



Play It Forward

Dear Friends,

The expression “**pay it forward**” is used to describe the concept of asking that a good turn be repaid by doing a good turn to others instead. We have entitled the 2008-09 Playworks Annual Report “**Play It Forward**” in that spirit – the idea of asking that a great opportunity to play be celebrated by making it possible for somebody else to play.

This past year was extraordinary. We ran, hopped, pitched, jumped, skipped, caught, threw and tagged. We opened in New Orleans and in St. Louis. We ran Recess Roll-Outs in Newark, NJ, Seattle, WA, Portland, OR and Los Angeles, CA. We ran our first-ever conference, **Play On**. We hosted our first dinner – **Get in the Game** – and honored Playworks **Most Valuable Principal**, **Rookie of the Year** and **Most Playful CEO**.

We visited the White House – twice – changed our name and expanded our training program. We launched a new website, played kickball, and added lots and lots of people to Playworks’ list of friends. We brought on new staff and said goodbye to staff moving on to new adventures.

Like any good game, 2008-09 was thrilling, challenging and rich in lessons. We hope that this annual report will give you an insight into the highlights and a little inspiration for the year ahead. Because if 2008-09 taught us nothing else, it’s time to play it forward.

With thanks for all your care and support,

David Rothenberg
Executive Director

Jill Vialet
President/Founder



PLAYWORKS

EDUCATION ENERGIZED





NEW INSIGHTS DRIVE OUR PROGRAMS

Longer and more intently than any other organization, Playworks has been helping schools make the most of a well-run recess. From the playground and into the classroom, recess and play can benefit the health and well-being of children, and directly and positively impact learning.

Each year, in addition to the standard evaluations required by many of our program funders, Playworks surveys the teachers, staff and principals at the schools we serve. These surveys give us insight into the specific areas where our work is making an impact and help to inform our future programs and offerings.

While staff consistently give high rankings to our impact on the playground, for the first time this year we included a question about the amount of time that teachers recovered in their classrooms with Playworks at their school. *Nearly three-quarters of respondents (73 percent) said they reclaimed the equivalent of 19 hours or more of instructional time per year.*

Of those, 36 percent said they had been able to reclaim 38 hours of teaching time formerly lost to resolving issues from recess. In addition, nearly two-thirds (65 percent) said that more students have on-task behavior in the classroom.

We also asked school staff about how our people and programs impacted issues such as bullying and school climate. Nearly eight of 10 (79 percent) said that bullying at recess had decreased, and 90 percent reported that students' use of conflict resolution skills on the playground has increased. This carried into the classroom as well. More than seven out of 10 respondents (71 percent) said that more students use conflict resolution strategies in class, with nearly as many (68 percent) reporting fewer conflicts during class.



