

2017

The development and sustainability of sports-based youth development programs as a viable option for after-school programs

<https://hdl.handle.net/2144/23307>

"Downloaded from OpenBU. Boston University's institutional repository."

BOSTON UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Dissertation

**THE DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY OF SPORTS-BASED
YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AS A VIABLE OPTION
FOR AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS**

by

JAMES BARTLETT PRESBREY

B.A., Ithaca College, 1988
M.A., Springfield College, 1993

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education

2017

Approved by

First Reader

Amy L. Baltzell, Ed.D.
Clinical Associate Professor of Counseling Psychology

Second Reader

John McCarthy, Ed.D.
Clinical Associate Professor of Applied Human Development

Third Reader

Albert J. Petitpas, Ed.D.
Professor of Psychology
Springfield College

DEDICATION

To my Mom and Dad who gave me life and did their absolute best to raise my sisters and I to be daring and to follow our dreams. I know you have raised your glass and I know you are proud.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I cannot express enough thanks to Dr. Amy Baltzell, my advisor and my committee chair who has been an inspiration, guide, mentor, Shepard and shining light for my entire journey at Boston University especially during this final leg of the ride. I completely understand the complexity of the challenges that can arise during such a trip as well as those that can derail it. I am blessed to have had Dr. Baltzell who never lost faith and always pointed to the possibilities rather than dwell on the challenges. Dr. John McCarthy and Dr. Albert Petitpas, I am forever grateful to be connected to those who I am bound to on so many levels. How many can say that their committee members were their professors and guides but also their colleagues and friends? I offer my sincere gratitude and appreciation for their ongoing belief in me and my ability to get to the finish line.

The pursuit of this advanced degree at an advanced age was an incredible opportunity for an old dog to learn new tricks and, more importantly, to model for my children; Ali, Michael and Joey, that learning is a lifetime process and that it is important to set challenging goals and to persevere. The sky is the limit for you and whether your dreams are related to accomplishments in the classroom, on the playing field, in the dance studio or in life; anything is possible! The most amazing role for me has been that of a husband and a father. I am blessed to have such an incredible support team at home as well as at school.

My completion of this project could not have been accomplished without the support of my BU classmates; Fritz, Rob, and Val as well as my friends/brothers; Greg,

Charlie, Ray and Jeff. There was a lot of support that came in different forms; everything from a review of applied multiple regression to a swift kick in the butt. I also would like to thank Joann's parents, Mr. and Mrs. D. for the countless times that they watched the kids when our hectic schedules were at a breaking point.

Finally, to my caring, loving, amazing and supportive wife, Joann: my deepest gratitude. Your encouragement and love as well as your challenging motivational approach has always provided strength and persistence. Despite the commitments related to raising three kids under the age of 10, your support was always there and your belief in me never wavered. It was a great comfort and relief to know that you were there managing the kids and our household while I was playing grad student for 48 hours each week for the Fall 2011 and Spring 2012 semesters. I always felt your love and support whether you were sending it or not.... Please know you will always have my deepest, heartfelt thanks. Your love has always provided me with the support to live by a personal maxim "to thine own self be true."

**THE DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY OF SPORTS-BASED
YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AS A VIABLE OPTION
FOR AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS**

JAMES BARTLETT PRESBREY

Boston University School of Education, 2017

Major Professor: Amy L. Baltzell, Ed.D., Clinical Associate Professor of Counseling
Psychology

ABSTRACT

The historical case study was designed to examine how the Play It Smart program, a Sports-Based Youth Development Program, was adopted and sustained by local stakeholders in an urban high school setting after the initial seed funding was cut. Current and past key stakeholders were invited to participate and school leaders (n = 2), community leaders (n = 2), the original Academic Coach (n = 1) and current Academic Coaches (two of which are past program participants) (n = 3) agreed to be interviewed for this investigation. The intent of the interviews was to uncover the key factors that are present that allow the Play It Smart program to sustain itself from year to year as well as how the program has become entrenched into the school culture and the role it plays in the academic and athletic objectives/philosophies of the school. Responses revealed a number of major themes related to the adoption and ongoing commitment to sustain the program for the last 16 years. These themes included an initial pledge from the stakeholders to restore the academic and athletic reputation at the school, the recognition of the relationship with the original Academic Coach and the positive results that were repeatedly promoted, the recruitment and buy-in from a collection of traditional and non-

traditional allies including the students and, ultimately, a shift in culture that seems to stem from a dynamic group of past participants that provides hope. The themes related to sustainability seem to further validate the theoretical framework that was so critical for the establishment of the Play It Smart programs in that: the context, football (sport) and academic performance, is also valued by stakeholders; the primary external asset, the caring adult mentor or Academic Coach, was able to attract and involve other assets to support the participants; the internal assets, life skills, were developed and refined while participating in community service activities which serve as the regular highlights shared with stakeholders throughout the school year; and the evaluation was designed to promote progress and to allow for adjustments.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	v
ABSTRACT	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	ix
LIST OF TABLES	xiv
CHAPTER ONE	1
Introduction	1
Tale of Two Brothers	1
Play It Smart	3
Play It Smart Framework	4
Sustainability and Sports-based Youth Development Programs	7
The Current Study	11
Specific Research Questions	12
Significance of the Study	14
CHAPTER TWO	16
Review of Literature	16
History of Afterschool Programming	19
Afterschool Programming and Academic Development	21
College Readiness	22

Achievement Gap.....	23
Impact of the Dropout Epidemic.....	26
Positive Youth Development (PYD)	27
Brick and Mortar Afterschool Programs.....	29
Sports Participation and Positive Youth Development.....	30
Play It Smart	35
Context.....	37
Internal Assets.....	37
External Assets.....	38
Evaluation	38
Role of the Coach.....	39
Academic Coach	40
Play It Smart Research.....	41
Quantitative Research	42
Qualitative Research	42
Challenges of Sustainability	45
CHAPTER THREE	49
Methodology	49
Setting	49
Participants.....	53
Research Questions	56
The Interviews	58

Procedure	59
Data Collection	60
Trustworthiness.....	61
CHAPTER FOUR.....	63
Results.....	63
Interview Themes.....	63
Themes that emerged based on primary investigator data analysis	66
The road to acceptance.....	66
School-wide commitment to Academic and Athletic success	68
Communication and Collaboration	69
Shift in Culture.....	71
Reflections of the School and Community Leaders	73
Richard Kaplan, Superintendent of New Brunswick Public Schools (2004–2015) .	73
President of New Brunswick Tomorrow (NBT), Jeffrey Vega	80
Reflections of the Allies in the School and Community.....	86
NBT Task Force Manager, Meredith Masin Blount	86
New Brunswick High School Board Member, Patricia Sydowsky	92
Reflections of the Participants (now Academic Coaches).....	96
Former Play It Smart participants, current Play It Smart Academic Coaches.....	96
Reflections of the Original Academic Coach	101
Laurie Lazovik, Director of Play It Smart (2000–May 2015)	101
CHAPTER FIVE	109

Discussion	109
Funding Generally Main Road Block	111
Synthesis of Findings: What lead to the Sustainability of the Play It Smart Program at New Brunswick High School?	112
Academically Prepared Director	112
Better Met Needs of Underserved Students: Did Not Expand Beyond Capacity ...	112
Importance of Diversified Funding Sources	113
Sustainability of Play It Smart program at New Brunswick High School.....	114
The “Magic” of sustainability at New Brunswick High.	115
Shift from Student Athlete to Scholar Athlete	116
Stakeholder Buy-In	116
Value of Community Service by Student-Athletes.....	116
Unconditional Caring “24/7/365” Adult Mentors.....	117
Legacy of Play It Smart at New Brunswick.....	118
Instilled Hopefulness: In Climate and Culture.....	119
Low High School Funding Competition in District.....	120
Laurie’s approach aligns with Best-Practices	120
Play It Smart Framework as a Strategy for Sustainability	121
Limitations	124
Future Research	124
Recommendations for Sports-based Youth Development Practitioners.....	124
Appendix A.....	127

QUESTIONS FOR SUPERINTENDENT AND/OR BOARD MEMBERS	127
Appendix B	128
QUESTIONS FOR STAFF AT NEW BRUNSWICK TOMORROW	128
Appendix C	129
QUESTIONS FOR PLAY IT SMART DIRECTOR AT	129
NEW BRUNSWICK HIGH SCHOOL	129
Appendix D	130
QUESTIONS FOR PLAY IT SMART STAFF AT NBHS	130
Appendix E	132
IRB RESEARCH APPLICATION	132
APPENDIX F	137
Invitation to Participate	137
References	139
VITA	149

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1 Overall Themes	66
Table 4.2 The Road to Acceptance	67
Table 4.3 School-Wide Commitment to Academic and Athletic success	69
Table 4.4 Communication and Collaboration	71
Table 4.5 Shift in Culture.....	72

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

There has been an effort over the last few decades to provide structure and support for the academic, social and physical development of the urban under-served youth to minimize the hazards that can occur during hours immediately out of school as well as to address the achievement gap that exists academically. School-based programs, afterschool programs and/or youth development programs may be essential for youth in underserved communities as they attempt to overcome many challenges. Having facilitated a school-based program in an underserved community, the researcher offers examples of two brothers attending a Title 1 high school serving primarily low-income, minority students.

Tale of Two Brothers

Kofi and Khalfani, brothers, lived in the same single-parent household. Kofi, who is two years older, entered high school as a Freshman when there was funding supporting the Afterschool program for the students on the football team. He regularly met with his mentor and received the support to set goals for his future as well as to develop the skills necessary to achieve those goals. Specifically, with regular individual meetings, Kofi and his mentor created a game plan that included coursework that would prepare him for college, SAT Prep and SAT's, college exploration, and community service. As a high school senior, Kofi was on track to graduate, had taken the SAT's twice, and had a list of colleges that he was interested in. He regularly met with his mentor to ensure he had everything in place to complete his applications as well as all the necessary financial aid

paperwork. In a school where the student to guidance counselor ratio is 450:1, Kofi was still able to develop a strong rapport with a caring, adult mentor and received the hands-on support necessary to achieve his academic goals. He was accepted to several colleges and ended up at a university about an hour from his home that provided the most financial aid. Kofi earned both an undergraduate and graduate degree and is currently working in Social Services.

In stark contrast, his younger brother suffered from the inconsistency of support that often befalls well-meaning, non-sustainable youth development programs. Khalfani started high school when his brother was a Junior and had similar hopes and dreams. He started working with his mentor to set goals and to put together a game plan for his future. After Kofi graduated and Khalfani started his junior year in high school, the Sports-based Youth Development program that provided the mentor lost funding and was dropped from the school. Khalfani had been informed that preparing for and taking the SAT was a critical step during his junior year in high school but, alone, he did not take the necessary steps toward a college career. For example, when it came to signing up for one of the test dates in the Spring, he had some questions about the application and never got in to see his guidance counselor. Without the structure of the support of the Play It Smart program, his schoolwork suffered. Instead of facing the embarrassment of continually struggling or failing in the classroom, Khalfani dropped out of school. With some family support, he was able to find work in fast food restaurants making minimum wage. With low self-esteem and little in the way of opportunities for the future, Khalfani became a prime candidate for many of the destructive activities young people without a

high school diploma encounter, such as gang involvement, crime, and drug use. Alex Kroll, a board member for the National Football Foundation, was familiar with this trend that included high dropout rates and underperformance in our urban high schools but also recognized that the power of sport and the right coach could make all the difference.

Play It Smart

In 1998, along with two Master's candidates from Springfield College, the researcher was invited to join Dr. Al Petitpas in the creation of a pilot project in four underserved schools in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. The pilot project was the brainchild of Alex Kroll who believed that power of football could uplift the lives of the young men participating in it. Play It Smart was developed in 1998 (Play It Smart, 2008) with the goal of providing inner-city at-risk high school football players with a mentor to support them academically, athletically, and personally during their high school athletic career. The aim of the program included goals to improve graduation rates of the participants, to promote and prepare them for the college boards and, to increase their attendance and overall preparedness for college and/or career.

The participants of Play It Smart have access to an Academic Coach who is trained to build positive relationships with students and to assist coaches in creating an environment that promotes positive growth. The Academic Coach works in the school for 20–25 hours per week for the entire school year with students from their first year in school (or Freshman year) until graduation. The Academic Coach plays a critical role in the overall success of the Play It Smart program by helping the participants identify their values, needs, interests and skills and then the development and achievement of specific

academic, athletic, career and community service goals.

Play It Smart Framework

The framework proposed for the Play It Smart program was grounded in the relevant research findings and recommendations from leaders in the field of youth development highlighted by Petitpas et al. (2005). The framework is characterized by four pillars that suggests students are most likely achieve positive academic and career development: (a) when they are in the right kind of learning environment (context) for self-discovery; (b) when they are surrounded by caring adult mentors and a positive group or community (external assets); (c) when they learn or acquire skills that are important for managing life situations (internal assets); (d) when they benefit from the findings of a comprehensive system of evaluation and research that builds improvement back into the system (Petitpas et al., 2005). This framework allows for a setting as well as the experiences that enable positive youth developmental experiences.

Play It Smart engages students while they are participating in activities (e.g. sport) that are voluntarily, that are challenging and intrinsically motivating, and require considerable commitment over time. This environment (context) has been found to be a place where young people can find a valued role within an important group (Eccles & Barber, 1999) and contains goals and incentives (Larson, 2000). Participants can establish relationships with caring adult mentors (external assets), which is critical for the development of positive assets. Two characteristics of the relationships with the Academic Coaches are empathy and holding the participants to high expectations (Catalano et al., 2002; Perkins, 1997; Bernard, 1997). When life skills (internal assets)

are identified, and acknowledged by the coaches, sport can be a favorable way to learn those skills (Meichenbaum & Turk, 1987) and with those skills, participants are less likely to get involved in high risk behaviors (Keith & Perkins, 1995). Finally, a formal evaluation is needed to better understand the effectiveness of youth development programs (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2002). In the partnership with Springfield College, there was a commitment to gather data and conduct an evaluation of Play It Smart on an annual basis.

The goals of the Play It Smart program were clearly defined and the success was based on the achievement of those outcomes including improvements in grade point averages, SAT/ACT test scores and graduation rates as well as increased involvement in community service activities and the development of the life skills and attitudes necessary to make positive choices about their futures. There have been several studies that used quantitative outcome data and all seemed to indicate that students are most likely to achieve positive academic and career development when the Play It Smart framework was employed in a systematic way (Petitpas et al., 2004). Qualitative data has also been collected to determine how the Play It Smart program influenced the attitudes and behaviors of teachers (Jones, 2005) and to better understand the life skills the participants gained to stay positive and persevere through the challenges they face through life (VanGorden, Cornelius, & Petitpas, 2010).

After a successful pilot in the four high schools in the Northeast from 1998 to 2000, the board members of National Football Foundation were committed to expansion of the Play It Smart. With the financial support of the National Football League, Play It

Smart grew to 88 schools in 2002–2003 and then to 138 in 2004–2005. They were enthusiastic about the results and seemed to believe this could help revive high school in the urban markets. With funding from the NFL, programs were established in every NFL city, Play It Smart expanded to 138 programs.

Play It Smart gained additional momentum when it received a promise of a grant to further study the model from Department of Education. With participants' graduation rates at 98% and on-to-college rates at 78%, the results were considered remarkable and there was an interest in testing the model with male and female student athletes from other sports. With this grant from the Department of Education in 2005 to further validate the model, the Play It Smart program was set to expand to 160 schools.

With support from two powerful institutions like the National Football League and the Department of Education, there was a long-term plan in place for continued growth and a vision to eventually reach a critical mass which would spark a movement where high schools across the country would become familiar with and adopt this model to better harness power of sport in the overall development of its participants. When leadership of the NFL and Department of Education shifted, new agendas and priorities also emerged and the Play It Smart funding was cut. The National Football Foundation members and Play It Smart leadership responded by providing assistance and support for each individual Play It Smart program to identify local monies and to make the transition to independent funding.

The researcher's initial intent was to further validate the Play It Smart model. When asked by a faculty member if the researcher would believe it if the results did not

support the framework, the answer was no. After thoughtful consideration of the potential bias that may exist, the researcher felt there would be a resistance to and/or disbelief of the validity of any negative results. This became an awareness of the potential of the biases that can be formed when one plays a significant role in the development of a new program. That conversation led to a long period of reflection, which led to the realization that the researcher's bias could impact any research to further examine or validate the model.

The biggest issue remaining in regards to Play It Smart was the overall sustainability of the model. With the loss of national funding, most Play It Smart programs failed to secure local support. Despite a positive track record, the school districts and local community agencies were unable to identify enough local funding to continue to formally support the Play It Smart programs in their cities. Without the funds, the annual training for Academic Coaches was cut along with the annual stipend for their 20-hour per week commitment. Many coaches, fully embracing the framework, continued to facilitate many aspects of the Play It Smart program using volunteers and/or other coaches but without the funding the formal aspects of the program, Play It Smart waned. As the researcher become more fully aware of his own biases that may impact a study related to the validity of the Play It Smart model, he began to recognize that the looming question regarding sustainability as a worthwhile and necessary topic to explore.

Sustainability and Sports-based Youth Development Programs

Noam (2008) and Mahoney (2009) identify sustainability as one of the primary challenges when examining the current state of afterschool programming in America. A

range of such programs that are designed to meet the essential physical and academic needs of under-served youth tend to begin with great intentions and, yet, fail. Speculation abounds regarding the reasons for failure of such programming, ranging from the lack of funding, poor training of youth service providers and lack of support from stake holders. There may be myriad reasons why such youth development programs fail.

Different from other youth sports programs, Play It Smart is a Sports-based Youth Development (SBYD) program as it is designed to make direct connections between the skills and attitudes that can be learned through sport and applied to their academic, personal or career development (Petitpas, Cornelius, Van Raalte & Jones, 2005). Though there must be other SBYD programs that have been sustainable over time, a limitation is what is reported in the research on SBYD programs. There have been few SBYD programs identified that provide a holistic intervention that use sport and/or physical activity to enhance college readiness. Two program models that have been reported in the literature include The First Tee (Petlichkoff, 2004) and the Personal-Social Responsibility Model (Hellison & Walsh, 2002). There has been no research to date on factors that contribute to either establishing or sustaining SBYD programs based on either model.

Play It Smart is another example of a youth sport program that fits the description of a SBYD program (Petitpas, Cornelius, Van Raalte & Jones, 2005). The Up2Us Center for Sports-Based Youth Development acknowledged the Play It Smart model as one of the model programs in education because of formal training for the Academic Coaches, the partnership with schools, the rigorous evaluation and the overall impact (Up2Us Front

Runners, 2012).

Even Play It Smart, a robust and impactful program that was noted for its best practices, was not sustainable in the majority of its sites when it became necessary to transition to local funding sources. In addition to the funding, what were the other factors standing in the way? The main issue at hand is the lack of understanding of all the factors which contribute to the sustainability of SBYD programs. If we can better understand what contributes to the sustainability of Play It Smart, we may be able to offer policy makers and others who are making grass root efforts practical ideas about how to establish and maintain youth development programs within a community.

Information regarding sustainability could potentially contribute to creating more opportunities for under-served students to participate in formal programming that aims to promote their academic, personal and career development. With more vibrant and more stable youth development programs, we may be able to contribute to the reduction of systemic nation-wide challenges as high school graduation rates increase, as more under-served students become college ready, as less youth become incarcerated, and as less are faced with challenges due to obesity. Through participation in programs that promote their holistic development, our youth would be better prepared to enter adulthood, to support themselves and their families, and to contribute to their communities as educated, productive and healthy citizens. When we are able to successfully educate and prepare our young people for the future, we are better able to realize Thomas Jefferson's vision for this country as the educated and healthy 'common man' is able to actively participate in the democratic process and to pursue happiness.

The purpose of this study was to begin to examine how and why youth sport development programs—that provide all essential factors to youth sport development programs including addressing physical activity, college readiness and character development—are sustainable over time. By having a better understanding of factors that are related to sustainability of such inclusive programs, youth development professionals could have greater opportunities to fulfill their missions of improving high school graduation and college matriculation rates, contributing to the adoption of healthier behaviors around wellness and reducing the destructive behaviors such as drug use and criminal activities. By creating well-designed and effective programs that are also sustainable over time, it is possible that such programs could also be of great value to the participants, to the community and to our country.

However, this study is primarily interested in the first question of sustainability. Once the decision was made to examine sustainability, the focus became the identification of those Play It Smart programs that survived after the funding was cut. The focus of this study was to better understand the factors that contributed to one Play It Smart program that has been in place, sustained, for over a decade and that was designed to address the academic, athletic, personal and career development of under-served youth.

To better address the challenges related to sustainability and SBYD programs, we attempted to answer some of the following questions about the critical factors that lead to sustainability:

- Is it the decision-making of the leaders about funding?
- Is it recruitment and integration of staff?

- Is it an evaluation?
- Is it the perceived results?
- Is it leadership of the program?
- Is it partnerships in the community?

The Current Study

To begin to understand how SBYD programs are sustainable, the next step will be to study a school, which has sustained a SBYD program. Through this effort, we may uncover if there are steps that can be replicated or if there is a process that other SBYD developers and facilitators can follow as they attempt to gain a more secure foothold in the after-school landscape. The focus of this study will be on New Brunswick High School, which has independently supported a SBYD program, based on the college readiness Play It Smart Program. This is a historical case study research investigation, which explored how the New Brunswick High School adopted and sustained a SBYD program within the urban high school setting for the last 16 years.

The qualitative portion of the case study explored how the New Brunswick High School Play It Smart program was established and became part of the school culture along with how the key stakeholders evaluated it from year to year as well as how they made decisions to adopt and then expand the program. This study further examined how original Academic Coach along with the current Academic Coaches have integrated the Play It Smart framework into their program as well as the process the school and community leaders used to make the decision to adopt and then to expand the program. The over-arching purpose is to understand how the given SBYD program has been

sustainable to date, when most fail within the first year or two of inception or after the initial funding runs out. All the adults in the program considered to be stakeholders, including teachers, sport coaches, Academic Coaches and administrators were invited to be interviewed.

The questions focused on the integration of the program into the school and into the community. There were efforts to get a better understanding of how those in charge of the program overcame any budget and/or funding challenges, how they trained and developed new staff and how they gathered data and how they used the data to highlight the academic, community and athletic contributions and link them to the overall school goals. Stakeholder perceptions of the program at its inception as well as when critical decisions were made was also explored. There are some references to simple descriptive statistics to provide an overview of the academic progress such as graduation rates of program participants, SAT and ACT involvement and scores, college attendance and GPA. This was information was offered to provide an overview of academic success of program participants as it was used to explore the value of such academic success with program stakeholders.

