How do we do it? Philly Style.

An evaluation of how the Students Run Philly Style program is implemented across Philadelphia

Meghan M. Blickman, MPA Candidate │ Fels Institute of Government │ May 2021

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I'll never forget the blue shirts. I trained for six months, ran for more than five hours, was stride for stride with my sister, and let out a single "whoop" when I crossed the finish line, but when I remember my first marathon, the sea of young people in blue is one of my clearest memories.

What were you doing when you were in high school? Truthfully, I was focused on getting my driver's license and being cast as the lead in the spring play. Normal things at the high school I attended that specializes in performing and visual arts education. I came to distance running in my mid-twenties, it was a way of coping with my mom's premature death from brain cancer. In distance running I found power, control, and an immense sense of accomplishment.

I often wonder, though, if I would have discovered the power of distance running much earlier in my life if there had been a program at my school like Students Run Philly Style (SRPS). If there had been an adult that could dismantle my perceived notion that I was terrible at sports from years of coming in last during the Presidential Fitness Test. If there had been an adult who taught me that there is more to being an athlete than always coming in first.

Students Run Philly Style came onto my radar around mile ten of my first marathon. The runners seemed so young, I'd later learn that they were between the ages of 14 and 19. They all wore blue shirts emblazoned with a lime green logo. I was blown away watching them run-- who knew that young people could run 26.2 miles? I was 25 and could barely handle it. I wanted to be part of whatever they were doing.

A few days after the race I found SRPS' website, I learned that they are less focused on how long it takes to cross a finish line, and more focused on how a student gets there. The program is powered by adult volunteers from all over the city and I was hooked when I realized that you didn't have to be a teacher or a star athlete to participate.

Students Run Philly Style is doing something special and unique, perhaps most clearly demonstrated by their 90% participant retention rate. It's a community of students, of mentors, of runners, and of volunteers.

Adult Running Leaders implement the program and slowly but surely, through unfailing support, through accomplishing goals on and off the course, students can learn that anything is possible.[2]

Section One: Background

About Students Run Philly Style[3]

Founded in 2005, Students Run Philly Style (SRPS) is a nonprofit, youth mentoring organization based in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The organization's sister program, I Run This City is based in Camden, New Jersey. SRPS pairs students with volunteer, adult mentors, and together they train for the same goal: completing the 10 Mile Broad Street Run, the Philadelphia Half Marathon, or the Philadelphia Full Marathon.

Long distance running is an exercise in endurance, and thus fosters resilience. Participants have physical health benefits, but just as importantly, participants can apply lessons in resilience to obstacles outside of running. The volunteer-powered program, and the opportunity to participate in road races sets SRPS apart from similar organizations.

Currently, SRPS has 14 staff members and 16 volunteer board members. They run four unique programs:

- **School Year Model:**[4] students train September through May, their capstone race is the 10-mile Blue Cross Broad Street Run in May. Students train with Mentors up to six hours weekly, and run up to 300 miles per season.
- **Marathon Model:**[5] students train March through November, their capstone race is the Philadelphia Half Marathon or Philadelphia Full Marathon, students train with Mentors up to ten hours weekly, and run up to 600 miles per season. Students also participate in the SRPS summer series.
- **MileUp:**[6] SRPS partners with the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office to offer an evidence-based diversion option for youth facing felony charges. MileUp uses SRPS' innovative mentoring and running model to keep youth out of the juvenile justice system.
- **OutPace:**[7] Started in February 2021, SRPS' newest program seeks to improve health outcomes and increase protective factors (including, but not limited to positive self esteem, strong social supports, success in school, and good mental, spiritual, and emotional health) for 300 LGBTQ+ Pennsylvania youth by providing inclusive, informed support.

In 2020 SRPS served 1500 students and had 400 volunteer mentors across the School Year Model, the Marathon Model, and MileUp. The Running Leaders that were interviewed for this paper are from the School Year or Marathon Model.

[1] Zirin, D. (2013, April 15). The Boston Marathon: All My Tears, All My Love. The Nation. https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/boston-marathon-all-my-tears-all-my-love/.
[2] "Our Program." Students Run Philly Style, studentsrunphilly.org/our-program/.
[3, 4, 5, 6, 7] Ibid.

Section Two: Problem Statement

Since 2005, the staff has grown from one full time member to eight full time and five part time, the number of students served has grown from 50 to 1500, the number of volunteers has grown from 20 to 400, and the number of teams has grown from five to 61.[8] The program has also changed over time, once organized primarily around the physical health benefits of running, SRPS is now organized around the benefits of 1:1 mentorship. What has stayed the same is that SRPS is volunteer powered, teams are based out of schools or other similar entities, and the program is fully funded by SRPS. Neither schools or students pay to participate.

SRPS' program is important in the youth development space. It has served as a model for other similar organizations and the senior leadership is often called on to present at youth development and mentorship workshops. The only year that SRPS experienced a decrease in participants was 2020 during the throes of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, growing the program by successfully starting new teams and sustaining them differs significantly across schools. SRPS' Program Director and I began discussing research questions with the following two facts in mind:

Over the last sixteen years, it has become clear that the program is relatively simple to implement at some schools and nearly impossible at others.

There is a small but not insignificant group of mentors who have had a different relationship to SRPS at every school where they have been employed or are currently employed.

This study will answer the following questions:
1. Why does an adult choose to be uninvolved with an existing SRPS team or not start a team at one school where they work, and then do the opposite at a different school?
2. What are the characteristics of a school where an adult chooses **not** to participate in or start an SRPS team; and what are the characteristics of a school where the same adult **does** choose to participate in or start an SRPS team?
3. What are the key factors that influence an adult's choice to start or join an SRPS team?
4. What would happen if SRPS incentivized volunteer work, and what would those incentives be?

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[8] During the COVID-19 pandemic all numbers have been about 50% of SRPS' typical year (enrollment, teams, leaders). SRPS has also decreased their number of staff by two during the pandemic.

Through interviewing Running Leaders who have had different experiences of SRPS, we will learn about specific challenges they have had, why they occurred, and what type of support would have been helpful for navigating and solving the challenges. Additionally, Running Leaders will share their own ideas about how to make the program more accessible to adults who want to volunteer. **SRPS' program has a steep learning curve, and it's at its strongest when Running Leaders stay with the program and become better at implementing it over time.** This research provides an important opportunity to identify new ways to flatten the learning curve that will ideally lead to more new Running Leaders that create more new teams at schools in Philadelphia and Camden.

The results of this research will produce actionable recommendations to support Running Leaders, and thereby strengthen the program to the benefit of over one thousand students in Philadelphia and Camden.

Key Terms

Use this glossary to understand how SRPS and the researcher have defined key terms.

Mentor, Running Leader

Words used interchangeably for the title of adult volunteers who work directly with the students across SRPS programs.

Uninvolved in SRPS

The person in question did not start a team at their school or did not join a team at their school.

Low Engagement

Figure One

There is a team at the school and the person in question was a Mentor, but identified as having low engagement according to the Mentor Engagement Scale (Figure 1). It is a scale of one to ten, where one is low and ten is high. I asked Running Leaders to self-evaluate their engagement on the team by considering important components of their role. A ten means that they do the majority of these tasks.

- 👟 I obtained my clearances on time and uploaded them to CourseMap
- 👟 I assist(ed) families/students with CourseMap
- 👟 I was/am in charge of co-leading practice at least once a week
- 👟 I have completed a milestone race with a student(s)
- 👟 I attend(ed) leader training   👟 I register(ed) my team for races
- 👟 I have been camp counselor   👟 I have/had relationships with the students
- 👟 My students knew/know how to get in touch with me
- 👟 Students on my team earn(ed) their sneakers by running a specific number of miles by a deadline early in the season.

Start a team

The person in question has attended Leader training, has interest from students, registered themselves and their students through CourseMap, obtained their clearances (PA Child Abuse, PA Access to Criminal History, and FBI fingerprint), has a space that is safe to practice, practices begin and are regularly scheduled, and currently have or are building toward more than one leader.

Sustain a team

Practice occurs regularly, miles are tracked in CourseMap, more than one leader, students earn sneakers, students complete the season and one of the capstone races (Broad Street Run, Philadelphia Half Marathon, Philadelphia Full Marathon).

