



# Playworks Metro Boston Prospectus



## overview

**FOUNDED** in Oakland, CA 1996

**LAUNCHED** in Metro Boston 2006

**CURRENT REVENUE** \$1.2 million

**DESCRIPTION:** Playworks takes the chaos and conflict out of elementary school recess and creates opportunities for children to learn and grow through meaningful play. Playworks places full-time, well-trained adult “coaches” in low-income, urban elementary schools to teach and organize games and physical activities throughout the school day and after school. Playworks coaches create safe, structured, and inclusive play environments during recess that get children more physically active and return them to the classroom more focused and ready to learn. Coaches also deliver classroom and after-school programming, where children learn the rules to new games and important leadership and conflict resolution skills. Playworks’ vision is that one day every child in America will have access to safe, healthy play every day, recognizing that play creates valuable opportunities for children to grow physically, emotionally, and socially.

**INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY:** Playworks Metro Boston is seeking \$1 million over two years to support its growth to 32 low-income elementary schools in Metro Boston and one additional city in Massachusetts.

### THE NEED

Across the country, recess time in public elementary schools is being cut, especially in low-income areas. Chaotic recess environments are a source of disciplinary problems that spill into classrooms and disrupt valuable learning time. However, recess is too important for it to fall victim to these trends:

- Obesity rates among elementary school-age children have grown fivefold in the last 40 years; in Boston Public Schools, 20% of children qualify as obese or overweight.
- According to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, recess is the greatest opportunity to ensure that low-income children get their daily dose of physical activity. Only 36% of children get the doctors’ recommended 60 minutes of daily physical activity.
- Studies show that children returning from recess are more focused in the classroom and better prepared to learn.

### THE OPPORTUNITY FOR SOCIAL IMPACT

Play is critical for the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive well-being of children. Playworks is the only national organization in the country dedicated to maximizing the health and learning impact of recess.

- Since its Boston-area launch in 2006, Playworks has served over 20,000 students in Boston, Revere, and Cambridge.
- Teachers in Playworks schools report that children are more physically active during recess and more academically focused when they return to the classroom.
- “Recess Rules,” a report about the value of recess produced by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, recognized Playworks as an exceptional model for improving the health of children.
- The Harvard Family Research Project found that Playworks improves students’ focus and participation in class and results in fewer school suspensions.

### TWO-YEAR GOALS

- Reach 10,200 students served and expand to 32 public low-income elementary schools in Metro Boston and one additional metropolitan area in Massachusetts
- Launch the Playworks Training Program to provide technical assistance to school districts and other youth-serving organizations in Massachusetts
- Develop a policy-focused strategic plan for increasing state and city support of play and physical activity
- Develop and implement a strategy to increase local philanthropic funding to support Playworks’ growth
- Build the capacity of Metro Boston’s Board of Directors to provide strategic and other technical support

### WAYS TO INVEST

#### Financial

- \$25,000 – Sponsor operations in one partner school
- \$5,000 – Sponsor the Junior Coach Program at one partner school
- \$1,000 – Sponsor a girls’ basketball or co-ed volleyball team for a full season of weekly practices and games

#### In-kind

- Space for staff trainings and sports leagues
- Recess equipment
- Event tickets, prizes, and other awards for student excellence on the playground

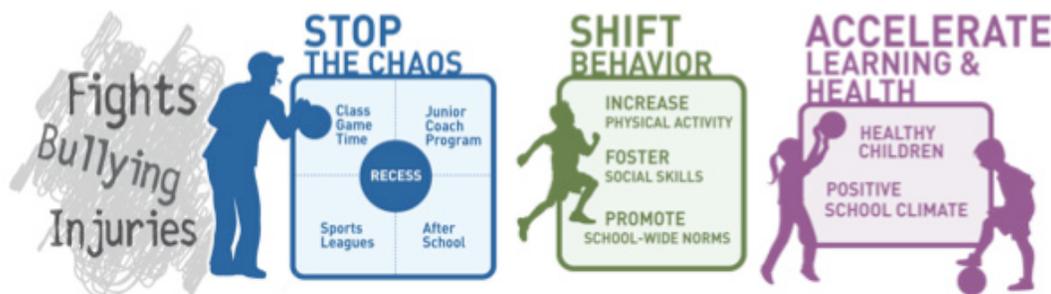
*“Playworks teaches teamwork and cooperation to students at all levels. It not only helps children to be physically fit, it helps to improve their academic performance.”*

– Jessica Bolt, Principal of the Martin Luther King Jr. K-8 School in Dorchester

## SOCIAL INNOVATION IN ACTION – THE PLAYWORKS MODEL

Responding to the call from school principals to rescue their schools from the negative effects of chaotic recess environments, Playworks has developed a comprehensive program of play that transforms the recess experience and promotes healthier, more academically focused school environments.

