

Methods for Increasing Participation and Retention in Girls Sports



Monica Maxwell and Kelli Wingate Smith

Increasing Participation in Girls Sports



Identifying and Eliminating Barriers for Participation

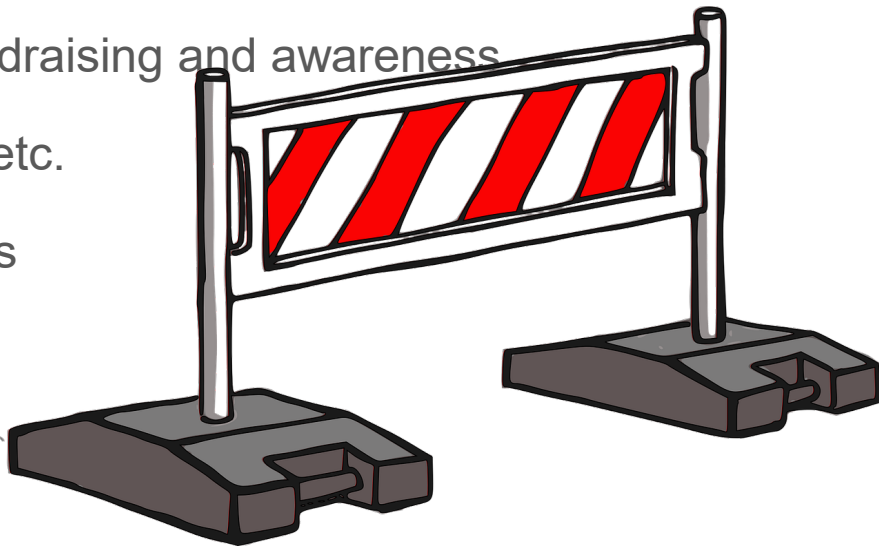
Body image issues- “I’m too _____ to play a sport.”

Limited access to pre-participation skill building opportunities-Know your community and the opportunities for girls prior to middle school sports.

Cost prohibitive-Review current costs/fundraising and awareness

Other priorities-other relationships, jobs, etc.

Lack of general knowledge about athletics



Promoting Female Sports

Active recruiting:

