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# Fencing, Karate or Botany?

Area after-school programs provide fun and education to young students.

By Reed S. Albers

**L**ogan Graham, 8, spends his after-school time with his friend Reggie Nelson, 7, playing on their Nintendo DS systems, working on homework and letting off pent-up energy by practicing karate.

His mother, Tina Graham, couldn't be happier with that regimen of after-school activities.

"We've been doing [after-school karate] for two years," Tina Graham said. "I was looking for something different for him to do. I looked at a few other after-school activities, but the results we saw from [karate] and the discipline were perfect for him."

The Enshin Karate studios, located in Burke, Springfield, Fairfax, Oakton, Annandale, Alexandria, Reston and Herndon all offer a structured after-school program.

At 2 p.m., Sensei Ali Farashkhani picks up the members of his after-school karate program and takes them to the Springfield-based gym.

From 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., the youths enjoy working on their homework,

interacting with one another and, of course, kicking the sand bag and learning the ancient martial art of karate.

The studio also offers a variety of karate training techniques and athletic games.

"It's very enjoyable for the children," Farashkhani said. "We play games a lot. If the kids play games, then they want to

**"At first kids think that [fencing] is like 'Pirates of the Caribbean.' But then they learn a lot of discipline from the sport."**

— Dan Taylor, **Have Blade Will Travel**

learn more about karate. If you just do straight training, they don't want to do it anymore after school."

A typical karate training session lasts one hour at Enshin Karate and



Reed S. Albers

Sensei Ali Farashkhani poses with his after-school program students at Enshin Karate in Springfield. Sensei Ali Farashkhani helps youths fill their after-school hours with games and karate training at Enshin Karate in Springfield.



Courtesy Photo

Dan Taylor (center) gives youths a chance to try a nontraditional after-school sport through his Have Blade Will Travel fencing

said that he has never had a child suffer an injury.

"We use tempered steel foils that are meant to bend on impact and we wear all the protective equipment that you need [to fence]," he said. "We always stress safety in this sport. It's our No. 1 concern."

Children ages 4 to 7 also can also participate in fencing with Nerf swords, not fencing foils, to play with.

"We want to get the younger kids involved," he said. "It's not quite like the traditional fencing. It's a little bit more like 'Pirates of the Caribbean'

with them."

Since sports don't suit every child's interests, the Cub Rub Recreation Center in Chantilly offers some alternatives.

The recreation center, which features two pools and a weight lifting facility, also has nature classes in the spring for those who wish to learn about the world around them.

"We have our after-school nature programs in the spring and we have family programs on the weekends," Naturalist Tammy Schwab said.

Classes in the spring include "Stupendous Science," a class about animals, a survey of scientific information and "Wizard Science."

"Wizard Science" is based on what Harry Potter would be doing at Hogwarts," Schwab said. "It covers topics such as botany and strange animals."

the remaining time is used to mentor and let the children catch up with their studies.

"We teach them about more than just karate," Farashkhani said.

For those who may not be interested in learning a hand-to-hand martial art, another option is the sport of fencing.

Fencing coach Dan Taylor, owner of the Have Blade Will Travel fencing school, has been visiting Northern Virginia grade schools since 2005 to teach children about the sport in an after-school activity session.

Despite the fact that fencing is not a mainstream sport, Taylor said children enjoy the after-school activity.

"At first kids think that [fencing] is like 'Pirates of the Caribbean,'" Taylor said. "But then they learn a lot of discipline from the sport."

In the program's four years, Taylor



Courtesy Photo

Students at Waynewood Elementary School in Alexandria practice fencing techniques.

# Impact of Concussions

Cognitive baseline testing protects student athletes from getting back on the field too quickly after a blow to the head.

**Jon Roetman**

**W**est Potomac linebacker Matthew Voltmer ended up on the ground on Aug. 14 and he doesn't remember how he got there.

It was a morning session during two-a-day practices at the high school in Mount Vernon, and the Wolverines were engaged in a hitting drill. A collision was the culprit, but Voltmer is uncertain of the details.

"I think we collided heads. To be honest, I don't remember the actual collision," Voltmer said. "I remember being about three feet away and then, next thing I know, I'm on my knees in front of him."

