

# USTA SCHOOL TENNIS BEST PRACTICES

## PARTNER WITH SCHOOLS BUSINESS MODEL

Mark Smith, **USPTA**

### SCHOOLS

The first step in this pro's process is contact with the schools. He has relied heavily on his contact with the closest elementary school in proximity to his club. Through contact with the Principal and the Physical Education teacher, he has been able to go into the school and actually teach the P. E. classes for an entire week two times a year.

While teaching the classes, he does some fundamentals of tennis and some games. (NOTE: this would be a great time for the pro to introduce the Skillastics program, to enable the teacher to continue with tennis. Not just the two weeks the pro is there in the gym.) He also is allowed to hand out a flyer invitation to the free event at his club. In this particular school district, they have a policy about flyers going home that are soliciting money. The handouts that the pro distributes invite the children to his club for two free clinics (NOTE: these could be termed "Festival Days"). He does two different time slots, 8U from 3:30-4:30pm and the 10U from 4:30-5:30pm. The children do not need to bring any equipment to these sessions. This allows an opportunity to teach them about the proper sized equipment.

### CLINICS (FESTIVAL DAYS)

The free clinics involve teaching the basic strokes, but mostly promote fun on the tennis court. Last spring this pro had 60-70 children show up for the two free clinics. He had 40 sign up for the spring program. Many of the ones who don't sign up play other sports. They attend the free clinics because of their excitement for tennis from the school sessions. At these clinics he hands out a flyer explaining that season's program. The entire schedule for the season including any dates (holidays) that they do not have tennis are listed. A detachable sign-up sheet with a brief disclaimer for the parents to sign is included as well. The program is an "in-house" league with tennis three days a week. Their practices are on Monday and Wednesday, with match-play on Friday. The first few weeks the Fridays are also used for practice days. The fee is \$125 per season per player. This includes a racket for those who need one, a t-shirt, and a pizza party awards day at the end of the season.

### ASSISTANTS

As far as help, this pro uses one assistant pro and some middle school/high school students to aid in the clinics, practices, and matches. He pays the assistant pro and does a trade-off for lesson or clinic time with the middle and high school students.

He also uses parent volunteers on match days to assist the players with keeping score.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

2 Seasons (spring and fall) - 40 players at \$125 per	= \$10,000
Advanced Clinic - 14 players at approx. \$120 per x 9 months	= \$15,120
Expenses - Assistant pro, t-shirts, rackets, balls, awards	= (\$2,120)
<b>Total income from 10U program</b>	<b>= \$23,000*</b>

\* This does not include the income from private lessons that have come from this group. Also, this pro says that the mothers of these players have started taking a clinic from him one night a week and will be forming a 2.5 team in the fall. This group generated an additional \$7,200 of income from their clinics during the past year. Net gain = \$30,000+

# USTA SCHOOL TENNIS BEST PRACTICES

## BEST PRACTICE OF A CTA PROGRAM

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

#### ***What is the name of your program?***

Houston Tennis Association NJTL

#### ***In your own words, please describe it.***

HTA NJTL provides youth development for children ages 4-18 through tennis and education classes at neighborhood parks and schools

#### ***Size of the program? How many kids? How many instructors/Coaches?***

More than 7,000 children served each year. Around 60 instructors are hired annually.

#### ***Why did you start it? What is the purpose of your program?***

The Houston NJTL program started in 1990 and provides free youth tennis programming and opportunities for at-risk youth in the greater Houston area.

### STARTING THE PROGRAM

#### ***How did you get started?***

A group of local tennis teaching professionals gathered together to start the first NJTL group. A few years later the City of Houston Parks and Recreation Department included youth tennis in its budget. The collaboration between Parks and the CTA has continued since then.

#### ***Who did you go to in order to get permission to offer the program and/or get permission to visit the school to promote your program?***

For neighborhood parks, the Houston Parks and Recreation Department has 78 neighborhood parks that include one to four tennis courts, so there is access to those courts. For schools, either the physical education teacher, principal, PTO leader or after school coordinator are the point of contact in getting permission to offer programs at a school.

#### ***How did you pitch your program?***

Word-of-mouth tends to be the best form of promotion. Once families or institutions become aware of the free youth tennis programs and accompanying enrichment opportunities, they begin seeking information or asking questions about how to get a program started where they are.

#### ***What are you selling? How do you sell it?***

Youth development—physically, mentally, socially—and safe, structured, healthy activities during highest at-risk times after school and in the summer.

