



SPORTS FOR LEARNING

ANAHEIM CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT RESEARCH STUDY

How Sports For Learning Brings Together
STEM, PBIS, and Soccer

Among the 18,000 students in Anaheim City School District's pre-K-6 schools, 78% are eligible for free and reduced lunch, 74% are English language learners, and 9% are homeless. Given these demographics, says Tammie Bernal, the PE program coordinator for the district, "Kids might not have funding for after-school activities, so we make sure we provide 60 or more minutes a day of moderate to vigorous physical activity."

When LCAP funding allowed the district to add PE activities to its Anaheim Achieves After School Program, the district chose Sports For Learning, which offers all 24 schools in the district a unique combination of soccer games and STEM instruction. Sports For Learning, which sends coaches to schools armed with a playbook full of lessons that combine soccer training and STEM learning, is an "opportunity for kids to be physically active and engaged," Bernal says, adding that each six-week cycle of Anaheim Achieves soccer culminates with a tournament that gives students a chance to display the skills they've learned from the Sports For Learning instructors, who are all college soccer players or college students.

Several schools throughout the district have added Lunch Recess sessions with Sports For Learning. During these three 20-minute periods every week, two Sports For Learning team members give soccer and STEM instruction to 120 students per day. Over 200,000 students in California and Texas attended Sports For Learning lunch recess programs in the 2016/17 school year. According to Mary Grace, Ed.D., Anaheim's assistant superintendent of educational services, principals have taken to the program as quickly as students and teachers have because it was "easy to implement, which leads to no discipline problems."

KEY BENEFITS OF SPORTS FOR LEARNING

- Makes students feel connected to their school.
- Teaches students age-appropriate STEM content.
- Builds on PBIS.
- Increases physical activity, which positively affects learning.
- Offers district-wide programs for lunch recess, after school, and Saturday school.
- Measures STEM engagement, discipline referrals, average daily attendance, and physical activity with a research-based assessment tool.





229,000
Students served in
2016-2017



135
Districts served
from 2015-2017

1,000+ Schools served from 2015-2017



Up to a **79%**
decrease in
discipline referrals



87%
of schools exceeded
expectations

SOCCKER AND STEM CONNECTS STUDENTS TO THE SCHOOL

One principal who is a big fan of Sports For Learning is Gauer Elementary's Kim Hadley. Her school runs several after-school programs so students feel connected to the school. Sports For Learning, she says, "complements teachers instructing PE as an academic, learning piece."

Each Anaheim school has its own "distinguished practice," and Gauer's is STEAM. This means that Hadley and her assistant principal Bernadette Grzechowiak are always looking for ways to inspire students to problem-solve and work collaboratively. Like soccer, Grzechowiak says, "STEAM is about working together and creating a plan." It helps, she adds, that "the kids are very interested in soccer. We have a long wait list."

During its programming, the Sports For Learning coaches guide students through drills and ask them STEM-based questions about topics such as forces, interactions, or motion stability—all of which tie in with the Next Generation Science Standards.

Sports For Learning keeps students thinking, and keeps them playing, too. Gauer now has 4th- and 6th-grade soccer tournaments during recess and lunch time. "They want to compete and use the skills they are learning," Hadley says.

"Sports For Learning ties a thought process to what they're doing. It's not just rote practice. The STEM-based soccer keeps them thinking and it keeps them playing, too."

— Kim Hadley, Principal of Gauer Elementary

PLAYING AS PART OF PBIS

Assistant Superintendent Grace says that Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) is an important focus in Anaheim. Many schools, including Gauer, make Sports For Learning an integral part of their PBIS initiatives, to teach essential life skills including sportsmanship and teamwork.

“Your coaches are able to provide a structure and keep the games functioning without discipline issues.”

— Mary Grace, Ed.D., Anaheim’s assistant superintendent of educational services



“We have found that the Sports For Learning STEM & Soccer program is a major deciding factor on why students attend Saturday school.”

— Leslie Coghlan,
Director of Student Services

As Principal Hadley explains, soccer is “an important part of our multi-tiered PBIS program. Students who might be facing challenges in the classroom during the day are following directions and working collaboratively with their peers when they are out there playing.”

Sports For Learning has also helped attendance at Gauer. Hadley recalls one particular student with an attendance problem. “He got into the program and now he feels excited to be part of the team. It’s something he looks forward to doing, he has made some friendships, and he has gotten more physically fit.”

If the ultimate test of a program is getting kids to come to school on a Saturday, Sports For Learning has passed with flying colors.

Shawna Derache, the principal of Clara Barton Elementary (another school where Sports For Learning is an essential element of the PBIS program), explains: “Five times a year we have Saturday school for making up days that kids have missed.” Having the Sports For Learning coaches come and give 30- to 45-minute soccer lessons on Saturdays has “been a HUGE draw for kids to come to Saturday school.”

“Kids don’t want to miss school because they don’t want to miss soccer.”

— Hadley



“Physical activity is making a difference in our district.”

— Tammie Bernal, District PE Coordinator

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IMPROVES ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Clara Barton Elementary’s distinguished practice is healthy living, which means that the school provides support on health and fitness content across the curriculum. Sports For Learning sessions play a key role.

The soccer session in the spring and fall support Derache’s wider belief that “physical activity does help academics,” a proposition that Bernal and the PEP team have proven with research.

As evidence, she points to the fact that, during the first year that students took Smarter Balanced assessments, there was no grade-level PE during the day. When the district added grade-level PE, math scores went up. Every year, she adds, students who are in the “healthy fitness zone” are more likely to score higher on the SBAC. No wonder Assistant Superintendent Grace never considered dropping Sports For Learning when reviewing budget spending.

As Principal Hadley concludes, it’s more than just a way to combine soccer and STEM. “It really is an investment in our students’ future.”

“We love it. There is always a waiting list. We started doing it one time a year and moved to two times a year because it was so popular.”

— Shawna Derache, Principal of Clara Barton Elementary