The junior got up, shook his head and got back in the drill.

Later that afternoon, between practices, Voltmer was watching TV when he realized the screen appeared brighter than usual. He didn't feel right, but he loves football and wanted to return for the team's second practice.

His mother had different ideas.

A teammate had informed Voltmer's mother of the hit her son took earlier in the day. After shining a light in his eyes and getting no response in his pupils, sign of a potential concussion, she took Voltmer to the hospital. Doctors performed a CAT scan and found a small bruise on his brain.

If Voltmer needed additional reason for not returning to the field promptly, it came three days later, when he took the ImPACT test.

**IMPACT IS A SOFTWARE** program geared toward managing the harmful effects of a concussion, including keeping an athlete off the field until he or she is fully recovered. Sustaining a second blow to the head while suffering from an initial concussion can cause second-impact syndrome, which is potentially fatal. According to the ImPACT Website, second-impact syndrome has led to 30-40 deaths in the last 10 years.

ImPACT provides a baseline by

measuring cognitive functioning through a series of recognition tests administered on a computer. Once a baseline is established, the test can be taken again for comparative purposes if an athlete has suffered a possible concussion. Data from the second test can help lead to a diagnosis and track recovery. Test results are kept at the University of Pittsburgh.

**VOLTMER, THE WEST POTOMAC** linebacker, had established a baseline when he took the test as a freshman. Two years later, the results from his second test showed a decrease in the quality brain function. Voltmer said he remembered most of what the test entailed from his freshman year, and noticed himself struggling at times when he took it a second time.

"Every single subject was lower, reaction time, memory, [performance on] everything was much worse than my baseline," Voltmer said. "In the reaction [segment] I remember there's one where you press a button if a red square shows up [and] press a button where a blue circle shows up, and I did the opposite for about two sets."

**"I think we collided heads. To be honest, I don't remember the actual collision,"**

— Matthew Voltmer,  
West Potomac linebacker

Voltmer agreed the results produced by taking the ImPACT test for a second time helped convince him to take the injury seriously. He sat out for about two weeks and missed the Sept. 3 season opener against Mount Vernon before returning to action.

Teammate Dustin Hess, also a junior linebacker, experienced dizziness and ringing in his ears after an Aug. 17 hit during practice. He continued to participate, but after a second blow later in the evening, he decided it was



The field hockey team spent the late morning completing the online impact test in the computer lab.

time to tell someone.

"I was feeling [dizzy] after impact, but I didn't report it until the evening because I thought I'd be all right," Hess said. "Then I came out here and practiced and I hit myself again and that was the last string. I couldn't see straight."

Hess, who also established a baseline with ImPACT testing during his freshman year, took the test two days later and produced diminished results. He also missed practice for two weeks and did not play against Mount Vernon.

Hess said waiting to report his symptoms was "stupid" and he would not try to play through symptoms if they occurred in the future.

**EVERY HIGH SCHOOL** in Fairfax County uses ImPACT testing to protect student athletes with possible concussions. Jon Almquist, athletic training program administrator for FCPS, said ImPACT provides information unattainable by the naked eye or a standard evaluation. But Almquist added ImPACT is only part of the solution in

terms of managing concussions.

Almquist said schools dial 911 if convulsions or vomiting is associated with a head impact. Otherwise, athletes are given a sideline exam and monitored after a head injury to determine down which path he or she is headed. Will the athlete be able to go home after the event, or will he or she be in need of further medical attention?

A full clinical evaluation is another tool, Almquist said. This involves examining a patient's medical history and trends, primarily whether the athlete has suffered a head injury. An ImPACT test would likely be given 24 to 72 hours after head trauma, to test how the brain is functioning.

"It's a tool in our tool box," Almquist said of ImPACT. "No one thing across the board is the answer. ... Everything has to be together. It's kind of like parts of a formula."

Almquist said the number of concussions recorded during the past 15 years is "much higher" than in the past, due primarily to a better under-

standing of concussions among medical personnel.

