



The Aspen Institute's  
**PROJECT PLAY**  
REIMAGINING YOUTH SPORTS IN AMERICA

**SPORTS & SOCIETY**  
A PROGRAM OF THE ASPEN INSTITUTE



# Addressing the State of Youth Sports

## PROJECT PLAY

REIMAGINING YOUTH SPORTS IN AMERICA

How can stakeholders – from policymakers to parents – collaborate to deliver universal access to an early positive experience in sports?

“ I congratulate the Aspen Institute for including sports. These sessions will (do more) than anything that can happen in this country to bring about positive changes. ”

**Jim Brown**

*Civic activist*

*Pro Football Hall of Fame inductee*



# So Many Breakdowns ...

## Barriers for all

- Marginalization of in-town, rec leagues
- Cuts to middle school teams
- Decline of intramurals
- Most schools no longer offer daily PE
- Casual or pickup play is less prevalent

## Upper-income barriers

- Exclusionary sport organization policies
- Excessive demands on family
- Win-at-all-costs mentality
- Lack of age-appropriate play
- Burnout, overuse injuries, concussions

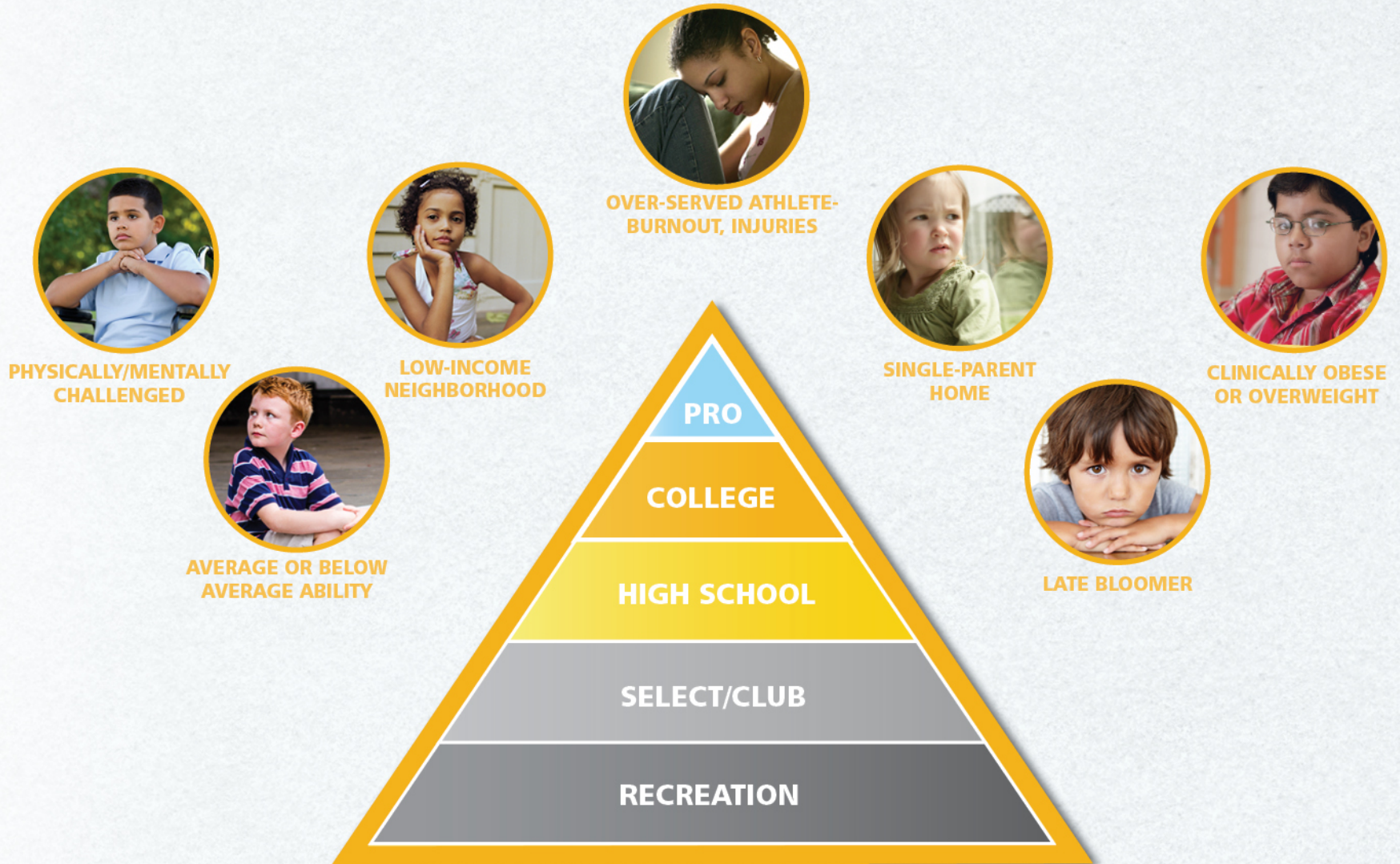
## Lower-income barriers

- Lack of viable parks
- Slashed recreation budgets for programs
- Lack of volunteer coaches
- Safety/transportation needs
- Rising fees for youth sport participation