#### ***How did they respond to your pitch? How did you get them engaged?***

Very favorably. Free training, equipment to borrow, instructors and special events all serve as incentives for getting school teachers, volunteers and parents engaged.

#### ***Any challenges you faced in successfully getting your program off the ground? Any advice on overcoming them?***

The bureaucracy can be daunting. It is important to maintain as much enthusiasm as possible even when frustration sets in. Sometimes scheduling seems impossible, but then you find an opening and can get something started. Be persistent, positive and as professional as you can.

## GROWING THE PROGRAM

### ***Once you engaged, how did you drive acceptance?***

The most successful element in growth is replication. Once enough “pilots” are tried and tested, a well-established program is one that can be reproduced in a similar environment and one where questions about what is required are easily answered.

### ***How is your program sustained? What is your business model?***

A combination of budget funds, grants, donations and some per-student fees are used depending on the site and situation. When a school program is offered for free, we tend to say there is no charge for the first season, that someone from the school must be trained to continue tennis, and that some payment will be expected for future seasons.

### ***How do you market the program?***

Health fairs, school outreach functions like family nights, written and email correspondence, and brochures. Physical education teachers that serve as summer NJTL instructors take information with them to their campuses.

### ***Is your program growing? How do you define sustainability? How do you reach it?***

Yes. Sustainability is the ability to continue offering the current programming and accommodate or plan for incremental growth based on success. It is reached by identifying need, demand and satisfaction and gathering funds that allow all of those objectives to be met.

### ***Any challenges you faced in growing your program and/or increasing adoption? Any advice on overcoming them?***

It seems to be increasingly challenging to find enough instructors with the proper background, skills and work ethic. College students are excellent but schedules and priorities change. Recruiting former students is helpful in finding coaches for specific neighborhoods.

## RUNNING THE PROGRAM

### ***Student: Teacher ratio?***

15: 1

### ***How much do you charge for your program?***

\$0 to \$25 for 8 group lessons plus an age appropriate racquet and ball

### ***Where do you run your program? How do students get there?***

Neighborhood parks and schools. Usually sites are within walking distance or reasonable driving distance. The program does not provide transportation except for a few special events.

### ***Is your program insured in any way?***

Yes. HTA takes advantage of the USTA insurance offered through Eagle Management.

### ***Do you run background checks?***

Yes.

### ***Are coaches certified in any way?***

Some. All receive training from USTA workshops.

### ***Does the program support special needs students?***

Yes. In addition to serving those with intellectual disabilities, a wheelchair tennis program is offered.

***How do you deal with equipment? Do you provide it? If so, how is it secured/utilized?***

Students may use equipment during class. HTA lends equipment to schools and churches and other groups when requested. Coaches sign an Equipment Sign-out sheet to help keep track of all equipment. HTA also provides an opportunity for students to purchase their own age-appropriate racquet and ball for a \$25 contribution.

***Please list out all the resources you use to run your program.***

USTA training and materials, USTA Foundation grants, Houston Parks and Recreation Department staff and facilities, Houston Tennis Association staff and volunteers, financial and time contributions from various community partners

***Do you support your program through any fundraising? If so, how do you do your fundraising?***

Yes. HTA has an annual gala and raffle, and NJTL seeks funds from grants and other sources to help support free youth tennis and education programs.

***How do you connect to the schools?***

Contact with schools is established through our USTA Texas Tennis Service Representative with special attention paid to schools that send employees to the 10 & Under Workshops. There is also a connection made with students and families in summer NJTL when they complete the end of season surveys and a question is included asking if tennis is held at their school and if not, would they like to see it offered. They are asked to provide the name of the school.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

**Name and title of program/project leader:**

Emily Schaefer, NJTL Leader/Cheryl Hultquist, HTA Executive Director

**Contact's address or location:**

c/o Memorial Park Tennis Center, 1500 Memorial Loop Dr, Houston TX 77007

**Contact's email address:** [emily.schaefer@houstontx.gov](mailto:emily.schaefer@houstontx.gov) / [htacheryl@houstontennis.org](mailto:htacheryl@houstontennis.org)

**Contact's phone number:** 832-395-7561 / 281-580-8313

**Program's website:** [www.houstonyouthtennis.org](http://www.houstonyouthtennis.org) / [www.houstontennis.org](http://www.houstontennis.org)

# USTA SCHOOL TENNIS BEST PRACTICE

## PARTNERING WITH SCHOOLS

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Growing School Tennis through connections with local Parks & Recreation Departments. City of Philadelphia Markward Recreation Center & Greenfield Elementary School & St. Mary's Parochial School.

