

Your partnership in 2020-21 helped Playworks create school cultures where all students are included and have the opportunity to be physically active while developing key social-emotional skills, like cooperation and conflict resolution.

As we endured a year of pandemic learning, these skills were even more essential in helping kids combat stress and anxiety and experience joy again, all through the power of play.

IMPACT SNAPSHOT

48,264

KIDS

48

YOUTH LEADERS

134

SCHOOLS & YOUTH ORGS

577

SCHOOL STAFF TRAINED

At the 16 schools served by Playworks Indiana through the Coach and TeamUp programs:

76% of students are on free/reduced lunch plans

42% of students are Black 26% are Hispanic

2% are Asian American 7% are Multi-racial

23% are White



Playworks and the Science of Learning and Development

All young people have the ability to become their best selves when provided the right experiences, context, and relationships. Play has the power to create those parameters. This past year, the [American Institutes for Research](#) shared a case study about how Playworks is leveraging the power of play to support whole child development. The Science of Learning and Development is a cross-disciplinary body of knowledge that describes how people learn and develop. It also provides many powerful lessons that can transform education systems, advance equity, and help every young person thrive.

It is critical to create the conditions for play that will result in the relationships we aim to build. Being intentional about play means explicitly focusing on:

1. Creating environments filled with safety and belonging, where everyone has an opportunity to play, there are shared agreements and norms, and players can adapt the games to the situation.

2. Fostering positive developmental relationships by encouraging adults to play alongside children, promoting active inclusion for everyone, and using games as a fun way to resolve conflict.

3. Creating rich learning experiences that intentionally focus on critical knowledge, skills, mindsets, and habits by making sure learning is fun, everyone can make mistakes and learn from them, and children know what to expect.



Celebrating our AmeriCorps Members - A Term of Service Like No Other

Playworks Indiana celebrated our 8 AmeriCorps Coaches in March for AmeriCorps Appreciation Week! This school year, our AmeriCorps Coaches stepped up in new, challenging, and exciting ways to help us continue to provide kids safe, healthy, and inclusive play every day, whether virtual, in person, or hybrid. Because of our AmeriCorps Coaches, more than 3,000 Marion County elementary students got to experience the the joy and benefits of play this school year and begin to heal from the upheaval of this pandemic.

"Playworks AmeriCorps Coaches are our mission come to life every day! We're grateful for our coaches who are making safe and healthy play REAL for kids no matter what"

Elizabeth Cushing (Playworks President & CEO)



Play Builds Serious Skills

"Play is one of the most important ways in which children learn"

-Jack Shonkoff, Harvard University

Play is not frivolous—it enhances brain structure and function, and promotes Executive Function (EF) development--the skill set that allows for conscious control of thoughts, actions, and emotions. During playtime, kids are practicing EF skills over and over again in a variety of settings. Scientists refer to EF as the biological foundation for adaptation and learning throughout life. They argue that strong working memory, cognitive flexibility, and inhibitory control – the three components of EF – provide the basis upon which children's abilities to learn to read, write, and do math can be built. This distinct set of skills is imperative to school readiness and academic success.

Interested in learning more?

[Visit Playworks.org/skills](https://www.playworks.org/skills)

Back to 4th Grade with DeForest Buckner

At the end of the school year, spirits were high for 4th Graders at Thomas Gregg Neighborhood School on a rainy Spring day when Indianapolis Colts defensive tackle DeForest Buckner stopped by for indoor recess. DeForest connected with Playworks' mission because like us, he believes all kids deserve the chance to get in the game and everyone deserves to feel included. DeForest knows that Real Players, Don't Bully!



Increasing Safe and Healthy Play in Indiana

Every year, Playworks surveys educators from our partner schools about the impact Playworks programming has had on student behavior and the overall school environment. Although the COVID-19 crisis disrupted Playworks' typical data collection and program evaluation, we still sent optional surveys at the end of the 20-21 school year. Survey results showed that:

- 97%** of educators agree that Playworks **helps students learn cooperation skills;**
- 97%** of educators report that Playworks **increases the number of students that are physically active;**
- 92%** of educators report that Playworks **strengthens students' ability to resolve conflict on their own;**
- 94%** of educators reported that Playworks **improved overall school climate;**
- 94%** of educators agree that Playworks helps students **demonstrate empathy toward one another;**
- 92%** of educators agree that Playworks helps students **feel connected to their learning community;**
- 80%** of educators report that Playworks **reduces the number of incidents of bullying at recess**



91%

OF EDUCATORS WHO RESPONDED TO A SURVEY ABOUT KEEP PLAYING SAID THE GAMES AND IDEAS HELP ENGAGE STUDENTS IN ONLINE LEARNING.