**WEST POTOMAC** head football coach Eric Henderson said he suffered at least 12 concussions during his football career at Fort Hunt High School and the University of Rhode Island. Henderson, who played left tackle at URI, said fighting through concussion

symptoms was commonplace 20 years ago. "When I played, yeah, you tried to suck that up," he said. "Now, the kids are so educated on head injuries and 'don't push a head injury,' that they almost become self advocates, which is good. ... I remember blacking out in a game and playing in the second half. That's what you did: 'Oh, he's awake?' A little ammonia capsule under the nose and 'OK, there no visible blood. I think he can go back in.' That's how it was. But it was 1987. Nobody did the longitudinal studies on head injuries that people have done [recently]. ... My memory sucks. It's atrocious, and I know it's due to all the concussions. ... I can't remember stretches of games in college."

**DR. JILLIAN SCHNEIDER** of Springfield, a clinical pediatric neuropsychologist who works with ImPACT, said convincing an athlete to stay off the field while recovering from a concussion can be "challenging."

**"Now, the kids are so educated on head injuries that they almost become self advocates, which is good."**

— Eric Henderson,  
football coach

"If they talk about the importance of getting back on the field even though they're experiencing symptoms, I'll talk about second-impact syndrome," she said. "I'll emphasize if they have another [head] injury [while recovering], their symptoms are going to be worse and they might miss a season instead of a game."

Schneider said football is the No. 1 producer of concussions among sports, adding lacrosse, hockey and boxing are among the top sports that lead to head injury.

Rest is the best way to recover from a concussion, Schneider said. Patients should stay away from physical activity, which she described as anything that elevates the heart rate, and should limit cognitive stress, such as reading and studying, she said.

T.C. Williams High School in Alexandria, does not use ImPACT testing. Tanya Hecox, the school's head athletic trainer, said it's a money-related choice. T.C. Williams uses Standardized Assessment of Concussion testing.

**WALT WHITMAN** High School in Bethesda, Md., also uses ImPACT testing. Members of the field hockey and girls soccer team took the test Oct. 16 for baseline purposes. Celeste Pilato, a junior on the field hockey team, suffered from headaches and nausea, common concussion symptoms, after being hit in the head with a ball during a Sept. 29 game against Walter Johnson. A doctor later diagnosed with benign positional vertigo, but said it was nice to have a baseline established if needed.

Maryam Hedayati, a parent volunteer and substitute teacher for Montgomery County, supervised during the recent ImPACT tests at Whitman. Hedayati explained to those in the room the test is not an academic quiz grading right or wrong answers, but rather a method used to collect data.

Hedayati has two sons on the Whitman football team. She said the oldest, Sassan Nejad, was concerned about how well he would do the first time he took the test, a worry Hedayati looks to eliminate.

"If they know this is just gathering information, and they're in a calm position," she said, "then they take their time and they do their best. And their answers, to me, will be more accurate."

The annual occurrence of sports-related concussions is estimated at 300,000, according the ImPACT Website. Schneider said it's "critical" to preventing further concussion damage.

Dr. Hiram Bagy of the United Wellness Center in Herndon, and team chiropractor for D.C. United, works with ImPACT and said a benefit of the test is the concrete numbers it provides. With some concussion symptoms such as drowsiness, common in the day-to-day life of a teenager, the data helps give a clearer picture of potential problems.

Bagy referred to the ImPACT test as "invaluable" and "amazing."

## Private School Search Timeline

### EARLY FALL

- Finalize schools that you plan to inquire about.
- Request admissions and financial aid material by phone or online.
- Review admissions materials to determine which schools to visit.
- Keep a calendar of pertinent deadlines for admission and financial aid and procedures, such as when schools start taking reservations for individual tours and interviews.
- Register for standardized tests—the SSAT or ISEE (for middle school and high school).
- Review the test Web sites to learn procedures and see sample questions; consider whether you want to buy a test-preparation book.
- Call to schedule individual tours, interviews, class visits, and "shadow days." Ask elementary schools about their test schedules and how to make an appointment.

### OCTOBER

- Visit open houses.
- Call to schedule tours, interviews, class visits, and school-based tests if you haven't already.
- Attend information sessions and take tours.
- Finalize school(s) to which you will make application.
- Take standardized test.