Hints & tips for working with Parks & Recreation Departments & Summer Camps to generate leads, connect with schools and establish School Tennis programs.

### STARTING THE PROGRAM

Every summer, Markward Playground, located in Schuylkill River Park in Center City Philadelphia and part of the Philadelphia Department of Parks & Recreation, holds a very successful summer camp with over 135 kids attending. Several of the camp counselors are either school teachers or training to become school teachers. I approached the camp director about connecting with the interested camp counselors to help get tennis into local schools and she greenlighted the plan. As a result, I've got a meeting set up with two local schools to introduce tennis this fall and a lead on third.

### GROWING THE PROGRAM

Getting two of the camp counselors interested in the Tennis in School program has led to another inquiry from another counselor about getting a program at their school. Hosting events at the recreation center builds trust and gives the rec center administrators a chance to see tennis in motion and how much the kids enjoy it, making it easy for them to make introductions for you.

### RUNNING THE PROGRAM

The curriculum, the pocket guide, the station cards & Tennis Skillastics were SUPER helpful in making an impression on the camp counselors & in getting them to help with an introduction to the principal. Having such professional materials makes a great impression on school administrators and teachers. You can see the teacher's eyes light up when you lay out the Tennis Skillastics materials!

### RESOURCES USED

Markward Recreation Center has generously agreed to allow the schools to borrow their tennis equipment, (racquets, foam balls, nets) for the weeks that tennis will be taught in each of the schools. This lowers the barriers to entry, (specifically cost of equipment,) that have precluded their participation in the past. The idea is to get the program started & the teacher/kids enjoying it...then they'll find the funds to support the tennis program on their own. When we get to this point, I will offer to personally subsidize one year of USTA organizational membership for the school if they commit to purchasing one year themselves.

It is so important to build trust with the camp director so they feel comfortable recommending you and the program. We have hosted several USTA Play Days at Markward and it has been very helpful in building trust. I've also worked with the local CTA to establish spring & fall tennis programs at Markward. One of the camp counselors, Rafael, is a PE teacher in training and was looking for new sports to offer to his classes this semester...he loved the materials & the Skillastics set... makes it very turnkey for him to bring tennis into his classes. Another one of the camp counselors, Monica, has a daughter, Jasmine, who participated in one of the Play Days that we hosted at the Markward Recreation tennis courts this spring and, as a result, has fallen in love with tennis. Monica and Jasmine are very excited to bring tennis to Jasmine's school this fall. Using Play Days as lead generators for School Tennis has been very successful here. When the kids & parents sign in at the Play Days, ask them to include their school info and ask if they have tennis at their school. The parents of kids that love tennis are usually ready, willing & able to help open doors & make introductions at their school.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

**Name and title of program/project leader:** Peg Connor

**Contact's address or location:** Philadelphia, PA

**Contact's email address:** [peg.connor@gmail.com](mailto:peg.connor@gmail.com)

**Contact's phone number:** 215-868-1989

**Program's website:** <http://markwardplayground.com/>



# USTA SCHOOL TENNIS BEST PRACTICE

## LOBS AND LESSONS

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Youth enrichment program that strengthens life skills, promotes academics and creates a path to higher education through the sport of tennis

### STARTING THE PROGRAM

It was started in 2004 by individuals that wanted build an indoor facility that could house a Davis Cup event with the stipulation it also be used for youth programs. Fundraising efforts were stifled due to other national and international catastrophes but others still wanted a tennis academy. Then 7 grad students at Virginia Commonwealth University, (VCU) created a youth tennis program as a class project and approached Lobs and Lessons. It was a tennis and literacy project that was mobile and partnered with other youth organizations like the YMCA and the Boys and Girls Clubs throughout the Richmond area. It started as a volunteer project. After the first year, one of the students became a paid staff member as the program coordinator. Cofounders of Lobs and Lessons donated 1.5M and raised additional funds. The university donated the property to build the 2 court, 2 classroom youth facility on campus. VCU also pays for building utilities and maintenance except for tennis court maintenance. Lobs and Lessons is the flagship program at the facility.

