Alexandria City High School partnered with the Alexandria Soccer Association (ASA) for high school students to play soccer for free with ASA. In exchange, ASA can use Alexandria City High School fields for free. Students can play ASA in the fall and may not feel slighted if they are cut in the spring at Alexandria City High School, allowing them to return to ASA in the spring as a “feeder league” for the high school.

It’s part of Alexandria City’s effort to make its sports programs more equitable to reflect the racial and ethnic makeup of the community. The school changed its name from T.C. Williams, named after a former superintendent who was a segregationist, to Alexandria City in 2021-22. “If you don’t have money, you can’t play soccer, volleyball and some other sports when you’re younger,” Alexandria City High School Athletic Director James Parker says. “Many kids of color can’t compete and get cut in high school because the entry level to the sport is too high. We have to find ways to get them involved.”

## Bloomfield Hills High School | Bloomfield Hills, MI

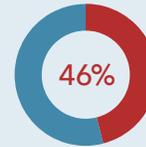


Location



Race/ethnicity

- White (67%)
- Black (11%)
- Asian (10%)
- Middle Eastern (8%)
- Hispanic (3%)
- Other (1%)



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

### Interscholastic

- |                |                 |
|----------------|-----------------|
| Baseball       | Gymnastics      |
| Basketball     | Ice Hockey      |
| Bowling        | Lacrosse        |
| Cheerleading   | Skiing          |
| Cross Country  | Soccer          |
| Dance/Poms     | Softball        |
| Equestrian     | Swimming        |
| Field Hockey   | Tennis          |
| Figure Skating | Track and Field |
| Football       | Volleyball      |
| Golf           | Wrestling       |

**Intramural**      None

### Club

- |                       |                   |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Badminton             | Strength Training |
| Frisbee Football      | Table Tennis      |
| Powerderpuff Football |                   |

### Website

[bloomfield.org/schools/bloomfield-hills-high-school](http://bloomfield.org/schools/bloomfield-hills-high-school)

### Contact

**Avis Najor**, athletic coordinator,  
avnajor@bloomfield.org

### Make schools community hubs investing in athletes for life

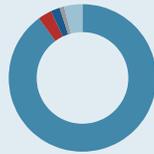
Bloomfield Hills Township today lacks a city-run recreation department, so community recreation opportunities are run by the school district. The high school campus gets used by community members as parks during warm weather and as indoor walks in the cold. The school plans to build a Health and Wellness Center for students and the entire community to use, such as spaces for a weight room, wrestling room, cardiovascular equipment, dance studio, and yoga classes.

The project isn't cheap. The estimated cost is \$300,000 to \$500,000, to be funded in part by a bond from the township. "Providing these types of athletic and recreational spaces at our centrally located high school will dramatically improve and enhance our sense of community," says Superintendent Patrick Watson. The commitment speaks to how high school sports, at their best, serve more than high school students. They help create active and healthy people for life.

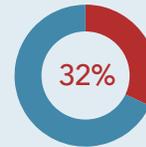
## Waunakee High School | Waunakee, WI



Location



Race/ethnicity



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

### Interscholastic

- |               |                 |
|---------------|-----------------|
| Baseball      | Skiing          |
| Basketball    | Soccer          |
| Cross Country | Softball        |
| Dance         | Swimming        |
| Football      | Tennis          |
| Golf          | Track and Field |
| Gymnastics    | Volleyball      |
| Lacrosse      | Wrestling       |
| Ice Hockey    |                 |

### Intramural

- Badminton
- Table Tennis

### Club

- Fishing
- Strength Training
- Yoga

### Website

[waunakee.k12.wi.us/high/](http://waunakee.k12.wi.us/high/)

### Contact

**Aaron May**, activities director,  
aaronmay@waunakee.k12.wi.us

### Embrace yoga as a regular activity

One of three female students at suburban high schools say they are interested in trying yoga, according to a national survey by the Aspen Institute. However, only 17% of females say they have tried the activity. The older the student, the more interest in yoga – ranging from 16% of all freshmen to 31% of all seniors.

Waunakee started a yoga club led by a teacher who has a side business that offers lessons. Initially, about 30 students signed up for the club. Within the first month, 125 students had joined as word of mouth spread. Now the club has 171 participants. Interest spiked so much that the teacher split the students into sessions, usually in the morning before school starts. Yoga is a great physical activity for the body and mind, and useful for both girls and boys.

## 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. Survey by the National Federation of State High School Associations in 2009.
4. A Multiple Case Study Analysis of Ohio Interscholastic Extracurricular Pay to Participate Policies, Scott S. Grant. Bowling Green State University, May 2017.
5. [National Center for Education Statistics](#).
6. "Education Statistics: Facts About American Schools," Education Week, Feb. 22, 2021.
7. "Suburban Public Schools are Now Majority Non-White. The Backlash Has Already Begun," Education Week, March 17, 2021.
8. [Reframing Suburbs: Race, Place, and Opportunity in Suburban Educational Spaces](#). John B. Diamond, Linn Posey-Maddox, Maria D. Velazquez; SAGE Journals, Nov. 23, 2020.
9. "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
10. [Challenging the Achievement Gap in a Suburban High School](#). John B. Diamond, William J. Corrin, Judith Levinson. Learning Point Associates, 2004.
11. "Suburban Schools: The Unrecognized Frontier in Public Education," Sean Gill, Jordan Posamentier and Paul T. Hill, Center for Reinventing Public Education, May 2016.
12. "Lawmakers, School Administrators Discuss Ending Pay-to-Play Fees," The Columbus Dispatch, Nov. 12, 2015.
13. [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.
14. Aspen Institute national survey of high school students, September 2020-March 2021.
15. Half of Tuscarora's annual expenses come from coaching stipends/coach contracts (\$288,000). Additional expenses include: uniforms/equipment (\$130,000), transportation (\$60,000), referees (\$25,800), medical care for athletes (\$17,500), security (\$12,558), awards/banquets (\$11,500), event management staff (\$8,000), coaching gear (\$5,000), Hudl/video resources (\$4,800), insurance (\$4,000), team meals/concessions (\$2,500), and event experience extra costs (\$2,500).
16. "Why Youth Sports Matter," Aspen Institute Project Play website.

## CREDITS

Jon Solomon, editorial director of the Aspen Institute 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 Group](#), representing perspectives from education, youth sports, health, academia, government, and philanthropy, contributed to the development of this report. Photos were provided by Bloomfield Hills High School, T.C. Williams High School, Tuscarora High School, and Waunakee High School (photographer Tom Linder).

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