Course Map

SRPS' database used for enrolling adults and students, collecting paperwork, tracking miles, and registering for races and events.

4

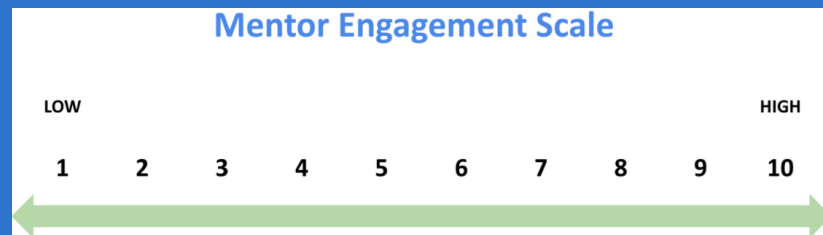# Section Three: Methodology

In order to select Running Leaders for the project, the SRPS Program Director reached out to sixteen former or current Running Leaders for whom she had contact information, and who met our criterion of multiple relationships to SRPS at multiple schools. Ten of them responded, and over the course of one month I spoke with each of them. Here are some characteristics of the group:

- None of them currently work at the same school or are on the same team.
- Some of them were previously Running Leaders together, however the interviews didn't include questions related to those relationships.
- Six identify as women, and four identify as men, which is proportional to the total group of Running Leaders across the program.
- The majority are on Marathon Model teams, which tend to be at high schools; thus the perspective of Running Leaders on School Year Model, which tend to be at K-8 schools, is underrepresented.

Biographical information about each Running Leader was captured in a Google Form titled "Leader Information Sheet" (see Appendix One). Running Leaders filled out the form prior to their interview and also submitted their consent form (see Appendix Two).

Running Leaders were asked different questions depending on if they (1) didn't start a team, (2) started a team, (3) joined a team, or (4) did not join a team at the schools they have taught/currently teach (see Appendix Three). The questions were developed based on a framework from Donald S. Van Meter's and Carl E. Van Horn's "The Policy Implementation Process, A Conceptual Framework." The framework can be used to analyze policy implementation that involves actors in a single organization and also across organizational boundaries,[9] which is helpful for examining SRPS because I could examine individual volunteers' experiences, and also put them within the context of the larger SRPS community and program. The framework was adapted for policy implementation by Janet Rosenzweig, her adaption of the model splits policy implementation into four categories: [10]

1. Characteristics of the Policy
2. Characteristics of the Community
3. Characteristics of the Implementing Agency
4. Characteristics of the Clients

[9] Van Meter, Donald S, and Carl E Van Horn. "The Policy Implementation Process A Conceptual Framework." Administration and Society, vol. 6, no. 4, Feb. 1975, pp. 445–448.

[10] Rosenzweig, J. F., Ph.D. (2001, December). *Issues in Policy Implementation/Application to Prevention Plan* [Scholarly project]. In *Prevent Child Abuse-New Jersey*.

Additionally, at the end of each interview Running Leaders evaluated their overall involvement at each school using the Mentor Engagement Scale that I created with the SRPS Program Director. Figure Two presents the ten case studies, the first table shows how each teacher rated themselves at each school where they've worked on the scale, the second table shows each leader's relationship to SRPS at each school.

- **Not aware:** The adult was not aware of the SRPS program at all
- **Did not join:** The adult was aware of the program, but did not join the team at the school where they worked
- **Did not start:** The adult was aware of the program, but did not start a team at the school where they worked
- **Joined:** The adult joined an existing team at the school where they worked
- **Started:** The adult started a team at the school where they worked
- **Started, did not work:** The adult started a team at the school they worked, but the team did not materialize or did not last beyond one season

For example, Rosemary[11] has taught at three schools. At the first school she taught at, she rated herself a zero on the Mentor Engagement Scale and she Did Not Start a Team. At the second school she taught at, she rated herself a seven and Joined a Team. At the third school she taught at, she rated herself a zero and Did Not Start a Team.

SELF REPORTED MENTOR ENGAGEMENT SCORE AT THE SCHOOLS WHERE RUNNING LEADERS HAVE WORKED AND CURRENTLY WORK				
LEADERS	**FIRST SCHOOL**	**SECOND SCHOOL**	**THIRD SCHOOL**	**FOURTH SCHOOL**
Ramona	0	3	8	
Annie	0	10	10, 5*	
April	0	10	10	
Rosemary	0	7	0	
Neil	0	7	8	10
Kennedy	2,10*	10		
Derek	7	9	8	6
Dominic	9	7		
Richard	9	0		
Kate	10	10	9	

RUNNING LEADER RELATIONSHIP TO SRPS AT THE SCHOOLS WHERE RUNNING LEADERS HAVE WORKED AND CURRENTLY WORK			
FIRST SCHOOL	**SECOND SCHOOL**	**THIRD SCHOOL**	**FOURTH SCHOOL**
Not aware	Joined	Joined	
Not aware	Joined	Started	Started
Did not join	Started	Started	
Did not start	Started	Did not start	
Did not start	Joined	Joined	Started
Joined	Started		
Joined	Started	Started**	Started, Did not work
Joined	Started, Did not work		
Started	Did not start		
Started**	Started	Joined	

*Indicates a change in involvement at the same school
**Started team in second year
Figure Two

[11] All Running Leader names and school names have been changed to protect privacy.

I analyzed the qualitative data by coding responses using four codes (see Appendix One for coded questions):

Code	Definition
Characteristics of the Policy	The Policy is SRPS' program being implemented by Running Leaders at their schools
Characteristics of the Community	The Community includes the SRPS staff, the SRPS board, Running Leaders, students, and SRPS' allies
Characteristics of the Implementing Agency	The Implementing Agency is SRPS
Characteristics of the Clients	The Clients are the Running Leaders and their teams

In order to assess characteristics of the policy, I asked Running Leaders how they learned about SRPS and the factors that influenced their choices to start or not start a team. I also asked a series of questions about the strengths and weaknesses of the teams they have been on. My research regarding SRPS incentives was also included in policy questions.

In order to assess characteristics of the community, I focused on a set of questions regarding Running Leaders' relationships to their students, the other adults on the team, and the wider SRPS community. I also learned about the administration at their various schools and if extracurricular activities were compensated.

In order to assess characteristics of the implementing agency, I asked about their relationship to the SRPS staff and how it has grown and changed over the years. Conversations tended to include stories about a moment where the Running Leader needed something and how the SRPS addressed it.

In order to assess characteristics of the clients, I asked about how the Running Leader spent time outside of school and if they were involved in other extracurricular activities. Additionally, we discussed team culture, and the unique challenges of the teams they have been on.

Declaration of conflicting interest
I was an SRPS mentor for two years at a Philadelphia K-8 school, and then worked for SRPS for two years as the Associate Director of Compliance and Project Management.

Section Four: Findings

Insights from the case studies: When the interviews are mapped, a few noticeable patterns emerge that might impact the success of a new Running Leader or team.

The left hand side of the table is each Running Leader's self reported Mentor Engagement Score at each school where they have worked and the school where they currently work (Figure Three). The right hand side of the table is each Running Leader's relationship to SRPS at each school where they have worked and the school where they currently work, as stated by the Running Leaders based on the definitions included in the methodology section. More details are included after the table.