**Stop the Chaos:** When Playworks partners with an elementary school and its principal, it places a full-time, well-trained “coach” in the school. The coach is responsible for implementing Playworks’ five-component in- and out-of-school programming model

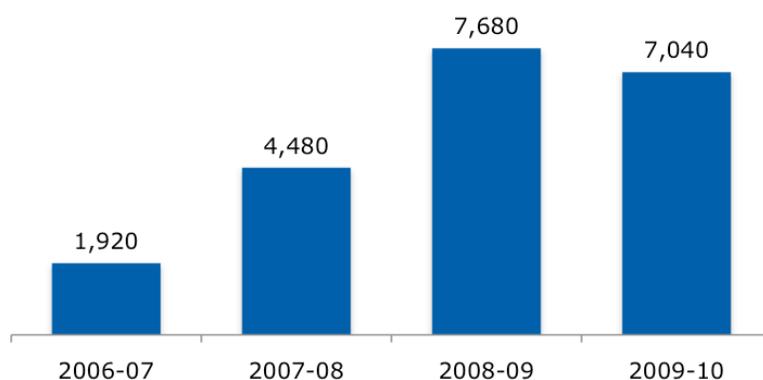


throughout the school year. The centerpiece of Playworks’ activities and the coach’s first focus is recess. The coach takes the chaos out of recess by creating a safe, structured, and inclusive play environment. She does this by establishing clear game rules, setting up distinct game and activity areas, and encouraging every child in the school to become active during recess. To complement the recess curriculum, the coach also delivers four additional programming components: *Class Game Time*, the *Junior Coach Program*, the *After School Program*, and *Developmental Sports Leagues*. During *Class Game Time*, the coach collaborates with teachers to introduce the rules to new games and deliver programming to develop students’ leadership and conflict resolution skills. The *Junior Coach Program* extends the leadership experiences of select fifth-grade students in each school who learn how to lead games at recess, resolve schoolyard conflicts, and become positive role models in the school community. During the critical hours *after school*, the Playworks coach provides a healthy snack, homework and academic coaching, and additional opportunities for physical activity. Finally, the Playworks coach organizes and coaches non-competitive *developmental sports leagues* for fourth- and fifth-graders aimed at skill development, providing a team experience, and teaching positive sporting behavior. The combination and emphasis of these five program components varies depending on the specific needs of each school.

**Shift Behavior:** Playworks’ programming is designed to shift behavior in three ways: (1) increase physical activity, (2) foster the development of key social skills, and (3) promote school-wide norms of positive behavior. By making recess a safe place for all children to play, Playworks gets every child running, jumping, and skipping for at least 20 minutes of every school day. Recess and the other program components give children more opportunities to get their daily dose of physical

activity. The Playworks curriculum is also specifically designed to help children develop social skills that contribute to leadership development and reduced incidence of conflict. For example, children learn how to use the game *Rock, Paper, Scissors* to settle disagreements on the playground; teachers then find students using the same strategies to settle conflicts in the hallways and classrooms. By promoting these behaviors throughout the school day and developing shared expectations of positive language and interactions, Playworks cultivates a school-wide shift in behavioral norms.

**Children Served in Metro Boston**



**Accelerate Learning and Health:** Playworks fosters a school climate that contributes to the long-term health and academic success of children in our highest risk schools. Students get the physical activity they need to stay healthy and, more importantly, they develop the habits and confidence to continue to engage in healthy play throughout their lives. Teachers experience improved transitions between recess and class and reduced conflict in the classroom, saving them valuable time to teach. Meanwhile, students who have a chance to run around and play games during recess return to the classroom more academically focused and prepared to learn. Playworks plays a valuable role in preparing students for greater academic success and healthier lives.

### KEY SOCIAL IMPACT INVESTORS

- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- The Boston Foundation
- Hestia Fund
- Amelia Peabody Foundation
- Bingham McCutchen
- Saucony Run for Good Foundation
- GoGirlGo! Boston
- Roy A. Hunt Foundation

### TEAM AND GOVERNANCE

Executive Director Max Fripp, who joined Playworks in 2008, brings over ten years of experience implementing and managing experiential learning programs in public schools and other youth-serving organizations. Mr. Fripp spent four years at Boston-based Citizen Schools training and managing volunteer Citizen Teachers and supporting growth to 37 campuses across seven cities. He spent two of those years serving as an AmeriCorps National Teaching Fellow in the Boston Public Schools. Kim Webster, program director, has been training Playworks coaches and managing program execution and growth in Boston since 2006; she is also responsible for managing relationships with

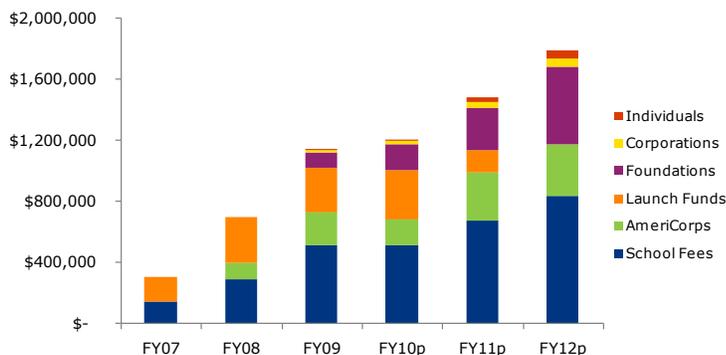
school administrations and brings seven years of experience in education and non-profit management in urban settings. Metro Boston's 23 coaches are directly managed and supported by a team of three program managers—Jon Gay, Valencia Winfrey, and Pamela Colasacco. Playworks Metro Boston recently transitioned from a local advisory board structure to an eight-member Board of Directors that is comprised of a diverse group of local leaders in the fields of business, education, and public health.

### FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

The Playworks operating model is supported by a mixture of earned income, government support, and philanthropic funding. Partner schools cover approximately 45% of operating expenses through a \$23,500 per school fee. AmeriCorps funds—which subsidize a portion of AmeriCorps coaches' salaries—cover an additional 15% of expenses. Playworks' Metro Boston launch in 2006 was supported by an expansion grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and additional philanthropic support provided through the national Playworks office. As these launch funds are phased out over the next two years, Playworks Metro

Boston is cultivating a local base of funding through foundations, corporate partners, and individuals. To support its growth through 2012, Playworks Metro Boston is seeking an investment of \$1 million, representing a 48% growth in its budget from fiscal year 2010 to 2012. These funds will primarily support expansion to ten additional schools in Massachusetts and the creation of a training program to introduce play to elementary schools and other youth-serving organizations that do not meet Playworks' criteria for full-time placement of its coaches. Once established, this program will provide additional earned income to support the Playworks model.

Revenue Sources and Projections



### Success Story: Esmerelda Hernandez

When Playworks Coach Julia Sayles first met Esmerelda Hernandez, she was a shy and overweight fourth-grader who lacked the confidence to play with her peers at recess. Each day during recess, Coach Julia encouraged Esmerelda to get involved and helped her build the confidence to start playing again. After becoming more active at recess, Esmerelda decided to join the Playworks girls' basketball and co-ed volleyball teams—the first sports teams she'd ever been on. A year later, upon entering the fifth grade, Esmerelda chose to become a Junior Coach. She now helps Coach Julia lead recess games for her peers and gives other kids the confidence they need to get in the game!

## PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

**Program Performance and Organizational Health:** Below is a summary of the key measures that Playworks Metro Boston will be tracking to demonstrate progress, capture lessons learned, and make course corrections as needed. *Note: Fiscal year is July 1 – June 30.*

	FY 2010	FY 2011 (P)	FY 2012 (P)
<b>Program Performance</b>			
Number of youth/elementary schools served	7,040 students 22 schools	8,600 students 27 schools	10,200 students 32 schools
Number of youth in Junior Coach peer leadership program	360	405	480
Number of youth served through after-school program	360	405	480
Number of youth served in developmental sports leagues	864	972	1,152
Percentage of students served who qualify for free or reduced lunch	82%	75%	75%
Number of teachers receiving Playworks training aimed to increase the level of physical activity in their curriculum	300	405	555
Number of metropolitan areas served	1	1	2
Develop Playworks Training Program	--	In development	Implement
Develop public policy system change strategy	--	In development	Plan complete
<b>Organizational Health/Capacity Building</b>			
Playworks coaches (AmeriCorps members)	23 (13)	29 (23)	34 (25)
Program managers	3	3	4
Add a training manager	--	--	Search and Hire
Add development director	--	Search and Hire	
Form a strategy to strengthen Board of Directors	In development	Implement	Implement
Earned income (as a percentage of total revenue)	43%	45%	47%
Local philanthropic support	\$200,000	\$350,000	\$620,000
Total revenue	\$1.2 million	\$1.5 million	\$1.8 million

**Social Impact:** Currently, Playworks uses the metrics below to measure its impact on students in Metro Boston. Survey responses are collected from principals and teachers at the end of each school year. Playworks plans to develop enhanced evaluation tools to provide a deeper understanding of its impact.

Indicator	2008-09
Percentage of students participating in at least 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous activities weekly	83%
Percentage of students who are physically active during recess	89%
Percentage of staff who report bullying at recess has decreased	78%
Percentage of school staff who say they want Playworks in their school the following year	94%



### Success Story: The Trotter School

When Mairead Nolan, principal of the Trotter School in Dorchester, contacted Playworks in February of 2009, recess was ruining her school days. Her office was constantly filled with students sent to her because of fighting, injuries, and bullying during recess. The chaos of the playground was undermining the learning environment she was trying to create in her school and her effectiveness as a school leader.

Playworks launched its program at the Trotter in September and the impact was immediate. In October, Ms. Nolan told Playworks that she was saving **three to four hours per day** because she no longer had to deal with negative recess issues. Playworks has stopped the chaos of recess and is accelerating learning and health for 350 Trotter students every day.