Building relationships

Youth Sports Camps

Big Sisters with MS Athletes

Big Sisters with JV Athletes

8th grade transitional tradition/rituals



Benefits of Participation in Athletics

Increased opportunities for leadership roles

Well-rounded applications for college

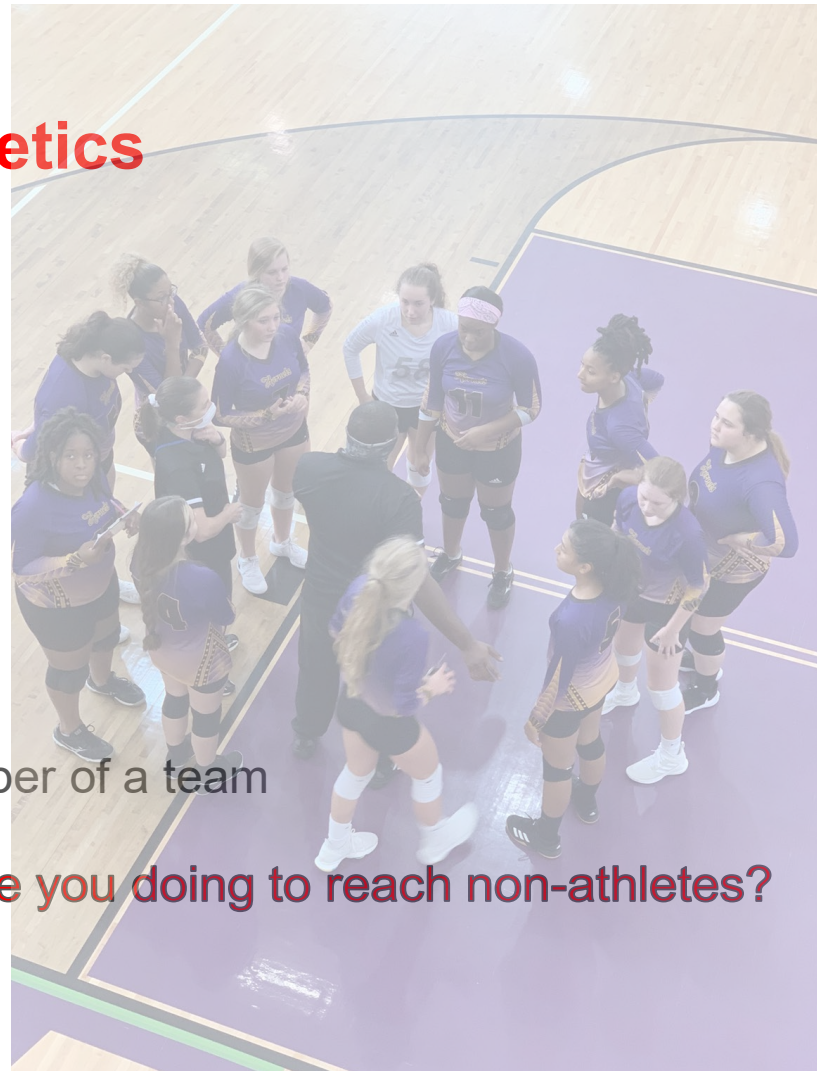
Exposure to new experiences

Scholarship opportunities

Increased academic performance

Lifelong skills developed through being a member of a team

Athletes are aware of these benefits. What are you doing to reach non-athletes?