SELF REPORTED MENTOR ENGAGEMENT SCORE AT THE SCHOOLS WHERE RUNNING LEADERS HAVE WORKED AND CURRENTLY WORK					RUNNING LEADER RELATIONSHIP TO SRPS AT THE SCHOOLS WHERE RUNNING LEADERS HAVE WORKED AND CURRENTLY WORK			
LEADERS	**FIRST SCHOOL**	**SECOND SCHOOL**	**THIRD SCHOOL**	**FOURTH SCHOOL**	**FIRST SCHOOL**	**SECOND SCHOOL**	**THIRD SCHOOL**	**FOURTH SCHOOL**
Ramona	0	3	8		Not aware	Joined	Joined	
Annie	0	10	10, 5*		Not aware	Joined	Started	Started
April	0	10	10		Did not join	Started	Started	
Rosemary	0	7	0		Did not start	Started	Did not start	
Neil	0	7	8	10	Did not start	Joined	Joined	Started
Kennedy	2,10*	10			Joined	Started		
Derek	7	9	8	6	Joined	Started	Started**	Started, Did not work
Dominic	9	7			Joined	Started, Did not work		
Richard	9	0			Started	Did not start		
Kate	10	10	9		Started**	Started	Joined	

*Indicates a change in involvement at the same school
**Started team in second year
Figure Three

Key Observations

- Running Leaders were evenly split between not being involved with SRPS (not aware, did not start) or being involved with SRPS (joined, started) at their first school. However, involvement tends to be very low, demonstrated by the Mentorship Engagement Score having a mode of zero at the first school of employment.
- The most dramatic difference in mentor engagement is between school one and school two (Figure Four). When a Running Leader had a change in engagement, the average of the two scores was taken (Annie=7.5, Kennedy=6). That said, please note the uneven sampling when interpreting results: school one n=10, school two n=10, school three n=7, school four n=2.
- Running Leaders tend to join a team or start a team at their second school. This could suggest that the success of getting a teacher to become a Running Leader is linked to how long they've been teaching and overall readiness to focus on activities outside of the classroom.
- Once a Running Leader has joined or started a team, they tend to remain involved with SRPS even when they switch schools. However, their involvement on the team tends to decrease slightly, which is noted between schools two and three. This could be related to the team already having a leadership structure in place.
- The mean Mentor Engagement Score at a fourth school is artificially high due to uneven sampling (Figure Four). Neil and Derek are the only Running Leaders I spoke to that transferred to a fourth school, and each of them reported a high level of Mentor Engagement.
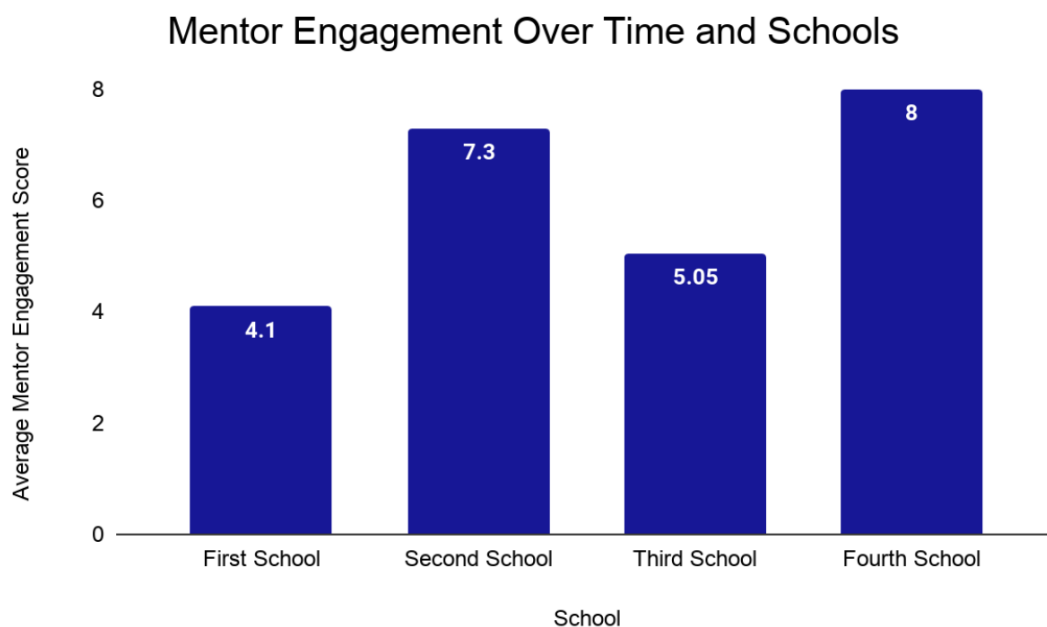

Figure Four

Research Question One: Why does an adult choose to be uninvolved with an existing SRPS team or not start a team at one school where they work, and then do the opposite at a different school?

Key Finding One: Adult volunteers choose to be uninvolved with an existing SRPS team due to lack of awareness or lack of time.

Overall there were two primary reasons that running leaders did not get involved. They lacked the awareness that there was an active team, and/or they did not have time to add an activity to their schedule.

1.1 - Awareness of the program

One Running Leader, Ramona, worked at two schools that had teams, but she didn't realize that they existed. It seems like this was influenced by comfort at the school and prior experience with teaching. When I asked Ramona if she would have considered joining the team she said:

Ramona moved to another school after a year, and was unsure if they had a team. She thought that they did, but never saw it advertised and never saw students running around the school. Ramona likely wouldn't have joined it, though, because she didn't identify as a runner yet, herself. This is consistent with prior research about SRPS, which found that volunteers join SRPS because of an interest in running, not an interest in mentorship, which is the primary function of the organization.[12]

> 66 **i'm not sure that i was aware of Students Run when i also wasn't running myself like i was kind of overwhelmed with like being a new teacher....** 99
>
> Ramona, Pine High School

Awareness of the program is also influenced by timing, both SRPS' and Running Leaders'. For example, Neil learned about the program from a Running Leader at another school and was immediately energized by the possibility to start his own team. When he reached out to the SRPS staff it was too late and he had to wait until the following season. His plans to start the team the following year were foiled when he was transferred to a new school.

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12 Christine E. Wegner, Gareth J. Jones & Jeremy S. Jordan (2019): Voluntary sensemaking: the identity formation process of volunteers in sport organizations, European Sport Management Quarterly, DOI: 10.1080/16184742.2019.1566930

Neil identified as a runner, so wanting to start an SRPS team was natural for him. Prior research on volunteers' commitment to organizations has defined "Affective Commitment," which is the extent to which a volunteer is impacted by the organization's focus.[13] Neil was primed to become a volunteer because running and setting his own goals for races were already important facets of his life.

"[Running Leader] was telling me about this program, he's like 'oh hey, there's this running organization I'm getting involved with, it's this nonprofit. I'm building a team for Forsythia Middle School. You should think about doing that.' I said 'oh that sounds great,' and then I left."

Neil, Magnolia High School

1.2 - Making time for the program

April is another current Running Leader who didn't get involved when she taught at a Maple Middle School in Center City, Philadelphia. She knew all about the team and spoke highly of them, even noting that she was sorry she couldn't be involved.

April is a Special Education teacher and primarily spent her after school time tutoring students. From her perspective, the culture of the school was all academics all the time, and she seemed surprised when she reflected on her experience and realized that she didn't do sports at all.

There were also personal factors for April that influenced her choice to not join the team. Maple Middle School was far away from her home, and the commute reduced extra time that she would have had for extracurriculars. April also was experiencing upheaval in her personal life.

66 I'll be honest. I was going through a divorce when I was at Maple. So those are all high level, personal personal things going on the divorce. I had a child... like there was a lot going on. 99

April, Sunflower High School

13   Ward, Jenna, and Anne-Marie Greene. "Too Much of a Good Thing? The Emotional Challenges of Managing Affectively Committed Volunteers." Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, vol. 47, no. 6, Dec. 2018, pp. 1155–1177.

Students Run PHILLY STYLE

Like Ramona, Kate was a new teacher at a K-8 school when she learned about the program. She was active in the running community and would see the kids in their blue shirts at the Bar Association run or the Broad Street Run. She chose to admire the program from a distance, though, because she was overwhelmed as a first year teacher and didn't attempt to find the time.

I found that not making time for the program does not mean there isn't interest, it is more reflective of the person's current extracurricular commitments and personal life. Both April and Kate went on to start teams at their new schools and are heavily invested in the program.

> 66 The first year i kind of was just trying to like survive. And then after that. i decided that i wanted to sign up for leader training and try to get that team at the school. 99
>
> Kate, Sage Middle School

Key Finding Two: Perceived negative student behavior did not impact a Running Leader's choice to be involved or uninvolved, but it did impact their experience and teams were not sustained once the Running Leader left.

When Derek arrived at Juniper School he attempted to start a team, which he was excited about after transferring from a school that had a successful team. Many of Juniper's students had challenging behavioral issues, he called the school community "louder" and "wilder" than his previous school.

It didn't stop him from forming a team, but he always felt like the students were disconnected and he didn't receive support from the athletic director or the school's administration. He wasn't able to form the meaningful relationships that are foundational to successful teams. Derek kept the team going for the year he spent at Juniper because he believes deeply in the program, but it wasn't a rewarding experience.

