

## Playworks 2023-2024 School Year Media Fact Sheet

**WHAT:** Playworks is the leading national nonprofit leveraging the power of play to transform children's physical and emotional well-being. With more than 25 years of experience, the organization aims to bring out the best in every kid and hopes that one day, every child in America will get to play every day. Through direct-service coaching of youth and providing training and consultation for adults working with kids, Playworks partners with elementary schools, districts, and community-based organizations to bring games and youth development practices. With an emphasis on social, physical, and emotional skill-building, students feel included while being active and developing valuable skills needed to thrive in and out of the classroom. During the 2023-2024 school year, the nonprofit is ensuring more than 600,000 youth in over 1,300 schools and community partners experience safe and healthy play during and beyond the school day nationwide.

**WHY:** Every kid--and adult--experience benefits from playing. The COVID-19 pandemic left students less physically active, more socially isolated, and further behind in their skill development and education. Play provides opportunities for joy, connection, physical activity, and acts as a protective factor supporting mental health. Playing is a natural behavior and a child's right, and yet not all kids have equitable access to it. Recess is sometimes the only time in a child's day when they can play, and it is often undervalued and many kids end up on the sidelines. That's where Playworks comes in. The nonprofit works to ensure that play is an integral and necessary part of a kid's day--in school and beyond. Cultivating a culture of connection, its externally validated programs offer protective factors to support children's mental well-being while fostering resilience, youth agency, teamwork, and cooperation on and off the playground. This positively impacts kids, school staff, and school cultures at large.

**IMPACT:** Playworks programming is designed to get kids in the game and to help schools build a community of playing together to make the school day safe, inclusive, and fun for everyone. The [2022-2023 National Survey](#) of educators at schools with Playworks revealed the nonprofit's holistic approach is helping students to develop empathy toward one another, learn cooperation skills, connect to their peers, and strengthen their overall well-being as they heal from the effects of the pandemic. As a result:

- 95 percent of educators agree that Playworks creates an environment of belonging.
- 95 percent of educators say Playworks builds opportunities for inclusion of diverse groups of students.
- 93 percent of educators share Playworks develops a supportive learning environment.
- 92 percent of educators report Playworks helps to improve school climate.

**HOW:** A thoughtful approach to recess can improve children's physical health and mental wellbeing. Playworks schools make the most of recess by implementing Playworks curriculum on the playground. The nonprofit also offers after-school developmental sports leagues that give youth an equal opportunity, regardless of athletic ability, academic standing, and finances, to participate in organized sports and learn components of teamwork. The five primary ways Playworks serves elementary schools and community-based partners include:

- **Playworks Coach:** A full-time Playworks staff member works onsite at one school year-round to run all Playworks programs during and after-school and serves as an engaged adult role model. Playworks' coaches are placed in schools where 50 percent of the student population is considered high need.
- **Playworks TeamUp or Relay:** One Playworks staff member oversees Playworks' programming in multiple schools, providing faculty and staff the training, tools, and consulting needed to empower a sustainable recess playground team.
- **Playworks PRO:** Playworks provides school staff members with hands-on professional development workshops and collaborative consultation to facilitate Playworks programming without a Playworks staff member onsite.
- **Digital Services:** PlayworksU is an online learning platform for school staff to foster the skills to support play through on-demand content such as video demos, printable game guides, recess assessment tools, and strategic support calls with Playworks' experts. Keep Playing provides curated, weekly resources that adults can utilize to play with kids and promote social emotional learning.
- **Playworks TagTeam:** Adults participate in a year-long certification program that builds capacity for out-of-school-time partners to run recess service at schools in their community.

A 2017 [review](#) conducted by the RAND Corporation and commissioned by The Wallace Foundation found that Playworks offers one of the few social and emotional learning interventions for elementary schools that meet the highest criteria for evidence of impact under the Every Student Succeeds Act. The review examined outcomes of the Playworks Coach model, which includes classroom, outside of classroom and out of school time components. Qualifiers show how Playworks' school programming is designed to help students build valuable intrapersonal skills and to help schools build positive school climates to get kids in the game and build stronger communities.

In the spring of 2023, the Surgeon General called attention to the public health crisis of loneliness, isolation, and lack of connection feuded by the COVID-19 pandemic laying out a [framework](#) to help individuals, organizations and systems foster connections to improve mental and physical health. [Physical activity](#) is cited as a critical tool scientifically proven to support physical, emotional, and mental health of youth, ages 6 to 17.

Playworks developed the [Great Recess Framework](#), an observational tool that can support schools to create consistent, appropriate and engaging school recess experiences that positively impact student's physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development. Evidence from a [study](#) published in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* supports the Great Recess Framework as a valid and reliable assessment tool to observationally measure the quality of the recess environment.

**WHERE:** Currently, the Playworks PRO model and digital services are implemented in elementary schools in all 50 states. Playworks Coach and TeamUp reach elementary schools and youth serving organizations in over 15 metro areas.

**CONNECT:** #Playworks | Find Playworks on social media: Facebook (@MakeRecessCount), Twitter (@Playworks), Instagram (@PlayworksRecess). For more information, visit: [www.playworks.org](http://www.playworks.org).

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