

**Sportsmen's Tennis & Enrichment Center:
Youth Participate in Homework Time**
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:

- The program uses quiet space for homework time and offers academic support.
- Tennis and other fun activities are used as incentives for youth to participate in homework time.
- Staff offer positive reinforcement and tell students what they are doing right first and foremost.
- Students are offered a quiet, private space to complete their homework if they are distracted.

Q: What environment is created for homework time? Is it intentional?

A: Yes, it is intentional. The director of STEC believes in quiet space for homework time. We cluster the students together by grade, because they are all BPS students with the same homework, so they can talk amongst themselves for support if they need it. We also intentionally have academic support. Each table has an adult counselor, academic volunteer, or a youth counselor. If a large number of students have the same question, we will add it to a list and address it as a group at the end of the homework time.

Q: How were youth encouraged to participate in homework time?

A: Tennis and other activities are used as incentives for students to complete their homework. Students want to do their homework because, not only do they want to play tennis, but they also want to get to the other fun activities such as the science, A.C.E., or ELA activity of the day.

Q: How does staff address student disengagement during homework time?

A: We have found that students can be distracted by their friends or different things going on in the classroom. So, we have three clusters of private desks. We will ask students if they need private time to do their homework, and most of the time the student asked will say yes. They then have a private space with an adult counselor or staff member to help them get back on track, until they are ready to be back in the classroom with the other students. Also, if students are not engaged during homework time, they will not be able to go out with the other students to play tennis afterwards. We try to always offer positive reinforcement and tell students what they are doing right first.

Q: What are two or three examples of ways in which staff maintain student focus and engagement on homework?

A: The constant support from faculty and youth staff, who are always at the table with them. Staff will call out students' disengagement if necessary. Staff are there to help, but they are also there to make sure the homework is being done. This really holds students accountable. Also, the constant reminder that after homework we will all go out and do these great things, and students don't want to be left out. Staff reiterate this a lot. Students also lead by example. Sometimes during open homework time, high school students will do their homework at the same table as elementary or middle school students. This is motivational for the younger students because they want to strive to be like the high schools students.

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.