



Best Practices Case Study

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Editor's note: The Confidence in Kansas Public Education Task Force sponsors the Friends of Education Awards. To recognize exemplary partner development, Kansas Partners in Education sponsors the Partner Activity award category. Each nominee is a business, company, or agency that has provided an on-going partner activity over an extended period of time (minimum of three years), by means of volunteer time, services, finances or other types of support, in amount that exceeds typical collaboration from a private or public institution. This case study provides information about a 2008 Partner Activity nominee and is an educational service to KSPE members, their organizations, and prospective partners.

Mission Bowl N Olathe and Olathe Lanes East partner with Olathe Public Schools

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In November 2001, Dennis Nelson, owner of Olathe Lanes West (now Mission Bowl N Olathe), approached the Olathe District Schools about developing a program to introduce high school students to bowling and to create a new generation of lifetime bowlers. USD 233 community development director, Jim Smith, assistant director Ruth Nelson, and director of activities and athletics Jim Ater met with Mr. Nelson and manager Eric Maxwell to discuss the potential of bringing bowling to secondary students. It was agreed that the startup year would provide intramural bowling for all four Olathe high schools, based on a concept developed in Wichita schools. The proprietors agreed to pay the costs of transportation, practice time, uniforms, professional workshops, and coaches over the next five years. Over 400 girls and boys participated in tryouts for 96 positions, and a new era of bowling for Olathe kids began during this season.

Soon, Jim Ater met with officials from other districts and the Kansas State High School Activities Association (KSHSAA) to plan the launch of bowling as a state-sanctioned high school sport. In Olathe's second year, students were competing at the state level, which opened the doors for college bowling scholarships.

Initially, over 90 percent of Olathe student bowlers were not involved in other activities at school. Bowling is a sport that gives students ownership and pride in themselves and their schools. Student bowlers, like other athletes, are required to maintain good grades in order to compete. Competition is intense, the fans are enthusiastic, and families are returning to the bowling alleys. Coaches enjoy the opportunity to work with students, other schools, and the bowling proprietors. The bowling program is aligned with the district's Nutrition and Wellness program. Bowling has been so successful that Olathe Lanes East's owner Eric Maxwell and Mission Bowl N Olathe's new owner Beverly O'Donnell have signed a partner agreement to sponsor bowling in USD 233 for five more years.

No one knew that Dennis Nelson's initial call to the Olathe District Schools would lead to this 10-year partner commitment, a state-sanctioned sport, and an outstanding opportunity for Olathe high school students. Bowling has been a win-win for students, bowling proprietors, and the district. Students have the opportunity to compete in a well-organized program, gain eligibility for college scholarships, and develop a life-long pastime. Bowling proprietors are growing a new generation of bowlers, attracting spectators and state-wide attention, and new families of bowlers. The district has enjoyed a successful new sport and long-term partner agreements with the business community.

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This case study is based on a 2008 Friends of Education nomination by USD 233-Olathe. For details on the 2009 Friends of Education Awards Nominations, visit www.kspartners.org.