# ... Leaving Many Children Without Sport Activity





# Our Goal: Sport for All, Play for Life ...



PHYSICALLY/MENTALLY  
CHALLENGED



LOW-INCOME  
NEIGHBORHOOD



OVER-SERVED ATHLETE-  
BURNOUT, INJURIES



SINGLE-PARENT  
HOME



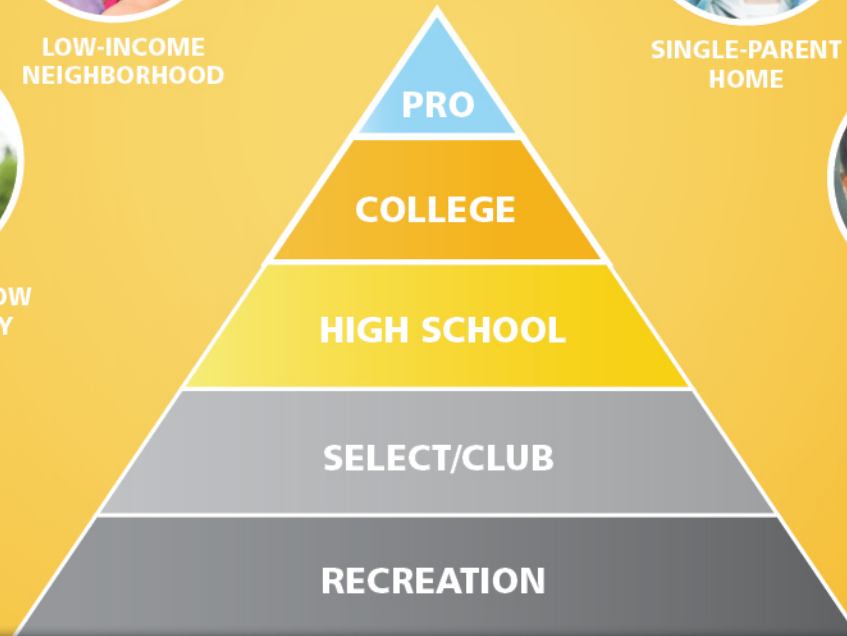
CLINICALLY OBESE  
OR OVERWEIGHT



AVERAGE OR BELOW  
AVERAGE ABILITY



LATE BLOOMER



PEOPLE

PLACES

PROGRAMS



# ... to Deliver Real Societal Impact

## PRIMARY

- More early positive experiences for children
- More kids involved in a variety of sports
- Higher sport participation rates overall
- Lower sport attrition rates overall
- More physical activity integrated with everyday life

## RESIDUAL

- More active adults
- Lower medical costs over lifetime
- Stronger, healthier communities
- More local resources (coaches) to sustain healthy sport culture



# How Will We Get There?







# Convene & Connect

**Sport leaders** discover strategies to help them recruit, retain children

**Policy leaders** gain new insights to help them build tools for change

**Academics** introduce and identify new, important areas of research

**Journalists** find story ideas and sources to grow the dialogue

**Parents, coaches and local leaders** make informed, quality decisions

**Stakeholders** across disciplines develop innovative partnerships

## PROJECT PLAY ROUNDTABLES



**New York:** “Early Positive Experiences: What is Age-Appropriate Play?”

.....



**Orlando:** “How to Get Medical Pros into the Game of Youth Sports?”

.....



**Bay Area:** “Digital to Physical Play: Can Tech Make it Happen?”

.....



**Chicago:** “Fields of Dreams: Innovate and They Will Come?”



# ESPN Town Hall with Aspen Institute's Project Play







# Summarize and Elevate

HOME PAGE TODAY'S PAPER VIDEO MOST POPULAR U.S. Edition ▼

## The New York Times Sports

WORLD U.S. N.Y. / REGION BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY SCIENCE HEALTH SPORTS OPINION A  
BASEBALL N.F.L. COLLEGE FOOTBALL N.B.A. COLLEGE BASKETBALL HOCKEY SOCCER GO

SPORTS OF THE TIMES

### Black and White Women Far From Equal Under Title IX

By WILLIAM C. RHODEN  
Published: June 10, 2012

Last week, 20 African-American women with various connections to athletics met in Harlem at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. This was a private event — no stage, no audience — but a gathering of accomplished, like-minded women who had come to tackle the vexing issues of gender and race. The topic was “What’s

Slate



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HOME / SPORTS NUT : THE STADIUM SCENE.

### Why Do We Let Kids Play Tackle Football?

We shouldn't.

By Stefan Fatsis | Posted Wednesday, Nov. 14, 2012, at 4:07 PM ET

For the second year in a row, **Slate** and **Deadspin** are teaming up for a season-long NFL roundtable. Check back here each week as a rotating cast of football watchers discusses the weekend's key plays, coaching decisions, and traumatic brain injuries. And click here to play the latest episode of **Slate's** sports podcast *Hang Up and Listen*.