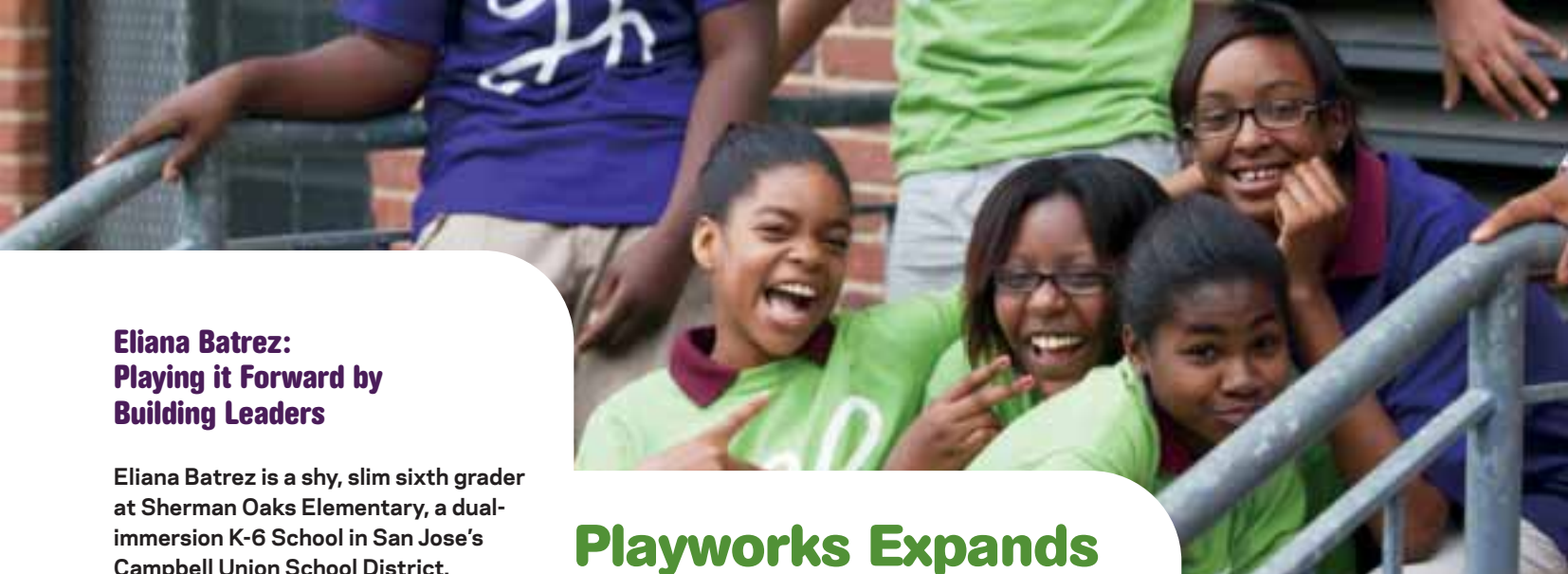
California Healthy Kids Survey

Over the past year, researchers from the University of California, San Francisco, (UCSF) have been analyzing results of more than 10 years of survey data on California school children. While the paper is due to be published in early 2010, the preliminary analysis reveals that while test scores are improving across the state, social-emotional health is declining. However, in Playworks schools, students have more positive results and have actually demonstrated improvements.

The UCSF researchers also found a strong cumulative effect from our program. The longer Playworks was at a school, the greater the likelihood of its students scoring better on several indicators, such as improved problem solving skills, increased physical activity, less drug exposure and more meaningful participation in school.

Evaluation is a core element of the Playworks model. These research initiatives demonstrate our impact, help us identify best practices and align our programs with validated standards and practices.





Eliana Batrez: Playing it Forward by Building Leaders

Eliana Batrez is a shy, slim sixth grader at Sherman Oaks Elementary, a dual-immersion K-6 School in San Jose's Campbell Union School District.

Now in her second year as a Playworks Junior Coach, recess has not always been Eliana's passion. In fact, it was at the urging of her teacher that Eliana joined the program at her school.

"I didn't like to go out at recess before," she explains. "But my teacher signed me up to be a junior coach and it was a lot of fun. Now I get to play with the little kids and teach them games."

Eliana says that the junior coach program makes her enjoy school more, too. "I really like coming to school now. It's more fun now that I'm a coach. I don't like to stay home - even when I'm sick. I know that the little kids are looking forward to me!"

Eliana says that as much as she enjoys handing out playground equipment and helping with the kids, she is finding that being a junior coach has an even bigger role in her life. "I just got accepted into a special program," she smiles. "When they asked me what I did to show leadership, the first thing I thought of was the junior coach program and Playworks. It is helping me to be a leader."

Playworks Expands

PLAYING NEW TERRITORY

After successful Recess Roll-Outs the previous spring, Playworks debuted in the South and Midwest sections of the country, operating our program in St. Louis and New Orleans' schools in the fall of 2008.

Particularly poignant was our entry into New Orleans. After Hurricane Katrina hit in September, 2005 and displaced tens of thousands of residents, teams of Playworks coaches volunteered to help out. About 30 volunteers dispersed to Houston schools and the Astrodome to bring play to children relocated there due to the storm. It was only natural that three years later, Playworks launched its program in the Crescent City. Nearly every child in Playworks schools there has somehow been affected by Hurricane Katrina, so our presence has been particularly appreciated. Ironically, during our first weeks in New Orleans, the city was once again evacuated due to the threat of Hurricane Gustav.