### GROWING THE PROGRAM

Currently working on a tracking project. Started initially with 40 kids. They now have 150 kids in the after school and over 400 kids in the summer program. This growth was achieved essentially by an inaugural event called the Young Aces Open, where public elementary schools were invited to provide 8 students per school to participate in a 10 and Under Tournament. In return, the schools received tennis equipment and training for their teachers to introduce tennis in the schools.

### RUNNING THE PROGRAM

Their partners provide the transportation that brings the kids to Lobs and Lessons where the kids receive 2 to 4 hours of tennis and enrichment and academic programming from September to May. They use the ACE program and the First Serve program. During the summer the camps run for 4 weeks. The children can only come for one week which is designed according to their grade level.

### RESOURCES USED

They receive funds from VCU for 2 staff members as part of the VCU Division of Community Engagement. No overhead except for court maintenance. They run an annual event called the Young Aces Open a 10 and Under tournament where money raised through sponsors and in kind donations. Over 200 kids participated last year.

## WORDS OF WISDOM

1. Connection to the university was key to leveraging resources- college students volunteer, facility overhead.
2. Being on a college camps helps incentivize kids to go to college
3. Be aware that partnering with a college can be stifling when seeking sponsors. You can't cultivate the same sponsors that are already at VCU.
4. Charges a small program fee for partners to bring their kids to the program. Have partners make a commitment to bring kids September to May to make a greater impact.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

**Name and title of program/project leader:** Tina Carter, Director of Mary and Francis Youth Center

**Contact's address or location:** VCU 120 South Linden St. Richmond, VA 23220

**Contact's email address:** cccarter@vcu.edu

**Contact's phone number:** 804 827-0802

**Program's website:** [www.mfyc.vcu.edu](http://www.mfyc.vcu.edu)

## MISCELLANEOUS

### ***How does academic program run?***

Use ACE and First Serve curriculum. Teach nutrition and future orientation, First Serve and ACE per month. Team building future orientation (career and college)

### ***How did you connect to the school?***

Work with Richmond public schools during the year and because there is no transportation they partner with other youth organizations. Schools put together an athletic task force at middle school level. Run an 8 week program in spring for 7 schools. Sends staff to the schools.

### ***Additional thoughts/suggestions***

Would like an NJTL conference to discuss and share best practices for underserved youth at great length.

# USTA SCHOOL TENNIS BEST PRACTICE

## JTT - HIGH SCHOOL VERSION

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The JTT - High School Version can be used with all players on the team at once or in skill level groups for large teams. We primarily utilized JTT this year on high school match days to reduce travel time while also increasing court time for all our players. On match days we would only take the top 8 players to the matches. The rest of our players played JTT under the governance of Page Valley Community Tennis Association (PVCTA). Travel time was reduced for our top 8 players since very few exhibition matches were played and stops to eat were very quick since it was only 8 players. The remainder of our players remained at our two practice courts to play JTT. One player, served as a “Player/Manager”. She had many duties on our team and one of them was working under the guidance of PVCTA as the coordinator for each JTT event along with various parents who would keep score and run the official time clock. Tiffany would randomly select captains for two teams then randomly select players for the two teams. The captain got to name the team. The teams would play each other to determine a winner using normal JTT scoring. One lucky player from the winning team was randomly selected as a prize winner after the match.

The school would announce a brief summary of how the tennis match day went, for example:

**“Our tennis team earned an important 7-2 win over Stonewall Jackson at New Market giving out team the #1 seed heading into the Conference Tournament. Kara Comer, Ashley Knight, KK Williams. Rachael May, Sydney Cubbage, Jade Housden, Ashley Printz and Kellie Lloyd all won matches in singles and/or doubles. In JTT tennis action in Shenandoah. Team Barnacle Boy captained by Amie Morris edged out Team Merman captained by Zoe Monger by a close score of 20-18. Haleigh Hildebrand won the JTT Winner Prize which was a gift certificate to Karen’s Ice Cream Stand in Shenandoah.” Our schools athletic website posted brief summaries of the high school and JTT matches plus a picture of the high school scorebook page and the JTT paper form.”**