Specific Research Questions

The purpose of the historical case study was to explore how the Play It Smart program at New Brunswick High School, a Sports-based Youth Development program, was adopted and sustained within this urban high school setting. The researcher identified several themes that emerged from exploring the following research questions:

1. What do the stakeholders of the SBYD New Brunswick program perceive leads to sustainability? Questions in the Interview Guide will address questions of funding, recruitment and training of staff, evaluation that indicates positive results, perception of the program, leadership of the program, leadership in the school and partnerships and/or leadership in the community?
2. What was the student-athlete experience of the SBYD New Brunswick program? What do they perceive as the strengths and weaknesses of the program?
3. How do the college attendance, GPA, program participation numbers of the SBYD New Brunswick program participants influence the decision-making process of the stakeholders?

The researcher utilized semi-structured questions during the one-on-one interviewing process with the participants in the study. Interviews were audiotaped and ranged in length from approximately 60 to 120 minutes.

The academic mentors or Academic Coaches (3), as they are referred to by the participants of this program, were interviewed for this study. The Academic Coaches were asked about the skills and competencies they are expected to have for this position as well as the goals that they are working towards with their students. The key administrators and teachers at the school were asked to comment in what ways the SBYD program support the goals of the school and in what ways it does not support the goals of the school. They were also asked about the key factors that are present which allows the program to sustain itself from year to year. During this study, the key stakeholders in the school and community who participated were asked whether the SBYD program fits in

with the overall culture of the school and if this contributes to the sustainability of the program from year to year. Finally, each of the participants was asked if and how the SBYD program may affect the overall high school experience for the students.

Significance of the Study

It is possible that the perception of the SBYD program, the documented results and the program facilitators (Academic Coaches) have nothing to do with sustainability but it is simply a matter of how the program aligns with goals of the leaders in the administration and the school board. Regardless of how the participants, the coaches and teachers feel about the SBYD program, the key factors may be that there is a school or district-wide priority to have afterschool programming in place for their students.

The significance of this study is to understand both idiosyncratic and potentially transferrable explanations for the sustainability of the Play It Smart program at New Brunswick High School. By studying a SBYD program that has been sustained for over a decade, strategies or themes may emerge that could be of interest to educators, community leaders, and parents who want to create consistent and sustainable academic, social and physical developmental opportunities for young people in afterschool programs. Results from this study may be of interest to others that lead positive youth development programs, those interested in college readiness programs as well as those community leaders and policy makers in charge of creating and sustaining afterschool programs. Finally, the findings from this study may include strategies for those who lead SBYD programs that are interested in expanding programs that are already considered sustainable but hope to grow their capacity and to reach more participants. It is hoped

that the findings from this study will lead to more research as well as more discussion on the importance of offering consistent and sustainable development spaces for our young people during the afterschool hours.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature

Out of school time (OST) and afterschool activities is still a young field of study but the initial research provides growing evidence that participation in afterschool programs can result in positive outcomes for youth (Schwartz & Noam, 2007). It is evident that there is both a national and local commitment to this area as there are numerous federal proposals for new or expanded after-school program funding, grants from foundations, state- and city-level initiatives, and efforts by scores of community groups around the country to create more after-school programs in their communities. Halpern (1999) believes the four following principal factors are driving this growing interest: (1) a belief that public spaces such as streets and play-grounds are no longer safe for children's out-of-school time, (2) a sense that it is stressful and unproductive for children to be left on their own after school, (3) a concern that many children need more time and individual attention than schools can provide to master basic academic skills, and (4) a conviction that low-income children deserve the same opportunity as their more advantaged peers to explore expressive arts, sports, and other developmentally enriching activities.

The shift in afterschool programming over the last 20 years is from a prevention-based approach to a strength-based approach. Young people should no longer be viewed as problems to be managed (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). In the 1990's, a new vision of adolescence emerged and a framework called Positive Youth Development was developed which highlights children and adolescents as resources for fostering

competencies rather than as problems to be managed (Lerner et al., 2006; Benson, 2006; Damon, 2004). In general terms, Positive Youth Development is a field which focuses on supporting or promoting, during the second decade of life, the positive developmental processes that are known or assumed to advance health and well-being.

As the field of Positive Youth Development began to grow, numerous programs were developed that use sport as a vehicle to enhance youth development. Several youth development programs have been created to support student athletes from underserved communities with their academic, career and personal development so they are better prepared for the future. Play It Smart is one such program. In 1998, with support from the National Football Foundation, Play It Smart was developed to increase high school completion and college admission rates among high-risk high school students in large, inner-city, academically under-performing public high schools in underserved communities. Using the core principles from Positive Youth Development theory, Play It Smart is designed to assist and enable high school participants to raise their educational performance, take and complete the rigorous courses required for college admission and success, prepare and score well on SAT or ACT tests, complete high school on credit in four years, and gain admission to college.

Play It Smart is based on a framework that suggests young people are likely to experience positive psychosocial growth when they: (a) are involved in voluntary activities that are intrinsically rewarding, contain clear rules and require committed effort over time (context); (b) are surrounded by caring, adult mentors and a positive peer group (external assets); (c) acquire life skills to deal with a variety of challenges (internal

assets), and (d) benefit from the findings of a comprehensive evaluation (Petitpas et al., 2004). Play It Smart brings all of these factors together in a systematic way and the creators of the model believe that students are most likely to achieve positive academic and career development when this framework is in place.

Since the inception of Play It Smart there has been a commitment to assessing the effectiveness of the program as well as the best practices. The National Football Foundation partnered with Springfield College and created the NFF Center for Youth Development through Sport. While there is some evidence that indicates participants improve their grades, sign up for and take the SAT or ACT at higher rates than their peers as well as gain admission to college at higher rates than their peers, there is still a need for a more thorough assessment of the how to establish and sustain an effective afterschool program.

There have been many efforts to address after-school support to under-served youth in poverty. Most programs that exist only address some of the essential needs of these youth and/or are not sustainable. First, the goals of youth development programs in general will be considered and through this discussion, highlight the challenges of providing consistent, sustainable programs that address the core needs of our under-served youth including earning an education (whether high school or collegiate), engaging in healthy physical activity and minimizing engagement in illegal, harmful behavior.

Ultimately the goal of Positive Youth Development programs is to level the playing field academically and socially. Many afterschool programs have sprouted up in

communities across the country to serve as the lever to boost a range of essential factors from academic performance, character development and/or physical activity for under-served youth. There is not a universal approach to after-school or out-of-school time programs but there is an agreement that they are a necessary part of the equation to address the essential needs of under-served youth and to shaping youth development, over all.

Because lack of sustainable sources of funding is one well-known obstacle to the field of afterschool programming, the researcher will explore the challenges to sustaining SBYD programs in underserved communities with limited resources.

The researcher will provide a thorough review of the literature that includes the following areas to demonstrate a rationale for such a study: (a) history after school programming, (b) the role of after school programs in academic development, (c) the emergence of the Positive Youth Development field, (d) Sport as a vehicle for Positive Youth Development, (e) Play It Smart and (f) challenges of sustainability to the field. The following sections are important to presenting a thorough summary of the current state of youth development as well as the factors that can impact their overall effectiveness and sustainability.

History of Afterschool Programming

Considerable attention has been devoted to after-school programs over the last two decades to discuss the purpose and effectiveness of these programs, which have been part of American culture for over a century (Mahoney, Parente, & Zigler, 2010; Vandell, Pierce, & Dadisman, 2005). Some of the most significant factors affecting the emergence

and expansion of afterschool programs over the last several decades have included historical changes in family demographics as well as the critical window of time following school dismissal when there is a lack of supervision for children (Halpern, 2002). Both seem to have consequences for the in-school success and psychosocial well-being of the young people who are affected by these factors.

The changes in family demographics include a number of different circumstances that result in a lack of supervision after school. Both custodial parents in single-parent families who need to work and double-parent families where both parents need to work create a supervision gap in every afternoon after school. In 2004, 78% of mothers with school age children were working (U.S. Department of Labor, 2005). This may be due to several factors including economic necessity and the rise in single-parent families. Also, schools are limited in their capacity to provide structured activities for all after the school day is over. This leads to situations where many youth have little or no supervision for anywhere between 20–25 hours each week (Coatsworth and Conroy, 2007). Limits to the capabilities of families and schools can result in poor academic achievement, gang involvement and risky behaviors around sexual activity and alcohol and drug use (Carnegie Council on Youth Development, 1995).

The last several decades there has been an enormous amount of effort to provide structure and support for young people from 2:00 to 6:00 PM to minimize the hazards during what is considered to be the riskiest time of the day for adolescents. It is during these hours that a disproportionate number of juvenile arrests occur and teenagers are most likely to engage in sexual intercourse, smoking, drinking alcohol or using drugs

(Carnegie Council, 1995). One out of every four adolescents are engaged in multiple high-risk behaviors and gang activity is on the increase (Poinsett, 1996).

The federal government as well as many private foundations have responded by making this issue a priority and have provided financial support to create programs that can provide supervision for youth during these high-risk periods. In an America After 3PM survey, a national study of school-aged children in Grades K–12 conducted by the Afterschool Alliance (2004), reported that 6.5 million children were involved in after-school programs. After-school programs have evolved and have become more than just child care. They now typically provide some form of academic support or social enrichment, or both. The lack of consistency of this grassroots approach to the problem has resulted in the failure to reach many of the youth in need and the uncertainty of the benefits for those participating in the programs. In addition, with the rapid expansion of afterschool programs over the last few decades, there is little collaboration between neighboring programs, which may result in duplication of services and/or large gaps of services and therefore missing an opportunity to effectively support the needs of a community.

Afterschool Programming and Academic Development

According to Karen Pittman (2005), the President of the Forum for Youth Investment, the 3 “R’s” of education or high school reform should also be part of afterschool program especially programming designed for high school-aged students. It is suggested that those 3 “R’s”; relationships, rigor, relevance, need to be present to ensure that young people are coming out of high school “ready for work, college and

life.” Pittman acknowledges that after school programs are not the magic bullet and that it doesn’t solve everything, but increased attention on student’s readiness for work and college should be an area of focus for afterschool programming. As far as evaluation of programs, again there is a need for after-school programs to track metrics such as graduation rates and levels of academic success. As it is with high school reform, building effective after-school programs within a community is not an issue for individual schools or individual service programs but requires a more universal effort. To be truly effective and meet the needs of students, after-school programming requires a broad systems approach (Pittman, Wilson-Ahlstrom, Yohalem, 2003).

College Readiness

College Readiness is the term used in the literature to refer to the understanding and competencies requisite to get to college. Several youth development programs have been created to help students in underserved communities to become more college ready. The following four essential skills have been identified as key indicators of college readiness: content knowledge and basic skills; core academic skills; non-cognitive, or behavioral, skills; and “college knowledge,” or the ability to effectively search for and apply to college (Roderick, Nagaoka and Coca, 2009). Proponents of college readiness programs contend that all four factors for high school students must be emphasized. The high schools in underserved communities typically serve a population that has had minimal exposure to college preparation: Under-served high school students often do not have family members who have attended college so resources within high schools become the only avenue to assist with the college knowledge.

Several youth development programs have been created with the primary objective to assist students in under-served communities to become more college ready.

As the National Director of Play It Smart travelling around the country visiting high schools in under-served communities, the researcher would routinely ask the student athletes to raise their hand if they were interested in college. The response was remarkably the same every time the question was asked. The majority of hands in the room shot up in the air as if there was a universal understanding that higher education meant an improved quality of life. When asked about their understanding of the necessary steps to get college almost all hands dropped from the air. It was apparent that only handful of students in each of these schools had a clear understanding of the necessary requirements to get admitted to college.

More and more youth development programs are being created with the goal to lessen the achievement gap that exists between students from under-resourced inner city communities and their more affluent suburban counterparts. Such college readiness programs provide a caring adult mentor and a strong social support network to help students navigate the challenging terrain from junior high school to college.

Achievement Gap

There are many factors currently impacting the students from under-resourced communities in the United States including academic, moral and physical shortfalls. Often, the “achievement gap” refers to racial disparities in academic achievement - the fact that students of color tend to lag behind their white peers in terms of school readiness, test scores, educational attainment, and grades. There is also an ‘achievement

gap’ that refers to disparities based on family income. Historically, low-income students as a group have performed less well than high-income students on most measures of academic success—including standardized test scores, grades, high school completion rates, and college enrollment and completion rates. While the achievement gap based on racial differences has narrowed over the last several decades, the ‘income achievement gap’ has widened (Reardon, 2013). Growing evidence suggests that more time in school or access to afterschool programs may help to narrow academic achievement gaps—if the added time is used effectively (Dobbie, Fryer & Fryer, 2011). In his article entitled “The Widening Income Achievement Gap,” Reardon (2013) warns that our schools cannot be expected to solve this problem on their own, but they must be part of the solution.

Regardless of race, gender, socioeconomic status of the family, the college aspirations and attendance of all high school students has increased dramatically over the last several decades (Roderick, Nagaoka, and Coca, 2009; Barnes and Slate, 2011). Yet significant disparities remain in college readiness for low-income and minority students in urban high schools. Research suggests that family income and parent’s education is strongly related to high school graduation and precollege academic preparation (Kuh, 2007). From an examination of the appropriate student data, the overall national dropout rate appears to be between 22 and 25% with a higher rate among black and Hispanic students (Tyler and Loftstrom, 2009). In 2002, it was reported that 78% of white students graduated with a regular diploma compared to 56% black students and 52% Hispanic students (Green & Winters, 2005). Higher aspirations for a college education may be due to the belief that it is one of the primary indicators for determining personal

well-being yet there remains a significant disparity in high school graduation rates between white students and student of color.

To turn college aspirations into higher graduation rates and higher on-to-college rates, educators have begun to acknowledge the development of skills and knowledge beyond basic skills and content knowledge. The four essential components associated with college readiness have been identified as a better measure to assess college enrollment (Conley, 2005, 2007, 2010).

College readiness is commonly understood as the level of preparation a student needs to enroll and succeed in a college program (certificate, associate's degree, or baccalaureate) without requiring remediation (Conley, 2007). Conley's (2005, 2007, 2010) research expands the notion of college readiness as it goes beyond the two types of skills already commonly recognized as key components of high school instruction. Any skills that determine academic achievement but are not readily measured by standardized tests or directly taught as content are considered non-cognitive skills. These include a range of behaviors such as self-awareness, self-monitoring, self-control, study habits, time management, and problem-solving skills. All are considered skills and behaviors that may help a student manage a new environment and the new academic and social demands of college. Beyond academic skills and behavioral skills, students need the information to successfully navigate the college search, admissions and financial aid process.

Schools are limited in the scope of what and how much they can provide so there is an enormous need to fill that void. There is a concern that many after-school programs

have simply become an alternative for self-care or an after-school arrangement where the child is not under the direct supervision of an adult for extended periods of time (Mahoney, Parente & Zigler, 2009). It has been estimated that 14% or 5.2 million 5- to 14-year-olds experience an average of 2–9 hours per week in self-care (U.S. Census, 2005). This can lead to even less time that young people have access to adults for support and guidance with academics, for information to help nurture and sustain aspiration and for motivation to achieve their goals. The National Center for Education estimates that public high schools average 2.6 counselors per school so many states operate well over what the American School Counselor Association recommends as the ideal counselor-to-student ratio of 100:1 (McDonough, 2005).

Impact of the Dropout Epidemic

In terms of academics, there is a dropout epidemic in underserved communities where graduation rates range between 21% and 50%. One in four African American and nearly one in five Hispanic students who attend high schools will not graduate from high school (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Each high school dropout costs the nation \$260,000 over his/her lifetime (Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009).

In terms of destructive behavior, almost half of violent crimes are committed by persons under the age of 25. And there is a direct link between high school graduation and prison time: Over 75% of prison inmates do not finish high school (Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009). The occurrence of a wide range of destructive and harmful activities among our youth include aggressive and antisocial behaviors, drug use, precocious sexual activity, criminal activities, academic under-achievement, and school failure. And, in

terms of physical well-being, 1 in 5 adolescents in the United States are currently considered overweight and by 2015, 1 in 4 will be overweight or obese (Wang, 2007).

With these shortfalls, many adolescents enter adulthood with a limited set of skills and abilities which has dramatic impact on our society. For example, the US Army Recruiting Battalion reports that only 28% of males between ages 17 and 23 are eligible to be recruited to serve in the armed services due to lack of a high school diploma, inability to pass the basic physical exam and/or a felony conviction. Some leaders in Washington, DC have referred to this predicament as a national security crisis. The percentage of children who live in poverty is among the most widely used indicators of child well-being because poverty is associated with many potential negative outcomes in the areas of health, education, emotional well-being, delinquency, and occupational attainment.

Positive Youth Development (PYD)

Despite limited formal research on the effectiveness of after-school programs, there are some studies that examine the impact of program participation on children's development which suggest that after-school participation can have important consequences for children's academic performance, social behaviors and relationships, and physical health (Mahoney, Vandell, Simpkins and Zarrett, 2009). A possible outcome from this research is an expanded view of the potential of after-school programs from basic child care and recreation to that of developmental contexts that contribute to children's positive development (Mahoney, Larson and Eccles, 2005). From this view, youth are not seen as in need of care or repair but are seen as resources to be developed

(Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003) reported that when programs focus on developmental systems ideas that stress the strengths of youth, positive development may be initiated. Karen Pittman (1990) points out that being problem-free does not equate to being prepared for the future. Positive youth development programs focus on strengths rather than a prevention or intervention of deficits.

Lerner (2004), the Director of the Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development at Tufts University, points out that young people are all too often defined as being positive for what they're not doing rather than what they are doing. The belief that all young people possess strengths and that these strengths are aligned with developmental assets are two key ideas associated with the Positive Youth Development (PYD) perspective (Benson, Scales, Hamilton, & Sesma, 2006). Lerner further suggests that if the strengths of the youth can be aligned with the strengths of families, communities and schools then young people may be the resources for the healthy development of themselves and others.

Theokas and Lerner (2006) have identified several facets of the ecology of youth that constitute key developmental assets promoting Positive Youth Development (PYD).

These are:

1. The individuals in young people's lives (e.g., parents, teachers, coaches, and mentors);
2. The institutions present in their community (e.g., structured, out-of-school-time [OST] activities, libraries, or skateboard parks);

3. Opportunities for youth and adults to work together in valued community activities (e.g., on school boards, on the chamber of commerce); and
4. Access to these people and institutions (e.g., due to adequate transportation, maintaining a safe setting for youth, or low financial costs).

Examples of Youth Development programs that integrate sustained, positive adult-youth relations, life-skill building activities and leadership opportunities in valued community activities are 4-H, Boys and Girls Clubs, Boys Scouts/Girl Scouts, Big Brothers/Big Sisters and YMCA. The context of such Youth Development programs promotes what Lerner et al. (2005) conceptualizes as a key indicator of PYD or one of the five “C’s”; competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring.

Brick and Mortar Afterschool Programs

To address the myriad need of urban poor and associated physical, academic and ethical issues, after-school programming has been looked to as part of the solution. There are some afterschool programs like the YMCA and Boys and Girls Clubs that have a long and rich history and have proven to be sustainable. They have become brick and mortar institutions that emerged when child labor laws disappeared and the lack of supervision after school led to increased concern over children’s safety in dangerous neighborhoods. Because these organizations have become perceived as essential, they have become a viable part of many communities across the country. They have been sustainable, meaning many have secure funding in place to ensure the doors are kept open and young people have access.

The YMCA and Boys and Girls Clubs do offer physical activity options, though,

in many cases, they do not have the resources for more holistic programming that includes academic development and college readiness activities. Programs like the YMCA and Boys and Girls Club have achieved sustainability. There is supervision and the programs are attractive to those who are interested in sport, physical activity, music and the arts. Like other afterschool programs, with the limitations in resources, many of these programs struggle to implement consistent programming aligned with more comprehensive youth development models.

In recent years, educators have shifted their view of adolescence and approach it as a special period in which adolescents need to be given support to increase their learning and development (Catalano and Hawkins, 1996). Many recognize the need for schools and communities to take on an expanded role to better support families in their mission to raise healthy and successful families (Hernandez, 1995).

Sports Participation and Positive Youth Development

Sport has long been a popular after-school activity for American youth. According to Pate, Trost, Levin, and Dowda (2000), a national survey of children's health has estimated that 58% of children age 6–17 participate in sport activities. Other sport participation data estimates anywhere between from 20 to 40 million adolescents participate in school-based sports programs each year (Coatsworth and Conroy, 2007). Similarly, others estimate that 20 million of the 45 million children ages 6–12 participate in non-school athletics and an estimated 5 million adolescents participate in interscholastic high school athletics (Jergovic, 2001). It has been further estimated that the annual cost of youth participation at this level is \$17 billion. In 1997, the Youth Risk

Behavior Survey indicated that approximately 62% of US high school students participated on at least 1 sports team in school and/or non-school settings. This proportion corresponds to more than 10 million youth (Pate, Trost, Levin and Dowda, 2000).

There are those who suggest that sport can have a positive effect on youths' social, psychological, and motor development and inspire a physically active lifestyle (Nichols, Pettee, & Ainsworth, 2007; Weiss, 2008). Over the last 20 years, there has been numerous programs that are designed to use sport as a vehicle for youth development. Sport has been one of those settings within schools and communities where educators and coaches have taken on the responsibility for the development of their teenaged participants. Because youth experience a rare combination of intrinsic motivation and deep attention when participated in a structured voluntary activity such as sport, it may be the context best suited to the development of initiative (Larson, 2000).

Perkins (2007) defined Sports-Based Youth Development (SBYD) programs as out-of-school-time programs that use a particular sport (for example, tennis, soccer, squash, baseball, or basketball) to facilitate learning and life skill development in youth which seems to generally cover both the prevention and potential aspects previously outlined. Most facilitators of SBYD programs seem to share the philosophy that the sport skills are the secondary goal while the primary focus is to teach life lessons. Sport, in many cases, becomes the hook that entices young people to participate in these programs (Le Menestrel, Bruno and Christian (2002). Perkins (2007) concluded that SBYD programs can provide settings and experiences that enable positive developmental

experiences to occur if program organizers, staff, and volunteers are intentional in how they go about implementing these programs.

The emergence of Sports-Based Youth Development programs over the last two decades coincided with the rapid expansion of afterschool programs and can be linked to the developmental assets proposed by the advocates of Positive Youth Development. The positive youth development movement is closely linked to the development of youth sports-based programming. The developmental assets proposed by the advocates of Positive Youth Development are similarly found as the primary goals of many SBYD programs. Like Positive Youth Development, SBYD programs reflect the transition away from the intervention programs of the 1980's, which were designed to address community problems. Facilitators of SBYD programs aim to use sport to address the most critical issues facing our youth in America: childhood obesity, academic failure and the lure of high risk behaviors such as gang involvement and drug use. The goals are different from those promoted in the traditional youth sport programs that mirror the dominant American sport philosophy and attitude of 'winning is everything.' SBYD programs are designed to address challenges as well as use the inherent power of sports as a vehicle for teaching life lessons while also promoting the personal, academic and athletic development of all the participants. Some researchers believe that there is some confusion around the definition of and the purpose of SBYD programs because the aim is not solely on prevention but also on maximizing the potential of each participant (Danish, Taylor & Fazio, 2003). With the focus on the inclusion of improved competence, facilitators of SBYD programs also have to define and teach youth the skills, values,

attitudes and knowledge necessary to succeed with the same intensity as they work to teach the prevention of the health-compromising behaviors previously outlined.