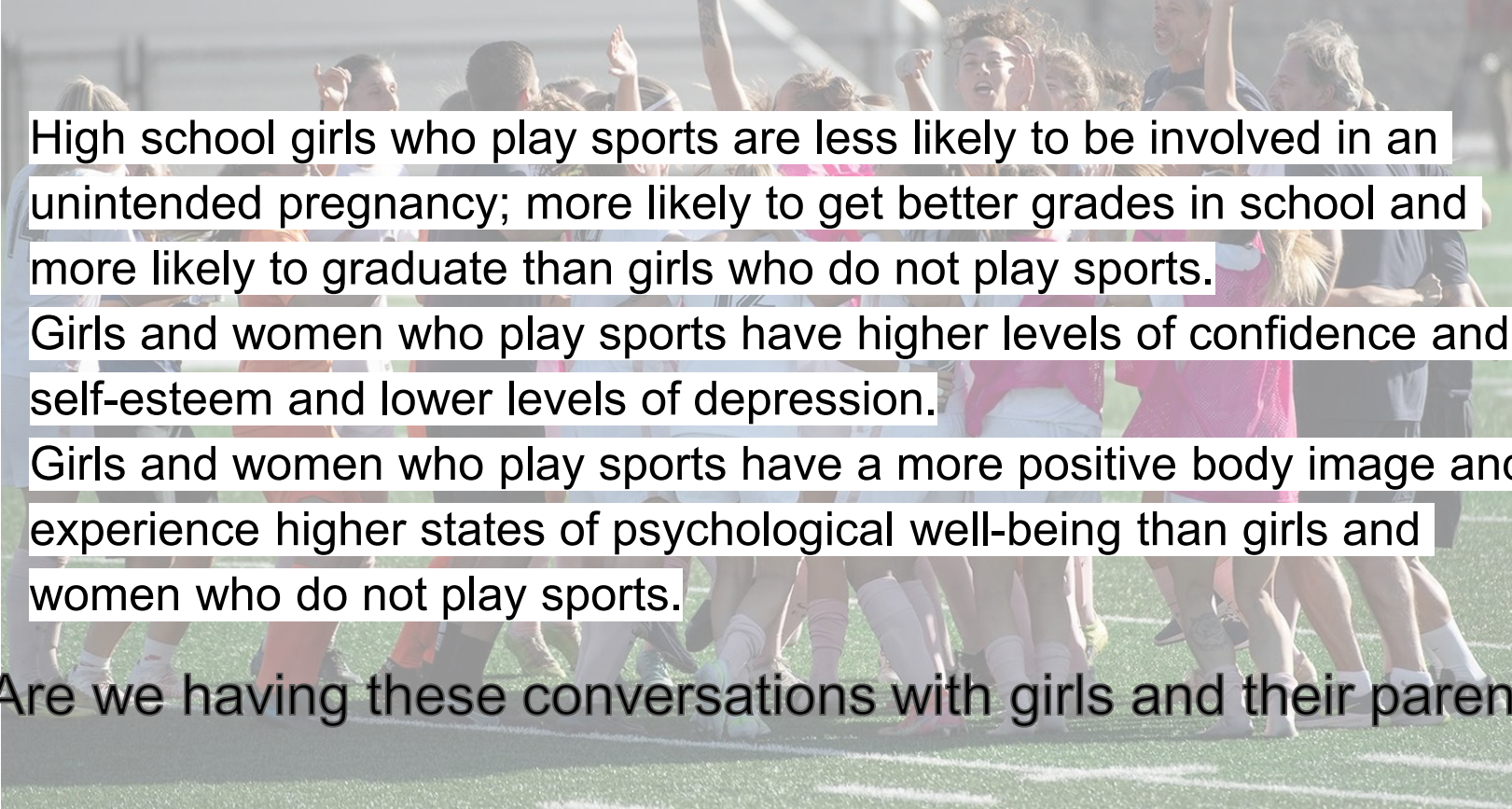
Benefits of Participation in Athletics

“Studies have consistently demonstrated that physically active people are not only healthier but also perform better on tests of cerebral or intellectual ability. Some studies even indicate that the results can be expedient; even a quick 5-minute walk can yield immediate results. Most studies show that the more exercise students get, the more proficient their mental faculties and cerebral performance can become.”

<https://www.fnu.edu/the-link-between-sports-and-academic-performance/>



Benefits of Participation in Athletics

- 
- A group of high school girls are celebrating on a soccer field. They are huddled together, with some raising their arms in the air. They are wearing soccer uniforms, including jerseys and shorts. The background is a blurred view of the field and some trees.
- High school girls who play sports are less likely to be involved in an unintended pregnancy; more likely to get better grades in school and more likely to graduate than girls who do not play sports.
 - Girls and women who play sports have higher levels of confidence and self-esteem and lower levels of depression.
 - Girls and women who play sports have a more positive body image and experience higher states of psychological well-being than girls and women who do not play sports.

Are we having these conversations with girls and their parents?

Benefits of Participation in Athletics

“Education based athletics and activities are the best dropout prevention programs in our nation’s schools.” -Phil Rison

Connections=Success



Retention in Girls Sports

Get to know the female athlete

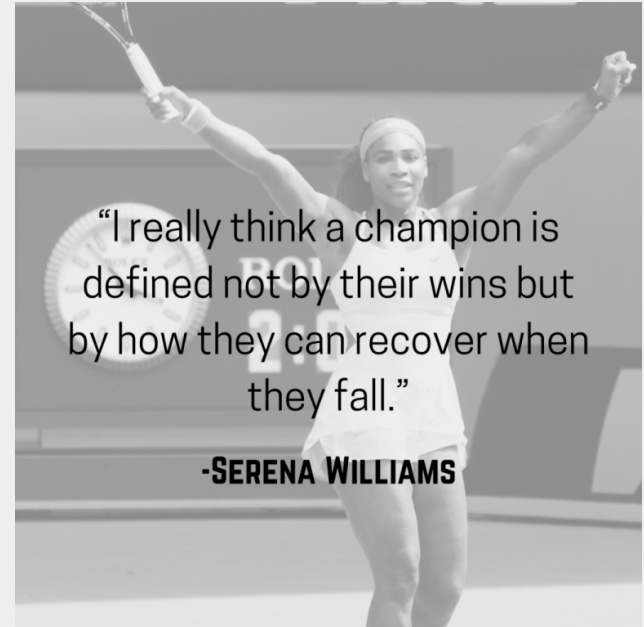
Start by asking more questions to gain insights on your students

