

**Sportsmen's Tennis & Enrichment Center:  
Youth Participation in Activities**  
*Interview with Tia Lites, Academic & Enrichment Coordinator*

Sportsmen's Tennis & Enrichment Center is a nonprofit tennis and educational facility that focuses on out-of-school time learning for children in grades kindergarten through high school.



Photo Credit: Sportsmen's Tennis & Enrichment Center

**Key Takeaways:**

- Tennis is offered to students as an incentive to complete their homework.
- The students are always doing something with their hands, involved in peer-to-peer teaching, and feel like leaders.
- The program's key values are sportsmanship, trust, effort, and community.
- The program follows the A.C.E. curriculum.

**Q: How were youth encouraged to participate in the program's activities?**

A: We offer tennis as an incentive for the academic studies, and balance academics with tennis. This balance makes students more willing to complete their work because if they do so, they know they get an hour-long tennis clinic twice a week. We also make sure our curriculum is engaging through project-based learning. The students are always doing something with their hands, involved in peer-to-peer teaching, and feel like leaders. By taking ownership of what they are learning, students are incentivized to complete their work. Additionally, if students work hard and push to the next level, they know they are eligible to enter programs beyond their age bracket.

**Q: Were youth given autonomy or leadership opportunities through the program's activities?**

A: All the time. Our motto is "growing leaders on and off the court." We always try to find new ways to help students own their leadership. Staff demonstrate positive examples to the students and students show these positive examples back to us by leading the classroom or on the court. We also have students participate in shadow days where students shadow a staff member. This helps them take ownership of their leadership abilities.

**Q: What are the key characteristics of activities or your program model that foster engagement and participation?**

A: This is actually a part of our mission and an acronym of the program's name (STEC). Sportsmanship: students should be respectful of themselves and others. Trust: building trust with us and their peers. Effort: everything we do is based on consistent effort, coachability, being able to listen, and accept differences. Community: being unselfish and able to work hard. These values are highly regarded by the students and are all over our program, both in the classroom and tennis court. Everyone at STEC follows these characteristics, including coaches and teachers. Students see how we act and strive to be like us, and this helps keep them engaged.

**Q: What activities did students respond most positively to and want to participate in? Were there any activities that most students did not engage with, and why do you think that is?**

A: We use a curriculum called A.C.E., which combines tennis and academia. An example of this is doing math problems using the dimensions of the tennis court. Students were very engaged by this.

Students did not really like essay writing. But, as I stated before, the incentive for them to write the essays is when they are done they are able to go play tennis.

*Sportsmen's Tennis & Enrichment Center is a nonprofit tennis and educational facility located in Dorchester. The organization focuses on out-of-school time learning for children in grades kindergarten through high school. Within the organization there are several programs. In particular, the Summer Learning Program and Ready Position have collaborated with Boston After School & Beyond.*