

# BEAR TRAX: A YOUTH TENNIS ADVANTAGE

## COLLEGE PATHWAYS PROJECT

In October 2000, Youth Tennis Advantage launched a new college-based learning center at the University of California to serve children from low-income communities in Oakland, Calif. The center offers 40 YTA participants intensive tutoring and advanced tennis training with Cal college students. The objective of the project is to form lasting bonds between diverse, low-income communities and higher education campuses in efforts to increase the number of Oakland children who go to college.

Tennis instructors and after-school educational staff at four neighborhood-based programs will maintain the core fundamentals of the Bear Trax program. Laney College will serve as an intermediate site between the neighborhood programs and UC Berkeley. Through a partnership with the tennis program at Cal, YTA envisions creating a pathway from disadvantaged communities to the university campus.

A similar program at Stanford provides intensive tutoring and tennis training to 100 children from East Palo Alto. This program has proven to be a successful model for increasing the number of low-income youth who attend college. Problem Statement Children from low-income families do not get the academic support they need to perform well on college entrance exams and admissions applications.

Neighborhood-based programs such as Bear Trax can provide support and activities that both keep children from getting in trouble and help them in school, but regular exposure to a rich educational environment helps participants understand the value of learning and to gain a pathway to college education. Without these programs, children and youth may drift toward negative activities, failure in school and dead-end choices.

## PROGRAM PLAN

YTA will create linkages between its neighborhood program sites that serve children from low-income families and the university community. Staff at neighborhood sites will select 40 youths to participate in the Cal program on a weekly basis during the school year. A link coordination team comprised of both academic and tennis staff plan and implement programs for outreach to parents and children in the Oakland area.



Participants are picked up by a UC Berkeley bus and taken to the tennis complex on the Cal campus. Two YTA program staff escort participants on the trip. Participants will arrive and receive tennis instruction, followed by a meeting with Cal students who will provide academic tutoring until participants are taken home. A partnership with the Cal men's tennis team anchors the program at the university while service learning and student activities programs on campus supply college student tutors.

## OBJECTIVES

1. Increase the awareness among YTA participants of the university, its educational resources and criteria for admission.
2. Provide a supportive environment for participants to improve their study skills and understanding of educational resources.
3. Form mentor relationships between college students and YTA participants.
4. Guide YTA participants to web-based educational resources that they can access from neighborhood learning centers and from home.
5. Develop strong tennis players and strong students who can qualify for athletic and academic scholarships.

Progress reporting will include measures of the number of nights students do homework, student reading level, math level, attitude toward school, grade point average and their understanding of college entrance criteria. The program intends to track actual college entrance data for high school students. Outcome data from younger children will be collected for reading, math and attitude toward school. This program is part of the network of programs operated by Youth Tennis Advantage. Tennis and academic activities are provided during the school year and summer months to children at six sites in Oakland and San Francisco.

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