- ★ **Meet with coach, explain expectations**
- ★ **Meet with teams, show them support**
- ★ **Enlist the support of the administration**



Life Skills and Leadership Development

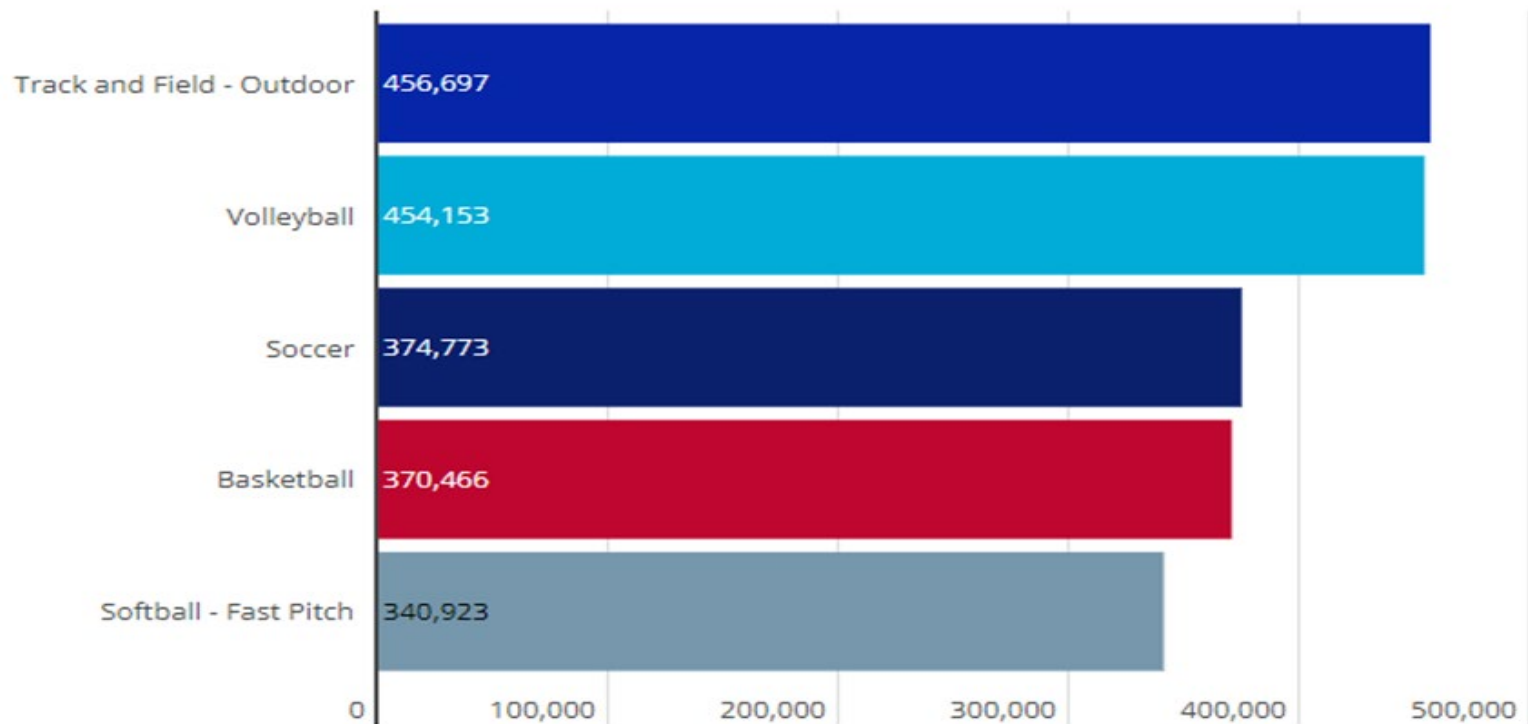
- ★ Girls learn teamwork, leadership and confidence
- ★ 20% less likely to get breast cancer later in life
- ★ Sports foster communication and trust
- ★ Enhance their self-image
- ★ Female athletes have more positive body image
- ★ Learn to set goals
- ★ **Learn how to fail!**



“I really think a champion is defined not by their wins but by how they can recover when they fall.”