### NOVEMBER

- Follow through on activities you may not have completed, such as scheduling tours, interviews, class visits, and standardized or school-based tests.
- Continue to watch for open houses you may want to attend.
- Start lining up teacher recommendations.
- Start working on applications, financial aid forms, student questionnaires, essays, etc.

### DECEMBER

- Complete any remaining applications, questionnaires, etc.
- Most application materials are due in January or early February.

### JANUARY

- Pay attention to deadlines: Most schools' applications, tests scores, references, transcripts, and financial aid forms are due in January or February.
- Request transcripts at the end of your child's first semester.

### FEBRUARY

- Don't miss the deadlines: Most schools' applications are due in February at the latest.
- Do school visits or shadow days for the student if you haven't already.

### MARCH

- Watch for school decisions starting in mid-March.
- Watch for financial aid decisions about this same time.

### APRIL

- Sign and return enrollment contracts and deposits.

### MAY TO SEPTEMBER

- Attend events and activities for new parents and students during spring and summer.

SOURCE: National Association of Independent Schools, [www.nais.org/go/parents](http://www.nais.org/go/parents)

# A Look at Trends in College Costs

Students at two-year colleges and out-of-state students at public institutions see lower costs.

Every year since 1998, the College Board has published a new edition of “Trends in College Pricing,” providing information on prices for tuition and fees and room and board at colleges and universities. For more, see [www.collegeboard.com/trends](http://www.collegeboard.com/trends).

The current report shows that the changing distribution of income has had a significant influence on the ability of families to pay for college.

Between 1977 and 2007, average family income rose 3 percent (\$463 in constant 2007 dollars) for the poorest 20 percent of families, 22 percent (\$11,275) for the middle 20 percent, and 86 percent (\$146,650) for the wealthiest 5 percent of families.

Excerpts and highlights directly from the report:

- Average published tuition and fees for in-state students at public four-year colleges and universities in 2008-09 are \$6,585, \$394 (6.4 percent) higher than in 2007-08.

- Average total charges, including tuition and fees and room and board, are \$14,333, 5.7 percent higher than a year earlier.

- Average published tuition and fees for out-of-state students at public four-year institutions in 2008-09 are \$17,452, \$866 (5.2 percent) higher than in 2007-08.

- Average published tuition and fees at public two-year colleges in 2008-09 are \$2,402, \$108 (4.7 percent) higher than in 2007-08.

- Average published tuition and fees at private four-year colleges and universities in 2008-09 are \$25,143, \$1,398 (5.9 percent) higher than in 2007-08. Average total charges are \$34,132, 5.6 percent higher than a year earlier.

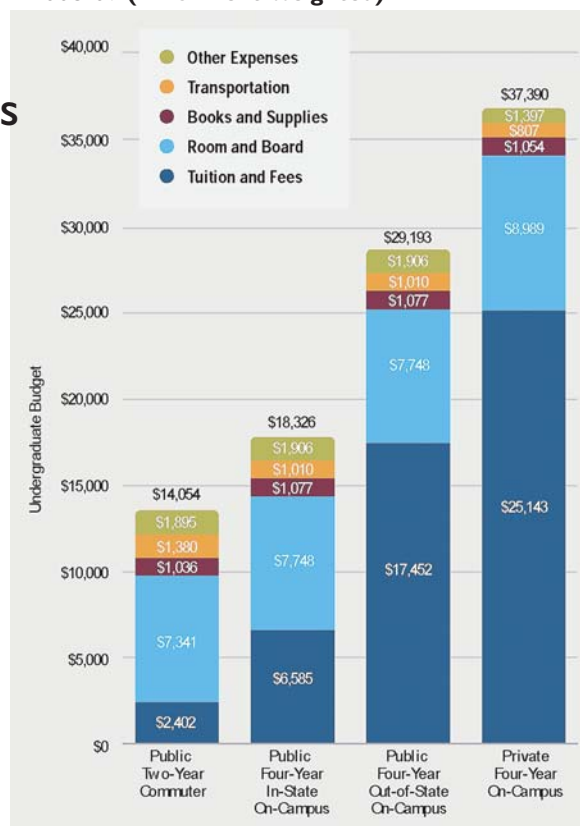
- The Consumer Price Index increased by 5.6 percent between July 2007 and July 2008, so tuition and fees at public two-year colleges, at for-profit institutions, and for out-of-state students at public four-year institutions declined in constant dollars. Tuition and fees at private four-year institutions and for in-state students at public institutions are 0.3 percent and 0.7 percent higher, respectively.

