



***Female Athletes Getting Kids Moving***

# **The BAWSI Play! Handbook**

**For Coaches and  
Athletic Departments**



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### **About BAWSI**

#### **BAWSI's Vision**

The Bay Area Women's Sports Initiative —BAWSI, pronounced “bossy”—is a nonprofit organization that awakens the power of female athletes as positive change makers in the world. Our vision is a world in which female athletes have activated their limitless potential as strong, influential leaders and are making positive differences across all spectrums of society: on the field, off the field, in their personal pursuits, in their professional careers, and in their communities.

#### **The History of BAWSI**

BAWSI was founded in 2005, in San Jose, California, by a small group of passionate female athletes and advocates, including Olympic and World Cup soccer champions Brandi Chastain and Julie Foudy along with Marlene Bjornrud, BAWSI's current CEO. They saw the need for female athletes to stake their claim as strong, powerful leaders capable of improving the world and created BAWSI to realize this goal.

At the same time, youth obesity had just been declared an epidemic and it was predicted that, as a result, this generation's children would not outlive their parents. Hot off the presses, however, was the Women's Sports Foundation's report stating that “simply moving or playing can reduce a girl's risk for obesity, cancer, gang involvement, tobacco and drug use, and unintended pregnancy.” In that moment, it was clear to BAWSI's founders that the women's sports community had a critical role to play in ending childhood obesity. They realized that by sharing their love of physical activity, female athletes were the ideal role models, leaders, and game-changers needed to foster excitement around exercise, make being active a way of life, and lead children to healthier, more positive futures.

In the fall of 2005, BAWSI launched BAWSI Girls to create a long-lasting and meaningful platform for women athletes to positively impact the lives of young girls in underserved communities—a population that often does not play sports due to lack of money, opportunity, safety, and/or encouragement from home and who are thus prime targets for health problems. On the playgrounds during the BAWSI Girls after-school programs, local female collegiate and high school athletes volunteer as coaches and lead the girls in fun activity and life skills stations.

Through consistent weekly interactions with the BAWSI Girls, the female athletes become influential role models in the girls' lives, showing them what it means to be strong, healthy, confident women as well as expanding the girls' ideas of what their futures hold to include things like going to college and becoming leaders in their communities.

Since BAWSI's inception, more than 13,000 elementary school girls in the San Francisco Bay Area have participated in BAWSI Girls and sweated their way to healthier, more positive lives. Another 700 children have participated in BAWSI Rollers, a similar program that BAWSI launched to offer fun, adaptive games to children with physical and mental disabilities. More than 2,000 female collegiate and high school athletes have helped the young girls on their journeys and, through their experiences, the athletes have come to realize the powerful impact they can have on the world by just being themselves and to see their potential as world-changers and leaders across all sectors—in government, business, nonprofits, education, and many more.



### **About BAWSI Play!**

#### **The Creation of BAWSI Play!**

In 2012, BAWSI began hearing from coaches and female athletes around the country wanting to know how they could get involved. In response, BAWSI created BAWSI Play!, a free toolkit that equips any team of female athletes with the tools, resources, and support they need to initiate and lead their own programs to get underserved elementary school students moving and involved in fun, active play.

#### **What is BAWSI Play!?**

BAWSI Play! consists of (1) a how-to-get-started Handbook for coaches and athletic departments, (2) a step-by-step guide called the Playbook for athletes to use to get kids moving on their school playgrounds, (3) an Activities book with more than 30 fitness activities and fun game ideas, and (4) Feedback Forms, which include three types of surveys for measuring program successes and opportunities for improvement. Using BAWSI Play!, teams of female athletes can connect with underserved elementary schools in their areas to lead the children in fun, high-energy activities once a week for 4-8 weeks.

#### **How BAWSI Play! Can Help Your Athletes Make a Difference**

The need to foster a love of exercise in the next generation of children is increasingly important. Obesity has reached epidemic proportions with 1 of every 3 children in America being overweight or obese. The health and social problems associated with this and the lack of physical activity are staggering:

- Overweight and obese children have much higher risks of developing heart disease (the leading cause of death in America), high blood pressure, asthma, and cancer.
- 1 of every 3 children born in America in 2000 or later is predicted to develop diabetes, a life-threatening disease, at some point in their life as a result of being overweight or obese.
- A sedentary lifestyle contributes to poor academic performance, social and psychological problems, and low self-esteem.