The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development initially outlined five desired outcomes for adolescent development in 1989 and then revised and expanded the list in 1995. The expanded list of desired outcomes for adolescent development includes the following:

- Ability to process information from multiple sources and to communicate clearly
- Begin journey to a lifetime of meaningful work by learning how to learn
- Good citizen
- Caring and ethical
- Healthy
- Valued place in a constructive group
- Learning how to form relationships
- Sense of worth
- Decision-making
- Develop an available support system
- Positive future orientation
- Learning respect

Other researchers have pointed out additional desired outcomes that overlap with many of the outcomes outlined by the Carnegie Council but, it seems for the most part, the list includes a comprehensive set of benchmarks for those developing SBYD programs. In 2011, Up2Us, a national coalition of SBYD programs, launched a process

to identify their members that demonstrate model SBYD programming. They defined a model SBYD program as one which the organization delivering the program demonstrated competency in each of the following five characteristics:

- *Trained Coaches* or caring adults who have received instruction in modeling and encouraging supportive relationships,
- *Intentional programming* or developmentally appropriate curricula with a focus on inclusive and engaging instruction, skill development and mastery,
- *Physical and Emotional Safety* or an environment free of hazards with an emphasis on community building, interpersonal skills and communication,
- *Strong administration* or a structure responsible for implementation of programs, evaluation and training, and
- *Context* or programs that address the child as a whole and connect the family, school, community and culture.

Petitpas et al., (2005) outline the conditions for maximizing positive social and psychological outcomes through sport participation. Due to many of the challenges of developing and sustaining SBYD programs, fulfilling all of these conditions can be difficult. Danish et al. (2003) outline several reasons why there are not many examples of SBYD programs that fully meet or address the desired outcomes outlined by the Carnegie Council or can be defined as a model SBYD program by Up2Us. First, many of the competencies or characteristics are vague and difficult to measure. Also, because many SBYD programs are federally supported, the goals and the research are centered around federal priorities which may or may not overlap with these competencies and

characteristics. Lastly, in many situations, the focus is on fixing the problems first so the prevention piece becomes the priority. Because the issues such as the dropout epidemic and childhood obesity are so looming and enormous, it is difficult for some SBYD programs to shift and focus on the holistic development of the participants rather than prevention and navigation away from the most critical challenges.

Several youth development programs have been created to use sport as a vehicle to help student-athletes in under-served communities to become more college ready. SBYD programs that include skill development in the non-cognitive or behavioral skills and increased awareness of college knowledge are believed to be able to assist high schools with this critical task.

Play It Smart

One such program, the Play It Smart program designed by the National Football Foundation (NFF), was developed to help football players at underserved high schools succeed on and off the field. The goals of the program are to promote the participants academic, athletic and personal development in schools in underserved communities. Underserved is defined in the Play It Smart Handbook (2001) as those communities and schools with a significant number of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch as well as those communities and schools with limited resources such as a college counselor, SAT/ACT Preparation programs, etc.

Since the Play It Smart program was first launched in 1998, being able to demonstrate quantifiable performance outcomes has been an essential component of the program design. To secure objective research on outcomes, the National Football

Foundation employed Springfield College to act as an objective third party that collects, analyzes and evaluates AIM's academic data.

Play It Smart's metrics to evaluate outcomes relate to:

- Increases in grade point average.
- Increases in four-year high school completion rates.
- Increases in college admission and enrollment.
- Increase in classroom attendance.
- Community service hours served.
- Life Skill modules completed.

Based on the research examining multi-site programs such as Play It Smart, Petitpas et al. (2006) suggest that personal growth is likely to occur when certain conditions were met. The creators of the Play It Smart model believe that students are most likely to achieve positive academic and career development when the following framework is in place:

- When they are in the right kind of learning environment (context).
- When they are surrounded by caring adult mentors and a positive group or community (external assets).
- When they learn or acquire skills that are important for managing life situations (internal assets).
- When they benefit from the findings of a comprehensive system of evaluation and research that builds improvements back into the system (Petitpas, Van Raalte, Cornelius, & Presbrey, 2004).

Play It Smart brings all of these factors together in a systematic way. The program framework promotes the engagement of students while they are participating in afterschool activities that are voluntary. Through its model and practices, Play It Smart can create a positive learning environment.

Context

For Play It Smart like other Sports-Based Youth Development programs, students are engaged while they are participating in activities (e.g., sport) that they do voluntarily, that are challenging and intrinsically motivating, and require considerable commitment over time (context). These characteristics have been identified as providing the optimal environment for students to develop initiative and promote future learning (Czikszentmihalyi et al., 1993; Larson, 2000). When participants are doing what they want to do and believe that they have a valued place within an important group, they are more willing to put forth the effort necessary to succeed (Carnegie Council, 1995; Eccles & Barber, 1999). Importantly, the context for growth must also contain clear rules, boundaries, and goals that promote accountability for results (Larson, 2000). Play It Smart holds participants responsible for their choices, and rules are enforced without ambiguity or favoritism.

Internal Assets

SBYD programs that adhere to this model can create a positive learning environment. Sport may lead to the development of life skills (internal assets) in youth if the skills are clearly identified and acknowledged by the program facilitators

(Meichenbaum & Turk, 1987). Play It Smart uses sport participation to facilitate learning and life skill development through a series of activities that promotes the use of skills used developed through sport participation in other arenas. Participation in community service is one of those activities that Play It Smart students are encouraged to plan and participate in and has served as a training ground to process the importance of the life skills.

External Assets

Researchers have shown that involvement in sport or other extracurricular activities is not enough to promote positive attitudes (Catalano et al., 2002). Participants must also establish close relationships with caring adult mentors (e.g., Academic Coaches) and have the benefit of parental involvement (Benard, 1997; Perkins, 1997). The quality of the relationships established with a caring adult mentor (external asset) is also critical for the development of positive assets during adolescence. The two key components of these relationships are empathy and holding young people to high expectations (Catalano et al., 2002; Perkins, 1997). Those mentors seem to have a significant impact on the overall development of the student when they are able to create an empathetic and constructive mentoring relationship as well as involve and empower the parents, or other adults, concerned with the educational efforts of the child.

Evaluation

To fully understand whether youth development programs are effective, data needs to be gathered and evaluated (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak & Hawkins,

2002). The National Football Foundation (NFF) Center was established shortly after Play It Smart was launched and housed on the campus of Springfield College. The purpose of the NFF Center was to evaluate the data gathered in the schools that were participating in Play It Smart (evaluation and research). After the 2001–02 academic year, data gathered from schools that had the Play It Smart for four years showed that 100% of Play It Smart participants who were seniors took the SAT or ACT and graduated and that 95% had been accepted to and were planning to attend college in the Fall of 2002 (NFF Center, 2002). This represented a significant difference between the on-to-college rates from the non-Play It Smart students in the same schools (NFF Center, 2002).

Role of the Coach

High school sport is justified as an activity that has educational, physical, personal and social-growth values. When high school coaches from North Carolina were surveyed, they ranked psychological/social development and teaching physical skills/physical development as their most important objectives (Gould, Chung, Smith and White, 2006). These coaches also seemed to agree that teamwork, the value of hard work, time management and goal setting were significant life skills that students could develop through high school sport participation. These coaches seemed to recognize the power sport as well as the importance of their role in teaching life skills.

Academic Coach

Play It Smart has developed efficient strategies for transferring positive skills and attitudes from the playing field to the classroom and community. Play It Smart works to assist high school coaches to build a bridge between the athletic field and the classroom and creating relevance between a student's academic and athletic experiences. For Play It Smart schools, the primary bridge builder at the school becomes a trained mentor called the Academic Coach. The Academic Coach uses a student's natural enthusiasm for their high school sport and high school sport and the positive peer pressure from their teammates as catalysts to lift their aspirations and strengthen their off-the-field performance. With the backing of the head coach and working directly with other school personnel, administrators, teachers, guidance counselors and athletic directors, Academic Coaches help the participants develop personal and team goals. The Academic Coaches then provide the social support to their students as they find the resources, inside and outside of themselves, to achieve these goals.

Academic Coaches tailor each Play It Smart program to the individual school situations while working within the proven program model. Academic Coaches work throughout the school year, not just during the sport season, to create a portfolio of complimentary activities that inspire and reinforce successful habits and behaviors. These activities include weekly study halls, SAT/ACT prep sessions, as well as individual meetings to determine goals and develop a game plan for achieving those goals. Academic Coaches use many strategies to create a productive learning environment, such as setting high expectations and goals, encouraging and supporting

students with a more challenging school schedule, teaching test taking and note taking strategies, and creating team building experiences off the field.

Academic Coaches also find and create appropriate community service opportunities for the team. Services activities seem to be an effective way that Academic Coaches have bolstered the life skill development of the participants in Play It Smart. Researchers have shown that skills learned in one context, like sports, do not automatically transfer to other situations unless individuals have opportunities to test out and gain confidence in their abilities to use the skills in the new situations (Caplan, Bennetto, & Weissberg, 1991; Dodge, Pettit, McClaskey, & Brown, 1986). Through Play It Smart, students are encouraged to take on leadership roles and to practice life skills during different community service activities. Community service gives participants opportunities to practice and gain confidence in their abilities to use life skills and leadership skills in the other settings (Danish, Petitpas, & Hale, 1993) as well as an increased sense of self-worth (Dryfoos, 1991). In addition, during their participation in community service activities, Play It Smart participants were able to learn about the diversity in their own community and were empowered and able to improve the environment in which they live (NFF Center, 2002).

Play It Smart Research

Since 1998, numerous evaluations have been conducted to gather the results of and to examine the model of the Play It Smart program. From the beginning, the academic success as well as the integration of life skills of the participants has been encouraging.

Quantitative Research

The results from the initial pilot project revealed that the participants' grade point averages increased, the SAT scores increased and exceeded the school averages and ultimately, more students graduated and went onto higher education. (Petitpas et al., 2004). With a better sense of the outcomes as well as the process behaviors, the Academic Coaches were then trained to promote the following process behaviors linked to academic success: attend all classes, take organized notes, turn in all assignments on time and take all tests on time. The National Football Foundation Center continued to gather quantitative data each year and examined the academic success of those participating in Play It Smart and non-participants from the same schools and found significant differences that supported the overall benefits of the program (NFF Center, 2002).

Qualitative Research

Qualitative data collection and analysis has also been used for evaluating the Play It Smart program as well as interpreting the impact on the participants of the program. Examples of qualitative research that has been conducted include a study to determine how the Play It Smart program influenced the attitudes and behaviors of teachers (Jones, 2005) and a study to better understand the life skills the participants gained to stay positive and persevere through the challenges they face through life (VanGorden, Cornelius, & Petitpas, 2010).

The 2010 analysis by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) of 50 studies using both school-based physical activity and academic-related search items

found one or more positive associations between participation in interscholastic sports and other extracurricular physical activities which included improvement in core academic skills (math and literacy), grades, test score results, and decreased drop-out rates. (CDC, The Association between School-Based Physical Activity, Including Physical Education, and Academic Performance, 2010).

Researchers have also shown that involvement in sport or other extracurricular activities is not enough to promote positive attitudes (Catalano et al., 2002). Participants must also establish close relationships with caring adult mentors (e.g., Youth Development Coaches) and have the benefit of parental involvement (Benard, 1997; Perkins, 1997). The development of positive assets during adolescence has been linked with the quality of the relationships with adult mentors. The two key components of these relationships are empathy and holding young people to high expectations (Catalano et al., 2002; Perkins, 1997). Play It Smart Academic Coaches undertake extensive training on how to create an empathetic and constructive mentoring relationship. They learn various strategies for involving and empowering parents, or other adults, concerned with the educational efforts of their children.

There have been a number of researchers who have gathered evidence that points to the harmful effects that can come from athletic involvement on adolescents and have questioned the psychosocial benefits of sport participation (Danish, Petitpas and Hale, 1990, 1993). Goldberg and Chandler (1995) further examined some of the developmental problems high school student athletes may experience and their implications for programmatic interventions. Issues related to overbearing parents,

questionable coaching tactics, losses in self-esteem and high dropout rates from sports have all been pointed out as the consequences of the 'win at all cost' attitude which is prevalent in sport today. The holistic development of youth must be kept in mind when developing Sports Based Youth Development programs as to avoid any of the damaging trends that have emerged in youth sports referenced by Goldberg and Chandler (1995) and Danish et al. (1990).

In some communities with lower Socio-Economic Status (SES), sport is viewed as a way out or a potential career for youth who show some athletic promise. There is a danger of sport being viewed this way by kids and their families as they forgo any other career options and a more wide-ranging commitment to academic development (Peltier, Laden & Matranga 1999). This message can be perpetuated by those in the community as well as family members, which may lead young people to primarily view themselves as athletes rather than fully understand and grasp their abilities as students. These are some of the dangers of creating a performance-focused environment. When the focus of sport participation is task-oriented, the development of positive life skills is more likely to occur (Czikszentmihalyi, 1996; Larson, 2000).

Petitpas et al. (2005) provide a comprehensive overview of the emerging field of Sports Based Youth Development which includes some implementation concerns to better assist those professionals designing and implementing programs that promote psychosocial development through sport. Selecting an appropriate site to operate a SBYD program is essential as the key stakeholders at the site should be open to collaboration and committed to introducing and supporting the program in a way that

positively promotes it with the prospective participants. The recruitment and training of the staff who will be working directly with the program participants is another critical area for those implementing a SBYD Program. Thoroughly screening candidates for these positions as well as providing an initial training can help to ensure that a program is launched properly with qualified people in place. Ongoing support and supervision is essential for programmatic consistency and overall success. Strategies that planners could consider include regular communication with staff facilitating the program, developing an evaluation protocol, staff meetings that include topics geared to professional development and continuing education (Petitpas et al., 2005).

Challenges of Sustainability

The challenges of better integration and reach of afterschool programs have been well-documented but there has been little research on the sustainability of the programs that have some recognized results. Many robust Positive Youth Development programs, designed to meet the physical, social and academic needs of under-served youth, have been established over the years. The results suggest a profound positive impact yet there is the potential of an equally devastating impact when the programs are unable to ‘keep the doors open’ due to issues related to sustainability.

When examining the current state of afterschool programming in the United States, sustainability has been identified as one of the critical challenges (Noam, 2008 and Mahoney, Parente & Zigler, 2009). Most research on this topic acknowledges that funding is directly aligned with the sustainability of afterschool programs and, thereby, emphasizes the importance of federal support. They also call for state and city level

support to create a state-wide system as well as policies aimed at supporting the development of afterschool programs, securing resources for new and established programs and ensuring quality programming. Noam (2008) and Mahoney and colleagues (2009) assert that with more secure funding, the program staff becomes better paid, will receive necessary training and professional development, and will result in less turnover. They also argue that with more funding, access to requisite materials and physical space, which are not currently available, could be offered to run effective programs.

When asked about sustainability, leaders from four highly successful Sports-based Youth Development program spoke about diversifying their funding sources to ultimately sustain their programs (Perkins, Berlin, Dworkin, Eames, & Menconi, 2007).

Sustainability was one of the four topics addressed in the article where the leaders also shared their program mission, the program design and content and an overview of the results. Each shared a similar philosophy in regards of using sport as a vehicle to engage and support underserved youth, adhering to the best practices of Sports-based Youth Development programs as well as continuing to diversify their funding sources to ultimately sustain their programs (Perkins et al., 2007). Along with the commitment to ongoing program development and a thorough evaluation, each pointed to fundraising as the approach to ensure sustainability. In this conversation, it seems that the ongoing challenge of sustainability was linked solely to their fundraising approach and did not include any other factors that may be associated with sustainability.

Some argue that by having a more formal structure for establishing and growing afterschool programs in each state could lead to more access to the essential components

of sustainable programs and the field of Positive Youth Development could become a viable profession. Though there is a clear call for sustainable programs, the one universal solution seems to be offering consistent funding. To date, there is limited research on sustainability that considers multiple factors related to the ongoing growth and development of afterschool programs and/or Positive Youth Development programs. The purpose of this study is to explore other factors beyond funding that may be requisite to strengthen the sustainability of PYD programs.

According to Noam (2008), there are several well-known obstacles to establishing and sustaining quality Out of School Time (OST) or afterschool programs. First the field lacks sustainable sources of funding. As a result, many programs have staff members that are underpaid and staff turnover is high. When resources are limited to pay staff, it is difficult to recruit those with highly qualified members with advanced degrees and relevant experience. Lastly, funds for quality materials is scarce and space can be limited. Additionally, the field has yet to develop into a viable profession with standards, training and career possibilities. For the field of Positive Youth Development to grow and have a foothold in OST programming, critical issues related to funding need to be addressed.

From a comprehensive review of the literature, Noam (2008) developed a framework to approaching quality OST and afterschool programming that includes following three features or variables:

- Activities, Curricula, and Learning
- Staff Capacity and Training, and Relational Care

- Support Structures and Leadership.

It seems there is much focus on the activities and curriculum as an improvement to program design will logically improve the overall program effectiveness. To strengthen the field, it has been recommended that all three features must be addressed and that a one-sided approach will not impact the field sufficiently (Noam, 2008). According to Domitrovich, et al. (2010), the practitioners that align their youth development programs with a valid theoretical or conceptual framework have a better chance to be sustainable or replicated.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

The purpose of the historical case study research investigation was to explore how New Brunswick High School adopted and has sustained the Play It Smart program for over ten years. New Brunswick High School is an independently funded Play It Smart program and Sports-based Youth Development (SBYD) program since 2005. The purpose of this study was to explore how this successful SBYD program was initially adopted and how it has been sustained for over ten years within an urban high school setting, particularly after the funding from the NFL was discontinued.

For the purposes of this study a successful SBYD program was defined as one which has been sustained in the community for over four years with at least 2 full-time employees. For the purpose of this investigation, case study research methodology was used to explore factors that contribute to the sustainability of this unique SBYD program with the goal of identifying possible explanations for sustainability of this particular program.

Setting

Research was conducted in the New Brunswick High School located in New Brunswick, New Jersey. New Brunswick High School is the only public high school in the district that participates in interscholastic athletics. The school district serves roughly 7,500 students and is one of 31 SDA Districts (formally known as Abbott School Districts) in the State of New Jersey. Based on criteria set forth by the State of New Jersey Department of Education, New Brunswick Public Schools are considered one of

the special needs districts in New Jersey (Librera, 2003).

The school was initially selected for be a Play It Smart school because of the academic needs of the students. Using the criteria set forth by the National Football Foundation for the Play It Smart program, New Brunswick was considered as an underserved school with a student population when over 70% are considered from economically disadvantaged households or that they qualify for free and reduced lunch and with a graduation rate under 60%.

Initially, the New Brunswick High School Play It Smart Program was one of five programs that received some funding from the National Football League. At that time, a part-time Academic Coach was secured as an Independent Contractor for the New Brunswick High School Play It Smart program. Laurie Lazovik, the original Academic Coach, was eventually hired full-time by the school district and then was elevated to the Program Director of Play It Smart at New Brunswick High School. Laurie then served in that leadership capacity at New Brunswick High School until the Spring of 2015. With external funding, Play It Smart was launched at New Brunswick High School in the Fall of 2000. From the Fall 2000 to Spring of 2005, the program was established and took root at New Brunswick High School and Play It Smart nationally expanded from 5 sites to 138 high schools across the country with additional support from the National Football League (NFL) as well as a funding commitment from the Department of Education.

Academic Coaches were committed to a minimum of a part time (20 hour per week) for the entire school year or a ten-month term from August 1st through June 30th.

Each Academic Coach attended an annual training session facilitated by Dr. Albert Petitpas as well as members of the NFF Center and the Play It Smart leadership team and were supported through the school year to collaborate with other school initiatives to improve academic performance, to increase high school completion rates, to stimulate students' constructive planning for future educators and careers. Using quantitative outcome data, Petitpas et al. (2004) contend that students are most likely to achieve positive academic development:

- When they are in the right kind of learning environment (context),
- When they are surrounded by caring adult mentors and a positive group or community (external assets),
- When they learn or acquire skills that are important for managing life situations (internal assets),
- When they benefit from the of a comprehensive system of evaluation and research that builds improvements back into the system.

Play It Smart was designed to bring all these factors together in a systematic way. The program engages students while they are participating in activities (i.e. sport) that they do voluntarily, that are challenging and intrinsically motivating and require considerable commitment over time.

After the initial pilot, the outcome data collected by National Football Foundation Center for Youth Development through Sport was encouraging. Results from the pilot revealed that participants' Grade Point Averages improved and their SAT Scores improved and the team average was higher than average for the general student

population (Petitpas et al., 2004). Graduation rates, on to college rates and participation in community service were also tracked and showed promise. During the expansion, the outcome data was collected from each operating site and the initial results at New Brunswick High School were on par with those from the pilot program. The stakeholders in New Brunswick Public Schools and in the community, were encouraged.

In 2005, there was a shift in the funding from the NFL and a new Secretary of Education did not honor a previous commitment from the Department of Education for funding. Almost all (all but 4) of the programs were de-funded from the NFL. There were efforts to assist each of the Academic Coaches and the key stakeholders in their school to identify and secure local funding to sustain their Play It Smart program. At this time, the New Brunswick High School Play It Smart program not only remained as a viable entity in the school but secured the funds locally to continue to support Laurie, their Academic Coach, on a full-time basis. The Play It Smart program was evaluated by the school board each year after that and it was not only sustained, but it also gained the approval to expand. Currently the program has the annual funding to support three full-time Academic Coaches.

This is a single-case historical research study: the single-case research design is useful if the case is an extreme, unique, or revelatory case; a representative or typical case; or a longitudinal case (Yin, 2003). During the 2004–05 School Year with some funding from the National Football Foundation, the Play It Smart program at New Brunswick High School was one of 138 operational SBYD programs. After the funding stopped, the SBYD program became unique or revelatory as the stakeholders in the

school and community rallied to fiscally support the program, which has since become a fully funded by the school. The SBYD program at New Brunswick High School also has been in operation for the last 16 years.

The role of the Program Director and Academic Coaches in the SBYD program is to oversee and facilitate comprehensive academic and personal development support for all the student athletes at New Brunswick High School. Activities can include one-on-one meetings, study halls, life skill presentations, SAT and ACT preparation, community service events, and other team events.