-SERENA WILLIAMS

Most Popular Girls High School Sports



DATA SOURCE: National Federation of State High School Associations, 2021-22

Where are they going?

9th grade: 61.9%

10th grade: 57.9%

11th grade: 59.1%

12th grade: 49.8%

DATA SOURCE: National Federation of State High School Associations, 2021-22

Get to know the female athletes parent/support system

★ Educate parents/guardians

- Communicate regularly
- Highlight the value of sports
- Make it easy for parents to access information about program availability

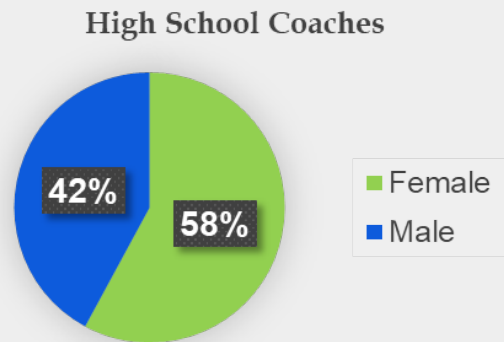
★ Educate parents on how they can support their daughter

- Reinforce being active
- Emphasizing fun, fitness and healthy competition
- Not commenting on body size or shape
- Arranging transportation to/from practice

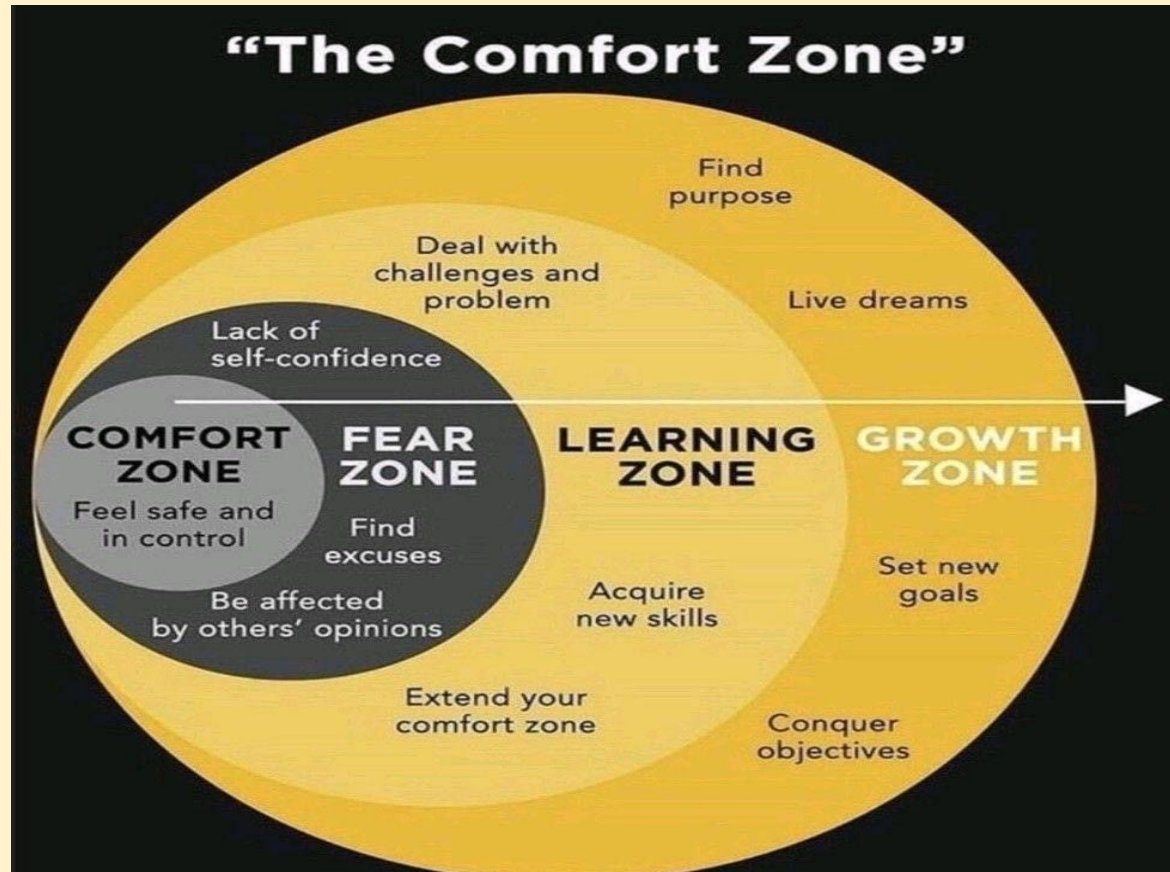


Female Role Models

- ★ Hire female coaches (**42%** of high school girls sports coaches, are male)
 - Enhance feelings of social inclusion
 - Offset cultural and environmental barriers
 - Challenge the negative cultural messaging girls receive about their participation
- ★ **Only 27%** of the more than 6.5 million adults who coach youth teams up to age 14 are women.
- ★ Invite female leadership to speak to your teams about their athletic experiences
 - Principals
 - Superintendents
 - State Association Representatives
 - College and Professional Sports Reps who work in sports



The Comfort Zone



Quality of Experience

- ★ **Presence of females on the coaching staff foster lifelong connections**
- ★ **Presence of females in other prominent administrative roles**
 - Athletic Director
 - Principal
 - State Association Representatives
- ★ **Champion for your girls (equal access to girls' sports teams or playing time on co-ed teams.)**
- ★ **Qualified person (coaches with good attitudes)**
- ★ **Qualified coach (education, experience, passion)**

Celebrate our Female Athletes

- ★ NGWSD (*Wednesday, February 1, 2023*)
