

Team Up! Sports Partnership for Students Preliminary Concept Q & A

ABOUT THE PARTNERSHIP

1. What is this preliminary partnership concept?

Rockford Public Schools (RPS) and the Rockford Park District (RPD) would enter into an intergovernmental agreement for the Park District to operate the School District's extracurricular sports programs at the elementary, middle school and high school levels.

2. What is the vision for the partnership?

All students will succeed by having an integrated, comprehensive world-class recreational and competitive sports program that develops their mind, body, character and athletic abilities.

3. Why is this partnership being considered?

RPD has a history of working closely and successfully with RPS on athletic programming. Last year, the relationship was expanded with the creation of the Superintendent's Summer Challenge, which offered a comprehensive educational and athletic opportunity for K-8 youth at six elementary and middle schools. Financial challenges facing RPS, including a projected \$50 million budget deficit for the coming school year, leave athletics vulnerable to reduction or elimination.

4. Is such a recreational/athletic partnership legal?

Article 7, Section 10 of the Illinois Constitution authorizes and encourages "units of local government and school districts (to) contract or otherwise associate among themselves . . . to obtain or share services and to exercise, combine, or transfer any power or function." As well, the Constitution calls upon the state to "encourage intergovernmental cooperation and use its technical and financial resources to assist intergovernmental activities." As we work through this concept, we also intend to engage IHSA to ensure compliance with its bylaws.

5. Do similar partnerships exist elsewhere? Have they existed in the past?

Yes. The Sterling Park District, for example, partners with the Community Unit School District #5 to provide middle school athletics and extra curricular activities. A similar alliance exists among the Cities of Elgin and South Elgin, the Bartlett and Streamwood Park Districts to serve middle school students in School District U-46. For 18 years beginning in the 1970s, the Rockford Boys and Girls Club ran middle school sports in Rockford.

6. Will student athletes, school teams and booster clubs notice any difference?

In the short term, little or no difference is expected. The goal is for a seamless transition. In the long term, an integrated, comprehensive and higher-quality recreational/athletic program is envisioned.

BENEFITS AND IMPACTS

7. What are the benefits of having RPD run all athletic programs for RPS?

Potential Benefits Include:

- Cost savings through streamlining
- Ability to strengthen feeder programs in schools through integration of existing Park District recreation programs
- Student use of RPD facilities
- Upgrades to RPS athletic facilities

8. How will current Park District staff, facilities, programs or partners be impacted?

- **Staff:** The Park District would develop a staffing system to achieve the partnership vision and hire the most qualified applicants.
- **Facilities:** A total Park District/School District facilities inventory would occur, with an eye toward consolidations and upgrades.
- **Programs:** Current recreational programs offered through RPD would not be affected.
- **Partners:** Partners will continue to play a key role in supporting quality programs.

9. Will the current coaches lose their jobs or be expected to volunteer?

A staffing system that serves the needs of student athletes and distributes resources evenly among schools must be developed.

COSTS AND FINANCING

10. What does it currently cost to run RPS athletic programs and what would it cost under the Park District's model?

RPS currently spends at least \$3 million annually on extracurricular athletics. A thorough cost analysis will determine if the goal of improving school athletics at a lower cost can be achieved.

11. Will this alliance increase my property taxes?

No. It is anticipated that a cost savings can be achieved. RPS would reimburse RPD for expenses incurred.

12. If I am a Park District resident, but do not reside in the Rockford School District's boundaries, will my taxes go toward funding Rockford's athletic programs?

No. RPS will reimburse the RPD for all direct and indirect expenses related to the sports programs.

TIMELINE AND NEXT STEPS

13. When would the transition take place?

An agreement could take effect this summer with implementation scheduled for the 2011/2012 school year.

14. What are the next steps in the process?

RPD and RPS will host listening sessions to gather input and answer questions regarding this preliminary concept. Meetings are being held with a variety of stakeholders including school administration, coaches, booster clubs, parents and other community partners. At the same time, park and school District staff will move forward on further development of the concept including cost analysis and facility inventory.