### STARTING THE PROGRAM

One of my players told me she didn’t want to play high school tennis because she didn’t like organized high school tennis matches (i.e. long road trips twice per week, very long matches, lots of players setting instead of playing, long stops to eat, not enough time for homework and family time, etc.). I had also coached her in JV basketball and she reminded me much of me at her age and we always got along really well. I agreed with her 100% as the past couple years I saw this as a problem too as our team grew in numbers. “Normal” high school tennis matches had been great when we first started out our team of 8 players 5 years ago but as our roster had grown it had become more difficult for me to manage match days. Opposing coaches were working great with me to get in many exhibition matches but the long match days were starting to take its toll on our team and myself. Her telling me she no longer wanted to play on our tennis team broke my heart but at the same time I was very glad she honest and told me how she felt. She motivated me to continue looking for ways to improve our tennis program. I spoke about our no-cut teams challenges with many coaches at the USTA High School Coaches workshop. The thoughts and ideas that came home with me from that workshop were incredible. I turned back to see if my player was willing to help me start a couple of new things with our team. With having no assistant coaches available to help much this season I needed help and I asked her to be a “Player/Coach” to help me. One of the things I wanted her to try was some sort of Junior Team Tennis program for our team. I was very

glad that she said she would like to do that and we came up with a game plan. The game plan was discussed at our annual team meeting at the start of the season and the team liked our ideas. It was important that the team wanted to do this and were supportive of the idea.

## GROWING THE PROGRAM

One thing we learned quickly is that the name “Player/Coach” could not be used for any player on a Virginia High School League (VHSL) team so her title was changed to “Player/Manager” which included some guidelines with what she was allowed to do. That also led to JTT being played under the governance of PVCTA because a high school coach was not on site.

The VHSL requires a high school coach to be on hand at all events. PVCTA is incorporated with insurance. PVCTA was great to work with and the only thing they required was a parent be on site. Having a parent keep the score and time clock was a great way to get parents involved so it worked out great. The parents that did this seemed to really enjoy the experience.

Our “Player/Manager” graduates next year so we have to prepare for a future without her. Our schools librarian was a former high school tennis coach and she has agreed to coach our top 8 players next season. That should give us some flexibility and will help us to begin to prepare for the following year.

Our high school does not have a boy’s team and I would like to see boys become more active in tennis. JTT is possibly an option for getting some boys on the tennis court.

## RUNNING THE PROGRAM

Support and buy in from the players and parents. Tennis balls for the matches and loaner racquets are needed. A well-organized binder containing paper forms. We used ping pong balls with each player’s name on them and a bucket to randomly draw captains, players and prize winners. We used a wooden crate to place everything inside so it was pretty quick and easy. Match days need to roll quickly and stay on schedule as players and parents seem to appreciate the set times compared to high school tennis matches. Above all players must enjoy it while at the same time playing competitive.

## RESOURCES USED

Current players, past players, parents, coaches, USTA employees, local CTA and school administration were all people we rely on to help our team grow. The USTA not only supplies knowledge and advice but also sent items that were very much appreciated. We had three grants through PVCTA overlap the season. One grant to help us purchase some loaner racquets, another grant to help build youth tennis programs in our area and a third grant to get racquets in the hands of players that are interested in tennis but cannot afford a racquet.

## WORDS OF WISDOM

- JTT is only a part of what she has ~~die~~ your program better.
- Appreciate, reward and tell people that have helped you how much it means to you.
- Learn how to text...like it or not it the best communication tool there is at relaying information quickly.
- There will always be challenges with your school, parents, county, town, schedules, etc. but do not stress over anything around the players. They need a good atmosphere around them at all times. Tennis can be challenging enough for players to learn so much so fast in high school tennis programs. Especially high school teams where all players are brand new to tennis.
- Have fun... have fun... have fun... even if it means you don't learn anything about tennis sometimes but at the same time always encourage everyone to always do their best.
- Help each player set goals for themselves and help them get what THEY want out of high school tennis (not what coaches, their parents, school administration, etc. want to see the player do)... unlike many sports high school tennis should always be what the player wants out of it.
- Talk to players about the good and the bad things of life and how our lives can change suddenly. All my players mean a lot to me. I worry about them all for different reasons. Keep players in your thoughts just as you would a member of your family.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

**Name and title of program/project leader:** Kirk Comer, Head Tennis Coach /  
Tiffany Kibler, Player/Manager

**Contact's address or location:** 917 Junior Avenue Shenandoah VA 22849

**Contact's email address:** [kirkcomer@gmail.com](mailto:kirkcomer@gmail.com)

**Contact's phone number:** 540-742-1323

**Program's website:** [www.pchsathletics.org](http://www.pchsathletics.org)