- Twenty-nine percent of full-time undergraduates in four-year colleges and universities are enrolled in institutions with published tuition and fee charges of less than \$6,000; 19 percent are enrolled in institutions with published charges of \$24,000 or higher.

- Average in-state public four-year tuition and fees range from \$5,412 in the South to \$8,602 in New England.

- The lowest-priced colleges are public two-year colleges in the West, with average tuition and

Average Estimated Undergraduate Budgets, 2008-09 (Enrollment-Weighted)



**Note:** Expense categories are based on institutional budgets for students as reported by colleges and universities in the Annual Survey of Colleges.

They do not necessarily reflect actual student expenditures.

SOURCE: The College Board, Annual Survey of Colleges.

fees of \$1,292; the highest-priced colleges are private four-year colleges in New England, with average tuition and fees of \$31,680.

- The proportion of high school graduates enrolled in college within a year after graduation grew from 49 percent in 1976 to 54 percent in 1986 and 65 percent in 1996. Between 1996 and 2006, the enrollment rate grew slowly to 66 percent.

## What Students Actually Pay

The net price of college is defined as the published price less the average grant aid and tax benefits students receive.

- On average, full-time students receive about \$10,200 of grants and tax benefits in private four-year institutions, \$3,700 in public four-year institutions, \$2,300 in public two-year colleges.

- Net price in public four-year colleges fell in constant dollars from 1993-94 to 2003-04, but has risen rapidly since.

- Net price in public two-year colleges fell in constant dollars during each five-year period from 1993-94 through 2008-09.

- At both public and private institutions, even most students who pay the published prices receive a subsidy, paying less than the full cost of their education. The largest subsidies average about \$12,400 per year at private doctorate-granting institutions.



Photo by Rich Sanders/The Connection

Langley cross country coach Gifford Kravik

## Sportsmanship

Giving student-athletes the right message regarding conduct on the field of play.

By Rich Sanders

When Mark Gjormand's Madison High baseball team would meet up against local Vienna area rival Oakton in past years, the two squads would leave everything on the field. Both the Warhawks and the Cougars, under then-head coach Scott Rowland, played all-out, wanting to win the game for pride and area bragging rights.

But the best part of the meetings between the two Northern Region programs was that the two head coaches, good friends, made sure their teams played the game the right way – with hustle, determination and fair play. At game's end, Gjormand and Rowland, no matter what the outcome, were still friends. The spring season, baseball meetings between the two teams provided textbook examples of good sportsmanship and respect for one's opponent.

“For a while, we had two of the better programs around,” recalled Gjormand, of going up against Rowland's Oakton teams. “We would make it clear to each other [as coaches] — ‘I want to beat you and you want to beat me.’ But at the end of the day, we'd sit down and eat together.”

All in all, high school sports across the Northern Region, both at the public schools as well as in the private schools, exemplifies the qualities of good sportsmanship through clean, fair play, proper perspective to the role of athletics in the life of a student-athlete and the understanding that, win or lose, one is to respect his opponent and handle the contest's final outcome in a classy manner.

Webster's Dictionary defines sportsmanship as “conduct becoming to a sportsman in fairness, courteous relations and graceful acceptance of results.”

While the local high school athletics community has, for the most part, been an exemplary example of sportsmanship, no individual or teams are perfect in the area of “conduct becoming to a sportsman.”

“I think it all starts with the coaches,” said Gjormand. “So much is made out of winning and losing. We all want to win.”

Practicing good sportsmanship is a daily exercise. Football players within the South Lakes High program in Reston have learned that.

“We learn about it every single day,” said Kevin Ball, a senior and All-Liberty District offensive tackle for the Seahawks. “Our coaches do not accept any cursing or disrespect to any adult.”

Ball said failing good player conduct results in not being allowed to play in games on Friday nights.

“I always want to win, we always want to win as a team, but you want to win in the right way,” said Gifford Kravik, the Langley High cross country coach.