Participants

The following is a list of those who agreed to be interviewed for this study:

- Original Play It Smart Academic Coach and former Play It Smart Director at NBHS
- Past Participants and Current Academic Coaches (3)
- Superintendent of New Brunswick Public Schools (NBPS)
- Board Member of NBPS
- Executive Director of New Brunswick Tomorrow
- Program Director at New Brunswick Tomorrow

Due to the nature of this study and its focus on sustainability, there are a number of participants that were critical to interview to fully understanding how Play It Smart became integrated into New Brunswick High School. The following list of key stakeholders at New Brunswick High School, in Play It Smart and in the community, that were considered to be the ‘A-list’ and were vital to interview for research regarding the

funding decisions that led to adoption and sustainability of Play It Smart:

Superintendent and School Board. Invitations were extended to those key leaders/decision makers at New Brunswick High School when the program was adopted after NFL funding was cut. Dr. Richard Kaplan, Superintendent of New Brunswick Public Schools from 2004 to 2015 and Patricia Sydowsky, New Brunswick Public School Board Member, both agreed to be interviewed for this study.

Program Director/Partners at New Brunswick Tomorrow. New Brunswick Tomorrow is a non-profit organization dedicated to enriching the lives of New Brunswick's people. A grant from New Brunswick Tomorrow served as 'bridge funding' for the Play It Smart program at New Brunswick High School when the NFL funding was cut. Invitations were extended to those key partners at New Brunswick Tomorrow to discuss their decision-making process for Play It Smart. Mr. Jeffrey Vega, the Executive Director at New Brunswick Tomorrow, and Meredith Masin Blount, Director of School-Based Programs at New Brunswick Tomorrow, both agreed to be interviewed for this study.

Play It Smart Director at New Brunswick High School. An invitation to participate was extended to Laurie Lazovik, the initial Academic Coach and former Director of the Play It Smart program at New Brunswick High School. Laurie was at New Brunswick High School for 14 years as either an Academic Coach or the Play It Smart Director. She was asked to reflect on how the program was established and how it has been sustained over the last 16 years.

Current Play It Smart Staff/Academic Coaches. Miguel Ulloa and Nate Harris are current Academic Coaches working with the Play It Smart program at New Brunswick High School as well as former student athletes at New Brunswick High School who also participated in the Play It Smart program. Invitations were extended to both to reflect on their past participation as students as well as to share their current views as primary facilitators of the program. A third Academic Coach, Rafael Castillo, who received training in the Athletic Counselling program at Springfield College, was also invited to participate to share his views of the sustainability of Play It Smart in New Brunswick High School.

Invitations to participate were also extended to key past and present administrators and teachers at the school including principals, athletic director, football coaches and teachers on staff who were involved when the program was adopted after NFL funding was cut. Despite several invitations via email as well as via voice mail, other key past and present personnel familiar with the Play It Smart program at New Brunswick High School did not answer either the emails or voice mails to coordinate an interview.

The criteria for participation in the study was primarily based on convenience sampling and only included those at the school or in the community that had a certain degree of familiarity with Play It Smart. All those that were familiar with this SBYD program, involved with decisions related to its ongoing sustainability as well as those who collaborated with the Academic Coaches on academic support and youth

development programming for the students participating on their teams were considered for participation in this study.

Research Questions

The initial set of questions consisted of open-ended prompts deliberately intended for each stakeholder and/or focus group participating in this study. A checklist was developed to ensure the interviewees touch upon the following areas as they responded to the prompts and/or research questions:

1. Funding
2. Program results and their relationship to sustainability
3. Recruitment and training of staff and its relationship to sustainability

The aim of this study was to better understand the key decisions made regarding the funding of the SBYD New Brunswick program, particularly when the program was initiated and when the NFL full funding of the program was cut. An Interview Guide was developed to address the decision-making process, the key personnel involved, the ongoing commitment to funding, leadership of the program, leadership in the school and partnerships and/or leadership in the community. Key interviewees included those listed above because of their decision-making capacity but also included those participants who may not have been involved directly in the decision-making process but were able to add insight into Play It Smart's place within the culture and framework of New Brunswick High School.

Prompts or questions for the *superintendent and the member of the school board* were prepared to get their initial impression of the Play It Smart program in their school

as it was established as well as of the Academic Coach as she started in an externally funded position. They were also asked questions about the how the program evolved or adapted to the environment in the school along with how it aligned with goals of athletic program and the academic program in the school. Finally, they were asked about any key considerations for providing internal funding when the Play It Smart at New Brunswick program when the NFL full funding of the program was cut as well as the ongoing funding each year.

Prompts or questions for the New Brunswick High School partners at New Brunswick Tomorrow were aimed at getting their initial views of view Play It Smart and its role at New Brunswick High School as well as their initial involvement as an outside organization. They were also asked about how Play It Smart aligned with their other initiatives in the school and in the New Brunswick community. Finally, there were questions about the evaluation process as well as the key considerations when New Brunswick Tomorrow began to assist with the funding and their role in getting the program fully adopted at New Brunswick High School.

Prompts or questions for the former Play It Smart Director/original Academic Coach at New Brunswick High School included were centered around the steps she initially took to introduce and to establish the Play It Smart program at New Brunswick High School as well as her approach to building relationships with the students and the stakeholders. She was also asked about any initial obstacles that she faced as well as how she was able to overcome any of those obstacles. Finally, she was about how the programs along with relationships have evolved over time.

Prompts for the past Play It Smart participants and current Academic Coaches at New Brunswick High School included questions about their initial experience as students and about the current experience as Academic Coaches. First, they were asked about the initial impressions of Laurie and of the program as well as their views on the perception of the program by others including non-football players, coaches and teachers. They were also asked about the current role as Academic Coaches and how they work with the athletic coaches, teacher, counselors and administrators in the building. There were questions about their training as well as about any current obstacles. Finally, they were asked about how the role of Academic Coach has evolved as the program has become more institutionalized at New Brunswick High School?

The Interviews

The researcher utilized semi-structured questions during the one-on-one interviews (see Appendix A for the full Interview Guide). The superintendent and school board members along with representatives from New Brunswick Tomorrow, past student-athletes and current Academic Coaches and the former Play It Smart Director comprised the list of those key interviewees. Additionally, the researcher hoped to interview other teachers, coaches, and administrators in the school but did not get any response after several attempts to schedule interviews. Interviews were audio-taped and ranged from approximately 30 to 90 minutes.

The aim of the open-ended questions was to learn more about the history of the decision making behind the funding and the adoption of the Play It Smart program from year to year. The researcher hoped to uncover the key factors present that allow the

program to sustain itself from year to year. Those that agreed to participate in this study were asked their opinions on how and why the Play It Smart program was adopted at New Brunswick High School. They were also asked if the program fit in with the overall culture of the school as well as their views of the role Play It Smart played in the athletic development and academic development of the student athletes.

Procedure

For this historical single case study; interviews, field observations and review of relevant information (i.e. annual report of the program produced by the Director of Play It Smart) was gathered to better understand the perspectives of those who participate in the Play It Smart program at NBHS. The procedure to secure the participants in the study began with an invitation to participate that was distributed to those that were considered key stakeholders in the Play It Smart program at New Brunswick High School. There was consideration for those who work or have worked at New Brunswick High School during the last 15 years and had any involvement with the Play It Smart program and/or were involved in the decision-making process to sustain the program when the initial funding was cut. Contact information for those administrators, board members, community members, and coaches was gathered from the school and the Play It Smart Director. In the invitation to participate (Appendix E), all the participants were offered the opportunity to read their interview manuscript. Institutional Review Board permission was gained prior to beginning data gathering for the study.

In summary, research questions posed to the range of participants addressed the following: (a) the initial decision making process in the funding of this program as well

as the funding for its ongoing sustainability; (b) the experience of the Academic Coaches as they initially interacted with school personnel; (c) if and how the experience in the school changed when the funding came from the school; (d) how has the staffing become integrated into the school culture/context; (e) how the relationships between the Play It Smart staff and the school staff change over time; (f) what is the experience of the current students in the program ; and (h) how does the SBYD program effect the overall high school experience for the participants, teachers, coaches and administrators.

Data Collection

Semi-structured one-on-one interviews were implemented. The researcher utilized semi-structured questions during the one-on-one interviewing process with the participants in the study. Semi-structured interviews were selected as a means of data collection because they are well suited for the exploration of the perceptions and opinions of the respondents and varied backgrounds and personal histories of the interviewees precluded the use of a standardized interview. All questions are reflected in the Interview Guides (see Appendix A). All interviews will be audio taped for subsequent verbatim transcription.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted in the school and took place in offices of administrators as well as the Play It Smart office or by phone. Data was collected during school hours. The interviews were conducted in space or environments that are quiet and free of distractions. Prior to beginning all interviews, signed informed consent and signed assent forms were secured. All participants were informed that they

could withdraw from participating in the study at any time. IRB approval was attained prior to beginning any data gathering, including interview data.

Trustworthiness

A specific research process was utilized to ensure the validity and reliability of the data collection. Corbin and Strauss (1997) point to Grounded Theory Methodology and Methods as a valid approach to qualitative research which allows for the combining of sources such as interview, field observations and historical.

Internal validity was obtained through the triangulation of the data collection. Triangulation of the data was accomplished through focus group and one-on-one interviews, and discussions with peers and mentors in the field of SBYD. Multiple data sources were utilized to gather information regarding the initial and ongoing decision-making process related to the funding for this SBYD program, the overall experience of the Academic Coaches as they interacted with the school personnel and the experience of the students who participate in the SBYD program.

Peer debriefing and member checking are two other strategies that were used to enhance the internal validity of the research. The researcher met with experts in the SBYD arena on a regular basis to review transcripts and get feedback to enhance the credibility and to ensure validity. The experts asked the researcher questions about the study to ensure the accuracy of the results. During the interviews, the researcher also restated or summarized information and then got feedback from the participant to ensure the accuracy.

Reliability can be achieved through a prolonged engagement, clarification of

researcher bias and the use of thick, rich description. The researcher spent extensive time in the school with the participants of the study to build rapport and obtain honest and open responses.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

The focus of the single-case historical case study research investigation was to explore how a successful SBYD program was initially adopted and how it has been sustained for over ten years within an urban high school setting, particularly after the funding from the initial NFL was discontinued. Research questions addressed the following: (a) the initial impressions of Play It Smart and the Academic Coach by the school and community personnel as well as by the students as the program was established; (b) the initial decision making process in the funding of this program as well as the funding for its ongoing sustainability; (c) the experience of the Academic Coaches as they initially interacted with school personnel; (d) if and how the experience in the school changed when the funding came from the school; (e) how the staffing became integrated into the school culture/context; (f) how the relationships between the Play It Smart staff and the school staff changed over time; (g) the experience of the current students in the program; and (h) how does the SBYD program effected the overall high school experience for the participants, teachers, coaches and administrators.

Interview Themes

Thematic analysis was performed by a group of graduate students at Boston University as part of a research team training experience. The following themes emerged from their review:

1. Importance of a strong Academic Coach
 - a. Laurie was the most important variable

- b. Excellent communicator
 - c. Initially built strong relationship with Play It Smart participants and parents
 - i. Importance of 'care'
 - d. Developed relationships with a non-traditional set of allies' relationships that led to relationships with decision-makers
 - i. both school and community leaders
 - ii. she quickly became an insider
2. The identified need for additional academic support and the high expectations of student athletes by the school and community leaders
- a. Commitment to scholar-athletes versus student-athletes
 - i. Board approval of increasing GPA standard from NJ mandate of a 1.7 to a 2.0 for NBHS student-athletes
 - b. Initial success with seniors in a development of a college game plan
 - c. More students academically eligible to participate
 - d. Additional evaluation by New Brunswick Tomorrow supports academic progress
3. The breadth and value of the program awareness
- a. Promotion of academic progress as well as program highlights circulated to school and community in a monthly newsletter
 - b. Stakeholders invited to End-of-Year Banquet

- c. Community service opportunities, which were introduced as an incentive for students who fulfilled academic requirements and attracted non-traditional allies such as leaders at Elijah's Promise Soup Kitchen and NJ Special Olympics.
- 4. The allies (both traditional and non-traditional) serve as advocates and influence decision-makers
 - a. Play It Smart became a funding priority for Superintendent and School Board members
 - b. Regardless of the party affiliation of the local government officials or school board, they agree that Play It Smart was a program that would not be cut
- 5. The shift in the culture at New Brunswick High School
 - a. The awareness has grown to the point that everyone knows about Play It Smart
 - b. It has become so attractive, non-athletes want to become part of it
 - c. The expectations to fully participate come from the other students (or teammates) as well as the coaches, teachers, etc.
 - d. Importance of Play It Smart alumni leads to a shift in culture and more hope for the future for the current participants

Data collected from all participants were analyzed collectively and compared/contrasted to formulate emerging categories common among participants.

Themes that emerged based on primary investigator data analysis

The researcher found a similar set of themes outlined above. A brief overview of each theme will be offered prior to review of each interview which will include the background information about each participant of the study as well as the categories or themes that emerged by providing supporting evidence from the data (e.g. quote from participants) (Adu, 2013).

The road to acceptance
School-wide commitment to Academic and Athletic success
Communication and Collaboration
Shift in Culture

Table 4.1 Overall Themes

The road to acceptance

The initial “buy-in” from the students and then from their parents seems to be a result of the rapport that Laurie, the initial Academic Coach, was able to develop. The students seemed to quickly recognize that Laurie was there to help them achieve the goals in the classroom and in life. She was consistent as far as being there for the academic support activities such as study hall but she was also available to listen to their hopes, dreams and challenges. As several of the participants in the study mentioned, it was evident that how much Laurie cared and how her students responded to that care and belief. She is described as the most important variable of the Play It Smart program. Despite some of the resistance that Laurie may have felt from the coaches and the athletic director, others recognized the connection Laurie developed with the participants in the

program. An excellent communicator, Laurie shared every program highlight academic and otherwise in a regular newsletter with a growing distribution list. This group also received invitations to an end-of-year Play It Smart Banquet where the all the academic as well as community service accomplishments were lauded. The ‘second wave’ of a buy-in came from this growing group of traditional (i.e. superintendent, board member) as well as non-traditional (i.e. school nurse, program director at local community-based social agency) allies. These allies were armed with enough information regarding the program goals along with the program achievements to further advocate for Play It Smart in the school and in the community. When the success was evident, there was a push for Laurie to take on more students. Even though this request was validation for all she had accomplished with getting the ‘buy in’ at the school and in the community, she had the foresight to not spread herself too thin. The school leaders eventually recognized this as well and expanded the program by adding addition Academic Coaches.

<i>Interview Participant</i>	<i>Comment</i>
Nate Harris	“Her caring no matter what the situation, through the ups and downs.”
Miguel Ulloa	“She was there and that we were able to talk to her and, being that she was an athlete and she related to us on that level, she helped us bridge the gap.”
Richard Kaplan	“I saw a very energetic original Play It Smart coach who was an outstanding educator trained at Springfield College.”
Laurie Lazovik	“I remember being excited about things and trying to get people to be excited about it (Play It Smart).”
Pat Sydowsky	“The kids need to believe that you believe in them and you need to offer them things that assist them in that respect.”

Table 4.2 The Road to Acceptance

School-wide commitment to Academic and Athletic success

There was an agreement among the key decision makers that New Brunswick High School was open to afterschool programs that could improve the academic performance of the participants. Those same decision makers were motivated to find a way to sustain those programs that demonstrated positive results. When school and community leaders became more aware of the academic progress of the Play It Smart participants, they were encouraged because the academic progress aligned with the vision for the school district. The success of the student athletes in the classroom as well as the success on the field was valued by many of the key decision makers in the school district and in the community. The program results even held up to an external evaluation conducted by New Brunswick Tomorrow, which may have led to a greater investment in the transition from the seed funding to the full adoption of Play It Smart at the high school. With a program like Play It Smart in place, they were eventually able to gain the board approval to raise GPA requirement to participate in athletics from a 1.7, which is mandated by the State of NJ to a 2.0. The superintendent and school board were committed to the development of scholar-athletes rather than student-athletes at the high school. Play It Smart evolved into a program of attraction for the students at New Brunswick. This along with the fact that more students were eligible to participate, which resulted in more students on the football team and, ultimately, more success on the field.

<i>Interview Participant</i>	<i>Comment</i>
Richard Kaplan	"I'm a firm believer in scholar athletes and the idea that football is not just for dummies and that this would be a great motivator for our kids."
Jeffrey Vega	"We (New Brunswick Tomorrow) had experience working with the local school board and New Brunswick only had one high school at the time and we were committed to providing comprehensive programs of all kinds at the high school students."
Pat Sydowsky	"There were expectations (academically) and our kids rose to the occasion."

Table 4.3 School-Wide Commitment to Academic and Athletic success

Communication and Collaboration

The breadth and scope communication and promotion of the program emerged as a theme related to sustainability. It seems that the results of the program were promoted in many ways: sometimes in a quantitative way and, at other times, in a more qualitative way. The program director found many ways to share the positive results, which in turn, became very important in promoting the program within the school and community. A newsletter was circulated regularly with program highlights and Laurie sent this newsletter electronically to anyone in the school or community who showed any interest. The Play It Smart goal of creating community service opportunities took hold with the participants at New Brunswick High School and a weekly service commitment at Elijah's Promise Soup Kitchen became an incentive for students who went to every study hall. Laurie began to track the hours each participant committed to service and those that reached a certain level were acknowledged during the end-of-year banquet and got their name on a plaque. With such an active community service program, there were many highlights to share whether it was football season or the offseason. The result of the

communication and promotion seems to be the scope of the overall awareness Laurie was able to create with many allies inside and outside the school.

Along with the promotion, it seems that Laurie also invited anyone that was interested to get more involved beginning with an invite to the banquet. As others got involved by helping to chaperone a service event or to assist as a presenter at a workshop, they became more intertwined with Play It Smart and became an ally. During the national Play It Smart trainings, there were discussions on collaboration and the development of allies. There were those allies that seemed to happen more frequently such as with the football coaches, the athletic directors, etc. due to the nature of the Academic Coach role. These were referred to as the more traditional allies but there were also plenty of examples of those partnerships that formed with other interested allies in the school and community that were viewed as non-traditional allies. Other than the students and parents who previously noted were the first to 'buy-in,' Laurie developed a collaborative relationship with the Director of Guidance and the other allies came from that non-traditional group. There are examples of both the traditional and non-traditional allies of the Play It Smart program becoming advocates beginning with the students and their parents who shared their support of the program at a school board meeting very early in the Play It Smart tenure at New Brunswick High School. The superintendent and school board member who participated in the study noted their roles as an ally and an advocate of Play It Smart as it became a funding priority for both. Regardless of the party affiliation of the local government officials or school board, they both agreed that Play It Smart was a program that would not be cut.

<i>Interview Participant</i>	<i>Comment</i>
Laurie Lazovik	"I used to send newsletters (to stakeholders), I invited them to things like when we had the signing day ceremony (for college) or when we had the end of year awards night and I would send them emails, pictures of kids volunteering."
Laurie Lazovik	"I went to athletic committee meetings with three board members, superintendent, athletic director, principal. I got involved with things like New Brunswick Tomorrow and youth team task force. I started to say 'yes' to things or put myself out there."
Jeffrey Vega	"Why Play It Smart (at NBHS) even until this day is successful is because we had collaborative financing."
Meredith Masin-Blount	"I think taking the time to self-promote in some way is hard but keep in mind just seeing how successful that it's been for the program, that is one reason I think that you can see the successes because it's very well tracked by something as public as the newsletter.....it's just a constant stream of information."

Table 4.4 Communication and Collaboration

Shift in Culture

As each participant in the study reflected on the overall impact of the Play It Smart program at New Brunswick High School a common theme emerged that the researcher labelled as a 'shift in culture.' Everyone in the high school and large number of community members are familiar with Play It Smart and the goals, the components, the care of the Academic Coaches, the achievements, etc. Very early in its tenure, the student athletes from other teams wanted to be part of it and now, non-athletes want to be part of it as well. The participants in the study shared that Play It Smart is a program of attraction at New Brunswick High School. The high expectations to fully participate come from the Academic Coaches, teachers, athletic coaches as well as, in many cases, the other members of a team. Each of the participants spoke about those Play It Smart alumni and this theme seems to belong with the other examples of a shift in culture.

Whether they continued their football careers in college and beyond or went to college and earned a degree, the stories of many of the Play It Smart alumni were well known to each of the participants in the study and they spoke of those alumni with great pride. They also tell those stories to the current Play It Smart participants. The stories seem to become proof of what is possible for those coming out of New Brunswick High School and Play It Smart. The shift in culture seems to be captured in the stories of college, of earned degrees, of coming back to New Brunswick to contribute to the city, of playing in the NFL. Each participant of the study provided some of these examples and, in many cases, were followed with a theme the researcher identified as hope. Because it has been linked to Play It Smart, a shift in culture or a culture of hope has been one of the factors that ensured the sustainability of the program at New Brunswick High School.

<i>Interview Participant</i>	<i>Comment</i>
Richard Kaplan	“All the good things that they (Academic Coaches) do with the kids, it’s magic if you keep the right people……, the sensitivity and the involvement is there……, so I think without a doubt that this program is institutionalized in New Brunswick High School.”
Richard Kaplan	“It’s a great program for kids because it’s structured and it provides them with somebody that cares about them and we’ve had some really good success stories here, have you heard of Jonathon Casillas and DeWayne Jarrett (two former students who went on to play in the NFL)?”
Pat Sydowsky	We have coaches (athletic coaches), a whole group of them, male and female that when you interviewed, you have to buy into Play It Smart.”
Laurie Lazovik	“The community service piece grew and grew and Play It Smart drove that and the kids were begging for more…, it helped them stay off the streets, it helped them feel good about themselves, it gave them something to do.”
Laurie Lazovik	“People weren’t coming to ‘Back to School Night’ and I would have a parent meeting and 80% would show up……, people would notice and comment on it.”

Table 4.5 Shift in Culture

The results of the current study are presented in the following sections: (a) the Reflections of the School and Community Leaders, (b) the Reflections of the Allies in the School and Community, (c) the Reflections of the Participants (now Academic Coaches), and (d) the Reflections of the Original Academic Coach.

Reflections of the School and Community Leaders

Richard Kaplan, Superintendent of New Brunswick Public Schools (2004–2015)

Richard Kaplan started his tenure as the superintendent of New Brunswick Public Schools in 2004 just as the initial decision was being made by the NFF and the NFL to only partially fund Play It Smart. In his first year, Dr. Kaplan and the school board along with New Brunswick Tomorrow dedicated funding to secure a full-time Academic Coach position in the high school. Prior to that, he served in the same position in the Boonton School District (NJ), in the Eatontown School District (NJ) and had been an assistant state education commissioner during former Governor Tom Kean’s administration. He started his career as a teacher.