Forbes

New Posts



Bob Cook, Contributor  
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5/11/2011 @ 5:48PM 670 views

### The Big Thinkers of the Aspen Institute Are Thinking About Youth Sports

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Image via Wikipedia

The Aspen Institute is a 61-year-old, high-minded organization dedicated to bringing together the most prominent leaders and thinkers for civil talk about the biggest and most controversial

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Past Event

SEARCH EVENTS



### Playing Safety: The Future of Youth Football?

Friday, November 9, 2012 - 11:00am - 1:45pm  
Washington, DC

SPORTS AND SOCIETY PROGRAM

EVENT

### Title IX and Beyond: How To Get the Rest of Our Girls Into the Game?

May 31, 2012

NEWS

### Secy. Duncan Calls for More P.E. on Aspen Panel

July 8, 2011

EVENT

### Blackmun, Ohno Anchor Sport for All, Play for Life Roundtable

May 13, 2011

ESPN

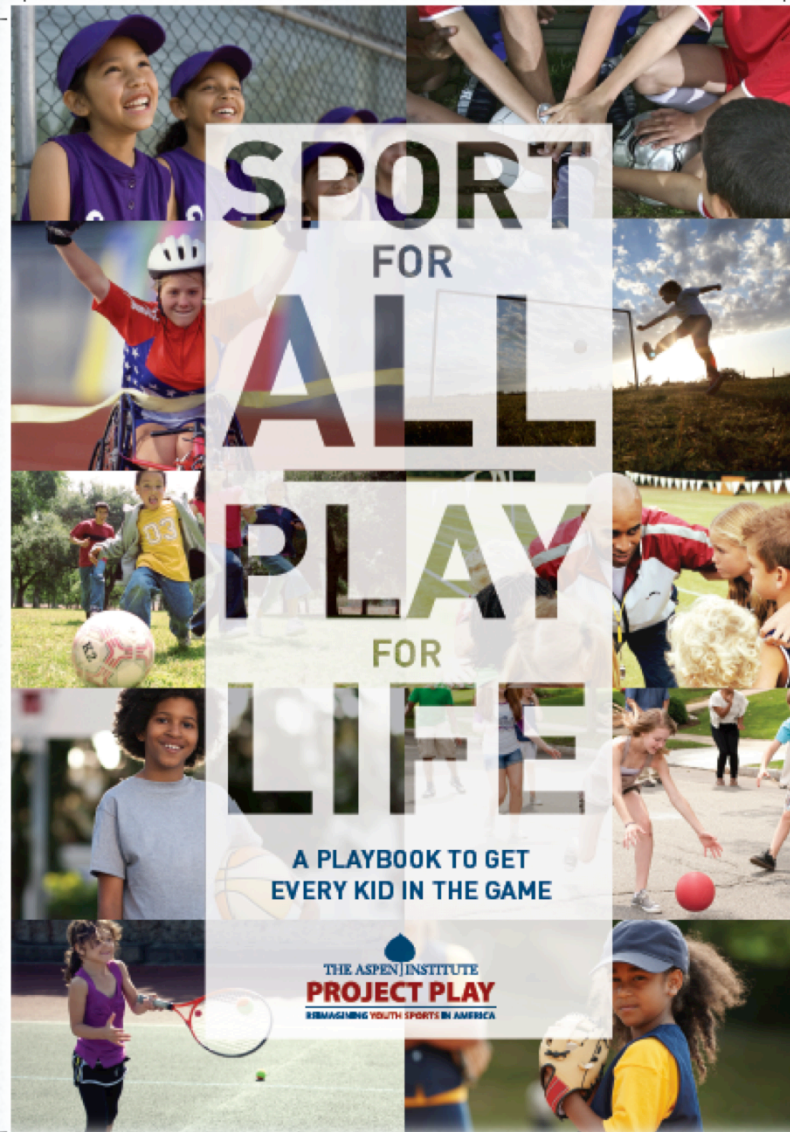
the Atlantic

C-SPAN

The Washington Post



# Project Play Report (Jan. 2015)







# Report (“Playbook”) Features



Propose a **new model** based on physical literacy



A **framework for action** based on eight pillars that stakeholders can align behind



**Tool kits** and guidance to enable mayors, parents and others to activate the model locally

## Feb. 25, 2015 Newseum in Washington D.C.

- 300 leaders, max
  - Focus on activation and cross-sector collaboration
  - Sessions on each of the 8 strategies in the report
- Commitments by major sports organizations
  - Release of Physical Literacy paper (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation)
- Reports on a regular basis (SFIA 2012)



# Create a State-Based Plan to Improve Youth Sports

### Inventory

- People
- Places
- Programs
- Policies
- Partnerships

### Build your movement

- Common agenda
- Shared measurement system
- Mutually reinforcing activities
- Continuous communication
- Backbone support organization

## Want More?



[www.AspenProjectPlay.org](http://www.AspenProjectPlay.org)

- Event summaries, reports, video
- Project Play Summit registration
- Sign up for newsletter

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