

The Kids FIRST All-American After-school Sandlot Program

In our attempts to “reclaim the timeless value of sport,” **The Center For Kids FIRST In Sports** has reclaimed **The Sandlot** as an experience where kids can rediscover the joy and satisfaction of play.

Years ago, children had safe places to hang out and play on their own. Times were simpler and different then. Those were times when kids could ride their bikes through the neighborhood, gathering their friends for a game in a sandlot.

Children were able to play, hang out with friends, and make memories that would last for a lifetime.

Freedom and imagination were the main ingredients of play in those days when children could just play without the pressure to perform for adults. Anyone who experienced **The Sandlot** remembers how special those times were for learning and growing up.

Free from the influence of adults, children learned how to get along and form lasting friendships. They learned how to solve their own problems: everything from disputes and arguments to adjusting the rules of play to fit the circumstances.

They figured out how to keep everyone involved and to make sure nobody “took their ball and went home.” They also decided when to play and when to stop.

In those days, the game itself became the teacher. Coaches were not necessary to organize practices, plan drills, and decide who plays. Play was fun, and children did not need anyone to motivate them to play. Kids played for the fun of it and learned life’s important lessons while laughter and excitement filled the air.

Youth Sports Today

This is an unfamiliar scenario for children today whose play and learning is rigidly organized by adults. Children today don’t play, they perform, and for this reason it stops being fun and 70% of them stop playing by the time they reach age 15.

It doesn't make sense that children don't enjoy play. For this reason, we have brought back **The Sandlot** experience. While it is impossible to return to simpler times, it is possible to recreate the experience.

By restructuring sports, children can once again enjoy the freedom and passion to play. This begins by giving the games back to the kids and removing adult managers and coaches. All that is needed is an adult to oversee the safety of the playground.

When properly mentored and tutored, adults can learn how to become effective role models and teachers. They can discover how to use sports and play to enable children to learn important life skills that will lead to happy and fulfilled lives.

Properly structured, playgrounds can become classrooms where children develop creative thinking skills, problem solving ability, and moral awareness. Through **The Sandlot experience** children can learn what virtue and positive character traits actually look like.

Adult role models and mentors can help children discover the meaning of honesty, respect, responsibility, teamwork, fair play, perseverance, and humility.

Through **The Sandlot** experience, they learn to compete with fairness, honesty, and integrity. They learn to balance competition and collaboration. This is where they learn social responsibility, perseverance, and how to deal with failure and disappointment.

The **All-American Sandlot Program** offers play and learning in an environment that is fun and affirming. The purpose of our **Sandlot After-School Program** is to make sure children remain physically active, have fun, learn from the games, and develop a love for reading, learning and self-expression.

Our **Sandlot After-School Program** integrates learning that is fun. We use books and stories about heroes from sport to motivate children to read, learn, and discover important lessons. We help children express themselves in constructive dialogue and in writing. Simple mathematics are used to figure out statistics such as batting averages and percentages. Work is not graded. Every effort is cause for praise and personal affirmation.

In addition to physical activity and literacy, we also include a nutritional component that reinforces healthy food choices.

We are committed to restructuring sports to become an effective classroom where children can learn life's important lessons. This is **The Sandlot** experience reclaimed. We also offer summer programs based on the After-school program and help promote and organize intramural sports programs.

Contact us for a free brochure. info@centerforkidsfirst.org