ROLLING OUT RECESS PLAYWORKS STYLE

Playworks took to playgrounds in Seattle, Portland, Newark and Los Angeles in the spring, when the 2009 Recess Roll-Out season began. With cones, red rubber balls, jump ropes and enthusiasm, teams of coaches brought the Playworks road show to the four cities to introduce schools and communities to our brand of play and physical activity. Living and working together for the week, the teams of 10 - 15 coaches dispersed each morning to their individual schools, more often than not at the mercy of the elements (snow in Seattle, rain in Portland, record heat in Los Angeles).

Recess Roll-Outs have become a Playworks trademark, and a powerful and effective means to showcase the impact we can bring to cities where we hope to expand. For five days, our coaches become part of the school community. They work on the playground and with teachers in the classrooms to teach students basic games, teamwork and conflict resolution skills.

Recess Roll-Outs also have a profound effect on the coaches who participate. As one coach wrote, "I came out of the Recess Roll-Out with a renewed passion for my job. I'm not only ready to go back to my school and finish the year on a high note, but also to continue to be an ambassador and advocate for the program."

Playworks Training



Playing it Forward in Stockton

A new initiative during the 2008-2009 school year, Playworks Training launched a pilot project with three schools in Stockton Unified School District and two Aspire Charter Schools. Funded by The California Endowment, the goal of the project was to provide school-based recess coaches and teachers with training so that they could implement Playworks' physical activity and play curriculum on their campuses.

Meet Rhonda, campus safety manager. As a result of Playworks' training, Rhonda learned how to successfully engage middle school students in fun activities during recess. The strategy was simple; get one interested student to play first, and the others will come. Sure enough, it worked! When the other students saw how much fun one student was having, the next day they all lined up at recess ready and eager to play.

Meet Ruben, a physical education teacher passionate about improving kids' health by getting them up and moving. As a result of Playworks' training, Ruben was able to increase threefold the number of girls playing soccer during recess. The strategy was simple; break up one big unruly soccer game with too many kids into a game of three line soccer. Once girls saw and felt that it was safe to play, they were raring to go!

Stockton Unified has been very pleased with Playworks Training, and introduced our training model to additional personnel in late 2009.

TEACHING THE REST OF THE WORLD TO PLAY

Vital to our movement, Playworks Training has embarked on an ambitious journey to create a scalable, sustainable model that allows us to support the movement for play throughout the country.

Playworks' shorter training modules have traditionally been the bread-and-butter of our initiative, and a crucial element in building the movement for play. These trainings focus on best practices, recess design, group management and other critical areas to help provide adults who work with youth the basic tools to support healthy and inclusive play.

Playworks Training worked with the Stanford Alumni Consulting Team (ACT) to identify new areas of opportunity. The team studied various revenue models and examined scalability and sustainability, with a focus on larger strategic partnerships. The result was a new focus on school districts and other large partnerships that will allow Playworks to systemically support schools and impact learning on a longer-term basis. Our partnership with the Stockton Unified School District (*see sidebar*) was our entry into this new type of strategic partnership.

In May, Playworks was contracted by the National Head Start Association (NHSA) to provide support to its centers on the East and West Coasts, providing teachers and parents with play and physical activity training for preschool-aged children.

While still in their early stages, these initiatives represent a crucial step for Playworks Training as well as to our vision that one day, all children will be able to play, every day.

Coach David Hidalgo: Playing it Forward on the Playground

When David Hidalgo stepped on the campus at Tyler Elementary, a dual-immersion Spanish-English pre-K through fifth grade school in Washington, D.C. last year, he knew he had his work cut out. Just out of college, a first-year coach at a first-year Playworks school with a new principal, the AmeriCorps member was admittedly “terrified.”

“The recess yard was crazy. There were fights and conflicts, kids standing around doing nothing, play fights turning into all-out street brawls...and it was my job to help turn it around,” he recalls. “On top of that, there were several classes of autistic kids, and they needed to play, too.”

