



What's SwingPals?

Now Enrolling
6/7th grade students

SwingPals teaches underprivileged Durham students mindfulness, emotional regulation and positive visualization using golf as a platform. Through our unique programming, students develop self-confidence, emotional agility, and leadership skills in a caring environment. SwingPals further guides its students to take their new skills back to their schools and neighborhoods to multiply its impact. Students truly learn, grow, and develop confidence in themselves and their abilities – a critical foundation for success. The process starts in 6th grade and culminates with high school graduation. What happens in between is truly inspiring.

Due to the success of our work, SwingPals is now experienced by every 6th grade student who enters one of our partner schools. During their PE elective, students receive 10 SwingPals sessions, alternating between classroom work focused on developing mindfulness, and gym sessions where they have fun playing golf while developing positive visualization.



SwingPals is built on the foundational principal that by developing a sense of safety and confidence in their abilities, students will be able to live healthier and happier lives. To facilitate this, our programming provides opportunities for students to improve their ability to emotionally self-regulate and build self-awareness through learning an entirely new sport. By experiencing first-class golf and mindfulness coaching, as well as community-focused service projects and college visits, students develop mentoring and leadership skills giving them the confidence to step outside their comfort zone and challenge their status quo.

The SwingPals program has four main goals:

- impact the lifelong health and wellness of our students
- develop in each student a deep sense of integrity and personal character
- ensure all our students are successful through high school and have an opportunity to enroll in college
- create change within and improve the school community so all students benefit from SwingPals



SwingPals currently serves four middle schools within the Durham Public Schools system: Githens; Lowe's Grove; Neal; and Shepard. These schools have high percentages of minority students and students eligible for free and reduced-price lunches (averaging 75% - *DPS Free & Reduced Statistics - State Report*. School year 2017/18. Raw data. Durham, NC.). Our curriculum utilizes biofeedback tools which help students learn how to transition from experiencing negative emotions to experiencing positive emotions. Using these tools, students are able to monitor their mindfulness/regulation development and progress, and improve their emotional regulation and self-awareness skills, so they can manage stressful situations more effectively.

Each year, SwingPals selects students who are facing the greatest adversity to continue in our year-round after-school program and works to intervene by providing positive coaching experiences and uses a strengths-based and peer support program to empower students to make change. By the time they graduate high school, they will have completed a six-year journey with SwingPals. Their journey will see them develop their mindfulness, emotional regulation, and mentoring skills - skills they will have further developed as SwingPals Student Leaders and Student Ambassadors, creating positive change in their schools and neighborhoods. They will graduate from SwingPals confident in their foundation, able to stay focused in times of adversity, and perfectly balanced to better handle any challenges they may face. We are hopeful that skills they learn through SwingPals will be reinforced by sharing them with peers. They will be ready to be conduits for a new cycle of growth, both personally, and in their families and community.

Feedback / Testimonials

HaShonda Webb (ZaTorria's Mom)

"Thank you, you guys are so wonderful. You have no idea how much I appreciate you and your team."

Jennifer Wright (Freddie's Mom)

"You are all doing a great job with Fredrick. He still likes it "a lot". He is doing 100% better this school year than last year. I do think SwingPals has something to do with that change."

Govan Garner, Health/Physical Education, Lowe's Grove Magnet Middle School:

"Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! These two weeks of instruction have been nothing short of exceptional. The quality of instruction and attention to minor details was phenomenal. Coach Ocaly and Coach Hodges provided my students with an engaging, informative, and empowering block of instruction that has inspired several of my students to continue with this program. I was extremely impressed with how the coaching staff challenged students to open their minds daily. The message of being receptive to an unfamiliar activity resonates most with me and is a skill I will be adopting into my professional toolbox. I look forward to working with the SwingPals program soon. This program was a definite success as I have had countless students ask if we could continue with the golf unit. Thanks for all of your preparation, dedication, and motivation. All of these things are greatly appreciated. Keep up the solid work as your positive impact is palpable."

Jackie Thomas (Kozi's mom):

"What an awesome meeting. The information I obtained will surely be demonstrated at home. In fact Kozi and I had an opportunity to deliberately shift from a place of negativity to a positive place emotionally. It was with intention that I was able to coach him into a place of openness. He relaxed, I shifted along with him. We re-routed our emotions and were able to enjoy a splendid night on the town. Without the tools you provided at the meeting. I had no idea how soon I'd be using those tools. I'm simply blown away at how we were able to change our course of thinking, by using the power of intention. POWERFUL! I'm overwhelmed with gratitude. Thank you Doug. Thank you Coach Ocaly, thank you SwingPals."

Michael T. Fuga, Ed.D. Principal, Neal Middle School:

"We love our partnership with you all and are so grateful to have our kids exposed to your positive energy and support. Goes way beyond golf and we are grateful for that!"

Gail McLamb (Daquan's Mom):

"SwingPals is a great program, my son Daquan enjoys playing golf very much and has learned a lot about the sport. His self-esteem has improved tremendously, his confidence level is at an all-time high and he is no longer shy. Golf has improved his concentration and his focus is better on his tasks. Daquan says he loves golf and he loves to see the ball in the sky like a bird."

Micah Copeland, Principal, James E. Shepard:

"I can't express how honored that I am to be working with SwingPals. You are an amazing organization! Thank you both so very much for the relationships you have developed with our students, the skills you have taught them and coordinating all of the resources so that you could be here for them. You guys are amazing and are making an impact in kids' lives. I was talking with Coach Gilliam the other day and he was sharing about the natural skills that some students demonstrated, and he mentioned that if they didn't have SwingPals they may never know of a gift or talent that they have. You guys are awesome!"

Patricia Jones-Bryant, retired teacher of 37 years, DPS substitute teacher

"Today was an awesome day for me. I was assigned to substitute for the regular coach who was absent, and I was able to observe Coach Hodges teach our students golf. I was overwhelmed when I realized that this effort was opening new horizons in the lives of our students. They actually embraced the lessons with smiles and compliance as he drilled them with exercises that stimulated their senses and opened the door to a new focus; a new sport, a competitive activity that they were really enjoying. Thank you."

Corine Thompson BS, MS, Health/Physical Education, Lowe's Grove Magnet Middle School

"I would like to give a HUGE shout-out to Coach Hodges and Coach Ocaly. For the past 3 years I have witnessed the growth of this program. SwingPals encourages students to try something new, believe in themselves, and work hard for what they want. I am truly thankful for SwingPals!"