During the course of Dr. Kaplan’s tenure as superintendent (from 2004 to 2015), the Play It Smart program not only survived but thrived. When the researcher spoke to Dr. Kaplan, he was serving the last month of his role as Superintendent of New Brunswick Public Schools after an 11-year term. His first impression of the Play It Smart program, which was already established when he arrived, was a “very energetic” staff person in Laurie Lavovick, the original Play It Smart Coach. He refers to Laurie as the “greatest cheerleader in the world” with a combination of “sensitivity and involvement.” Dr. Kaplan shared his belief in the importance of scholar athletes rather than just student

athletes. To further make the point about developing scholar athletes, he pointed out how football was a great motivator for kids but also that playing football requires higher-level thinking.

Dr. Kaplan did acknowledge that Laurie had already done an incredible job convincing the NBPS Board to partially fund the Play It Smart program after the NFL had removed some of the financial support. He again pointed to her enthusiasm and how she was able to share all the results as well as stories of success to get the key decision makers on board. As a new Superintendent, he saw how “gung ho” the board was and did his own analysis. He recognized that Laurie was an “outstanding educator trained at Springfield College” and who was facilitating a program that works really well.” He also recognized the importance of the pillars of the program’s design as he states, “it’s a great program for kids because it’s *structured* and it provides them with someone who *cares* about them.” It seemed easy for him to support the Play It Smart program because the school board was already sold and there were plenty of positive results and positive press to point to as well. As he prepares for his retirement in a few weeks (from the time of his interview), Dr. Kaplan feels strongly that the program will continue to thrive at NBHS because “the next guy will have no choice.” This seems to be a statement about how the Play It Smart program has become so engrained into the culture and the fabric of the school, that its existence will be secure after the transition of leadership in the school district.

Dr. Kaplan came on board with the New Brunswick Public Schools during a critical time. There were plans for a brand new, state of the art high school. He points

out that the original high school built in 1962 was 170,000 square feet and the design for the new high school, which would include institutes like visual and performing arts and health science, was 430,000 square feet. With the expansion of the space as well as the programs, there was thought and effort into creating an environment where both the teachers and students wanted to be there and didn't rush out the door at the end of the day.

It seems a significant step in Play It Smart sustainability at NBHS was when there was space designated for the program in the design of the new building. In those same conversations, there was talk of program expansion and in Kaplan's second year an additional Academic Coach was hired to work with Laurie. They hired Miguel Ulley, a graduate of NBHS and a past Play It Smart participant. This seems to be another example of how the Play It Smart program has become more engrained in the culture at NBHS.

Because of the support from the board as well as the documented success as along with the success stories of particular student athletes, Dr. Kaplan was not only able to contribute to sustaining the program but he was able to support the growth of Play It Smart in NBHS. He again points out that he was able to do some "great things" during his 11-year tenure because there was "continuity of the superintendent and continuity of the board and everyone got along" and he continues with emphasizing the value of "a good board-superintendent relationship."

A certain magic, A sense of attraction. When asked about the continued success of the program, Dr. Kaplan comments on the some of the examples of the shift in

the school culture. With the adoption of Play It Smart at NBHS, the focus was on developing scholar athletes, which was different than the approach to just keep student-athletes eligible. The board wanted to raise the bar academically for their scholar athletes and the minimum GPA for participation was increased from the NJSIAA (New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association) standard of 1.75 to a 2.0. Dr. Kaplan suggests that the board was able to make that change because of Play It Smart, the afterschool program that is providing the support for students to achieve a higher GPA. He also points out that when a team starts to win, there is an excitement about being part of the team. The added bonus comes in to play with someone like Laurie who genuinely cares and the students are recognized and rewarded for their academic progress as well. Dr. Kaplan acknowledges that the right combination of the higher academic expectations, some success on and off the field and the rewards and care coming from the Academic Coach create a certain “magic.” He seems to suggest that there is not a feeling of being monitored and controlled by the program but more a sense of attraction to being part of a team and part of a program.

The introduction of the community service activities by Laurie through Play It Smart was another way to recognize and reward the participants and whether they were the star on the field or the star in the classroom did not matter. When talking about the overall support of the school board, Dr. Kaplan points to the service activities and specifically mentions the relationship that Laurie developed with New Jersey Special Olympics. Laurie created opportunities for her students to participate in community service and a relationship with the NJ Special Olympics grew to become an annual

tradition for the New Brunswick student-athletes to volunteer at the state-wide Special Olympic events in the Project UNIFY program. In 2013 after over a decade of the tradition, New Brunswick High School Play It Smart program received the Special Olympics of New Jersey Project UNIFY Award in recognition for the school that has best adopted and promoted inclusion, acceptance, and awareness within their school environment in conjunction with the mission of the Special Olympics (Greater Middlesex Conference, 12/13/14). Dr. Kaplan recognized that “the things they have done externally (through service), have gotten the kids excited about something other than themselves as they give.” He goes on to comment about the positive perceptions of the school district make for a better student who is more successful and secure in themselves. He further contributes the linkage to the Special Olympics and benefits of community service to Laurie and the Play It Smart program.

When asked about overcoming obstacles, Dr. Kaplan referenced the transition from the initial funding arrangement first through the National Football Foundation and the NFL and then through New Brunswick Tomorrow. He states that “there wasn’t any hesitation by the board to continue without outside support.” He acknowledges the seed money from New Brunswick Tomorrow and does not fault them for ‘backing out’ because their funding shifted to another program that supports the New Brunswick Public Schools. As he continued to discuss overcoming obstacles, Dr. Kaplan mentions the Teacher’s Union and the hourly rate that is mandated for teachers who stay after school to serve as tutors, etc. By presenting a cost analysis, Dr. Kaplan was able to get the board to support Play It Smart as growing budget item. He argued that having someone to

provide academic assistance all day rather than the \$42 or \$44/hour for teachers who serve as afterschool tutors was more cost effective and easy to “sell.”

Peer Pressure to buy-in. Another obstacle he points to was the adoption of the Play It Smart program by other coaches and other students. With the football program already involved or “bought in,” Dr. Kaplan suggests that the coaches for the other sports felt “peer pressure” to get involved and that worked well. The wrestling coaches came on board next because as Dr. Kaplan suggests that many of the football players also wrestle so those students already had become accustomed to the program and it was easier for those coaches to adopt. More importantly was that the football players bought in as they knew that it helped them keep their grades up reaching the increased minimum GPA of a 2.0 and simply they were attracted to the program as it is viewed as a benefit or bonus rather than a punishment or penalty. Other coaches and teams followed and very shortly after Dr. Kaplan came onboard, the program was expanded to serve every athletic team in New Brunswick High School. The “tougher pill to swallow” as Dr. Kaplan refers to it was asking the coaches to spend an hour and a half each week with their teams supporting their academics and academic development. This was a more difficult obstacle to overcome because it came without the \$44/hour that teachers expect for doing anything beyond what’s in their contract. Now this expectation is clearly stated when new coaches are being interviewed for a coaching position at the school.

Division I collegiate recruits. Finally, Dr. Kaplan could not help but mention several the names of past participants that have become the success stories of the Play it Smart program at NBHS and are intertwined with the program and part of its lore.

Jonathon Casillas, Dewayne Jarrett and Nate Harris were all mentioned and seem to have become as big a part of the Play It Smart story as Laurie Lazovik. Jonathan and Dewayne were recruited to play Division I Football, which was not the norm for football players from New Brunswick High School prior to Play It Smart. Jonathon Casillas went to University of Wisconsin and has earned two NFL Super Bowl rings as a player over the last 8 seasons. Dewayne Jarrett went to University of Southern California and was selected in the second round of the 2007 NFL Draft by the Carolina Panthers. Nate Harris earned an academic scholarship to Rutgers University and walked on to the football team and went on to contribute significantly as a defensive lineman on three teams that won bowl games. All three were mentioned by Dr. Kaplan as he discussed the overall success of the Play It Smart program at New Brunswick High School. These graduates along with the others that went on to college and have done noteworthy things have become an additional attraction for the current participants because their stories are intertwined with the Play It Smart lore.

According to Webster's Dictionary, lore is a body of traditions and knowledge on a subject or held by a particular group, typically passed from person to person by word of mouth. Both Nate and Miguel, the former football players and Play It Smart participants who have returned to New Brunswick High School as Academic Coaches has certainly added to the lore of the program. In an article regarding effective teachers, Duncan-Andrade (2007) outlines five pillars he identified for their success in urban schools. Duty was one of those pillars and it was characterized by those teachers that see themselves as members of the community where they teach, not afraid of the community and able to

build relationships with the parents, siblings and the broader community. With Nate and Miguel, New Brunswick High School has two role models serving as Academic Coaches who are also members of community and committed to the community. Nate and Miguel also exemplify the other pillars identified by Duncan-Andrade including a critically conscious purpose, preparation, willingness to new ideas and learning, and a commitment to building trust with students.

President of New Brunswick Tomorrow (NBT), Jeffrey Vega

Another primary player in the evolution and adoption of the Play It Smart program at New Brunswick High School was Jeffrey Vega, the President of a local foundation dedicated to revitalization of New Brunswick called New Brunswick Tomorrow (NBT). Mr. Vega, who served as the President of NBT from 2000 to 2014, became very familiar with the Play It Smart program at New Brunswick High School because it met the conditions necessary to gain NBT's attention and support. They were able to provide some financial support for the Play It Smart program during the transition from the NFF/NFL seed funding as well as for the expansion of a part-time model to a full-time position. But as an organization dedicated to enriching the lives of New Brunswick's people, New Brunswick Tomorrow was also very excited about the measurable results of the Play It Smart model at New Brunswick High School

The Broker for Transition. He refers to his role as the "broker for the transition" when he coordinated a meeting between the NFF and the key decision makers in the Board of Education of New Brunswick Public Schools. Mr. Vega and New Brunswick Tomorrow have been heavily involved with the New Brunswick Public

Schools since his role in the adoption of behavioral health care program at New Brunswick High School in 1988. Mr. Vega and others with New Brunswick Tomorrow became very interested in the potential impact of a full time Academic Coach and ultimately agreed to provide the funding to elevate the original Academic Coach position from half-time to full time. Mr. Vega points to the funding transition at New Brunswick High School to being a “collaboration between the NFF, New Brunswick Tomorrow and the local school board.

Mr. Vega understood that the goal of the NFF to support schools transitioning from the initial seed money to local funding after three years but also understood how challenging that could be especially without having that local agent (like New Brunswick Tomorrow) advocating for that as well. The ‘push’ from a local agency can make a big difference. Mr. Vega goes on to say that he has seen so many groups say ‘yes’ when ‘external outfits’ offer short term funding to get a program started because it’s a great opportunity but at the end of funding there is no local money to keep the program going. In his role with NBT, he was able to identify other resources from local foundations such as the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. He knew it would be attractive to them because it addressed their ‘bottom line’, which was improving the academic performance of local students. Mr. Vega goes on to say that after several years when there were questions about where the funding was coming, Play It Smart became one of the superintendent’s ‘sacred cows’ or one of three programs that would never be cut.

Expert Program Evaluation. Mr. Vega also discussed how important evaluations became in the philanthropy field in the mid-1990’s. To receive ongoing

funding, there was a demand for programs like Play It Smart to submit a program evaluation. Mr. Vega suggested that no one had the right formula on how to properly evaluate their program. He mentions formative evaluations and summative evaluations but goes on to say that there was “very little expertise” in conducting evaluations. Up to that time, most were accustomed to reporting anecdotal information rather than leading a more thorough evaluation. Mr. Vega seems to have mentioned this because he goes on to link the ‘brokering role’ that NBT provided to those outside agencies with the process they had in place to evaluate their program. He is very proud of the experts such as consultants, professors from Rutgers University, etc. that he brought to the table to construct an evaluation model where they could measure the impact of the programs while also understanding the program in the right context. It seems that the program evaluation became an important criterion to gain NBT’s support as the broker with the New Brunswick Public Schools. The annual evaluation was one reason Mr. Vega mentions when he points to Play It Smart as a natural partner.

By being familiar with the local landscape and having access to funds to financial support the Play It Smart program at NBHS, Mr. Vega comments that they had the issue of sustainability “up front” with the board. After the funding from the NFF was exhausted, NBT provided some financial support for six more years but there was the expectation that the New Brunswick Board of Education would eventually cover the entire cost of the program. Both Dr. Kaplan and Mr. Vega referred to a current annual budget close to \$200,000 per year. Mr. Vega made sure his team continually communicated with Laurie to ensure the program was doing what it was supposed to be

doing. Mr. Vega was interested in the results because the role of NBT was to communicate the results so that they could get the funding to continue to support it.

Importance of Athlete Community Service. Like Dr. Kaplan, Mr. Vega refers to the community service component of the Play It Smart program as something very unique and another way to engage both the student athletes as well as the non-athletes. They both commented on the amount of pride that the students at New Brunswick High School took in the number of community service hours that they accumulated. Even after the school became the sole funder of the Play It Smart program at New Brunswick, NBT continued to pay for transportation and all the “bells and whistles” that go along with making the service events successful.

Key component: Laurie, Academic Coach. After discussing all of the variables that go into creating a sustainable program such as the funding, the evaluation, the capacity building plan, the alliance with an organization like NBT, etc.; Mr. Vega believes that new programs either ‘thrive or die’ based on the most important variable or, simply, the staff. In the case of Play It Smart at New Brunswick High School, it was Laurie as the initial Academic Coach that made a big difference. He acknowledged that it is very difficult to enter a system such as a school as an outside agent where they may not initially embrace you. Mr. Vega went on to say that NBT was also able to assist her in the school when she did face some challenges related to being outside the system.

In addition to all the efforts to support programs with developing meaningful and comprehensive evaluation, Mr. Vega also points to New Brunswick Tomorrow’s work with a national firm to facilitate a questionnaire to identify their needs and to create a

Capacity Building plan. Whether it was the support with the evaluation and capacity building plan, NBT recognized their role as the local “broker” and provided funding to guide the complete adoption process of the Play It Smart program in New Brunswick. Mr. Vega again stressed how important the evaluation is as your able to regularly highlight that the program really works. If that is not done, he says that “it stops being sexy and foundations stop it and drop it.”

The right formula. It is Mr. Vega’s opinion that “the right formula” for sustainability includes the support of a local organization such as NBT to provide guidance, some financial support and, ultimately, to serve as a ‘broker’ with other local funders.

The interview with Mr. Vega shed a lot of light on the role that a local organization like New Brunswick Tomorrow can play in assisting a foundation like the NFF in a local market like New Brunswick. By being familiar with the landscape and knowing the key players who share a similar vision in a city the size of New Brunswick. As the former National Director of Play It Smart, the researcher would like to note that the opportunities for collaboration in cities the size of New Brunswick where there was one high school serving the entire district were more likely than the bigger cities with multiple high schools serving the district.

As a summary of the Reflections of School and Community Leaders, there were numerous themes that emerged. Both Dr. Kaplan and Mr. Vega acknowledge:

- **The support and interest from the school board members and** how important that was for sustaining the Play It Smart program during those critical years of

transition from the NFF seed funding to local funding.

- They both pointed to the **collaboration between the NBT and the New Brunswick School Board** several times during their respective interviews.
- But there also seemed to be **difference view in regard to who was the primary driver or decision maker** in the adoption of Play It Smart at NBHS. Lori shared that Mr. Kaplan and Mr. Vega didn't necessarily always agree as both seemed to want to take credit as the playing a key role for the adoption of the program. Lori seemed to understand how not to get in the middle of that debate but found ways to ensure both the superintendent and executive director had time in the spotlight.
- It was very clear that both Dr. Kaplan and Mr. Vega recognized the **importance of having someone like Laurie as the Academic Coach** to the overall success of the Play It Smart program and, ultimately, to its adoption and growth in the New Brunswick Public Schools. As Laurie entered the system, she was viewed as an appropriate professional due to her training at Springfield College. Both acknowledged that it can be difficult to enter a system as an "outsider" as she did when she started but Laurie was very comfortable and effective in building bridges or developing allies in the system to gain support. As Dr. Kaplan remarked she is the "World's Best Cheerleader" and it seems she was able to cheer on her students so they absolutely knew how much she cared but she was also able to cheer about the results or the early successes to get people like Superintendents and Presidents of local foundations on board.
- Both Dr. Kaplan and Mr. Vega also agreed that the results were compelling and as

Mr. Vega pointed out the results needed to come from a more **formal, systematic evaluation to be viewed as legitimate**. As the former National Director of Play It Smart, the NFF Center at Springfield College was in place to ensure that the data was gathered and each year conducted an evaluation to better understand both the successes as well as the areas that needed improvement. While the agreed on the importance of the more quantitative results, both also very well-versed on the ‘feel good’ stories that could be highlighted when speaking about individual students. There are also all the stories that come from getting students engaged in community service and, in particular, how opportunities to participate in community service at New Brunswick High School became an incentive for students to fully participate in the academic support components of the program. Laurie did track their hours of service but the more qualitative sharing or the story-telling is what really seemed to attract those like Dr. Kaplan and Mr. Vega. In the end, the Play It Smart program and Laurie had the support from two very important decision makers in the New Brunswick community who, in turn, brought a lot of pieces together to secure funding, space, ongoing security or sustainability and, even, growth.

Reflections of the Allies in the School and Community

NBT Task Force Manager, Meredith Masin Blount

Even though when she initially was hired by New Brunswick Tomorrow to oversee Task Force Management, Meredith Masin Blount was familiar with Play It Smart because it was one of their portfolio programs in the New Brunswick Public Schools.

Because the universal goal for all those portfolio programs was to help New Brunswick students succeed and graduate, Ms. Masin Blount agreed to be interviewed for this study on the sustainability of Play It Smart at New Brunswick High School. She immediately points out that the niche of using athletics or football made this program a bit more unique than some of the others in the New Brunswick Tomorrow portfolio. She continues to explain that New Brunswick Tomorrow provided financial support for salaries during the transition to local funding and currently continues to provide support for non-salary items. In addition, New Brunswick Tomorrow also supports the AVID program in New Brunswick High School, which facilitates a tutoring program and mental health services in the school, which are also available to the Play it Smart participants.

Expert Program Evaluation. Like Mr. Vega, Ms. Masin Blount talks about the extensive evaluation required of entire portfolio of New Brunswick Tomorrow programs. She points to outcomes such as staying in school, graduation rates and on-to-college rates as being important. The Evaluation Task Force, which Mr. Vega also spoke of, periodically takes a deeper look to determine what is happening with a particular program and what factors are contributing to its success.

Alliances with Play It Smart staff and school staff. When asked about any specific findings that came from Play It Smart, Ms. Masin Blount points to the alliances that were formed with the staff at the school as being one of the reason Play It Smart was so successful. The students benefitted from those alliances and Ms. Masin Blount goes onto suggest that many non-athletes became interested in Play It Smart because they recognized that the alliances with the staff at the schools was a benefit. When asked to

comment further about the context of Play It Smart being athletics, Ms. Masin Blount talks about importance for young people in the New Brunswick community to build trusting relationships before getting their full “buy in.” She continues to say that due to “some of the situations they have lived through, they don’t necessarily trust you because you say that you should trust me.”

Importance of Student-Mentor relationship. She suggests that over time, each participant has the opportunity to create their own relationship with the mentor (or Academic Coach). She feels that the students may be daunted at first about the study halls, the SAT/ACT Prep, Community Service, etc. that are built into the program but they also find this consistent mentor that “helping them through it.” Ultimately, it seems that Ms. Masin Blount recognizes how favorably the students respond to the care that the mentor or Academic Coach has for their academic and personal development. She suggests that Laurie’s passion for the program as well as her passion for the children and their families was ‘crucial’ for the success of the program. She continues that “Laurie genuinely cared about their success and wanted to see them succeed” and that “the students recognize really quickly if you’re really there for them or not.”

Ms. Masin Blount seems to understand the balance between care and holding students to high expectations and how Laurie was able to achieve this balance and get the students to respond. This comment leads to Ms. Masin Blount pointing to the expansion of Play It Smart in New Brunswick High School and how there are four Academic Coaches now working with all sports.

Athlete Community Service. When asked about other ways the program has changed or evolved over the years that may or may not have contributed to the sustainability, Ms. Masin Blount points to the community service. She goes on to say, “getting the high-profile community service partner” like the Special Olympics was an example of how the program evolved. With Play It Smart participants serving as volunteers during many of the Special Olympics events through the year, the partnership grew to the point where the high school even hosted some of the events. Creating community service opportunities for the participants was always one of the primary objectives along with the objectives related to academic improvement and college readiness but it seems that Ms. Masin Blount suggests the relationship that was formed between Play It Smart and the Special Olympics was significant. She points out that with Play It Smart it “is kind of rare that everyone kind of agreed how successful it was.”

As the interview continued, the issue of obstacles was introduced and Masin Blount built upon this notion that everyone recognized the worthiness of Play It Smart and was on board as far as support so the funding was justified but it was a more gradual process to expand the program from one Academic Coach to four. She continues by pointing out that the school board was asking for the expansion and even the students were vocal about it so seems that everyone was in agreement. The obstacle, like it is for everyone, was the money suggests Masin Blount. This seemed to be an obstacle everyone was committed to overcoming and a gradual expansion took place when they added additional Academic Coaches over time.

Laurie's ability to promote the Good that was happening. When asked about the best practices related to funding and sustainability that she observed during the early years with Play It Smart, Ms. Masin Blount points to Laurie's ability to promote the good things the program was doing with a large audience. She does acknowledge that 'self-promotion' has a negative connotation but also how it is necessary for people to know what you are doing.

Monthly Play It Smart Newsletter. Masin Blount suggests that Laurie's newsletters going to everyone in the school, the school board and the superintendent was a way promote things like community service events they did each month. The newsletters were also used to list those students who had the highest number of community service hours logged for the year. The newsletter was also a place where college acceptances were announced as well as a listing of the colleges that the participants ultimately decided to attend. This seemed to become a place where all students could be recognized to their effort regardless of their academic or athletic accomplishments. Masin Blount goes on to say that when 'people see that things are happening, they see that there's progress being made.'

Play It Smart Annual Awards Banquet. Laurie also coordinated an Annual Awards Banquet for the Play It Smart participants and their families. All the key players in the school were also invited so it served as another way to promote and raise awareness of all the programmatic success. Masin Blount suggests that the '*constant stream of information*' publicizing the Play It Smart activities as well as the individual accomplishments of the participants kept the teachers, the administrators, the school

board and the superintendent aware of every success and fully invested.

As Masin Blount continued, she suggested that recognition participants in the newsletter and at the banquet may be one of the reasons why the community service activities became such an incentive for the Play It Smart participants. Initially, helping out at a local soup kitchen or at the food pantry did not seem that exciting. Then there was the competition to log more service hours because those who had the most hours were recognized and acknowledged for their participation.