Digital Services that Deliver Impact

Many educators have risen to the challenge of transitioning their lessons to accommodate virtual education, and Playworks has been helping educators ensure play remains in every child's day, even online.

187 Keep Playing Users

16 PlayworksU Subscribers



THE CHALLENGE



Abrupt withdrawal of social interaction and friendship



Limited social-emotional support to build skills tied to resiliency



Lack of access to outdoor space and physical activity



Ongoing anxiety and prolonged exposure to toxic stress

Piloting Innovation Tag Team with Boys & Girls Clubs of Indianapolis

With support from the Allstate Foundation, Playworks Indiana was one of six Playworks regions piloting Tag Team during the 20-21 school year. Tag Team is a partnership with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Indianapolis at Liberty Park Elementary School in Warren Township. Through this pilot program, Playworks trains school based BGCI staff to implement Playworks programming during the school day while still providing their traditional after school services. This expands Playworks capacity to provide services to kids, schools and districts by growing the number of trained professionals capable of facilitating Playworks evidence based approach to recess and play.



In the short time we have been able to partner with Playworks so far, I have witnessed students who might not be the most excited about recess time, looking forward to playing and building relationships on the playground. We are very excited about this partnership and its ability to build and support healthy relationships.

Jason Brooks, Principal Liberty Park Elementary

BGCI Senior Youth Development Professional, Coach Anna Savery, leading recess at Liberty Park Elementary. Coach Anna on the Tag Team pilot, *"I've developed new skills for leading games and programs, and I've really enjoyed being able to work with two excellent organizations!"*

Playworks Indiana

2020-2021 Impact Report



Looking Ahead to the 2021-2022 School Year

Despite the challenges of the 2020-2021 school year, Playworks was still able to positively impact students with safe, healthy and inclusive play and begin healing from the pandemic. As we look ahead and plan for the 2021-2022 school year, the demand for Playworks services is higher than ever as schools and districts focus on recovering from student learning loss. Now more than ever, it is essential that students feel safe within their school community, are supported by adult role models, and have access to positive outlets for physical activity and social-emotional development. **Playworks delivers all three.**

ADAPTING FOR THE FUTURE

Social-Emotional Learning

Leverage expertise to expand action-based learning modules to focus on flexibility, resiliency, perseverance, and skills necessary to succeed in our current situation.

Physical Activity

Ensure children can be active in school, and at home to promote physical and mental health by reducing stress, building resilience, and creating joy.

Student Leadership

Empower Junior Coaches to introduce socially-distant games, minute movers, and cheers to build community and infuse emotional support.

Trauma-Sensitive Approach

The culmination of social isolation, anxiety, fears of losing loved ones to illness, missing important milestones, and grief will have a corrosive effect on students' mental health. High quality recess and play can mediate symptoms of trauma in students by building strong emotional self-control and additional skills linked to resilience.

To learn more, visit [Playworks.org/traumasensitive](https://playworks.org/traumasensitive)

Regional Partners — \$100,000+

AmeriCorps
Arthur Dean Family Foundation

Game Changers — \$25,000 to \$99,999

The AllState Foundation
The Indiana Department of Health
The Lilly Endowment Inc. Youth Program Resilience Fund
UnitedHealthcare

Playmakers — \$10,000 to \$24,999

Managed Health Services
OneAmerica
Salesforce

Supporters — \$500 to \$9,999

Indiana Farm Bureau Insurance
Kiwans Foundation of Indianapolis
The Nicholas H. Noyes, Jr., Memorial Foundation
Carrie Lahr



We are grateful for your support!

Danny Embry
Heather Hutchinson
Janet Roach
Jenny Dexter

Kim & Randy Schultz
Mark Clark

To donate or learn more, visit playworks.org/indiana or contact Emily Kitterman at emily.kitterman@playworks.org