> 66 And that relationship thing [with the kids] doesn't transfer over as much. Being on the running team at Juniper literally brought nothing. Nothing like. oh. my job is easier now. because it was just a really hard job. 99
>
> Derek, former Running Leader

Students Run PHILLY STYLE

Kate was a Running Leader at Violet Elementary School, which is across the street from a high school that also has an SRPS team. In an effort to build community, Kate and the Running Leaders from the high school tried to combine practices. Unfortunately, there is a lot of social and economic distress in Violet's community and students witnessed adults fighting nearly everyday after school, and the police were regularly called.

"[The high school team] would have to walk over to meet us, they would just be seeing what was happening. And I think they felt really unsafe. And so they didn't want to put their kids in that situation." Kate, Sage Middle School

Additionally, Violet and the high school rode the same bus to races. She noted that the high school team was very polite and quiet, they never complained if the bus was running late or if it was cold. Kate described it as very distinct differences between the teams.

"If there's something that did not go according to plan our kids would freak out. They would sometimes be rude. Like, be loud. I think our kids sometimes scared other teams." Kate, Sage Middle School

Kate and her fellow Running Leaders never considered ending the team and knew not to hold behavioral issues against their students. The Running Leaders recognized the behavior as students being in panic mode related to other difficult issues outside SRPS, confirming for the Running Leaders how important the team was. Students learned that they could trust Kate, and when students from the team were giving substitute teachers a hard time she often was the one speaking to the students about how they needed to do better and be responsible for their actions.

Derek and Kate experienced similar behavior issues, but they both noted leading the team was worth it to them, even if only one or two kids were running. However, when Derek and Kate left Juniper and Violet respectively, the teams folded. The experiences suggest that it's often the commitment of Running Leaders that hold teams together. When the schools represented in this study weren't able to make SRPS an integral part of their culture, the teams didn't continue if the Running Leaders departed because there wasn't a natural successor to lead the team.

"There was such a lack of just school culture there they didn't have any sort of continuity around anything."
Derek, Former Running Leader

"I mean that last year there was really, really, really tough. And then I ended up leaving. And they never resumed. The teachers in that school and the kids in that school are in survival mode, like 95% of the time."
Kate, Sage Middle School

Research Question Two: What are the characteristics of a school where an adult chooses not to participate in or start an SRPS team; and what are the characteristics of a school where the same adult does choose to participate in or start an SRPS team?

Key Finding One: It is more difficult to start a team at a special admit school.

Philadelphia is home to several different types of schools. Broadly they can be put into two groups: special admit schools and neighborhood schools. The former are schools that require an application or lottery to be admitted and they tend to draw students from all over the city; the latter are public schools where anyone in the catchment can attend. I found that special admit schools have a harder time holding consistent practices. Running Leaders who have taught at special admit schools primarily named barriers around transportation, including:

- Long commutes home in the dark, either walking or taking SEPTA
- Not having money for SEPTA fare (student transpasses aren't accepted after 7:00 pm on weekdays and aren't accepted at all on the weekend)
- Not having a parent or guardian who could do pick ups or drop offs

Dominic currently teaches at Acorn Middle School in Northeast Philadelphia. Prior to starting at Acorn he was a Running Leader for a large and successful team in North Philadelphia. He was eager to bring SRPS to Acorn, but he believes he wasn't successful because Acorn isn't a neighborhood school and parents didn't want their students staying late. It was also nearly impossible to find a central location to meet on weekends for long runs. This stood in stark contrast to his old team in North Philadelphia where students were all from the same neighborhood and the school was a central part of the community.

Key Finding Two: The relationship and involvement of a school's administration is inconsequential.

When I began interviews, I hypothesized that Running Leaders would be more likely to start teams if their administrations were involved and supportive of SRPS. I quickly learned that the Running Leaders' programs aren't impacted by their relationship or involvement with the administration. No interviews uncovered administrations that were anti-SRPS, typically they were neutral or very excited about the program.

"They were happy with us as long as we required nothing of them." Kennedy, Ficus High School

Originally, Kennedy was a Running Leader at Iris School, a K-8, special admit school in Center City. She became involved with the program when she started as extra hands, and then became the lead Running Leader her second year. The administration's neutrality didn't impact her experience.

She attempted to get more support, like funding or a stipend. She was not granted the money, but it didn't change her desire to have a team.

Ramona is currently a Running Leader at Pine High School, and sees celebration as a critical role for an administration to play. Prior to moving to Pine, she was a Running Leader at Poplar School, where the admin barely acknowledged the team. It didn't impact her choice to have a team, but she thinks that it did impact her ability to recruit a large team and build up SRPS' reputation.

Although the relationship and involvement of the administration appears to be inconsequential overall, Running Leaders consistently named a few things that the administration could provide that would help make their teams more successful, including:

"Our principal acknowledges the successes of how many kids we have running marathons, they thank Running Leaders regularly for all the work, commitment, and time that they have. And I think generally acknowledges the importance and the value add that the program gives our kids."
Ramona, Pine High School

- Most Running Leaders I spoke to have not been given keys to the school and thus risk the team being locked out after practice. It's a seemingly small situation that creates significant stress. Administrations should give Running Leaders a key to the school so that they don't have to worry about being locked out, and also have a warm place to wait before and after practice when it's cold.
- Give leftover milks and other snacks from school meals to kids before or after practice for more energy. Sharing snacks as a team also helps build community.
- Communicate with parents to help validate the program when it's new.
- Identify students who could benefit from the program.
- Negotiate gym access and use with other athletic teams.

Key Finding Three: Current athletic offerings for students impact an adult's choice to start a team. They also impact the success of the team.

A school's athletic offerings were different for every Running Leader that I spoke to. At some schools, SRPS was the only athletic program and fit in naturally, at others having SRPS in addition to track created important additional running opportunities, and at one school the large athletics program didn't leave room for SRPS

3.1 - SRPS is the only or one of very few athletic programs

The Running Leaders I spoke with who had teams at schools where they were the only athletic activity tended to rate themselves highly on the Mentor Engagement Scale, showing high commitment to the program. Predictably, they were also more likely to talk about the mentoring component of the program.

Geranium School is a K-8 in Southwest Philadelphia and when Kate started the team there, it was one of very few athletic opportunities. There were a couple of sports and only one gym teacher, so there wasn't another obvious coach at the school. Kate noted that SRPS worked for Geranium because they're not a particularly organized school and struggle with infrastructure, the administration was grateful that she had outside support.

The mentorship aspect of SRPS was very important to Kate, but she started the team with another running leader who identified more with the running part. She thought that the two of them had a good partnership, because she focused more on implementing the entire program, and the other leader focused more on making sure the fast kids were safe on their runs.

> **66 i think that people come to the program for various reasons. Some people come because they like being part of a running community and they think it's a fun way to give back. And then i think some people join SPRS as a Running Leader because they really like kids. 99**

Kate, Sage Middle School

The team at Geranium lasted for two seasons, but ceased to exist when both Kristen and her co-leader left the school. Kate started a team at her new school, and her co-leader dropped out of the program all together.

3.2 - SRPS creates more running opportunities

After four years at Iris, Kennedy transferred to Ficus High School and immediately began an SRPS team. Ficus has a strong sports culture that includes a track team. SPRS is different, though, because it's an opportunity for long distance running, and Kennedy and the track coach have developed a partnership.

> **66 Sports are a big thing to the culture of the school. But running is not part of that culture because running is either like the punishment for your important sport, or you're on the track team. So the idea of long distance running just like doesn't exist. [The track coach] is wonderful. He will often throw kids my way. I'll throw kids his way so it's just what their motivations are. 99**

Kennedy, Ficus High School

The partnership allows students to do both SRPS and the track team. An important part of SRPS' program is tracking mileage to earn sneakers and to be allowed to register for races. Kennedy allows miles from the track team to count for SRPS.

SRPS attracts a different kind of athlete. This idea was consistent in several interviews. Kennedy calls it the "Island of Misfit Toys," where pictures of the team don't reflect stereotypes of athletes, and the culture is less competitive. From Kate's experience at Geranium, even at the middle school level, she would agree.