The challenges were overwhelming at times, but Coach David was determined to learn more, to make it work. He says he decided to “smile all the time” and talk with the teachers every day—particularly those working with autistic students. He said he treated the students with respect, listened, got them involved in the games, and eventually they began to trust and understand that he was there to do one thing—help them play.

He credits the AmeriCorps program for keeping him motivated. “AmeriCorps has helped me grow,” he says. “It has made me want to make a positive change in the world, to contribute, to make things better and to influence change in my community. It’s helped me to be a better person and to feel like I’m doing my small part to make the world better by helping these kids.”

“David returned to Tyler for the 2009-2010 school year as a second year AmeriCorps member.”



Playing to the Crowds

Playworks enjoyed some fun and games last year, debuting two major events that supported our bottom line and helped build our growing reputation as a smart organization that knows how to play

Headlined by Oakland Raiders’ running back Darren McFadden and Olympic swimming gold medalist Natalie Coughlin, Playworks held its first-ever fundraising dinner last March. With four-square, hoops, putt-putt golf and other game stations, attendees were encouraged to **Get in the Game**.

Maynard Webb, chairman and CEO of LiveOps, a successful Santa Clara, CA-based high tech company, was named Playworks’ inaugural Most Playful CEO for his extraordinarily playful approach to combining work and play in the workplace.

Tammie Miller from Baltimore’s Gardenville Elementary was recognized as the Most Valuable Principal. This first-year Playworks principal was honored for her dynamic way of building play into the culture of her school.

Playworks program coordinator, AmeriCorps member and New Orleans native Sean Tate was recognized as our first ever Rookie of the Year for the program he built at Abramson Science and Technology Charter School, and for providing a caring and stable presence to students still traumatized from the storm that dramatically changed their lives.



Principal Rosemary Mauldin: Playing it Forward, Even in Turmoil

Nestled in Richmond's notorious Iron Triangle, Verde Elementary has an extraordinarily challenging school environment.

"Many students are latchkey kids from single-parent families," says Principal Rosemary Mauldin. "They live in a tough area surrounded by violence. They come to school tired and lethargic because the sirens at night keep them awake. They don't go outside to play much because it is just too dangerous."

Before Playworks, the playground was chaos, with fights and disagreements and the early stages of gangs beginning to form. Kids simply didn't know how to play, says Ms. Mauldin. They didn't know the rules and there was constant miscommunication. So they fought instead.

"With Playworks, finally, we had someone teaching kids how to play and showing them the rules," she says. "The kids could hear about kickball, talk about kickball, but it wasn't till someone showed them how to play that it all turned around."

"When Coach first came, he started making the kids play the games. He also broke up a lot of fights," she continues. "Now the kids know they have a choice. They have to be responsible and accountable to the rules, or they don't get to play. Guess what? They choose to follow the rules and they choose to play. Playground fights have dropped to zero. Zero!"

Mauldin admits her students and her community face major challenges, but she is committed to keeping Verde a safe and affirmative environment with a positive school culture.

"With play and Playworks, we're showing kids that even in this small community, with all the ills around us, there's some sanity," she reflects. "When kids play, they learn so many important lessons - socializing and teamwork and rules and boundaries. If they learn these things, they are going to be able to live healthy lives."



"PLAY ON" DEBUTS IN SAN FRANCISCO

San Francisco became the epicenter of play for two plus days in May as more than 250 adults from around the country gathered for our first-ever Play On conference, a strategically interactive and fun conference designed to showcase best practices in the field of play and to provide participants with tools and ideas they could take back to their organizations and use immediately.

The high-energy conference focused on issues and implementation strategies around bringing play to schools and communities, providing the casually-dressed, sneaker-shod participants with smart, thoughtful approaches to supporting a successful program.

Participants visited various stations to get their "Play Passport" stamped, along the way learning games like Ro-Sham-Bo Relay, Switch, Double Dutch jump rope and others. Breakout sessions included information on play for physically challenged children, promoting physical activity to girls, violence prevention, positive coaching, hands-on games and strategies to engage children on the playground and others. The conference was kicked off by keynote speaker Kevin Carroll, author of *Rules of the Red Rubber Ball: Find and Sustain Your Life's Work*.

