Sports Programs Teach Life Lessons

DPS Elementary-Middle School sports leagues emphasize healthy competition, good sportsmanship

SCHOOL OF THE WEEK

On the football and soccer fields behind Bates Academy on a late Monday afternoon in October — and on a recent wintry Saturday afternoon inside the Mackenzie Elementary-Middle School gymnasium, and on countless other occasions after school and on weekends — parents of students on teams from kindergarten through eighth-grade filled the sidelines and the stands this year to attend programs that, in large measure, did not even exist a year ago.

Not only parents, but aunts, uncles, friends and other supporters watched the young students showcase their playing skills as well as their ability to communicate and work effectively as a team.

“The guys can’t hustle like I can! They get upset too fast,” said Donavon Gardner, parent of another Schulze sixth-grade competitor, said he is in support of the program mainly because of the development aspect that he has witnessed his son experience since working with the coaches, being on the team and a part of the program.

“My son is gaining a positive experience, great playing time, healthy competition and is constantly surrounded by good role models,” Gardner said. “I am happy with the program and I am glad my son is a part of it.”

According to Gardner’s son Nolan, “The coaches teach you what it means to have good sportsmanship and team work.”

Team Players

Around 4 p.m. at Mackenzie, everyone left the gym with smiles on their faces and there was not a sore loser in the house.

“This program gives students something positive to do and allows them to work together with others,” Adams-Lawton said. “It also encourages students to be active and get involved with sports while stressing the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle and being active.”

“We want as many kids as possible to come out and enjoy while competing on a healthy level,” Adams-Lawton said.

Register Now:

Register your children now for K-8 spring sports including soccer, golf, flag football, baseball, track and basketball.

Parents who want their children to participate must complete an Application, Parent Consent Form and Physical Form at their local school.

For more details, visit www.detroitk12.org/youthsports

Middle School Jamboree March 29

Detroit Public Schools Elementary-Middle School Sports Program will hold a Middle School Jamboree March 29, 2014 at Renaissance High School.

Competition organizer Maria Adams-Lawton of Healthy Kids, who is actively engaged with the program and the opportunities that it affords the students. She also says this is a great way to get more female students involved in sports as the program has co-ed team opportunities.

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The new K-8 Sports Leagues will rev up even further with a spring sports lineup of soccer, golf, flag football, baseball, track and basketball with registrations underway. Yet already, 900+ kids played in fall soccer, basketball and football, and another 750 are finishing winter boys and co-ed basketball and cheerleading programs.

UAW-Ford, Ford Motor Fund, DPS Foundation support

With direct support from UAW-Ford, the Ford Motor Company Fund, the DPS Foundation and experienced providers such as Healthy Kids Inc., the district deployed its new strategic initiative in 2013-14 to offer all DPS students in grades K-8 an opportunity to play in an organized sport.

“Statistics show that kids do better in school when they are involved in sports,” said Edward Tomin, named this year as Director of DPS Elementary-Middle School Athletics.

“UAW-Ford recognizes the importance of supporting arts, music and athletics in our schools because of the tremendous impact these enrichments can have on the overall development of students,” said Jimmy Settles Jr., vice president and director, UAW National Ford Department. “Today’s students are our future leaders and that is why as part of our on-going mission, we continue to seek opportunities to brighten their path.”

Participating students in grades K-5 are taught the fundamentals of a variety of sports, including proper technique, skill development and character building within a fun and inclusive atmosphere. Students in grades 6-8 continue to sharpen their skills and character building, with a dose of healthy competition.

Coaches include representatives of the service providers, parent volunteers, and teachers.

Girl Power

Late Saturday afternoon a week ago, the snow showers were falling, but inside the packed Mackenzie gym, sixth-grader Avahnea Varnes summed up what it means for her as her Schulze teammates faced competition from Palmer Park Preparatory Academy in a co-ed basketball game.

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