A solution, however, is not out of reach. Simply moving and playing can reduce a child's—and especially a girl's—risk for obesity, cancer, osteoporosis, unintended pregnancy, gang involvement, and alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drug use.

Female athletes are a natural fit to lead children toward healthier futures by sharing their love of physical activity and modeling healthy life choices and fitness as a way of life.

The goal is that BAWSI Play! will be reciprocally transformative: that children develop a love and lifestyle of physical activity and that female athletes will realize the powerful impact they can have on the world by just being themselves and will discover their leadership capacities to be world-changers and leaders across all sectors—in government, business, nonprofits, education, and many more.

### **Are you in? Then let's Play!**



### **Getting Started in 5 Easy Steps**

#### **Step 1: Deciding to Use BAWSI Play!**

The first step to engage in authentic and intentional service is identifying what issues you care about and determining how you can make an impact. Discuss with your team and see if you want to “Choose To Matter” by using BAWSI Play! to make a difference in your community.

To use BAWSI Play!, you and your athletes need to:

- Commit to being on the playground at a local underserved elementary school and leading children in fitness activities once a week for a minimum of four weeks.
- Review the Handbook, Playbook, Activities book, Feedback Forms. (Also available online at your BAWSI Play! Website)
- Commit to participating in the Beyond BAWSI\* community by becoming a member and sharing your experiences in service, both with BAWSI Play! and other service initiatives

*\* Beyond BAWSI is a community of female athletes and coaches inspiring one another to be change makers in the world.*

**Remember, we’re here to help and support you!** If you need anything, contact BAWSI at 408-247-2544 or [bawsi@bawsi.org](mailto:bawsi@bawsi.org).

#### **Step 2: Deciding When to Lead Your BAWSI Play! Program**

Once you choose to use BAWSI Play!, you need to decide when you’ll be on the playground. Offseason is best for some teams; year-round is most impactful for others.

The only requirement is that your athletes go to the school and lead children in fitness activities once a week for a minimum of 4 consecutive (or near consecutive) weeks in order to make a strong positive impact and develop meaningful relationships with the school and children. At least three athletes should be on the playground each week—though the more the merrier!

Deciding when your athletes will be on the playground will be a collaborative decision made with the elementary school but before you reach out to a school, you and your athletes should:

- **Decide when in the year** you’d like to be on the playground (fall, spring, both, etc.).
- **Decide what days of the week** work best for you and your athletes.
- **Decide what times during the day** work best for you and your athletes.
  - **IMPORTANT NOTE:** BAWSI Play! is designed to be implemented before or during school hours only (such as during lunch recess). Leading a program after school adds additional administrative burden to you and your athletes (gathering permission slips for all participating children, obtaining liability insurance, etc.).
- **Decide how many weeks** you’d like to be on the playground (4 weeks minimum, 6-8 weeks recommended).
- **Name your program.** BAWSI Play! programs should be named as follows:
  - (your team mascot) + Play! - For example: “Pioneers Play!”



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### **Step 3: Identifying Underserved Elementary Schools**

Throughout the country, schools are losing PE classes, recess time, and opportunities for students to participate in extracurricular sports and activities. Children living in high-poverty communities are most affected and face the additional challenges of not participating in sports due to lack of money, opportunity, safety, and/or encouragement from home. They are thus prime targets for health problems and are especially in need of you and your athletes.

There are several ways to identify underserved communities and elementary schools in your area:

- **Talk to your athletic department** to find out if the department has existing relationships with local, underserved elementary schools or if they can suggest schools to contact.
- **Talk to your university** to find out if the university has existing relationships with local, underserved elementary schools or if they have suggestions. Seek out student leadership and/or community service organizations and/or institutes on campus for advice.
- **Ask your athletes.** If any of them grew up in the area or have come to know the area well, they may have suggestions.
- **Call the school district** and tell them that you and your athletes would like to go to an underserved elementary school to get kids moving before school or during recess. Ask which schools would benefit the most from having your athletes on their playgrounds.

### **Step 4: Reaching Out to an Elementary School Principal**

The principal is the first person to contact once you've selected an elementary school where you'd like to help get kids moving. The principal may not end up being your main point of contact at the school but this is where you should start.