Benchmark Plaque. Masin Blount was aware of the plaque that Laurie introduced that included all the names of those who reached a certain benchmark over the course of the school year. Masin Blount acknowledges that the recognition may have been the initial motive for the students to get involved but she did say that she recognized how empower the community service was for the students. It became a way for every participant to contribute to a team goal regardless of their athletic or academic ability.

Ms. Masin Blount, like Dr. Kaplan and Mr. Vega, regularly mentioned the importance of the support for Play It Smart that came from the New Brunswick Public School Board. It was one of the many priorities of the researcher to interview a school board member from New Brunswick who was familiar with the program and was there during the transition from the NFL funding to the local funding. Patricia Sydowsky was one name from the school board that kept coming up and the researcher was able to schedule an interview with her to discuss her role, initially in, the preservation and, then, in the growth of Play It Smart at New Brunswick High School.

New Brunswick High School Board Member, Patricia Sydowsky

Ms. Sydowsky introduced herself as a lifelong member of New Brunswick community who graduated from New Brunswick High School, married an alumni varsity basketball player from the high school and raised her children in New Brunswick who are also now graduates. She was appointed to the school board the same year Play It Smart and Laurie arrived. It seems that Ms. Sydowsky was immediately sold on Play It Smart because she knew academic support was something that the athletes were in desperate need of. She acknowledges that the athletes “didn’t have the grades, they didn’t have the SAT scores, they didn’t have the whole package” and they “didn’t have anyone who believed in them.” She admits that there was a general lack of expectations from the teachers and the students were not going anywhere after graduation. When she was initially appointed, Ms. Sydowsky seemed to believe that their students did not even have the most basic life skills necessary to be successful in society such as “how to dress, how to interview, and how to carry oneself.”

Right from the beginning, Ms. Sydowsky seemed to have a clear alignment to some of the stated and unstated objectives of the Play It Smart program but she also witnessed Laurie enthusiasm along with the care had for each student. She appreciated that Laurie immediately set a tone and there were clear expectations. She observed that when the students were held accountable for their grades, behavior, etc., they rose to the occasion. Ms. Sydowsky credits Laurie and Play It Smart for this ‘groundbreaking’ development at New Brunswick High School. She goes on to say that for an alumna it was “glorious’ to see the success in the classroom as well as the success on the football

field after being the county ‘doormat’ for so long.

Family atmosphere. As a board member, Ms. Sydowsky said that the most significant criteria when evaluation any program is the academic results. But immediately after, she talks about the importance of creating a ‘family’ atmosphere whether it comes from being on a team or being part of a program. According to Sydowsky, the coach or, in this case, the Academic Coach should be committed ‘going out and knocking on their doors’ as evidence of their care. The willingness of the coach to talk to parents and to talk to teachers is what Sydowsky views favorably and important for creating a family atmosphere. She continues to mention the family atmosphere through the interview. Ms. Sydowsky goes on to say that when new coaches are interviewed for the high school, they are asked about the how the candidates will adopt the and participate in the Play It Smart program as well as their philosophy regarding creating a family. When asked about the history of a family culture at New Brunswick High School, Ms. Sydowsky recognizes that it was engrained in the school when she was a student there.

Culture Shift: Being part of something special. As the interview continues, Ms. Sydowsky elaborates on the shift in the culture that seemed to occur when Play It Smart was introduced at New Brunswick High School. Beginning with Laurie’s enthusiasm and commitment to the student’s development, the students began to trust that they had an ally (caring adult mentor). It became attractive to be involved and part of the program and study halls, community service were viewed more as a privilege or benefit rather than another requirement. Ms. Sydowsky comments on the why the numbers on

the football increase from 28 to over 50 and how students recognized something special was happening and wanted to be part of it. She believes that much of the attraction to Play It Smart came from Laurie's enthusiasm as well as her dedication "to keep pushing and pushing and pushing." It seems the participants recognized how much Laurie expected of them as well as believed in them and responded favorably.

Sydowsky says that there are now three programs at the high schools that "she would lay in front of a train for" and Play It Smart is one of them. When it comes to any school board decisions regarding budgets, Sydowsky says that these programs are non-negotiable. In addition to Play It Smart, there is a music program that is included in the trio Sydowsky feels so strongly about. Partially modelled after Play It Smart, they use music as the 'hook' or as context to attract the students and to keep them involved. The third program included in that list of three is the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program. AVID is designed to provide the at-risk student who has the personal drive with the organizational and study skills necessary to take advanced level coursework in order to be prepared for and accepted into college. Each of these programs collaborates with each other and form as many alliances with teachers as possible. They all also seem to rely, to a certain extent, on the students' motivation to participate. With these programs, many of the determined yet unprepared students get the support they need to gain admittance to college. Ms. Sydowsky seems to believe that a culture of success was formed around each of these programs due to many highlights and accomplishments including state championships and performances at the Lincoln Center in New York.

Program addresses challenges that exist. Ms. Sydowsky points to some of the neighboring school districts and suggests that they have failed to address many of the challenges in their schools. The outside programs at New Brunswick High School that make the cut and get adopted are addressing some of the challenges that exist. She recognizes that their school system needs more “advocates to ensure that the kids don’t fall through the cracks” and acknowledges that their school board is attracted to programs that provide this kind of support.

Successful Graduates. Like Dr. Kaplan, Ms. Sydowsky routinely through the interview mentions many of the graduates who have achieved some notoriety such as Jonathon Casillas and Dwayne Jarrett and how they also have become part of the culture of the Play It Smart program. She notes that when the current students in New Brunswick talk about those graduates, they say “he looks like me,” “I play football like he did,” and “he was a good student.” Ms. Sydowsky holds high regard for those graduates that have given back to the community through the years since her own graduation and she proudly notes that, in some cases, those Play It Smart graduates have done more than her contemporaries. In addition to the success stories, Sydowsky points to the other outcomes that she is interested in as a board member and college graduation is extremely important to her. This takes time to get results this area but she wants to know if the participants ‘graduated from college, are they working, are they gainfully employed, are they doing something they like to do, are they successful, and are they good citizens?’ As a board member as well as member of the New Brunswick community, Ms. Sydowsky is proud to mention those former students that have come

back to work in the area including Miguel and Nate, two graduates of New Brunswick High School as well as Play It Smart who returned after they graduated from college to join Laurie as an Academic Coach.

Reflections of the Participants (now Academic Coaches)

Former Play It Smart participants, current Play It Smart Academic Coaches

The interview with the former Play It Smart participants, now Academic Coaches, begins with a question about their first impressions when they were introduced to Laurie and Play It Smart. Miguel Ulloa was a Junior in the Fall of 2000 when Play It Smart was established at New Brunswick High School. Nathaniel Harris was a few years behind Miguel and he entered high school as a Freshman in Play It Smart inaugural year so he says it was all he ever knew as a high school student. The only non-New Brunswick High School and Play It Smart alumni is Rafael Castillo who believes that he was brought onboard because of his academic background and his ability to communicate with the growing bilingual student population at New Brunswick High School.

Importance of Laurie caring, no matter what. Mr. Ulloa said that having Laurie represented a big change. Initially, it was just having someone there to oversee a mandatory study hall. Instead of football practice starting immediately after school, there was an hour-long study hall. There were still teachers in the building so it was an efficient way to get some if not all their homework done. Mr. Ulloa admits it was also a time to get involved in some of the other clubs that were offered right after school. He seems to infer that it was a welcome change but initially he was more aware of the academic benefits. He goes on to say that they recognized very quickly that she was

available to talk about things other than study hall. He continued that it did not matter that she was a female but that she was a former athlete who could relate to them and “she helped bridge the gap.” Finally, Mr. Ulloa said the conversations with Laurie were “more about the love of their sport and helping them to succeed for the future.” Mr. Harris added that Laurie’s “caring, no matter the situation through the ups and downs” is what mattered most. In addition, he goes on to say always being available “24 hours a day and the consistency” were also important. Mr. Harris points out that prior to Play It Smart, students in New Brunswick “usually didn’t have someone that was consistent in their lives.” It seemed to be inferred that once Laurie came to the school the inconsistency of support began to change.

Year-round care from Laurie and teammates. Consistency and structure were re-introduced when Play It Smart started at New Brunswick High School and part of that included the notion of a year-round commitment for the participants. Mr. Ulloa said that prior to Play It Smart, everyone went their separate ways and did not care less about what their teammates were doing. With Play It Smart he acknowledged that when they were around each other for the full year, they began to worry about each other off the field and wanted to see each other succeed and graduate. Also, the students had access to all the academic support made available by the high school because there was the structure of the Play It Smart and Laurie directed them and ensured that the students were getting what they needed academically. For Mr. Harris, Play It Smart and the structure of the program was all he ever knew as a high school student. All the components of the program such as study hall, community service, life skills session were required from the

start so it seems that Mr. Harris felt it was all part of being a high school student at New Brunswick High School. He comments that as a Freshman, the program helped him stay organized and it became ‘second nature’ to have the structure all four years as a student.

Athlete Buy-in: A plan, a future. Mr. Ulloa points out that when the program first started, there was ‘no set path for students’ after high school. The seniors thought about graduation and prom but after that, Mr. Ulloa said that a lot asked, “what are we going to do with our lives?” He goes mention to some of his old teammates who graduated ahead of him who “unfortunately made the wrong decisions” and even “some who ended up in jail.” When Laurie started discussing the ‘college process’ with that first group of seniors, Mr. Ulloa seems to feel that it helped get their buy in to the program in because it provided a plan and maybe even hope for the future.

Awareness and Flexibility regarding Cultural Differences. When asked about how the Play It Smart program has evolved over years from their perspective, Mr. Ulloa, Mr. Harris and Mr. Castillo immediately point to the number of student athletes and the new building as well as their space attached to the counseling center. When Play It Smart first started at New Brunswick High School, there were not even 50 students on the football team and now Mr. Ulloa notes that there are 457 student athletes participating in Play It Smart. Mr. Harris also talks about being in the new space in the new school but suggests the biggest difference is the awareness of the cultural differences of their population and how the football team may be predominately African American and the soccer team predominately Latino. As he continues, he points to the importance of consistency as previously lauded as a vital approach as an Academic Coach but he also

acknowledges the importance of being flexible especially with the awareness of some of cultural differences. It seems that whether Mr. Harris gained this awareness from his training as a counselor or from his experience in the school, this level of mindfulness is critical for all those in the field.

All three Academic Coaches do acknowledge that while there are more students and they do have the new space, the measures of success or the goals of Play It Smart have remained the same. Mr. Ulloa comments on how, initially, Play It Smart helped the football team come together through the ‘year-round’ participation and through the community service events. Now, he observes that “kids (from all sports) are starting to get to know each other through working in the community and they’re building friendships and relationships that they can bring back into the school.” Mr. Ulloa provides another example of how they build upon this cross-sport collaboration when he points to their ‘Color War’ and they divide up the different athletic teams so there are students from different sports on all the teams.

Community Service Expectations. Community service at New Brunswick High School has become one of the more unique expectations where each hour is tracked and those that log a certain number of hours get acknowledged for their participation. Mr. Ulloa adds that those that participate begin to see themselves as more than just athletes. Through community service, they learn and get to practice transferable skills. Mr. Ulloa believes that community service ‘helps them as students’ and helps them understand ‘who they are as a person.’ Mr. Harris adds that whether it is community service or grade point averages or participants having a plan for college or parental involvement, ‘it’s

second nature now and the expectations have changed for the better.’ They all seem to feel that there has been a shift in the culture at the school due to the influence of the Play It Smart program.

We have “that caring part”. When asked if there was a common thread between the three current Academic Coaches, Mr. Castillo comments that while they are all former athletes, they also ‘have that caring part.’ He goes on to say that it is ‘caring for the individual but caring for the community as well.’ Mr. Ulloa points to one of the many great insights that he gained from Dr. Petitpas while at enrolled in the Graduate Athletic Counseling Program at Springfield College and adds that “kids don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.” While Mr. Harris did not go through the Graduate Athletic Counseling Program at Springfield College like Mr. Ulloa and Mr. Castillo, he talks about his experience as a student athlete at New Brunswick High School and then as a student athlete at Rutgers in addition to having Laurie as his mentor and how the combination has provided a solid foundation to serve as an Academic Coach. Again, he goes on to say that consistency goes along way and they all share the philosophy to be available “24/7/365” (24 hours per day, 7 days per week and 365 days per year).

Patience and Understanding. When asked about recommendations for success, their comments seemed directed to those Academic Coaches or counselors entering the field, which may contribute to sustainability because effective counselors may be able to get results. Mr. Castillo spoke about patience and understanding your target population. Mr. Harris adds that the counselors should be prepared and have a plan but to also be

open minded as there are times that they will need to adapt. Mr. Ulloa points to the communication and the importance of ensuring the key stakeholders in the school understand the vision of the program so they are more apt to buy into it. When asked about Laurie's ability to get the stakeholders on board, Mr. Ulloa acknowledged that it was a 'rough road' to establish a new program and she was faced with many road blocks but people began to take notice of the results.

Benefits of community service seem to be two-fold as it provides an excellent opportunity for the participants to build relationships with each other and facilitators such as counselors and teachers while also for learning about themselves but it is also a great way to promote the program and gain the support of those key stakeholders. With Mr. Ulloa and Mr. Harris graduates of New Brunswick High School as well as from the Play It Smart program, it adds to the lore of the program and shift in the culture at the school.

Reflections of the Original Academic Coach

Laurie Lazovik, Director of Play It Smart (2000–May 2015)

Laurie Lazovik was Laurie Ben-Ami when she arrived at New Brunswick High School sixteen years ago to launch a pilot program call Play It Smart during the 2000–01 Academic Year. Laurie was a graduate from Dr. Petitpas' Athletic Counseling Graduate Program at Springfield College and served as an intern in a similar role the year before. After 16 years with Play It Smart, Laurie is still working in the New Brunswick School System and is currently a guidance counselor at Woodrow Wilson Elementary School.

A difficult start. As she reflects on the early days, weeks, months and even years, she makes several comments about the lack of support and even resistance that she

got from all the key stakeholders she was told to expect help from. Initially, when New Brunswick High School was offered the opportunity, it was the principal and a representative from New Brunswick Tomorrow that agreed to the pilot. Laurie notes that the Athletic Director and the football coach were not supportive and how “that was a very difficult thing” for her. She felt that because the Athletic Director was not included in those initial conversations about Play It Smart and did not hire her, there was some resentment. Laurie also heard that the AD felt that a female should not be working with football. She also said that there was the feeling that Play It Smart would be a distraction from football and actually weaken the football program. When she started, Laurie said the staff was unclear of her role; she “was not a teacher, not a guidance counselor” and she felt she “was treated as a minority.” Needless to say, it seems she felt it was an uphill battle establishing a new program under those conditions.

Meaning: The students kept her “coming back”. She also remembers that she knew from the training that building relationships in the school did not stop with the ‘pillars’ or the key stakeholders and Laurie was able to get support from the school nurse, the custodians and the secretaries. But it was Laurie’s immediate connection with the students that she says kept her ‘coming back.’ She also talks about the appreciation she felt from the parents as well which seemed to happen shortly after she started as well. In the Play It Smart Training prior to that first year, there was the recommendation for each Academic Coach to conduct a needs assessment and Laurie spoke about going through that process with each of the participants to get the program started. She asked each of them about themselves and their needs and she seemed to feel that something special

happened when they realized that she wanted to help.

Director of Guidance: Key support to Laurie. Of the pillars or key allies that were spoken about in training, Laurie only points to the support she received from the Director of Guidance because the Athletic Director, Head Football Coach and Principal were not engaged or supportive. She did go on to say that others soon recognized her efforts and became key allies. Laurie talks about her Pat Sydowski from the school board who took notice and began to support her. She thinks that Ms. Sydowski may be the one who got Laurie invited to present to the athletic committee, which was made up of three school board members.

Play It Smart Newsletter. Laurie remembers that the newsletters she created to highlight some of the progress was one of the things that seemed to help her get more connected with the school board members, the superintendent and other stakeholders in the school district. Laurie shares that she was able to build strong alliances by inviting anyone and everyone to the National Signing Day, the Play It Smart End of the Year Awards, and community service events. She also shares that she was invited to join the New Brunswick Tomorrow's Youth Task Force and even spoke at the local Rotary Club. Regular communication with all this small but growing group allies included academic updates and highlights as well as pictures from college visits and community service events.

Chair of the English Department Ally. One of the not-so-typical allies was the chair for the English department and asked Laurie to resurrect the peer leadership program and even paid for Laurie to attend additional training. Laurie coached the

cheerleading team and she was also invited to bring back the Spring Musical Production which had not been done for 25 years so it appears getting involved with other school activities may have also helped her build additional alliances.

Play It Smart helped with academics and kids wanted to participate. When Laurie talks about the Play It Smart finally getting any acknowledgement from those more traditional stakeholders it was because she recognized that it was helping academically and more students were eligible or staying eligible to play football. She speaks about a realization that Play It Smart and the activities like study hall, SAT Prep, life skill workshops and even community service was not a distraction but it was creating a consistency for the players that was not there before. Laurie goes on to say that “kids started to go out for football because they wanted to be part of Play It Smart.” Others seem to recognize that in addition to the academic progress, attendance was up and issues related to discipline were down. Laurie admits that the promotion of Play It Smart took time but she points to those in the school district that were going to give her the time to get the results.

Data to support success of program. After a few years with a new Principal and Athletic Director, Laurie said she finally had that positive experience of having support from the core pillars that she heard about in that initial Play It Smart training at Springfield College. At the time, the funding for Play It Smart at New Brunswick High School came solely from the school district and New Brunswick Tomorrow but Laurie claims she still had to justify her full-time salary every year. And even with the funding and the full-time status, Laurie says she still felt somewhat separate staff, still felt like an

outsider. To truly become part of the school system, Laurie felt she needed to be included in the step guidelines which determines the annual salaries based on years in the system and level of education (i.e. BA, MA, PhD). She feels that she finally won this battle by pointing to the results of Play It Smart. By this time, at least 90% of the Play It Smart participants were going on to college every year, the participants were logging thousands of hours in community service, all the Juniors took the SATs each year and their scores were higher than the school average so Laurie had a lot of data to support her argument.

She also gathered a lot of qualitative information that comes from individual stories of progress. She spoke about the parental involvement at banquets and even at school board meetings when it was not so typical for the parents of high school students in New Brunswick to be involved. When she was invited to share their progress at a New Brunswick Tomorrow meeting with some of their funders from Robert Wood Johnson and Bristol Myers, Laurie brought students to talk about their experience. She remembers that when one student was asked about his college choice and if he had always wanted to go there and he said prior to Play It Smart, the only thing he was thinking about in his future was about what he was going to wear to the senior prom.

Commitment to mentor-athlete ratio. Once the Play It Smart program as well as the Laurie's full-time status was more secure, she shares that talk about expansion to other sports began. Laurie recalls that when this happened that she "put her foot down" and set some boundaries and said 'no' to the expansion if the expectation was that she would work directly with all the student athletes. She knew the reason Play It Smart was

so effective was that “if kids were in the hallway, I knew where they were supposed to be.” She goes on to say that she knew her students so well, she knew their families, the class schedules, their strengths and their weaknesses. She knew she would not be effective if she were solely responsible for 400 students, which is similar to the number of students that a typical high school guidance counselor works with in New Jersey. Laurie points to the time that the soccer team went to a school board meeting to ask for Play It Smart as one of those moments that really pushed the decision makers to approve additional Academic Coach positions.

Successful Graduates. Like some of the others interviewed for this study, Laurie is very proud of the graduates from the high school and from Play It Smart. She stays in touch with many of them. Shortly after this interview, Laurie schedules a day with Jonathan Casillas, a Play It Smart graduate who is now playing with the New York Giants, to read to her elementary school students on Read Across America Day. But it seems that the most noteworthy Play It Smart graduates in Laurie’s eyes are Miguel Ulloa and Nate Harris, her two former students who along with Rafael Castillo serve as the Academic Coaches at the high school.

Fidelity to Play It Smart Program Mission. When asked how the Play It Smart program evolved over the years, Laurie says that the core principles of Play It Smart never changed. Laurie continued to conduct a needs assessment every year and there may have been years when she planned some different activities to achieve the overall goals like the year she determined they needed more team building so she coordinated a day at a ropes course. Laurie’s measuring stick for any additions to the Play It Smart

program was “is it right for the kids?” and “does it fall in line with Play It Smart?”

As the interview wound down, the final questions were centered on recommendations for other programs striving to achieve sustainability. Laurie stated that even if data collection and data analysis may not be a strength, the quantitative evaluation and results are extremely important when promoting a new program.

Important of qualitative data. As reflected through much of the interview, Laurie also spent a lot time highlighting more of the qualitative data through the Play It Smart newsletter and events such as an end-of-year banquet. There has been a fair number of positive stories by the local press which Laurie has re-circulated to those in the local network that she has built of allies in the school and community.

Importance of cultivating local partnerships. Laurie also pointed out that she “did not live in a bubble in this program” but she researched and became aware of as many of the local opportunities or programs that aligned with the overarching goal of helping kids in the community. Many of these partnerships that Laurie established continue to flourish like her long-standing relationship with Special Olympics of New Jersey and Elijah’s Soup Kitchen. Finally, Laurie suggests that a ‘little luck’ is helpful but that perseverance and hard work go a long way as well.

Similar to the themes identified by the Boston University doctoral students, the researcher identified the following common categories:

- The ‘buy in’ from the students and the acceptance of the original Academic Coach,
- the identified need,

- the high expectations and positive results,
- program awareness,
- key allies as decision makers and, finally,
- shift in culture.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

This study was designed to explore how a successful SBYD program was initially adopted and how it has been sustained for over ten years within an urban high school setting, particularly after the funding from the initial NFL was discontinued. The intention of the researcher was to examine/uncover the factors that led to the success and the sustainability of the Play It Smart program at New Brunswick High School for the last decade and a half.

Research questions addressed the following:

1. How do the former students who participated in Play It Smart and now serve as the Academic Coaches view the program?
2. How do the coaches, teachers and administrators view the program?
3. How do the ACs create an environment that can be integrated into the culture of the school?
4. How do the results contribute to the sustainability of the program?
5. What are the activities introduced by Play It Smart that have become part of the traditions or fabric of the school?