"I would say that for the most part, the kids that would join the running team were not kids who were super elite athletes at all. They were kind of like: 'I want to do a sport, but like I didn't make the basketball team, or I want to do a sport but I don't want to be super competitive'." Kate, Sage Middle School

3.3 - Large Athletic Program

Richard was an extremely involved Running Leader when he and another teacher started the program at Violet Middle School. The relationships that he formed with the students were especially important to him. When he moved to Vestia High School two years later he wanted to continue forming relationships with students via athletics, but didn't consider starting a team because of the large and well organized athletics program.

When I asked Richard if there's a way that SRPS could be implemented at Vestia he was unsure and didn't comment on the unique mentorship aspect of SRPS, he alluded to the equivalent happening during other sports. He did suggest that:

"I truly believe that if there was some way for SRPS to have a unique high school track team... that was tandem or in conjunction with, for example, a cross country team. Maybe a coach or an older member of the team became a liaison to Students Run. That way they do their practices with the team... maybe even miles are logged. And then, amidst the regular athletics, the regular Students Run races like at Belmont Plateau... Maybe that could just be an additional track."

"I will say that I think high school is unique. SPRS is harder, because it's not considered a quote unquote varsity sport. You know if my kid is a freak athlete and wants to run why not run for the track team? Or if I'm coaching football right, I wouldn't want my best football players to not come to football to go to Students Run." Richard, Former Running Leader

Research Question Three: What are the key factors that influence a person's choice to start or join an SRPS team?

Key Finding One: The Running Leader is recruited by someone at the school.

Forty percent of the Running Leaders I spoke to were recruited by a current leader, typically because they had a preexisting relationship. Annie joined the Forsythia School team because her best friend was the leader and was looking for someone to take it over. Annie had a supportive relationship with the other leaders on her team, although she didn't see them much because they split up who was responsible for leading practice each day.

Annie and another leader were initially recruited because the leader of the Forsythia team needed more help and more consistent adults. They started primarily as extra hands, and then grew into more significant leadership roles. Teams tend to develop a model where someone is the primary leader and others are secondary.

"The teacher said that, like, a lot of people signed up because they wanted that Broad Street bib. And then none of them... they weren't very consistent about showing up to."
Annie, Nasturtium High School

Sometimes the recruitment seemed to come out of left field. April didn't have time for SRPS when she was at Maple Middle School, but when she began teaching at Elm High School she had more time on her hands and a teacher she had never met came up to her and told her she should start the running program. It also helped that the teacher who recruited her already had a great reputation at school and that made it easier for April to recruit students and adults.

❝ She [was] well known. The kids loved her. So thats how it all started. She cared about the school. The school community was supportive and interconnected and loved it. ❞
April, Elm High School

Key Finding Two: The Running Leader shares values with SRPS

Prior research on "super volunteers" defines them as "individuals who volunteer ten or more hours per week with a single organization".[14] I didn't ask the Running Leaders how much time they give per week, but everyone cited the large time commitment they've made to the organization. The same paper reports that values are the most critical motivator for super volunteers, but they're also the most critical motivator for non-super volunteers. The research suggests that shared values are an important part of choosing to get involved in volunteering no matter your level of involvement. This held true for the Running Leaders I spoke with. For example, Dominic joined his first team at a 9 on the Mentor Engagement Scale and then dropped to a 6 when he tried to start his new team at Acorn Middle School. Less dramatically, Kate rated her level of engagement with SRPS as a 10 when she started the team at Violet School, but her level dropped to a 9 when she joined the team at Sage Middle School and took on a secondary role.

"It's been nice to be on a team that has another running leader that basically had already fully formed like the culture and relationship with the parents, and already had systems in place so that really I just show up to run." Kate, Sage Middle School

When Neil started building his team at Magnolia High School he focused strongly on the opportunity for mentorship with the students. He wrote notes to be delivered to the kids that said one of the teachers thought they'd be great for the team and should try it out.

SRPS' program is built on the benefits of a caring adult and student relationship as means for mentorship and overcoming obstacles. Neil reflected the value and kept the majority of his freshmen team together for four years. They were disappointed when the Broad Street Run was canceled in May 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, he's unsure if he'll be able to bring his students back for the 2021 race.

"This was me building a relationship, outside of the teacher student role that we had in the classroom. I think that was pretty enticing for some kids to get to know their teachers better and that definitely is something that kept this group of freshmen that I had recruited so heavily on the team throughout the years, as we had built a really good relationship."

Neil, Magnolia High School

14 Einolf, Christopher J, and Cheryl Yung. "Super-Volunteers: Who Are They and How Do We Get One?" Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, vol. 47, no. 4, Aug. 2018, pp. 789–812.

Key Finding Three: Having a low barrier to entry is important

SRPS doesn't have official Running Leader roles, such as primary leader or secondary leader, or delineated responsibilities such as administration captain or registration captain. All an adult has to do to become a Running Leader is come to training, get their clearances, and register through CourseMap (SRPS' database). However, most teams establish these roles officially or unofficially and many of the Running Leaders I spoke to referred to "primary" and "secondary" or "support" leaders. When Kennedy joined the team at Iris School, the primary leader needed more support.

"It was just: 'hey, if you can say what day of the week you'll show up great, but if you can't make it. Just let me know so I don't wait for you."
Kennedy, Ficus High School

The lower level of commitment for a new Running Leader worked for Kennedy because she got to learn the program slowly and wasn't overwhelmed by all of the tasks that the primary leader was responsible for. She replicated her experience when she moved to Ficus High School.

"I offered the same type of model as I did at Iris. Leaders can show up... maybe this is your New Year's resolution to get in shape, maybe you just need that accountability. Whatever it is for you. Last year we had a few teachers that, I don't know if they'd ever run before, but they said 'sure we'll try it out and see some other kids not in our classroom.'... And so just like creating that space [was important]."
Kennedy Ficus High School

Kennedy has four leaders on her team who are committed and run consistently with the students, while she handles all of the paperwork.

Ramona joined her team primarily because the other Running Leader needed help. She focused much more on the mentoring side and found it to be a really easy lift to join the program.

"[She] actually spearheaded a lot of sneaker distribution, CourseMap, all of that stuff, and I was kind of like the adult mentor... show up to practice, support kids, support running, be an additional set of eyes and ears. [She organized] a lot of the logistical pieces." Ramona, Pine High School

When Ramona transferred to Pine High School, it was easy for her to continue in a supporting role. However, as she has become more familiar with the program the primary leader has delegated some of the administrative tasks to her.

Sometimes Running Leaders are in a position where a lower level of commitment is favorable. For example, Kate was the primary leader at Violet School, now at Sage Middle School she plays a supporting role. It's okay with her, though, because she was feeling burnt out from her experiences at Violet and having fewer responsibilities at Sage makes it a more pleasant experience for where she is in her life right now.

SRPS is the only extracurricular activity that the majority of the Running Leaders I interviewed participate in. However, the structure of the primary leader and support leader worked well for Richard when he was a Running Leader with Kate at Violet School. She was the primary, and he was the support. As the support he was able to continue his involvement with Student Government. Ramona has also been able to sponsor another activity.

Research Question Four: What would happen if SRPS incentivized volunteer work, and what would those incentives be?

Most of the existing research on incentives has been focused on paid staff, not volunteers. There are two types of incentives:
- Explicit: enforceable by a third party contract that "defines the conditions under which the reward is provided."[15]
- Implicit: based on trust that the agent performs a task and trusts in receiving some form of material or immaterial reward for the effort expended… relational contracts." [16]

For example, a cash reward stipulated in a contract is an explicit incentive for undertaking and/or accomplishing a task. Implicit incentives are somewhat different. A person would earn social or self approval for undertaking and/or accomplishing a task. Another example is a person driving an environmentally friendly car, their explicit incentive is earning a tax benefit, and their implicit incentive is demonstrating their values to themselves or others. [17]

All of the volunteers that I spoke to referred to the importance of the relationships they have been able to build with students, which is a type of implicit incentive. Ramona summed it up well, when she said:

[15] Speckbacher, Gerhard. "The Use of Incentives in Nonprofit Organizations." Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, vol. 42, no. 5, Oct. 2013, pp. 1006–1025.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.

