



In conjunction with the North Carolina Tennis Association (NCTA), the North Carolina Center for After School Programs (NC CAP), the United States Tennis Association Foundation (USTA Foundation) and the North Carolina Tennis Foundation (NCTF), after school students have found themselves in a new game. This collaboration has led to over twenty-five after school programs adopting tennis as a new after school activity. These programs are part of the USTA's National Junior Tennis and Learning (NJTL) network.



NJTL was developed in 1969 by Arthur Ashe, Charlie Pasarell, and Sheridan Snyder. Initially, it was developed to serve as a junior tennis league in larger cities. More recently, NJTL has shifted its focus to tying tennis and education together. This shift has created new opportunities for numerous programs across North Carolina.

This is not North Carolina's first endeavor into the NJTL Network. In the 1980's, numerous NJTL Chapters were started across the state. In 1996, Raleigh's NJTL Chapter was awarded the National Chapter of the Year by the USTA. These older programs laid the foundation for the programs that are be-



ing established today.

Numerous NJTL programs across the state are working with students who would not have been exposed to tennis otherwise. Through this collaboration, over 3,000 students have been introduced to the game and over 60% of these students identify as African American or Hispanic. The age range for participants is 6-16 and all approach tennis with an unmatched passion and enthusiasm.



This is not your parents' tennis game! Racquets, balls, courts, and nets have all been modified in an effort to make the sport more fun and easier to learn. Although some programs have permanent tennis courts, they are not required. The majority of North Carolina's NJTL Programs use gymnasiums, blacktop areas, and multipurpose rooms to set-up their tennis courts. All of these changes have made it easier to introduce tennis in an after school setting and have also made the sport easier to teach and learn.



A major focus of this project is to increase health and wellness opportunities in after school programming and tennis is a perfect way to accomplish this goal.



The response from the students and administrators has been overwhelming. The students are thrilled to be learning a new sport and administrators appreciate the health and educational focus the program offers. The



health benefits of tennis include increased flexibility, balance, coordination and cardiovascular health. Students become so engaged with the activities that they often don't realize that tennis is supporting a healthier lifestyle.

Not only have students become healthier by playing and learning a new sport, they are also learning to develop sportsmanship and other important social skills. The graphic below from the USTA Foundation, reveals how youth are greatly impacted by tennis and speaks directly to one of the goals of this project: *Create a positive impact on student attitudes and behaviors through tennis.*

Many of our NJTL Programs are now taking tennis to the next level by adding the Academic Creative Engagement (ACE) Curriculum from the USTA Foundation. This curriculum builds upon the tennis program



but adds an educational component. The ACE Curriculum focuses on math, reading, nutrition, and character development while connecting these topics to tennis.



Connecting tennis to education allows students to stay engaged and learn through play and group activities.



In addition to adding more educational opportunities, NJTL programs are adding numerous tennis opportunities for students. Many of our NJTL sites are hosting afterschool play days and tennis carnivals at their facilities for the entire community to enjoy. The local Community Tennis Associations (CTAs) have



been huge advocates and have kept great relationships with our NJTL Chapters. These relationships have allowed for an easy transition when students begin looking for ways to expand their ten-

nis careers through Junior Team Tennis or local USTA tournaments.

As we look toward the future, we are excited about our NJTL Chapters as they continue to develop and introduce tennis to a new generation. This partnership has been a true success. The after school programs have embraced tennis and cultivated a passion for the sport. The continued support of NCTA and NC CAP will lead to many more children playing tennis. To learn more about this collaboration or to connect with one of the programs working within this project, please contact Andrew Waldrop at NCTA, Andrew@nctennis.com or 336-852-8577.