The best way to contact a principal is to email them and follow up with a phone call. You can often find a principal's email address on the elementary school's website or you can call the school office and ask for it. In your email, you want to introduce yourself and your team, let the principal know of your team's desire to help get kids moving, and request a time to meet and discuss the opportunity. Use the email template in [Appendix 1](#) on page 11 to write your message to the principal.

If you don't hear from your principal within a couple days, call them to follow up (for example: "Hi, this is Angela from the San Jose State Basketball team calling to see if you've had time to read the email I sent on September 18 about my team leading a free physical activity program at your school.") If the principal is:

- **Interested**, set up an in-person meeting with the principal.
- **Interested but too busy** to be your point of contact, ask if there is a teacher in charge of recess or another staff member with whom you could coordinate your program.
- **Not interested**, thank them and ask if they can suggest another school that might be interested. Look into the school they recommend or identify another school you'd like to partner with, and contact that principal.

When this doesn't work, sending a flier by mail and/or fax to the school(s) with the basic details about the program and your contact information may be another strategy to try.



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### **Step 5: Meeting with Your Elementary School Principal**

When you meet with your elementary school principal, you want to:

- **Answer the principal's questions** about your program. See [Appendix 2](#) on page 12 for a list of FAQs from principals.
- **Ask about the school**, the community, children who attend the school, its successes, and its challenges. Be sure to share what you learn with your athletes since it often doesn't feel like a big deal to athletes to get kids engaged in physical activity since it comes so naturally to them. By sharing this information, your team will realize the profound positive impact they'll be making by being present with the children on the playground.
- **Pick dates and times** when your athletes will come to the school to play with and lead the children in activities. The Playbook is designed with flexibility in mind so that your athletes can be on the playground for anywhere from 20 minutes to an hour.
  - Remember to pick times either before or during school but not after school!
- **Schedule your first day introductions.** On the first day that your athletes are on the playground, the principal or another staff member will need to gather all the children together and let your athletes introduce themselves and why and when they'll be on the playground. This only needs to be 5 minutes long at most but it needs to be facilitated by a staff member so all children are gathered while your team introduce themselves. The staff member should also encourage the kids to participate in the activities with the athletes.
  - See [Appendix 3](#) on page 13 for additional ideas for letting the kids know when your athletes will be on the playground.

### **Now you're ready to get kids moving.**

Hand the Playbook and Activities book off to your athletes so they can prepare to lead their weekly sessions on the playground, and continue on to the Supporting Your BAWSI Play! Program on page 8. Ready, set, play!

Note: In some cases, the school will ask athletes to provide TB tests, background checks, and/or fingerprints since they will be volunteers. These requirements vary by school district. Your school will let you know what, if any, documents they require.

Note: The BAWSI Play! Handbook is written for coaches and athletic departments, however, there may be cases in which the athletes themselves want to take on the role of establishing relationships with elementary schools and deciding with the school contact when their BAWSI Play! program will take place. We encourage athletes to take ownership of their BAWSI Play! program and lead the launch of their program with the support of their coach and athletic department.

**Remember, we're here to help and support you!** If you need anything, contact BAWSI at 408-247-2544.



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### **Your BAWSI Play! Program At-A-Glance**

<b>What</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>When and Where</b>	<b>Tasks</b>
Decide to use BAWSI Play!	Coach or Athletic Department	Before being on the playground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decide to use BAWSI Play! to make a difference in your community.</li> <li>• Commit to being on a playground once a week for a minimum of 4 weeks.</li> </ul>
Decide when to lead your BAWSI Play! program	Coach or Athletic Department	Before being on the playground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decide when you'd like to be on the playground.</li> <li>• Name your program.</li> </ul>
Identify underserved elementary schools	Coach or Athletic Department	Before being on the playground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify an underserved school in your area at which you'd like to make a difference.</li> </ul>
Reach out to an elementary school principal	Coach or Athletic Department	Before being on the playground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect with a principal by email and/or phone.</li> <li>• Set up a time to meet in person.</li> </ul>
Meet with your elementary school principal	Coach or Athletic Department	Before being on the playground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn about the school and students you'll be working with.</li> <li>• Schedule when your athletes will be on the playground.</li> <li>• Give the Playbook and Activities book to your athletes.</li> </ul>
Prepare for your weekly session	Athletes	Before each day on the playground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get ready to get kids moving each week.</li> </ul>
Lead your weekly session	Athletes	On the playground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get kids moving!</li> </ul>
Collect feedback from 4 children (optional but recommended)	Athletes	Second-to-last or last day on the playground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete Program Participant Surveys with 4 children.</li> <li>• Review surveys with athletes and coach or athletic department.</li> </ul>
Collect feedback from athletes (optional but recommended)	Athletes and Coach or Athletic Department	At the end of the last day on the playground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Athletes complete the Athlete Experience Survey.</li> <li>• Review surveys with athletes and coach or athletic department.</li> </ul>
Collect feedback from the principal (optional but recommended)	Coach or Athletic Department	Within one week of the last day on the playground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete the Elementary School Contact Survey with the school principal or school contact.</li> <li>• Review surveys with athletes and coach or athletic department.</li> </ul>