Building on the success of our San Francisco debut, plans are in the works for Play On 2010.

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**Diana Colón:
From Chaos to Showtime**

Ever since Playworks came to Joseph K. Hurley K-8 School in Boston's South End, things have been a bit easier after recess in Diana Colón's first grade class.

"Recess before Playworks was a free for all," she laughs. "There was really nothing to do. There was a jungle gym, blacktop and a swing set with no swings. Then the kids discovered they could go up the slide instead of down. There were lots of collisions, lots of little injuries."

Ms. Colón says every day after recess, she had to spend at least 10 to 15 minutes just calming her students down when they came back to the classroom.

"Particularly in first grade, little dramas become huge issues that escalate to tears," she explains. "If something went wrong on the playground - someone took a wrong turn or played 'unfairly,' someone got shoved in line, someone misunderstood, the kids would bring it back into the class and I'd have to calm them down."

Now there are least four activities going on at recess and all the kids are engaged and playing together, Ms. Colón says. "The dramas have evaporated, and the students come back to class with a much better mindset."

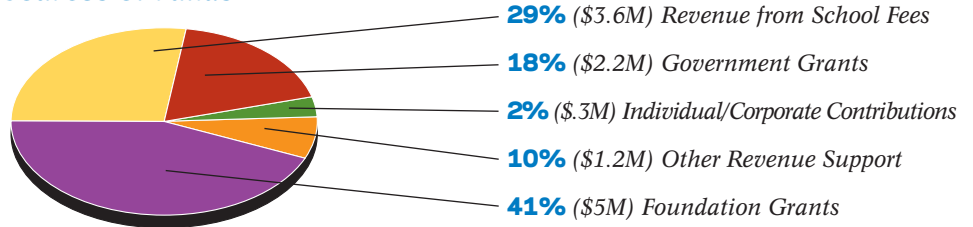
And that extra time Ms. Colón once spent resolving issues? "For the first time, the kids get show and tell," she says. "I couldn't do this before Playworks."

2008-09 PLAYWORKS SOURCES AND USE OF FUNDS

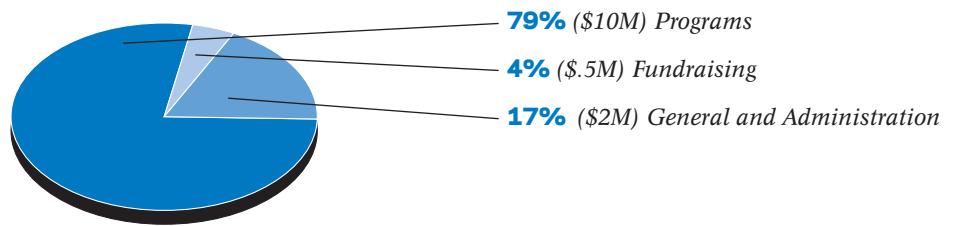
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Our vision is to provide safe, healthy and inclusive play to more than a million children by the end of 2012. This is an ambitious goal, but we have a proven, sustainable model and a track record of success that we've worked to build for more than 13 years.

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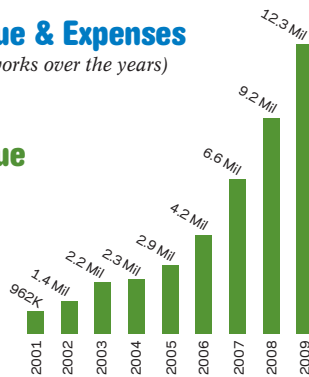


Uses of Funds

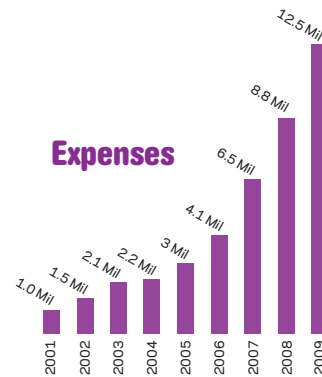


Revenue & Expenses
(for Playworks over the years)

Revenue



Expenses







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