- ★ Social media recognition
- ★ Athletic website recognition (*Athlete of the week for boys and girls*)
- ★ Youth sports/middle school nights
- ★ Have a girls and women's leadership group (*Student led*)
 - Locally (Conference/League/District)
 - Regionally
 - State
- ★ Recognize former female athletes in the building (*teachers and support staff*)
- ★ Female administrator appreciation night



STRONGER, SMARTER, BOLDER:
GIRLS TAKE THE LEAD



National Girls & Women in Sports Day

Powered by WSF



A background image of a soccer game. In the center, a player in a blue jersey with the number 9 is about to kick a soccer ball. To her left, a player in a white jersey with the number 10 is sliding in to tackle her. In the background, another player in a white jersey with the number 18 is visible, and to the right, a player in a blue jersey with the number 4 is watching the play. A soccer goal is in the far background.

Nothing is more expensive than a
missed opportunity!

Contact Information

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Resources

<https://trace.tennessee.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1370&context=jasm>

<https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1115&context=doctoral>

<https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/full/10.1086/693117>

<https://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/advocacy/benefits-sports-participation-girls-women/#:~:text=Girls%20and%20women%20who%20play,who%20do%20not%20play%20sports.>

Ideas for celebrating NGWSD tonya.sebring@cherokeek12.net

<https://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/2022-WSF-Annual-Salute-to-Women-in-Sports-Journal.pdf>

<https://www.aspenprojectplay.org/youth-sports/facts/challenges>

<https://www.nfhs.org/articles/increasing-student-participation-retention-in-high-school-sports/>

<https://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Keeping-Girls-in-the-Game-FINAL-web.pdf>