> ❝ **You can't quantify being a kid's person outside of the classroom… it is probably the thing that i get the most out of Students Run. i think it makes me a better teacher. makes me a better part of a school community. and helps me in a way that like it fills me up.** ❞

Ramona, Pine High School

All but two Running Leaders I spoke to feel that SRPS already uses explicit incentives: the blue race day shirts, sneakers, race entries, snacks, and paying for the bus for races. The two Running Leaders who don't believe that the program is currently incentivized have also become less involved or not involved with SRPS over the years.

Key Finding One: Some schools pay Running Leaders a stipend, but the impact it has on their involvement varies.

All of the running leaders I interviewed for this project have been financially compensated for leading the program with at least one school where they taught. However, the arrangements for payments varied from school to school. They include:
- Grants, and the money isn't guaranteed year to year.
- Included in contract
- Lump sum at the beginning of the year

April was not financially compensated when she was a Running Leader at Elm High School, but some of her co-leaders were. She isn't sure why that was, but it did create riffs among other running leaders. She wasn't interested in being paid because she viewed her work with SRPS solely as volunteerism, and didn't get involved with the conflict. Every Running Leader I spoke to agreed with April, that they are first and foremost volunteers.

Kate asked for a stipend when she was at Iris School and again when she got to Ficus High School. She wasn't granted one when she was at Iris, which didn't impact her involvement. When she went to Ficus, she immediately advocated to her principal for funding:

"He just said, [I can] guarantee the first year [there will be no funding] at all. They didn't know how many kids would actually show up and whatnot. But if I could get the program running, then we could re-discuss that." Kate, Ficus High School

Students Run PHILLY STYLE

Kate's program grew close to 40 students and as promised the second year her principal paid her the equivalent of 30 hours of work. To make the stipend operational at the school, she was given the title Students Run Coordinator and is in charge of all of the administrative work for the team. Her stipend and title makes it easier to implement a primary/secondary model where the other running leaders focus more on the running and relationship building.

When running leaders were compensated, an overwhelming majority put all of the money back into the team for things like:
- Snacks after practice
- Water during practice if the school's water fountains aren't operational (SRPS provides some snacks and water, but they don't last throughout the year, especially if the team is large)
- Breakfast after Saturday practice
- School branded t-shirts
- The occasional Uber or Lyft ride for a student who missed the bus to a race
- SEPTA fare for a student to get to/from practice

Key Finding Two: Some type of incentive would help Running Leaders feel valued and likely wouldn't negatively impact their opinion of SRPS.

Running Leaders tended to look at me curiously when I asked them about incentives, perhaps because previous research about SRPS has found that its status as a volunteer driven organization is a critical part of its identity.[18] When I reframed the question as "what kind of incentive would change your experience?" Running Leaders had an easier time responding and likened incentives to feeling valued.

"I think it's definitely a sign that they value our time, they value the work that we do. I wouldn't actually look at any of the running leaders that I work with differently if they were getting compensated either."
Ramona, Pine High School

Annie, a high school Running Leader, shared that she has often felt frustrated during the 2020 season, which was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. She thinks that SRPS has invested too many financial resources keeping students involved, and not enough keeping Running Leaders involved, which struck her as odd.

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18   Christine E. Wegner, Gareth J. Jones & Jeremy S. Jordan (2019): Voluntary sensemaking: the identity formation process of volunteers in sport organizations, European Sport Management Quarterly, DOI: 10.1080/16184742.2019.1566930

"They ended up giving gift cards to kids, and then also Garmin watches. And for me… I don't need those things, but I kind of was a little like, 'wait a minute, you're just giving it to these kids and they haven't done any…' I mean some of them hadn't even really run or been in practice much. And I just thought it was a little bit like 'you know we're focused on the kids and not on the leaders.' And the only way to have the kids is the leaders." Annie, Nasturtium High School

Running Leaders overwhelmingly love the SRPS branded swag they receive, especially the jacket they earn at the end of their first season. That said, most of them have enough swag at this point because they've been involved for several years. Instead, Running Leaders would be interested in a new event or something that they could put back into their team:

- Gift cards for supplies
- A running field trip for kids and adults
- A race that's only Running Leaders

The most common reason Running Leaders cited for a financial incentive not changing their opinion of SRPS is that it seems impossible that it could be enough money that it would draw more interest in the program from potential new volunteers. A few thought that it might help with commitment, but they suggested other solutions for increasing commitments, like giving out leader jackets earlier in the season. Overall, Running Leaders understood why a person would prefer to do an extracurricular activity with a stipend.

❝ Thinking about it. if a teacher had to decide between do i need these funds versus not… thankfully i wasn't in that position. But i can see where that would be a deal breaker for some people. ❞

Kennedy, Ficus High School

Ultimately a monetary incentive most likely would not influence adults choosing to join or remain with SRPS. It also most likely would not impact current Running Leaders' opinions of the program.

Section Six: Program Recommendations

The recommendations were generated based on my ten interviews with current or former Running Leaders and the key findings. I also considered research from Christopher J. Einolf and Cheryl Yung about how to develop super volunteers and keep them involved. Einolf and Yung define super volunteers as "individuals who volunteer ten or more hours per week with a single organization."[19] Most SRPS Running Leaders commit an average of eight to ten hours per week to the program, putting them at or just below Einolf and Yung's model of super volunteers. Einolf and Yung state that it's critically important for super volunteers to:

- Have their expectations to be met
- Socialize with other volunteers
- Receive intensive and meaningful training
- Trust the organization
- Feel that the organization uses funds wisely
- Feel that they are making an important contribution[20]

Using data from the Running Leader interviews, and the aforementioned research on super volunteers, I believe the following recommendations will help Students Run Philly Style support Running Leaders who are starting teams at schools that are more likely to face challenges building and sustaining their teams.

The first column of this table contains seven challenges identified by one or more Running Leaders, the second column contains my recommendations to help eliminate the challenges. The third column suggests who the primary implementer of the recommendation should be (SRPS staff member, mentor, etc.). The fourth column suggests how to measure success when the recommendation is implemented. I hope that the SRPS staff will discuss the recommendations and use and adapt them as they see fit. Following the list of recommendations is a suggested timeline for implementation starting with 2021 Leadership camp, which is a three-day sleep-away camp that students are nominated by their Running Leaders to attend.

19 Einolf, Christopher J, and Cheryl Yung. "Super-Volunteers: Who Are They and How Do We Get One?" Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, vol. 47, no. 4, Aug. 2018, pp. 789–812.
20 Ibid.

Recommendations

Challenge	Recommendation	Primary Implementer	Measure of Success
There's a learning curve to implement the program really well	Establish clear roles that teams can choose to adopt and help create lower barriers to entry. Ask a few teams to pilot the roles for the season. Collect regular feedback.	Program staff; Associate Director of Mentorship and Training	New teams report that the program was clearer and they understand each unique responsibility .
CourseMap is not user friendly and registration takes an extremely long time	Collect specific feedback about which functions are not user friendly, starting with the group of Running Leaders included in this study. Help Running Leaders prioritize their time. Manage expectations by stating roughly how long it takes to register a student. Update and/or create the CourseMap instruction manual.	Associate Director of Compliance	Reduction in: phone calls requesting assistance, the use of paper packets instead of digital registration, lower rate of late registration.
Schools with an established track team are less likely to have successful SRPS teams	Create a hybrid model for high schools where students can do both. However, SRPS is a mentorship program and a hybrid model could compromise the quality of the mentorship. Perhaps consider a 2 days/week track program, and 1 day/week SRPS or the opposite*.	Program staff in collaboration with 2-3 running leaders who will pilot the hybrid program at their schools	Pilot the program in 2-3 high schools Assess if students in the hybrid model are still achieving the goals of the SRPS program. Add specific questions to the evaluation for students who participate in the hybrid model.
Getting to/from practice	Allot Running Leaders SEPTA passes at the beginning of the season based on the number of registered students**.	Program Manager	Running Leaders report that it eases the students' burdens and practices on weekends are better attended.