See **Heart and Soul**, Page 7

# Heart and Soul of High School Sports

From Page 3

Krivak, the former cross country coach at W.T. Woodson High School in Fairfax, said characteristics of a good sportsman include playing hard, being gracious in victory, congratulating the winning opponent after a loss and having a healthy perspective of sports.

"I stress with our kids that running is important, but not as important as your grades and not as important as your family," he said.

**ACTIONS SPEAK** loudest when it comes to good sportsmanship. During a recent football game, South Lakes defensive back Sean Price successfully batted down a long pass intended for a Madison High wide receiver. Both players, in the closely contested game, fell hard to the ground. But Price quickly got up then reached out a hand to help the Madison player up as well. It was a small gesture, but spoke volumes in front of the large Saturday afternoon crowd.

Price's display of sportsmanship is, by and large, the rule and not the exception in high school sports.

"Some kids might not get sportsmanship right away," said Krivak. "But when they see good sportsmanship, they respond. Sometimes you have to give it a little bit of time with kids."

One reason for less than model sportsmanship is an athlete's inability to live up to his or her own expectations. Sometimes teenagers, perhaps not used to failure or losing, expect an unrealistic level of success. When such lofty measures are not realized, the result can be poor behavior on the athletic field or court.

"They might think anything less than a perfect performance is failure," said Jason Freeman, an associate professor of psychiatry and neuro behavior at the University of Virginia Medical School in Charlottesville. Freeman is a consultant to the UVA athletic program and also works with high school athletes. "It might feel to them that they are not meeting expectations. There is a buildup of frustration that can leak and [result in] behaving poorly on the field."

Freeman said the key to helping such individuals is to show them perspective. Certainly, sports are an integral part of a student-athlete's life. But,

Freeman helps them to realize that other areas such as academics, family and social life are at least as important as sports. Athletics, he emphasizes, is one part of their identity.

**THE VIRGINIA HIGH SCHOOL LEAGUE (VHSL)** spells out rules of sportsmanship conduct for all to see in its annual Handbook and Policy Manual. Its Sportsmanship Rule requires all VHSL member schools "to conduct all their relations with other schools in a spirit of good sportsmanship."

High school coaches who embrace good sportsmanship often serve as the best examples to student-athletes. With so many poor examples of sportsmanship at the professional level it is vital that high school athletes receive positive role models of sportsmanship. A good coach can make all the difference in the world for teenage athletes. But even the best coach's are not perfect and display bad sportsmanship at times.

"I think all of our coaches agree with the handbooks [of sportsmanship] and the articles they see," said Francis Dall, the director of student activities (DSA) at Westfield High. "But in the heat of a moment during a game, the proof is in the pudding. What happens when you lose a game on a bad call?"

Dall, the former Lake Braddock High football coach from 1989-99 who led the Bruins to five district titles, believes sportsmanship across the board (pro, college and high school) is not at the high level it once was 15 or 20 years ago. But he believes it can get back to that.

"We've got to do the best we can and show some common sense," said Dall, of coaches and school administration leaders. "Kids will follow [good examples]."

Rules of good sportsmanship at the private high schools in Northern Virginia are set by head masters and filtered on down throughout the sports leagues such as the Independent School League (ISL) for girls' sports, and both the Mid Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAC) and Interstate Athletic Conference (IAC) for boys' sports.

"Our leagues are governed by the heads of the school," said Rob Lee, the boys' athletic director at Potomac School in

McLean. "Sportsmanship is paramount in their eyes. It's reinforced continually. I hope it's made a good impression [on the athletes]. We try to make it work."

High school athletics serve as a vehicle to teach student-athletes how to respond in the right way to both success and

adversity. School administrators, as well as coaches, need to teach the value of being a good sport. Gjormand, the Madison baseball coach, said a good rule of thumb for high school athletes is to play the game hard and fair, and to have fun. And when the game is over, live with the results knowing you gave it your

best in the right spirit of the game.

"Just go play," he said. "Lay it out on the field. When it's over, it's over. I'm as competitive as anyone."

"But sometimes you have to tip your hat in this game. It's called sportsmanship and showing a little class."

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