

Advantage Centers – Excellence through Soccer

Soccer has been nearly synonymous with ‘community’ in nearly every corner of the world except the United States. Innovation in how soccer can be better used to promote youth and community development has been emerging on every continent. This revolution, however, is just getting started.

Advantage Centers is a experimental initiative established to raise public understanding of the full potential of soccer to positively transform students, schools, and communities in Portland. Each Advantage Center will feature *Soccer for Success* and *America SCORES* – two of the leading programs in the United States:

A passionate teacher in Washington D.C. pioneered these programs on a dusty playground nearly 15 years ago, giving her students a break from after-school studies and including a soccer ball. These original efforts to blend sport, expression and community service led to development of a formal curriculum. Now, *America Scores* has chapters in 15 US cities and has accrued nearly 15 years of documented, positive student improvement in academics, healthfulness, and a sense of self-confidence and community.

Unfortunately, *America SCORES* and her newer cousin - *Soccer for Success* reaches only a tiny fraction of the students who – in some cases – ONLY find meaning in school in this way. [Stats]

Portland Advantage Centers are a partnership with local leaders and – under the bright light of the Major League Soccer debut of the Portland Timbers - Advantage Centers are intended to showcase the best practices of how soccer can be used to transform communities throughout Oregon and around the world.

The students of Advantage Centers will soon ‘speak for themselves’, reciting compelling, original poems as part of the curriculum – and validating soccer-infused strategies for school success that reach the ‘hard to reach’ students.

The progress of students at Advantage Centers will promote replication of innovative soccer programs by schools and youth agencies with existing resources - ushering in the next wave of innovation and understanding of soccer-related teaching strategies.

Through the Advantage Centers effort, ‘soccer – and sport’ will earn their way back into the tool-kit of teachers in all schools and at all levels.