Continued

Challenge	Recommendation	Primary Implementer	Measure of Success
Special admit schools have a hard time maintaining consistent practice times	SEPTA passes mentioned above could help with associated transportation challenges. Neighborhood weekend practices are where several schools meetup at a central location (i.e.; City Hall) and run together. SRPS should consider formally facilitating opportunities and relationships so students can attend weekend practice where they live instead of where they go to school.	Program Staff; lead by Associate Director of Mentorship and Training, and the Program Manager. The latter staff will collaborate with Running Leaders at neighborhood practices to ensure the safety and inclusion of students who only run with them on weekends.	Teams at special admit schools earn their sneakers more consistently, Running Leaders report higher and more consistent attendance. Students successfully and regularly attend weekend neighborhood practice where they live instead of where they go to school.
Incentives should be rethought	Running Leaders don't need more gear and they don't want a stipend. Consider races without students. Consider gift cards for supplies with suggested ways to use the money***.	Program Staff; lead by Program Director	Higher Running Leader attendance at events. Gift cards- Running Leaders report that the assistance was helpful. In order to learn more, allow them to opt in or opt out of sharing how they used the funds (this may or may not be allowable by SRPS auditor or accounting rules).
Unengaged administrations	SRPS can suggest to Running Leaders what they should ask their administrations for****. If that doesn't work, SRPS should provide support to see if adding their voice and validation helps.	Program Manager	More Running Leaders have keys to the school, consistent access to the gym, more teams report that the admin helps with parent communication, more teams report that the admin helped identify students to join the team.

*Idea emerged from a former Running Leader, Richard, who is currently at Vestia High School.
**Idea emerged from a current Running Leader, Neil, who is currently at Magnolia High School.
***Idea emerged from a current Running Leader, Annie, who is currently at Nasturtium High School.
****Ideas emerged from several Running Leaders.

Suggested Timeline for Implementation

Month	Key Event(s)	Recommendation(s)
June 2021	Leadership camp (COVID-19 dependent)	
July 2021	Summer Series begins South Jersey Athletic Association 5k	Start developing team roles SEPTA pass distribution
August 2021	School Year Model Leader Training	Update CourseMap user guide Consider early jacket distribution for Marathon Model Running Leaders Running Leader event
September 2021	School Year Model registration School Year Model pre-survey with Temple Sport Industry Research Center (SIRC, external program evaluator)	Identify new teams that will use team roles Assess how CourseMap registration went for School Year Model SEPTA pass distribution Program Manager works with school admins to help facilitate school resources for the School Year Model teams. Neighborhood practice matching for School Year Model students who live and go to school in different communities
October 2021	Target reschedule of 2021 Broad Street Run	Begin collecting feedback on team roles Running Leader Event
November 2021	Rothman 8k Philadelphia Half Marathon Philadelphia Full Marathon Extra Mile Fundraiser Marathon Model post-survey with Temple SIRC	Start developing hybrid SRPS-Track model Consider early jacket distribution for School Year Model Running Leaders
December 2021	Marathon Model season ends Marathon Model appreciation event	Convene a meeting of school administrations, perhaps as a focus group to learn more about integrating SRPS programs at their schools
January 2022		SRPS-Track Team pilot teams identified

Continued

Month	Key Event(s)	Recommendation(s)
February 2022	Marathon Model Leader Training	
March 2022	Marathon Model Registration Marathon Model pre-survey with Temple SIRC	Assess how CourseMap registration went for the Marathon Model. SEPTA pass distribution Neighborhood practice matching for Marathon Model students who live and go to school in different communities Program Manager works with school admins to help facilitate school resources for the Marathon Model teams
April 2022	Philly Style 8k Pre-Broad Street Run Leader Training (both models)	Begin collecting feedback on SRPS-Track Team program
May 2022	Broad Street Run	Running Leader event Consider early jacket distribution for Marathon Model Running Leaders
June 2022	Leadership Camp (perhaps COVID-19 dependent) School Year Model Season Ends School Year Model appreciation event School Year Model post-survey with Temple SIRC & midpoint survey with Marathon Model	Evaluation of recommendations from Year One

Section Seven: Limitations

The Running Leaders who participated in the study: I only spoke with Running Leaders who met our criterion of multiple relationships to SRPS at multiple schools, and that the SRPS Program Director could successfully get in touch with, suggesting that even if the Running Leaders are no longer involved with SRPS, that they still have good will toward the program. Thus, the picture the interviews painted of SRPS is overwhelmingly positive and highly generalized. The Running Leaders who participated in the study may not be representative of the broader population, which influences the reliability and validity of the results.

It's unclear how Running Leaders' personal lives impact their experience of SRPS: The research sought to learn if what the Running Leaders had going on outside of school in their personal lives impacted their involvement or non-involvement with SRPS. It was challenging to get a meaningful answer from Running Leaders even when the question was asked in a seemingly non-invasive way: "what did you do outside of school?"

The analysis doesn't include data about the schools: The methodology was fully ethnographic. The research doesn't consider quantitative data regarding characteristics of schools that could impact the success of the SRPS program.

The impact of COVID-19: 2020 was the first time in sixteen years that SRPS experienced a decrease in participation for adults and students. We remain in a pandemic environment and It's unclear what the long term consequences will be on the SRPS program. It's possible that proposed recommendations will not be able to be prioritized while the SRPS staff prioritizes making the program function during COVID-19. Additionally, despite the pervasive and ongoing nature of the pandemic, its impact was not included in this study.

Researcher's bias: The findings and analysis could be impacted by my prior experience as an employee and Running Leader with SRPS.

Section Eight: Recommendations for Further Research

The limitations of the project inform the recommendations for further research.

Interview former Running Leaders who are disconnected from the program: Interviewing Running Leaders who may not currently be involved with the program, but still have a relative amount of goodwill toward it was inevitable based on the sampling technique. However, interviewing disconnected Running Leaders would give a fuller account of the program. Different challenges implementing the program would be identified and the recommendations would serve a wider array of teams. It would also help the SRPS staff learn more about the culture and community of the program.

Interview school administrations: Discussions with school administrations would help SRPS understand why it's hard for most schools to absorb the program into their overall culture. It could also help to form a group of validators from administrations. The validators could help Running Leaders with buy in from their administrations, they could also provide important feedback to SRPS as they explore how to find Running Leaders more support.

Complete quantitative analysis about the schools named in the project: The School District of Philadelphia's Annual Student/Teacher Feedback Survey includes important school based and environmental factors related to climate, student achievement, and student characteristics. Compare the variables between the schools to see if Running Leaders' perceived challenges and successes implementing the program at their schools show any trends. SRPS should use this information when a new school is coming into the program and give intentional support if/when it's needed.

Delve deeper into the mechanics of a successful team: Identify a few teams with more than one leader that have successful programs. Ask specific questions about the roles each of them fill, the delegation of responsibilities, and consider how a well organized leadership team impacts a volunteer's overall experience. Consider how successful teams could mentor new teams and Running Leaders.

Section Nine: Conclusion

Students Run Philly Style's most important resource is its group of Running Leaders. Without their people power, enthusiasm, and commitment, the program wouldn't be nearly as successful. The Running Leaders I spoke to regard SRPS highly, and enthusiastically shared their experiences choosing to be involved or uninvolved with the program. There aren't any dramatic changes SRPS should make to the program. However, a few new ideas emerged from my interviews and analysis that could make a difference and lead to more growth. The narrative from the conversations provides important context for SRPS to prioritize and understand what changes could be made. Based on my research and interviews, I'm certain that post COVID-19 pandemic, SRPS will resume its tradition of growth. **After all, the program teaches us that with caring support, in the face of hardship, anything is possible.**

Special Thanks To:

I have yet to train for and run a marathon alone, I am lucky that I didn't complete my capstone alone either. Special thanks to:

- Lauren Kobylarz, Program Director, Students Run Philly Style
- The ten Running Leaders interviewed for the study
- Janet Rosenzweig, Capstone Advisor
- Claire Robertson-Kraft, Instructor
- Anna Carlson-Ziegler, Editor
- The Students Run Philly Style community. This program is transformative for students and mentors alike. I am a better person for knowing you, thanks for making me part of your story.

Appendices

Appendix One: Leader Information Sheet

Leader Information Sheet

You are invited to participate in a research study that will help SRPS understand why and how the SRPS program works at some schools, and why it doesn't at others. We hope to learn more about the experience of running leaders and ultimately have deeper insight into what SRPS can do to support running leaders and their teams. This study will provide SRPS with useful, actionable research that points to successes, challenges, and ways to address them.

The consent form linked in the original email from Lauren Kobylarz provides more information. If you agree to participate please sign the consent form by typing in and dating your name. You will upload it at the end of this google form.

