



# Developing Your Schools Program

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This section will give your Club/Association information on how to build your program, how to connect with local schools and general best practices. Use the information below to develop your program and begin building your community relationships.

## **Topics**

Important Tips

Outreach with Schools

How to connect students to your Club/Association

Expanding your Community Presence

Our youth soccer community is part of the larger community that we live in. This section will help give you ideas on ways to connect your Club/Association with groups like schools and community centers to introduce children to youth soccer and your soccer programs.

If you have any questions about building community partnerships, connecting your Club/Association or facilitating communication, contact Heather Turney, Member Services and Outreach Coordinator at [heather@WashingtonYouthSoccer.org](mailto:heather@WashingtonYouthSoccer.org).

Enjoy!



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## Important Tips

### Age Target Recommendations

Before you reach out to the schools, know your target so that you are using your resources and time wisely. The benefit of reaching kids and giving them a introduction to your club will be lost if you do not take the time to map out who you want to reach and understand why you want to target these ages.

### Flexibility

Giving the schools plenty of planning time and being as flexible as you can will help build your relationship and insure that you reach as many of your target grades as possible.

### Importance of personal connections

Building and maintaining personal connections with the local schools will help build your community identity and partnerships. Most importantly, these relationships may open more avenues for your club to reach the local youth and market your youth soccer program. Being known as a good community partner will help solidify your organization as an integral part of your community.

### Importance of a good ambassador

Having a good club ambassador both in your outreach process and for the coaching sessions is instrumental to building relationships. These people will become the face of your club and if they are personable, responsible, responsive, professional and good-humored, schools will be more willing to work with them again.

### Handout approval

Prior to your session, gain approval from the school to hand out any material. Most schools will not be against this in-kind exchange, but may feel uncomfortable if not asked for prior permission.

### Importance of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

When possible, run your after-school session through the Parent Teacher Association. As non-PTA sanctioned programs require liability insurance and other documentation, not working through the PTA has an added cost and time that is not necessary unless your school does not have a functioning PTA.

### Importance of following up

Your program should not end after the last bell rings. Always follow up, ask for feedback and thank the school for allowing you to come in. These little actions will go a long way to leaving a lasting impression on the school.



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## Outreach With Schools

Below is a list of things to discuss when meeting with the school to organize your visit. Depending on how you structure your program, this list may need to be adapted to meet your specific needs. However, make sure to come to the meeting prepared with samples of your handouts, curriculum, and information about your Club/Association.

### Benefits of program

- Qualified soccer coaches
- Sample Curriculum - This curriculum is a sample created by Washington Youth Soccer that combines the Age-Appropriate Training Curriculum, basic healthy lifestyle topics and the Washington State EALRS (Essential Academic Learning Requirements) which "describe what students should know and be able to do." They will help the school identify what concepts and skills the program may target according to their measurement standards.
- Support of teacher education - Washington Youth Soccer Youth Modules

### In-School or After-School

- Explain the differences between the two programs. For the In School program, discuss what health topics you can cover.
- Hours and ages
- Equipment and teacher assistance if needed
- Establish contact points for school and your club/association
- Facility (indoor/outdoor)

### Handout Approval

- Any club handouts or materials you wish to hand out - gain approval first!

### Post Session Follow Up

- Discuss the possibility of club handouts, registration flyers and other sessions for the future at this point
- Produce a review sheet for the school to give feedback on your program

## How to connect students to your Club/Association

Once you have started a relationship with your local school(s), in order to continue connecting students to your Club/Association, you will need to continue building and developing this relationship. Below is a list of ways to be a good community partner while connecting students with your programs.

1. **Set up an evaluation procedure.** After your Soccer in Schools session, follow up with a thank you letter. Make sure to include your contact information and future possibilities. Other ideas are to set up a follow up meeting to try to set up future partnership opportunities such as club material distribution or future visits, revisiting the school before fall/spring registration for a one-day session to reintroduce youth soccer and/or create a feedback template to gauge the thoughts of the school on your program.
2. **Continue the two-way relationship.** In addition to providing information on your club and how kids can be involved, provide teachers and schools with new soccer materials like the Age Appropriate Training Curriculum, help connect teachers with educational opportunities like local "E" license clinics and invite schools to participate in any hosted events like tournaments. By building a two-way relationship, you become an important resource for teachers and schools who will better identify your club and help promote you to parents.
3. **Become an educational resource.** Promote yourself as the local youth soccer experts and educate others (teachers, school officials, parents) about the importance of youth soccer. Offering resources and education to your local community not only builds a better environment for youth soccer and open opportunities to find more volunteers, but will help create your Club/Association identity as the go-to resource in your community.
4. **Be smart when you reconnect.** Create short, easy to read materials by keeping content short and concise, adding images to spark interest and include the most relevant contact information. Using these materials, make sure you do not over-inform your target audience. Connect with schools/teachers/parents only during important times. Examples would be a month prior to the open of Spring/Fall registration periods.
5. **Be personal.** Teachers, PTA members and other school members will respond better to personal direct contact. Stay away from mass emails or try to personalize them through mailing merges. Change the information according to the target audience and include in each communication a "call to action" or a proactive step, so that they are encouraged to continue the communication thread.



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## Expanding Your Community Presence

While the Soccer in Schools program is geared specifically to schools, it can be expanded provide a unique service to other groups that work with youth populations. The concept is the same, to bring the experience of soccer to new markets and to build your community identity. By offering a free soccer session in exchange for program promotion, you are able to connect with kids and groups to make a real impact that a flyer by itself cannot create.

### Possible markets

- Local community centers
- Local after school/daycare centers
- In partnership with other youth sports programs
- Summer camps
- Local events/parades/days
- Churches
- Language centers

Some keys to the continued success of your Soccer in Schools program and your outreach work will to cultivate personable, energetic and passionate coaches who can act as a strong positive representation of your Club or Association. By providing people who are professional, educated and reliable, you will increase your chances to build dedicated relationships within your community and facilitate more kids into youth soccer. You can help create these key members by providing educational opportunities within your Club/Association, create a positive and supportive environment for them to work in and, most importantly, not relying too heavily on one or two coaches. Building community relationships, working with kids in fun low-key environments should be fun, so be mindful that you are creating the opportunities for success in your staff: volunteer or paid.