Theoretically, an integrated approach to youth development programs leverage the most effective structural and content components of social–emotional and behavioral health prevention interventions; integrated programs are expected to be more efficient to deliver, easier to implement with high quality and integrity, and more sustainable

(Domitrovich, Bradshaw, Greenberg, Embry, Poduska & Ialanga, 2010). The Play It Smart program at New Brunswick High School, like most of the Play It Smart programs across the country, was established with a clear understanding of the conceptual framework where young people can experience positive psychosocial growth when they: (a) are engaged in an activity that is voluntary, contains goals, and requires persistence; (b) are taught life skills in a systematic way; (c) are surrounded by caring adult mentors; and (d) benefit from the findings from a comprehensive evaluation (Petitpas et al., 2004). The Play It Smart framework is aligned with the conditions for maximizing positive social and psychological outcomes through sport participation identified by Petitpas, Cornelius, Van Raalte and Jones (2005). Through the interviews with the School and Community Leaders, the Allies in the School and Community, the Past Participants and Current Academic Coaches and the Original Academic Coach, it was apparent that the New Brunswick program aligned with each of the four pillars from the model developed by Petitpas et al. (2004).

In alignment with Play It Smart framework, participation on the football team proved to be challenging and intrinsically interesting for the participants of the New Brunswick High School program and to serve as the context. Laurie as the Academic Coach or caring adult mentor led the way as an additional external asset introduced through the Play It Smart program. Whether it was during one-on-one meetings, study hall or as they were processing some of the community service events, internal assets or life skills transferable to domains outside of sport were taught. Laurie was able to use community service to link some of the skills learned on the football field to those that can

also be used outside of sport such as communication, problem solving, etc. Finally, multiple agencies such as the NFF Center, New Brunswick Tomorrow and the school district itself conducted evaluations to determine the results of the program. Laurie Lazovik, a recent graduate of the Athletic Counseling program at Springfield College created the Play It Smart program with this framework and adhered to all the best practices shared during the annual Play It Smart training sessions.

Funding Generally Main Road Block

Afterschool programs have become a common developmental context for young people but the current social, political and economic climate continue to pose the following challenges:

- 1) funding,
- 2) program sustainability and expansion,
- 3) quality improvement and maintenance,
- 4) programming to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse group of children

(Mahoney, Parente and Ziegler, 2009).

Funding for afterschool programs has become a more collaborative venture in recent years. The seed funding for the Play It Smart program at New Brunswick High School could be described as a collaborative venture between the National Football Foundation and the National Football League. There was even a collaborative approach to funding Play It Smart at New Brunswick High School when the seed money was cut and the program funding was the responsibility of the school district and the local community. New Brunswick Tomorrow played a significant role in providing financial support during

that period of transition to local funding until New Brunswick High School was able to fully adopt and support the program.

Synthesis of Findings: What lead to the Sustainability of the Play It Smart Program at New Brunswick High School?

Academically Prepared Director

Because program budgets are limited, many afterschool programs hire staff who may be considered underqualified for the role or do not provide ongoing training or have limited opportunities for advancement. All of these examples can lead to high turnover yet none of which were the case in New Brunswick. Laurie came on board at New Brunswick with a Master's Degree in Athletic Counseling from Springfield College, she participated in annual Play It Smart training sessions as well as had professional development opportunities as an educator through the New Brunswick School District and was finally entered the step system afforded to all full-time teachers in New Jersey to determine salaries.

Better Met Needs of Underserved Students: Did Not Expand Beyond Capacity

Play It Smart at New Brunswick High School seems to have been able to meet the needs of a diverse set of stakeholders since its inception. Maybe the common thread for the participants initially was sport or more specifically football. The focus of supporting only the football team remained in place despite many requests to expand with just one Academic Coach in place. As Mahoney, Parente and Ziegler (2007) point out, there is a challenge of expanding to meet the needs of a more diverse set of participants and at New Brunswick High School any expansion was deferred until the additional personnel were

secured. So many times, it seems that programs try to expand too quickly because they recognize the need is so great. Despite the apparent need, it seems that Laurie recognized her limitations and that expansion would take valuable time away from her current participants.

Importance of Diversified Funding Sources

Richard Berlin from Harlem RBI, Aaron Dworkin from Hoops and Leaders Basketball Camp, Ned Eames from Tenacity, Arn Menconi from Snowsports Outreach along with Daniel Perkins (2007) address the following four questions as leaders of proven sports-based youth development programs:

1. the programs mission and vision for creating the program,
2. the program's design and content,
3. the overview of the results, and
4. how the program has been able to sustain itself.

Each seem to share the same philosophy in regards of using sport as a vehicle to engage and support underserved youth, adhering to the best practices of Sports-based Youth Development programs as well as continuing to diversify their funding sources to ultimately sustain their programs (Perkins et al., 2007). For each of these leaders in the field, it seems that there needs to be an ongoing commitment both to program development, evaluation as well as to fundraising to ensure sustainability. Regarding funding, specifically, Richard Berlin points to having a diverse group of funders ranging from individual donors, corporations, foundations, public agencies as well as garnering additional support from volunteers, staff and families. When foundation funding cycles

are off or they are unable to support new initiatives, Harlem RBI relies on special events to raise unrestricted funds. Their strategy to diversify and expand revenues has allowed them to increase their organizational revenue from 1997 to 2007 (2007). Once established it seems that organizations managing successful Sports-Based Youth Development programs must shift their focus to ongoing challenge of sustainability which 9 out of 10 times refers to funding.

In the case of the Play It Smart program at New Brunswick High School, the program was established under the umbrella of the National Football Foundation, a national organization that provided seed funding to get started but was unable to maintain the funding over time. To be truly effective and to meet the needs of students, some suggest afterschool programming requires a broad systems approach (Coatsworth & Conroy, 2007). The Academic Coach and key decision makers in New Brunswick benefited from introductions to variety of local champions as well as the dissemination and incorporation of programmatic best practices from the NFF but ultimately, they had to solve the sustainability issue.

Sustainability of Play It Smart program at New Brunswick High School

As a result of the current study, the researcher discovered that the sustainability of the Play It Smart program at New Brunswick High School were due to a variety of factors that all played a role in its eventual adoption. Each of the participants in this study made some reference to the following themes during the interviews:

- the identified need at New Brunswick High School,
- the positive results of the program,

- the increased awareness of the Play It Smart program,
- the key allies who were supportive,
- the diversity of the initial funding after the seed funding ended and, finally,
- each referred to some shift in the culture.

The researcher did have his own biases entering the study due to his tenure as the National Director of the Play It Smart program while the NFL funding was in place. While the researcher expected to find that the positive academic results along with acceptance and approval the Academic Coach gained from the participants as well as the key decision-makers contributed to the adoption of the program, the other factors also came to light. A culture of care, community service and collaboration were some factors that universally emerged during the interviews.

The “Magic” of sustainability at New Brunswick High.

It seems that as all the positive results both big and small were promoted, a very diverse set of allies came to the table, which led to more opportunities to collaborate. From the superintendent to the Director of Guidance to the school board members to the parents to the executive director and staff of New Brunswick Tomorrow, Laurie was able to engage them all through email updates, newsletters, invitations to banquets, etc. The collaboration that may have been a result of the program promotion as well as participation in community service activities created a ‘magic’ according to Dr. Kaplan, the superintendent of New Brunswick Public Schools.

Shift from Student Athlete to Scholar Athlete

Both Dr. Kaplan and Mr. Vega refer to significance of their roles in the ensuring the sustainability of the Play It Smart program at New Brunswick High School. Dr. Kaplan points to the shift in focus from student athletes to scholar athletes and how having academic support in place allowed them to raise the bar academically. The Play It Smart measures of success are examples of raising expectations and setting clear goals in athletics, academics and life (Van Gordon, Cornelius and Petitpas, 2009). This approach versus the idea of ‘just keeping athletes eligible’ was something different for New Brunswick High School.

Stakeholder Buy-In

Dr. Kaplan mentions how he “made room” for Play It Smart while designing the new high school. Mr. Vega refers to his role as the “Broker for Transition” when discussing the adoption of the Play It Smart in New Brunswick. It seems that Laurie did an excellent job keeping them both well informed of all the positive results from the program but also knew to allow each to view themselves as the primary driver in the transition process leading to the decision to fully fund Play It Smart and its ultimate sustainability. As a board member, Pat Sydowsky also had a strong voice and claims that Play It Smart is one of three programs in New Brunswick High School that “she would lay in front of a train for.”

Value of Community Service by Student-Athletes

Community Service as one of the primary objectives of the Play It Smart program at New Brunswick High School may be one of the most critical to its overall success as

well as its sustainability. While each participant in the research mentions the academic results and the on-to-college rates, the community service goal at New Brunswick seemed to make an enormous impact in how the program was viewed and may have set it apart from the other academic support programs in the school. Community service was also something Laurie could easily promote in her Play It Smart updates with pictures and highlights. It became highly valued activity as hours were tracked and students were acknowledged when they reached a certain benchmark each year. As it is designed in the program framework, it became one of the ways the students could practice some of the transferable skills in another arena.

Unconditional Caring “24/7/365” Adult Mentors

There was also consensus or each clearly acknowledged how apparent it was that Laurie genuinely cared about the students and how important that care is for students. Nate Harris, a former participant and current Academic Coach, states that Laurie cared no matter what the situation. He goes on to say that many students did not have that someone like Laurie who was consistent in their lives but she “was available 24 hours a day.” Miguel Ulloa, another former participant and current Academic Coach, admits that initially their conversations were strictly about academics but it evolved to Laurie listening to their plans for the future and helping them develop a plan to get there. Rafael Castillo, the only current Academic Coach who was not a graduate of the Play It Smart program at New Brunswick High School, suggests that care continues to be the cornerstone of the current program and they all share the philosophy to be available to their students “24/7/365” (24 hours per day, 7 days per week and 365 days per year).

Legacy of Play It Smart at New Brunswick

It seems all participants in the study would agree with some level of the ‘magic’ that Dr. Kaplan referred to during his interview. Each spoke about certain graduates from the Play It Smart program; some who got Division I football scholarships and went on to have NFL careers as well as those who went onto college, graduated and have returned to New Brunswick to do meaningful work such as Nate and Miguel. It seems that these stories and that these graduates have created a legacy of possibilities or even a legacy of hope within the Play It Smart program at New Brunswick High School. All of the factors outlined above may have contributed to the creation of a culture of hope as well as the sustainability of the Play It Smart program as it has become part of the fabric of the New Brunswick school system. In an article entitled Hopeful Choices, Snyder, Feldman, and Rand (2002) defined hope as something that enables people to set valued goals, to see the means to achieve those goals and to find the drive to make those goals happen. Students in high school are required to make many choices. Snyder et al. (2002) believe that hope is essential in determining the outcomes of these choices. A school counselor or mentor can play an enormous role in building hope when they help their students identify a set of meaningful goals in a variety of life’s domains, assist them in recognizing their capabilities and developing a plan to achieve those goals. If students feel that they have little or no control over their lives, they may develop hopelessness (Abrahamson, Metalsky & Alloy, 1989).

Instilled Hopefulness: In Climate and Culture

More players academically eligible, more success on the field and graduating seniors having college opportunities also added to this sense of hopefulness. It seems the students thrived when they had access to a caring adult mentor who listened to their goals, gave them hope and served as an advocate. Because sport is well-suited for setting goals and goal achievement, it can offer another domain for athletes to gain a greater sense of control through their achievement which can lead to a greater sense of hope (Curry, Snyder, Cook, Ruby and Rehm, 1997). This along with the added sense of control and empowerment that comes from community service may have led to more hopefulness for the Play It Smart participants. It seems the coaches, though initially skeptical and a little threatened by the Academic Coach, had more students eligible and excited to participate on the football team which led to on-field success. It seems the parents were encouraged by the academic and athletic success and how there was an expectation as well as an avenue to college became the norm.

Sustainability seems to be more likely to occur when both climate – what students and staff experience — and the culture — what they believe the school should value — change. Hope seemed to flourish when the participants at New Brunswick HS were able to identify their values, interests and transferable skills as well as to share their goals with a caring adult mentor and then formulate a plan for achieving all the incremental steps that led to goal achievement. This renewed hope seemed to represent a change in the climate which may have contributed to a change in the culture with the football team at New Brunswick which has since become contagious.

Low High School Funding Competition in District

Some things to consider when discussing afterschool programs or Positive Youth Development Programs and sustainability are the opportunities for collaboration and, in this case, the size of the school district. New Brunswick School District has eight elementary schools, one middle school and two high schools but New Brunswick High School is the only high school that participates in interscholastic athletics. If there were more high schools in the school district, funding and sustainability may have been a greater challenge as individual budget items for one school may have been more difficult to approve.

Laurie's approach aligns with Best-Practices

In a paper titled "A New Day for Youth: Creating Sustainable Quality in Out-of-School Time," Gil Noam (2008) points the progress that the field has made but suggests a three-way approach to continue to face the sustainability and quality issues together. The three elements that require equal attention include:

- a strong team of leaders from the field,
- training for those in the field to duplicate the most critical asset of strong caring relationships, and
- assistance for programs to become more intentional in goal-setting around learning.

It seems that these three elements existed for Laurie as she embarked upon her journey at New Brunswick High School. In her case, under the initial umbrella of the National Football Foundation and Springfield College, she had access to and support from the

leaders in the field. She seemed to intuitively have a strong ability to develop caring relationships as well as the formal training during her undergraduate and graduate years. And finally, the framework of Play It Smart seemed to allow her to create a program where the participants had plenty of incentives around academic achievement and thus, excited to learn.

Play It Smart Framework as a Strategy for Sustainability

When exploring possible dissertation topics, the researcher initially hoped to develop a research agenda that would further validate the Play It Smart framework. The focus of the research was to explore how a Play It Smart program in an urban setting was initially adopted and how it has been sustained for the over 16 years. In the review of the findings, the researcher continually returned and referenced to that same Play It Smart framework. The following attempts to link the key findings related to sustainability back to the Play It Smart Framework.

For sustainability, the context of the program as well as the goals must be important to the participants as well as the administration, the school board and the community. Sport or football has been found to be an environment or context where youth engage in a desired activity and can achieve positive psychosocial growth. Sport is not only a desired activity for the Play It Smart participants but it was also important to those key stakeholders in New Brunswick. The superintendent spoke about the value of sport in the educational process as well as in preparing his students for life. He was even an advocate for elevating how student athletes were viewed when he pushed for the school to refer to them as scholar athletes. There was a consistent thread that came from

the participants in the study regarding their pride in the accomplishments of their athletic teams and from the school board member, “no longer being the doormat of their athletic conference.” Program sustainability seems to be more likely to occur when the environment or context for the program is attractive to the program participants as well as the stakeholders.

In the findings, the consistency and care demonstrated by Laurie as the Academic Coach was a universal theme in regards to sustainability. The ‘external asset’ in the Play It Smart framework refers to surrounding the participants with caring adult mentors who hold high expectations of participants and are willing to maintain regular involvement over time. In her role as an Academic Coach, Laurie was the caring adult mentor and was able to expose students to additional external assets or caring adult mentors through some of the programming for academic support and/or community service activities. Each participant remarked on Laurie as the primary variable in regards to the Play It Smart buy-in at New Brunswick High School and its ongoing sustainability. The caring adult mentor or the face of program must be viewed as indispensable by the participants as well as the key stakeholders to best ensure sustainability.

The reference to community service as such a dynamic and active element of the Play It Smart program at New Brunswick High School was another common theme. The community service experience at New Brunswick High School has become a primary vehicle to support the life skill development of the Play It Smart participants. The Play It Smart framework contends that internal assets come from teaching of life skills in a systematic manner. With the connections to additional external assets (caring adult

mentors) and the highly visible nature of the community events themselves, this element of the framework became another theme on any discussions about sustainability. Many of those caring adult mentors from the community service events are now considered either the traditional or non-traditional allies and are either part of the decision-making process and/or are able to influence decisions in regards to sustainability.

The final pillar of the Play It Smart framework suggests that the findings of a comprehensive system on evaluation and research benefit the participants. The results from evaluations conducted by the NFF Center as well as the external audit conducted by New Brunswick Tomorrow highlighted encouraging outcomes in regards to the academic and career development of the participants. The ongoing self-examination of Play It Smart at New Brunswick High School continues to support the framework as well as the original approach to providing academic support to the student athletes. The results from the annual evaluation continue to validate the impact of the Play It Smart program at New Brunswick High School and a part of the decision-making process when it comes to funding and sustainability. Laurie shares that while the results do not necessarily influence their commitment to the original Play It Smart objectives to improve academic performance and on-to-college rates but they are helpful in determining any adjustments they need to make each year to promote program improvement and growth.

By staying true to the Play It Smart framework, it seems that Positive Youth Development programs will be more likely to ensure young people experience psychosocial growth as well as to position themselves favorably for long-term sustainability.

Limitations

Lastly, the researcher extended invitations to several former head coaches of the football team at New Brunswick High School to participate in this study and none responded. It would have been helpful to hear their insights regarding the adoption and sustainability of Play It Smart at New Brunswick High School.

Future Research

While the results from this study as well as Noam's proposal are encouraging as it may help to solve the sustainability issue for Sports-based Youth Development programs, more studies are clearly needed. Future research is needed to how best to work with national and community partners in large cities as well as rural communities to establish Sports-Based Youth Development programs. It would also be helpful to explore all best collaborative practices when working with of variety of community partners as far as foundations, local agencies, and schools. Additional research should be conducted at a school or site where they have succeeded despite turnover at the helm rather than the stability New Brunswick had with Laurie serving as the Academic Coach and then the Director for over 10 years. All of these questions need to be answered so there is clearer path for Sports-based Youth Development leaders and practitioners to develop a strategic sustainability plan to ensure long-term viability of impactful programs that greatly needed in every community.

Recommendations for Sports-based Youth Development Practitioners

The following recommendations are offered for practitioners in the field of Sports-based Youth Development regarding the long-term sustainability of their programs.

1. Optimally, the facilitator or facilitators have formal graduate-level training as an athletic counselor, a sports psychologist, a counseling psychologist or from a related field. With this training, the facilitator or facilitators understand how to build the trust and rapport that can lead to the buy-in from the participants. A caring relationship with a mentor can be the foundation to the greater goals associated with academic, personal, career and athletic development. Certainly, there are those facilitators who may not have the formal training but are committed and passionate and are able to build caring relationships like the ones described in this study. Along with some additional training, that commitment and care is the real priority and will go a long way towards the success and sustainability of the facilitator as well as the program.
2. Along with a dedicated and dynamic facilitator, a systematic approach with a clear set of measurable objectives is also recommended. In this study, the Play It Smart framework seemed to lay the groundwork for the Academic Coach at New Brunswick High School to create a sustainable program. As the one of the external assets, she could use football as the context to build strong relationships with the participants as well as the key stakeholders. With the consistency of those relationships, she was also able to assist the participants in their adoption of the internal assets associated with the program. The formal evaluation that is part of the framework is also important so the results of the program can be shared with stakeholders and other community partners.

3. Based on the findings, the constant promotion of the program seemed to play a large role in the level of awareness that they stakeholders had as well as further cementing the buy-in from the participants and their families. The Academic Coach of the Play It Smart Program at New Brunswick sent regular updates and invitations to each of the stakeholders, which kept them abreast of all the positive results. For the participants and their families, this also was beneficial as it was acknowledgement for their developmental progress outside of sport. It is recommended that facilitators of Sports-based Youth Development programs participate in a specialized training to better identify or create the additional milestones or achievements that occur thru the academic year and then better promote them so they are acknowledged and celebrated on a regular basis.
4. Lastly, it is recommended that a thorough assessment of all the partners prior to the establishment of a Sports-based Youth Development program take place to better ensure long-term sustainability. Those partners, like those in New Brunswick Public Schools and in the New Brunswick community, seemed to align well with the key pillars of the Play It Smart framework in that, the success of the football was important (context), the Academic Coach (external asset) was able to build caring relationships with participants and connect them with other mentors, the opportunity to partner with others in the community served as the foundation for the vibrant community service initiatives where participants could practice and adopt many life skills (internal assets) and the results were promoted and deemed significant (evaluation).

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONS FOR SUPERINTENDENT AND/OR BOARD MEMBERS

1. Why was New Brunswick High School selected as one of the initial sites to participate in the Play It Smart program?
2. Did you support adopting the program? Why or why not?
3. Do you still the support having the program in you school? Why or why not?
4. What was it like having Laurie (current Play It Smart Director at NBHS) as part of the school, when she first started?
5. Do you like having her in the school now? How did the relationship evolve over time?
6. What were the key considerations to fund the program when the Play It Smart at New Brunswick program was initially introduced and when the NFL funding (or outside funding) of the program was cut?
7. Were there any obstacles to offering full funding to the program? If so, how were the obstacles addressed?

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONS FOR STAFF AT NEW BRUNSWICK TOMORROW

1. How did New Brunswick Tomorrow get involved with Play It Smart at New Brunswick High School?
2. How did you initially view Play It Smart and its role at New Brunswick High School?
3. Can you give examples of other initiatives in New Brunswick and at the high school that you support or have supported in the past?
4. Did Play It Smart align with other initiatives that you support in New Brunswick and at the high school?
 - a. If so, how did Play It Smart align?
5. How did you evaluate the program?
6. What were the key considerations when New Brunswick Tomorrow began to assist with the funding?
7. How did you evaluate the Play it Smart program, in terms of deciding to temporarily fund the program?
8. Were there any obstacles? If so, how were the obstacles addressed?
9. What advice would you give to others who are evaluating a program such as Play It Smart for funding and ongoing support?

APPENDIX C

QUESTIONS FOR PLAY IT SMART DIRECTOR AT

NEW BRUNSWICK HIGH SCHOOL

1. How did you build relationships with all the stakeholders?
2. How did those relationships evolve over time?
3. What obstacles did Play It Smart face in terms of maintaining funding?
4. How were you able to overcome the financial obstacles once the NFL funding was cut?
5. What strategies did you use to secure funding for the program?
6. How has Play It Smart at NBHS changed over the years to give it the best chance to retaining funding?
7. If so, how has the program changed to give it the best chance of being funded?
8. What strategies did you use to secure funding to expand the program?
1. Is the program evaluated on a regular basis?
2. If so, is the evaluation used to secure or determine funding?
3. What strategies did you use?
4. Are there obstacles that still exist or that are present each year?
5. How does Play It Smart fit with the athletic program at NBHS? And with the academic - side of NBHS?

APPENDIX D

QUESTIONS FOR PLAY IT SMART STAFF AT NBHS

1. As a participant, what did the current Play It Smart Director do to help you in the classroom?
2. What is it like to be part of the Play It Smart program at New Brunswick High School?
3. Were there any differences in the Play It Smart program when it was funded by the NFL and when it was funded by the NBT and the school?
4. How has Play It Smart at NBHS evolved over the years?
5. Describe your relationship with the Play It Smart Director?
6. Help me understand your role as an Academic Coach at New Brunswick High School?
7. What do you do to make the program valuable to the student-athletes and NBHS?
8. How do you overcome obstacles to help the program thrive? Can you give me an example of overcoming an obstacle with a student? Can you give me an example of overcoming an obstacle with another school personnel?
9. How do you work with the athletic coaches? Can you describe your relationship with the coaches?
10. How do you work with the teachers and counselors? Can you describe your relationship with the teachers and counselors?
11. How do you work with the students? Can you describe your relationship with the students?