# **Supporting Your BAWSI Play! Program**

## **Supporting Your Athletes**

Your female athletes will be the ones leading your BAWSI Play! program on the playground but will need your support with the program and their efforts to get kids moving and excited about exercise.

Various ways you may want to support your athletes during their BAWSI Play! program dates include:

- Organizing and providing transportation for your athletes to and from your campus and the elementary school
- Going to the elementary school with them to observe and be there if they need anything during their program sessions
- Taking photos and videos to share with the athletic department, university, and greater public about the leadership work the athletes are doing to get kids in their community excited about exercise
- And more! Be sure to listen to your athletes and let them know you support their work.

## **Collecting Feedback**

### **Collecting Feedback about Your BAWSI Play! Program**

Though the smiles, laughter, and relationships you and your athletes build with children on the playground will let you know your BAWSI Play! program is making a positive impact on the children and your athletes, collecting feedback will give you additional information about where you're succeeding and where there are opportunities for improvement.

BAWSI Play! Feedback Forms include three sets of instructions and surveys. These include the:

1. Athlete Experience Survey (completed on the last day of the program)
2. Program Participant Survey (completed on the second-to-last and/or last day of the program)
3. Elementary School Contact Survey (completed within one week of the last day of the program)

### **When and Why to Use the Feedback Forms**

We encourage teams to use all three feedback forms every time they lead a BAWSI Play! program. Completing and reviewing the surveys with your team gives the athletes an opportunity to reflect on the leadership work they are doing in their community and discover their leadership capacities not only on the field but also off the field, in their personal pursuits, in their professional careers, and in their communities.

In some cases, BAWSI may ask you to complete all three feedback forms and send copies to the BAWSI office so that BAWSI Play! can continue to be improved and updated.



### **BAWSI Play! Program Sustainability**

#### **Continuing Your BAWSI Play! Program**

As your BAWSI Play! program comes to an end, the elementary school students, your elementary school contact, and your athletes are likely to ask what's next. This is ultimately up to you, your athletes, your team, and your athletic department.

The BAWSI Play! program is designed with flexibility in mind so that athletes and teams can use it to best support their goals to be leaders to make a difference in their communities. Here are some ways to continue your program:

- Continue to lead the program at the same school to develop powerful relationships between the elementary school students and the athletes.
  - Your athletes will have become role models and positive female figures in the students' lives. Continuing your program by leading it at the same school every fall, every spring, or every fall and spring will support the development of meaningful relationships that will benefit both the children participating in the program and the athletes leading the program.
- Lead the program at another school.
  - You may want to reach more students by leading a program at another school. That's great. It's ultimately up to you and your athletes to decide what will be most personally meaningful.
- Introduce your BAWSI Play! program to another team on campus.
  - If your sport keeps you from leading the program again, introduce it to another team on campus that is entering its off-season. That team may want to lead the program in the spring and your team can lead it each fall.

BAWSI is always interested in hearing your feedback, what is working, and where there are opportunities for improvement. Let us know how you've continued your program or what's kept you from leading it again by contacting us at 408-247-2544.



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### **Appendix 1: Template for Emailing an Elementary School Principal**

SUBJECT LINE:

Free physical activity program: Female athletes getting kids moving!

EMAIL:

Dear Principal (last name),

I am the coach of the (college name and sport, i.e. Cal State East Bay Women's Volleyball) team, and my athletes and I would like to bring our FREE physical activity program to your school. I would like to tell you a little about the program and set up a meeting to further discuss this opportunity.

The goals of our FREE physical activity program, (name of your program), are:

- to get kids in underserved communities moving,
- to get them excited about exercise,
- to lead them toward healthier, more positive futures, and
- to provide them with strong, healthy female role models and leaders.