To make things more efficient please fill out this form ahead of time with basic information about yourself.

The name and photo associated with your Google account will be recorded when you upload files and submit this form.

Not **meghan.blickman@gmail.com**? Switch account

* Required

Email address *

Your email

Name *

Your answer

Phone number *

Your answer

What school do you currently work for? *

Your answer

How many years have you worked at your current school?

Choose ▼

What do you call the neighborhood that your current school is in? *

Your answer

What is your job at school? *

○ Teacher

○ Guidance Counselor

○ Support Staff

○ Administration

○ Other: _____

If you're a teacher, what grades and subjects do you teach? Please write N/A if this doesn't apply to you. *

Your answer

Four part question: What school(s) have you worked for in the past? What do you call the neighborhoods they were in? What was your job? And how many years were you there? (ex. White Oak Middle School, Teacher, Colesville, 5) *

Your answer

Please upload the signed consent form *

⬆ Add file

Submit

Appendix Two: Consent Form

Primary Study Contact: If you have any questions about your participation in this study, please contact Meghan Blickman at meghan.blickman@gmail.com

What is the purpose of the study?
You are invited to participate in a research study that will help SRPS understand why and how the SRPS program works at some schools, and why it doesn't at others. We hope to learn more about the experience of running leaders and ultimately have deeper insight into what SRPS can do to support running leaders and their teams. This study will provide SRPS with useful, actionable research that points to successes, challenges, and ways to address them.

What will you be asked to do?
Participating in the study will entail a structured interview with Meghan Blickman. Each interview will take between 30-60 minutes.

What happens if you do not choose to join the research study?
Your participation is voluntary, and there is no penalty if you choose not to join the research study. Your relationship with administration will not be affected by your decision to participate or not participate in this study.

How will confidentiality be maintained and your privacy protected?
The research team will make every effort to keep all the information you tell us during the study strictly confidential, as required by law. All data collected in the study will be kept strictly confidential and separate from official records. No staff members at your current or past place of employment, or SRPS staff member will have access to your individual interview responses. Tapes, notes, and transcripts will only be viewed by members of the research team.

I ( ) agree to participate
I ( ) do not wish to participate in the study

I'd like your permission to tape our conversation. No one other than the research team will have access to this recording, but it will be helpful in the analysis of all the information collected. Your participation is voluntary and you are free to stop at any time or skip any questions you chose not to answer.
I DO ( ) DO NOT ( ) consent to be audio taped

Participant's signature: _____ **Date:____/____/___**
Participant's name: _____

Appendix Three: Coded Interview Questions

	INTRO & FRAMING	CODE
1	What is your name?	Characteristics Client
2	What school(s) have you previously worked for? What do you call the neighborhood(s)?	Characteristics Community
3	Was there an SRPS team at [name of school they previously worked for]?	Characteristics Policy
4	If you were part of the SRPS team at [previous school], could you please rate your level of engagement using this scale? [insert scale here]	Characteristics Client
5	What school do you currently work for? What do you call the neighborhood?	Characteristics Community
6	What is your job at school? (teacher, guidance counselor, support staff). If you're a teacher, what grade(s) and subject(s) do you teach?	Characteristics Client
7	Please use this scale to rate your level of engagement [insert scale here].	Characteristics Client
	PREVIOUS SCHOOL, DID HAVE A TEAM, INVOLVED	
1	Tell me about what your life was like when you were at [school name]. What sticks out from your school life and your personal life?	Characteristics Client
2	Tell me a little bit about [school name]. What was the admin like? What were the students like?	Characteristics Community
3	Generally speaking, was the admin supportive of after school activities from outside groups?	Characteristics Community
4	Were you involved with other extracurricular activities?	Characteristics Community
5	How did you learn about SRPS?	Characteristics Policy
6	Why did you decide to get involved with SRPS at [school name]?	Characteristics Client
7	Tell me about the culture of the team. What was your relationship like with the students? What was your relationship like with the adults on the team?	Characteristics Client
8	How many RLs? How many students?	Characteristics Client
9	What was your experience like being part of the team?	Characteristics Client
10	What were some of the strengths of the team?	Characteristics Policy
11	What were some of the weaknesses of the team?	Characteristics Policy
12	Please describe your relationship to the SRPS staff.	Characteristics Implementing Agency
13	Please describe your relationship to the wider SRPS community.	Characteristics Client
14	Did your school incentivize leading extracurricular activities? If so, what was the incentive?	Characteristics Community
15	Would an incentive have impacted your involvement with SRPS?	Characteristics Policy

	PREVIOUS SCHOOL, DID HAVE A TEAM, NOT INVOLVED	
1	Tell me about what your life was like when you were at [school name]. What sticks out from your school life and your personal life?	Characteristics Client
2	Tell me a little bit about [school name]. What was the admin like? What were the students like?	Characteristics Community
3	Generally speaking, was the admin supportive of after school activities from outside groups?	Characteristics Community
4	Were you involved with other extracurricular activities?	Characteristics Client
5	What, if any, was your relationship to SRPS?	Characteristics Implementing Agency
6	What were the main factors in deciding not to join the SRPS team?	Characteristics Client
7	Were there any factors in your control or SRPS' control that would have made you more likely to the SRPS team?	Characteristics Policy
8	Did your school incentivize leading extracurricular activities? If so, what was the incentive?	Characteristics Community
9	Would an incentive have impacted your involvement with SRPS?	Characteristics Policy
	PREVIOUS SCHOOL, DID NOT HAVE A TEAM	
1	Tell me about what your life was like when you were at [school name]. What sticks out from your school life and your personal life?	Characteristics Client
2	Tell me a little bit about [school name]. What was the admin like? What were the students like?	Characteristics Community
3	Generally speaking, was the admin supportive of after school activities from outside groups?	Characteristics Community
4	Were you involved with other extracurricular activities?	Characteristics Client
5	How did you learn about SRPS?	Characteristics Policy
6	What, if any, was your experience of SRPS when you were at [school name]?	Characteristics Implementing Agency
7	What were the main factors in deciding not to start an SRPS team?	Characteristics Policy
8	Were there any factors in your control or SRPS' control that would have made you more likely to start a team?	Characteristics Policy
9	Did your school incentivize leading extracurricular activities? If so, what was the incentive?	Characteristics Community
10	Would an incentive have impacted your involvement with SRPS?	Characteristics Policy
11	Please describe your relationship to the SRPS staff.	Characteristics Client
12	Please describe your relationship to the wider SRPS community.	Characteristics Client

CURRENT SCHOOL- ON A TEAM		
1	Tell me about your life right now. What sticks out from your school life and your personal life?	Characteristics Client
2	Tell me a little bit about [school name]. What is the admin like? What are the students like?	Characteristics Community
3	Generally speaking, is the admin supportive of after school activities from outside groups?	Characteristics Community
4	How would you describe the differences between [current school] and [previous school]?	Characteristics Community
5	Are you involved with other extracurricular activities?	Characteristics Client
6	How did you learn about SRPS?	Characteristics Policy
7	Did you start a new team or join an existing one?	Characteristics Client
8	What were the factors that influenced your decision to start a team?	Characteristics Policy
9	What were the factors that influenced your decision to join a team?	Characteristics Policy
10	Tell me about the culture of the team. What is your relationship like with the students? What is your relationship like with the adults on the team?	Characteristics Client
11	How many RLs? How many students?	Characteristics Community
12	What is your experience like being part of the team?	Characteristics Client
13	What are some of the strengths of the team? What makes it work well?	Characteristics Policy
14	What are some of the weaknesses of the team? What do you want your team to work on?	Characteristics Policy
15	Please describe your relationship to the SRPS staff.	Characteristics Implementing Agency
16	Please describe your relationship to the wider SRPS community.	Characteristics Community
INCENTIVES- ALL		
1	Does your school incentivize leading extracurricular activities? If so, what is the incentive?	Characteristics Community
2	From your point of view, does SRPS incentivize being a leader?	Characteristics Policy
3	What are the incentives?	Characteristics Policy
4	If SRPS were to incentivize being a leader, what type of incentives would positively impact your experience with the organization? Would any negatively impact it?	Characteristics Client
5	How would SRPS change if there was a monetary incentive?	Characteristics Policy