

# The Play It Smart Philosophy

Play It Smart is guided by a set of general principles that create a structure for the processes used to achieve desired program outcomes. These principles form the foundation of the Play It Smart philosophy and are outlined in the chart below. This philosophy is also reflected in the Play It Smart framework that describes some of the specific program elements that are used to promote positive development in all Play It Smart participants.

		Rationale
Emphasis	Develop assets versus prevent deficits	Rather than focusing on deficits and psychopathology, Play It Smart emphasizes the development of internal and external assets, and uses membership in a constructive group (the Play It Smart community) as a primary protective factor
Focus	Relationship versus program-driven	Consistent with both counseling psychology and positive youth development research, the quality of the academic coach (caring adult mentor) / participant relationship is more important than any programmatic approach
Approach	Process versus expert consultant model	Rather than relying on adults to tell participants how they should think and behave, emphasis is placed on assisting them in identifying and developing their personal skills in order to foster feelings of self-efficacy, independent thinking, and hope for the future
Goals	Long term growth versus short term remediation	Emphasis is placed on developing and internalizing skills and attitudes that enable participants to make a successful transition into productive adulthood

## Positive Youth Development through Play It Smart

	PROGRAM ELEMENTS	Play It Smart
CONTEXT	Intrinsically motivating/ Requires commitment/Provides challenge (flow)	Sport participation is intrinsically motivating and one of the few activities that young people find challenging and worthy of lots of time and energy (Larson, 2000)
	Valued place in a constructive group	Sport is highly valued by youth and athletes hold the most respected position and status among their age-mates (Weiss, 1995). Each participant is supported and guided in finding a special role within a special group (Play It Smart)
	Voluntary, rules, constraints, goals, rewards and concerted effort over time	Play It Smart is an integral part of football program and has clear rules (e.g., mandatory study halls, attendance in classes), goals (e.g., team GPAs or hours of community service), and incentives (e.g., attend a college football game as reward for reaching academic goals), and involves participants throughout the entire school year
INTERNAL ASSETS	Development of planning, social, and problem solving skills	Focus on future planning, decision making, and problem-solving through team building and other one-on-one and group activities (e.g., ropes courses, college campus visits)
	Sense of identity and purpose (hope and plan for the future)	Promotes identification with Play It Smart participants and supporters across the United States by creating learning teams (positive gangs) that fosters expectations for higher education and future careers
	Transfer of Life Skills to different domains by involvement in community service and giving back to the community	Community Service Activities (e.g., tutoring and coaching younger students, reading to the elderly and nursery school children, volunteering at soup kitchens) Leadership roles outside of sport Transferable skills workshops
EXTERNAL ASSETS	Close relationship with adult mentors	Academic Coach and Head Coach training and evaluation Emphasis on assets and the quality of the AC/participant relationship
	Involvement of parents and parental monitoring	Parent Booster Clubs, Parent Night programs, Parent Handbooks and Newsletters
	Structured activities that provide opportunities to learn about oneself, identify individual talents, and gain success experiences	Community service activities Leadership conferences (e.g., Destination 2002)
RESEARCH AND EVALUATION	Evaluation of changes in positive and negative behaviors using multiple and standardized assessment measures	Assessment of GPA, SAT/ACT, graduation and college matriculation, and community service, as well as related psych-social variables
	Evaluation of program effectiveness beyond the conclusion of the program or intervention	Follows each student throughout their high school years and beyond (e.g., Adjustment to College) by tracking their academic, personal, and career progression
	Assessment of which program components lead to positive developmental changes	Assesses which program components have the largest impact (e.g. quality of academic coach/participant relationship or participation in community service activities)