Here's how it works: First, it is entirely FREE to you and your students and is lead entirely by my athletes and me. (The only school staff required is one contact person.) We will come to your school once a week for (number) weeks to lead your students in fun, high-energy activities.

We would like to meet with you to go over details, learn more about your school and students, and pick dates and times when our female athletes can help get your kids moving. If you are unable to be the point of contact, we're happy to meet with a teacher in charge of recess or someone else on staff with whom we could coordinate the program.

Please don't hesitate to contact me at (email address) or (phone number) if you have any questions. Thank you, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

(name)

(title)

(college name and sport)

Note: (Name of program) is a recognized BAWSI Play! program. BAWSI Play! was created by the Bay Area Women's Sports Initiative (BAWSI) to equip any female athletes with the resources needed to use their platform as athletes for the greater good by connecting with kids in their area to get them moving and on their way to healthier, more positive futures. For more information about BAWSI, visit [www.bawsi.org](http://www.bawsi.org).



## ***Female Athletes Getting Kids Moving***

### **Appendix 2: FAQs from Principals about BAWSI Play!**

#### **What is BAWSI Play!?**

BAWSI Play! is a free toolkit that equips female athletes nationwide with the tools, resources, and support they need to initiate and lead their own programs to get underserved elementary school students moving and involved in fun, active play. Teams of female athletes connect with an underserved elementary school in their area and pick a day of the week, a time of the day, and 4-8 weeks to go to the school to play with the children and lead them in fun, high-energy activities.

#### **What is BAWSI?**

The Bay Area Women's Sports Initiative—or BAWSI, pronounced “bossy”—is a nonprofit organization that exists to awaken the power of female athletes as leaders in their communities. Our vision is a world in which female athletes have activated their limitless potential as strong, influential leaders and are making positive differences across all spectrums of society: on the field, off the field, in their personal pursuits, in their professional careers, and in their communities. BAWSI gives BAWSI Play! free of charge to any female athlete interested in making a difference.

#### **What are the benefits to the school and the students of having your athletes on the playground?**

Our female athletes will offer students a structured and organized fitness program before school or during recess, help them foster a love of exercise and to embrace healthy lifestyles, provide children with positive role models and female sports figures (which are so difficult to find compared to male sports figures), and many more!

#### **How much will this cost?**

Nothing! The program is FREE to the school and all students.

#### **Do you need a staff member to assist you?**

No, but the school needs to designate a contact person whom we can contact with questions.

#### **How will the students know about the program?**

On the first day that our athletes are on the playground, the principal or another staff member will need to gather all the children together and let the athletes introduce themselves and why and when they'll be on the playground. This only needs to be 5 minutes long at most but it needs to be facilitated by a staff member so all children are gathered while the athletes introduce themselves. The staff member should also encourage the kids to participate in the activities with the athletes.

#### **How will the students know where to find you or who you are out on the playground?**

The athletes wear matching team apparel to represent their college and team when they are on the playground. They'll also have nametags so all students know who they are.

#### **What happens when it rains?**

Athletes come rain or shine. If it rains, we move to the school's designated indoor space to play.

#### **What happens after the program comes to an end; will you do it again next semester or year?**

It varies program to program. Some athletes lead their program every offseason; some lead it year-round each year. Others lead it at one school for one season or year then lead it at another school the next; and still others just lead a single season at a single school.



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### **Appendix 3: Ideas for Announcing Your BAWSI Program to the School**

On the first day that your athletes are on the playground, the principal or another staff member will need to gather all the children together and let your athletes introduce themselves and why and when they'll be on the playground. This only needs to be 5 minutes long at most but it needs to be facilitated by a staff member so all children are gathered while your team introduce themselves. The staff member should also encourage the kids to participate in the activities with the athletes.

Other ideas for making sure the children know you'll be there and are excited to play include:

- **Create colorful posters** with your team name, program name, and when you'll be on the playground to post around the elementary school. (Be sure to get the school's permission first.)
- **Create a flier or write a paragraph** with information to be sent to the parents in the school's newsletter, through email, or with the children to take home.
- **Submit a paragraph for the school newsletter** announcing the program and when it will take place.
- **Ask the school to make PA announcements** right before recess so the students remember to meet you on the playground to play.
- **Be creative!**