12. How were you trained to serve in your current position to make the PIS program a positive experience for the student-athletes and NBHS, in general?
13. What do you do for ongoing professional development?
14. How has the Play It Smart program evolved over the years?

APPENDIX E

IRB RESEARCH APPLICATION

Application No. _____

Date Received _____

IRB RESEARCH APPLICATION

Two copies of the completed, typewritten, and signed research application should be submitted to the Institutional Review Board, 25 Buick St., Boston, MA, 02215, with two copies of the full grant proposal (including appendices but excluding budgets). Any documents pertaining to the review of the research by another IRB should also be included. Two copies of an informed consent form, and assent form if applicable, must accompany the application.

Attached are synopses of selected parts of the federal regulations governing the use of human subjects in research, which may be useful in preparing applications. Included are important definitions, criteria for IRB approval, and general requirements for informed consent. Two appendices are also included. Appendix A describes categories of research exempt from further review by the Board and appendix B describes categories of research which may be reviewed by the IRB by an expedited procedure, prior to a convened meeting.

Questions concerning this application or the application process should be directed to the Coordinator for the Board at (617) 353-4365.

1. Category of review (enter N/A if no claim is made):

_____ Exempt: Applicants may claim exemption from further review if the research is in accordance with Appendix A (see attached); applicants must cite the applicable regulation.

 X Expedited: Applicants requesting expedited review must cite the applicable regulation in Appendix B (see attached).

2. Project Title:

The Development and Sustainability of a Sports-Based Youth Development Program

3. Principal Investigator (include title, department, university address, email and telephone number):

James Presbrey

Doctoral Candidate
 Sport Psychology Specialization within the Counseling Program
 37 Curtis Ave.
 Manasquan, NJ 09736
jpresbrey@academicsinmotion.org
 917-213-9432

4. Co-Investigators and Staff (include same information as requested in 3 above):
5. Granting Agency and Date of Submission (include name, address, phone number, and fax number of program officer as well as the sponsor grant number and Boston University Restricted Fund Account number if available--enter N/A if appropriate): N/A

Note: Please attach PI and Co-I Conflict of Interest Disclosure forms if the study is not externally funded. For grant-related studies, please indicate whether an investigator conflict of interest has been disclosed to the CRC Office of Sponsored Programs.
 Yes X No _____

This document is attached for Principal Investigator.

6. Expected Duration of Study:
 The study is expected to begin two weeks after CRC-IRB approval. Therefore it is expected that the study will begin March 15th, 2015. And the study is expected to be complete by March 15th, 2016.
7. Description of Project.
 A description of various aspects of your project is necessary for the IRB to comply with the mandated criteria for approval of research involving human subjects as set forth in the Federal Regulations and Boston University's policies. The criteria are summarized on page three of this form. Please use numbered continuation pages and address each item below, identifying each item by the appropriate letter.
 - A. Describe the proposed research briefly, with attention to:
 1. Objective (s) and expected outcome(s).
 The objective of this study is to better understand the development and the sustainability of Sports-Based Youth Development programs. Specifically the study will consider the obstacles related to sustainability and decision-making process and practices of the key stakeholders in under-served community evaluating a Sports-Based Youth Development program that was established in a local high school over 15 years ago.
 2. Experimental design, number of subjects, and aspects of the research which are experimental.

15–20 current and past staff members at New Brunswick High School (NJ) as well as staff at a local foundation will be invited to participate as interviewees in this case study of the sustainability of a Sports-Based Youth Development program at their school.

3. Materials and procedures, with particular attention to those involving human subjects. (Two copies of all questionnaires, survey instruments, psychological or similar tests, and interview questions which will be used in the project must accompany the application.)

Two copies of the Interview Guide for Participants are attached.

B. Describe the criteria for the selection of subjects (age, sex, etc.), the method for identifying subjects, and the anticipated number of subjects in each identified subject category. Include a description of any involvement of prisoners, of institutionalized persons, of persons with acute or severe physical or mental illness, or of pregnant women as subjects. Also describe any involvement of subjects who are students, employees, patients, or clients of Boston University or other hospital or institution.

Current and past administrators, board members, teachers and coaches from New Brunswick High School supports that are familiar with the Play It Smart program as well as the decision making process to adopt and support the program when the initial external funding ended will be invited to participate in the study (see letter of invitation) via e-mail. An invitation to participate will also be extended to staff and board members from a local foundation that approved a grant to support New Brunswick High School in their efforts to internally fund their Play It Smart program. An invitation to participate will be sent via email by the principal investigator. The principal investigator will also facilitate the interviews and will be responsible for securing taped and transcribed interviews in a locked filing cabinet in his office as well as on his laptop. It is understood that there are potential risks to the participants' identity, care will be taken to make sure that no-one except the primary researchers (Presbrey) will have access to the electronic information.

It is expected that approximately between 20 and 30 New Brunswick High School administrators, board members, teachers, coaches as well as board members and staff from a local foundation will be contacted and that approximately 10–15 will participate in the interviews. All potential participants will have some experience with and knowledge of the Play It Smart program at New Brunswick High School.

C. Describe the information that will be provided to the subjects about the research. Include two copies of any ads, posters, or recruitment letters to be used.

Two copies of the recruitment letter are attached. This will be the only means of recruiting for the study.

D. Describe the circumstances under which informed consent will be obtained from subjects, including how, when, and by whom consent will be obtained.

Informed consent will be obtained prior to the subjects participating in the study. Participants will be asked to sign and date the form after they have read and fully understand the Informed consent.

E. Describe any expected benefit(s) for the subject from participating in the study and describe any benefits to others, including society at large. In addition, describe any financial compensation to be provided to subjects.

There is no expected direct benefit to those who participate in the study. However, through their participation, they may be making a positive benefit to society. It is important that we understand the challenges faced by those agencies attempting to establish sustainable Sports-Based Youth Development programs in their communities to better support and prepare their adolescents for future success in school and in life. Many Sports-Based Youth Development programs provide a safe haven in communities during those ‘after school’ hours as they promote the athletic, academic and personal development of the participants, so those that facilitate these programs understand many of the obstacles to maintaining consistency and securing ongoing support each year. A greater understanding of the challenges to developing and sustaining youth development programs may be useful for educators, athletic directors, administrators, coaches and others who have as their goal the creation of youth development programs in their community. To the extent that this information is helpful in supporting and educating educators, athletic directors, administrators and coaches; society at large may benefit.

No financial compensation will be offered to the participants.

F. Describe any reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts to the subjects arising from participation in the research and any measures to prevent or minimize such risks. This includes physical, psychological, social, legal, and economic risks or discomforts.

There is no risk to the participants. The only discomfort that might arise would be from increasing personal awareness of the nature of how decisions are or have been made in their school district and any non-alignment between the decision-maker’s values and those of other school administrators or school board members.

G. Describe what steps will be taken to maintain the confidentiality of records identifying the subjects, including measures to restrict access to such records and to preserve the anonymity of subjects in publication or reports regarding the research.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Those that volunteer will be asked to participate in a focus group or a one-on-one interview which will be audio-taped.

Any information that the participants provide for the study will be completely private as required by law and their names will not be identified in any reports about this study. Participants will be told of any new information gained from this study upon their request.

Only the primary investigator will have access to the raw and it will be exported to Word documents once transcribed and save on the primary investigator's computer. Once transcribed, participants will be assigned a number which will be the only way to identify them.

8. Informed Consent Form(s).

Two copies of each proposed informed consent form, and assent forms for minors when applicable, must be included with each application. The content must be consistent with the basic elements of informed consent as defined by Federal and University policy (see attached). Please note this represents the minimum information to be given a potential subject. The IRB may waive the requirements to obtain informed consent in some circumstances. If a waiver of any requirement for informed consent is requested, please consult with the Coordinator of the Board.

I accept responsibility for assuring that this study will be carried out in accordance with all applicable federal state and local laws and regulations and in accordance with the policies of Boston University, with respect to the protection of human subjects participating in this study.

Signature of Principal Investigator

Date

This application has been reviewed and approved for submission to the Charles River Campus IRB.

Chairman/Director of Department

Date

APPENDIX F
INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

January 2015

Dear :

My name is Jim Presbrey, and I am a candidate for a doctoral degree in Sports Psychology at Boston University. I am inviting you to participate in a research study which will serve as my doctoral dissertation. The purpose of this study is to better understand the development and the sustainability of a Sports-Based Youth Development program called Play It Smart which has been associated with New Brunswick High School for over 15 years.

In cooperation with Laurie Lazovik, I have identified a list of individuals who played a prominent role in the adoption of the Play It Smart at New Brunswick HS. The individuals who agree to participate will be interviewed. The interviews will be conducted to individuals interviewed either via telephone or in person as scheduling and resources allow. The interviews will be recorded digitally and, if requested, interviewees will be provided with paper copies of the final transcripts.

We hope to better understand the factors related to sustainability of Sports-Based Youth Development programs. We hope to contribute to a better understanding of the decision making process associated with the adoption of Sports-Based Youth Development programs.

There are no known risks associated with participation in the study. The only discomfort that might arise would be from increasing personal awareness of the nature of how decisions are or have been made in your school district and any non-alignment between the decision-maker's values and those of other school administrators or school board members. You are always free to skip a question, take a break, or stop the interview at any time.

Your participation in this research is purely voluntary. Refusing to participate or discontinuing participation will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Upon your request, you will have an opportunity to read your transcript to ensure the accuracy of your comments.

You will not receive any compensation for participating in this study.

I hope that you will consider participating in this effort to document the history of

Play It Smart at New Brunswick High School. I will be contacting you via telephone in the near future to confirm your interest in being interviewed. Please feel free to contact me as specified below with any questions.

Sincerely,

Jim Presbrey
37 Curtis Ave.
Manasquan, NJ 08736
(917) 213-9432
jpresbrey@academicsinmotion.org

REFERENCES

- Abramson, Lyn Y., Metalsky, Gerald I., & Alloy, Lauren B. (1989). Hopelessness depression: A theory-based subtype of depression. *Psychological Review*. American Psychological Association, 96, 2, 358.
- Alliance, Afterschool (2004). *Afterschool Alliance backgrounder: Formal evaluations of afterschool programs' impact on behavior, safety and family life*. Washington, DC: Author. Available online at <http://www.Afterschoolalliance.org>.
- Benard, Bonnie (1997). Turning It Around for All Youth: From Risk to Resilience. *ERIC/CUE Digest*, 126. ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education New York N.Y.
- Benson, Peter L., Scales, Peter C., Hamilton, Stephen F., & Sesma, Arturo (2006). *Positive youth development: Theory, research, and applications*. Wiley Online Library.
- Berlin, Richard A., Dworkin, Aaron, Eames, Ned, Menconi, Arn, Perkins, & Daniel F. (2007). Examples of sports-based youth development programs. *New Directions for Youth Development*. Wiley Online Library, 115, 85–106.
- Canargie Council on Adolescent Development (1995). *Great Transitions. Preparing adolescents for a new century*. Concluding report of the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York.
- Caplan, M., Bennetto, L., & Weissberg, R. P. (1991). The role of interpersonal context in the assessment of problem-solving skills. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 12(1), 103–114.

- Catalano, Richard F., Berglund, M. Lisa, Ryan, Jean A.M., Lonczak, Heather S., & Hawkins, J. David (2004). Positive youth development in the United States: Research findings on evaluations of positive youth development programs. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. Sage Publications, 591, 1, 98–124.
- Catalano, Richard F., Berglund, M. Lisa, Ryan, Jeanne A.M., Lonczak, Heather S., & Hawkins, J. David (2002). Positive youth development in the United States: Research findings on evaluations of positive youth development programs. *Prevention & Treatment*. American Psychological Association, 5, 1, 15a.
- Catalano, Richard F., & Hawkins, J. David (1996). A theory of antisocial behavior. *Delinquency and Crime: Current Theories*. 149.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2010). *The association between school based physical activity, including physical education, and academic performance*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- Coatsworth, J. Douglas, & Conroy, David E. (2007). Youth sport as a component of organized afterschool programs. *New Directions for Youth Development*. Wiley Online Library, 115, 57–74.
- Conley, D. T. (2005). Align high school with college for greater student success. *The Education Digest*, 71(2), 4.
- Conley, D. T. (2007). *Redefining College Readiness*. Educational Policy Improvement Center (NJ1).

- Conley, D. T. (2010). *Replacing Remediation with Readiness*. An NCPR Working Paper. National Center for Postsecondary Research.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1993). Activity and happiness: Towards a science of occupation. *Journal of Occupational Science*. Taylor & Francis, 1, 1, 38–42.
- Curry, Lewis A., Snyder, C. R., Cook, David L., Ruby, Brent C., & Rehm, Michael (1997). Role of hope in academic and sport achievement. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. American Psychological Association, 73, 6, 1257.
- Damon, W. (2004). What is positive youth development? *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. 591:13–24.
- Danish, S. J., Petitpas, A. J., & Hale, B. D. (1993). Life development intervention for athletes life skills through sports. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 21(3), 352–385.
- Danish, Steven J; Taylor, Tanya E; Fazio, Robert J; (2003). Enhancing adolescent development through sports and leisure. *Blackwell Handbook of Adolescence*. 92–108.
- Dodge, K. A., Pettit, G. S., McClaskey, C. L., Brown, M. M., & Gottman, J. M. (1986). Social competence in children. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 1–85.
- Dryfoos, J. G. (1991). *Adolescents at risk: Prevalence and prevention*. Oxford University Press.
- Dobbie, W., Fryer, R. G., & Fryer Jr., G. (2011). Are high-quality schools enough to increase achievement among the poor? Evidence from the Harlem Children's Zone. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 3(3), 158–187.

- Domitrovich, Celene E., Bradshaw, Catherine P., Greenberg, Mark T., Embry, Dennis, Poduska, Jeanne M., & Ialongo, Nicholas S. (2010). Integrated models of school-based prevention: Logic and theory. *Psychology in the Schools*. Wiley Online Library, 47, 1, 71–88.
- Duncan-Andrade, J. (2007). Gangstas, wankstas, and ridas: Defining, developing, and supporting effective teachers in urban schools. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 20(6), 617–638.
- Eccles, Jacquelynne S., & Barber, Bonnie L. (1999). Student council, volunteering, basketball, or marching band what kind of extracurricular involvement matters? *Journal of Adolescent Research*. Sage Publications, 14, 1, 15980.
- Gould, D., Chung, Y., Smith, P., & White, J. (2006). Future directions in coaching life skills: Understanding high school coaches' views and needs. *Athletic Insight*, 8(3), 28–38.
- Halpern, Diane F. (2005). Psychology at the intersection of work and family: recommendations for employers, working families, and policymakers. *American Psychologist*. American Psychological Association, 60, 5, 397.
- Halpern, Robert (2002). A different kind of child development institution: The history of after-school programs for low-income children. *Teachers College Record*. 104, 2, 178–211.
- Hellison, Don, & Walsh, David (2002). Responsibility-based youth programs evaluation: Investigating the investigations. *Quest*. Taylor & Francis, 54, 4, 292–307.

- Hernandez, Donald J. (1995). Changing demographics: Past and future demands for early childhood programs. *The Future of Children*. 5(3), 145–160.
- Jergovic, Diana (2001). The impact of athletic participation on the academic achievement of American adolescents. Loyola University of Chicago.
- Jones, Tiffany (2005). How does the Play It Smart program influence the attitudes and behaviors of high school teachers and administrators (An unpublished doctoral dissertation). Springfield College, Springfield, MA.
- Kuh, G. D. (2007). What student engagement data tell us about college readiness. *Peer Review*, 9(1), 4.
- Larson, Reed W. (2000). Toward a psychology of positive youth development. *American Psychologist*. American Psychological Association, 55, 1, 170.
- Le Menestrel, S., Bruno, M. L., & Christian, D. (2002). *Sports as a hook: An exploratory study of developmental focused youth sports programs*. Washington, DC: Center for Youth Development and Policy Research at the Academy for Educational Development.
- Lerner, Richard M. (2005). *Promoting positive youth development: Theoretical and empirical bases*. White paper prepared for the workshop on the science of adolescent health and development, national research council/institute of medicine. Washington, DC: National Academies of Science.
- Librera, W. L. (2003). *Designation of Abbott Districts Criteria and Process*. New Jersey Department of Education.

- Mahoney, Joseph L., Larson, Reed W., Eccles, Jacquelynne S., & Lord, Heather (2005). Organized activities as developmental contexts for children and adolescents. In J.L. Mahoney, R.W. Larson and J.S. Eccles (eds.) *Organized activities as contexts of development: Extracurricular activities, after-school and community programs* (pp. 1–22). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, Mahwah, NJ.
- Mahoney, Joseph L., Parente, Maria E., & Zigler, Edward F. (2010). After-school program participation and children's development. *Handbook of research on schools, schooling, and human development*. Routledge, New York, NY, pp. 379–397.
- Mahoney, Joseph L., Vandell, Deborah Lowe, Simpkins, Sandra, & Zarrett, Nicole (2009). Adolescent out-of-school activities. *Handbook of Adolescent Psychology*. Wiley Online Library.
- McDonough, Patricia M. (2005). Counseling and college counseling in America's high schools. In D.A. Hawkins and J. Lutz (eds.) *State of college admissions* (pp. 107–121). National Association for College Admission Counseling, Washington, D.C.
- Meichenbaum, D., & Turk, D. C. (1989). Facilitating, treatment adherence: a practitioner's guidebook. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science*, 21(1), 116–117.
- National Football Foundation Center for Youth Development through Sport (2002). *Academic progress report of Play It Smart*. Springfield, MA: Springfield College.

- Nichols, J. F., Pettee, K. K., & Ainsworth, B. E. (2007). Physiological and metabolic dimensions of girls' physical activity. In M.J. Kane and N.M. LaVoi, (eds.) *Developing physically active girls: An evidence-based multidisciplinary approach* (pp. 51–62). The Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport, University of Minnesota Minneapolis, MN.
- Noam, G. G. (2008). A New Day for Youth: Creating Sustainable Quality in Out-of-School Time. Retrieved from <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download;jsessionid=C5807FF7C366F76EC51457143A425C41?doi=10.1.1.510.1403&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- Pate, R. R., Trost, S. G., Levin, S., & Dowda, M. (2000). Sports participation and health-related behaviors among US youth. *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, 154(9), 904–911.
- Peltier, G. L., Laden, R., & Matranga, M. (1999). Do high school athletes succeed in college: A review of research. *The High School Journal*, 82(4), 234–238.
- Perkins, D. F., & Le Menestral, S. (2007). *Sports-based youth development*. Jossey-Bass.
- Perkins, Daniel F., & Noam, Gil G. (2007). Characteristics of sports-based youth development programs. *New directions for youth development*. Wiley Online Library, 2007, 115, 75–84.
- Petitpas, Albert J., Cornelius, Allen E., Van Raalte, Judy L., & Jones, Tiffany (2005). A framework for planning youth sport programs that foster psychosocial development. *The Sport Psychologist*, 19, 1, 63–80.

- Petitpas, Albert J., Van Raalte, Judy L., Cornelius, Allen E., & Presbrey, Jim (2004). A life skills development program for high school student-athletes. *Journal of Primary Prevention*. Springer, 24, 3, 325–334.
- Petlichkoff, L. (2004). Teaching life skills through golf: development and delivery of a sport-based program. In *Proceedings of the 10th World Congress of Sport Psychology*. Thessaloniki, Greece (pp. 318–319).
- Pittman, K., Tolman, J., & Yohalem, N. (2005). Developing a comprehensive agenda for the out-of-school hours: Lessons and challenges across cities. In J.L. Mahoney and R.W. Larson (eds.). *Organized activities as contexts of development: Extracurricular activities, after-school and community programs* (pp. 375–397). Erlbaum, Mahwah, NJ.
- Pittman, K., Wilson-Ahlstrom, A., & Yohalem, N. (2003, July). After-School for All? Exploring Access and Equity in After-School Programs. Out-of-School Time Policy Commentary# 4. In *Forum for Youth Investment*. Forum for Youth Investment. The Cady-Lee House, 7064 Eastern Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20012-2031.
- Play It Smart (2008). *Results*. Retrieved May 26, 2015, from http://www.playitsmart.org/Play_results.php
- Poinsett, A. (1996). The Role of Sports in Youth Development. Report of a meeting convened by Carnegie Corporation of New York (March 18, 1996). ERIC Document ED407376

- Reardon, S. F. (2013). The widening income achievement gap. *Educational Leadership*, 70(8), 10–16.
- Roderick, Melissa, Nagaoka, Jenny, & Coca, Vanessa (2009). College readiness for all: The challenge for urban high schools. *The Future of Children*. Princeton University, 19, 1, 185–210.
- Roth, Jodie L., & Brooks-Gunn, Jeanne (2003). What exactly is a youth development program? Answers from research and practice. *Applied Developmental Science*. Taylor & Francis, 7, 2, 94–111.
- Snyder, C. R., Feldman, D. B., & Rand, K. L. (2002). Hopeful choices: A school counselor's guide to hope theory. *Professional School Counseling*. American School Counselor Association, 5, 5, 298–308.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. M. (1997). *Grounded theory in practice*. Sage.
- Theokas, Christina, & Lerner, Richard M. (2006). Observed ecological assets in families, schools, and neighborhoods: Conceptualization, measurement, and relations with positive and negative developmental outcomes. *Applied Developmental Science*. Taylor & Francis, 10, 2, 61–74.
- Tyler, John H., & Lofstrom, Magnus (2009). Finishing high school: Alternative pathways and dropout recovery. *The Future of Children*. Princeton University, 19, 1, 77–103.
- Up2US Center for Sports-Based Youth Development (2012). *Front runners: Leaders of the sports-based youth development pack*. New York, NY.

- Vandell, Deborah L., Pierce, Kim M., & Dadisman, Kimberly (2005). Out-of-school settings as a developmental context for children and youth. *Advances in Child Development and Behavior*. Elsevier, 33, 43–77.
- VanGorden, K., Cornelius, A. E., & Petitpas, A. J. (2010). Looking back: Reflections from Play It Smart graduates. *Hellenic Journal of Psychology*, 7, 335–349.
- Wang, Youfa, Beydoun, May A. (2007). The obesity epidemic in the United States—gender, age, socioeconomic, racial/ethnic, and geographic characteristics: a systematic review and meta-regression analysis. *Epidemiologic Reviews*, 29, 1, 42914.
- Weiss, M. R. (2008). 2007 CH McCloy Lecture: “Field of Dreams:” Sport as a Context for Youth Development. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 79(4), 434–449.
- Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, (3rd ed.) Sage Publications. Thousand Oaks, California.

VITA





