



*a legacy initiative of the Maryland State Youth Soccer Association & BMD26*

## LET'S PLAY INITIATIVE LAUNCHES IN BALTIMORE CITY, MARYLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOR UPCOMING SCHOOL YEAR

Maryland State Youth Soccer Association (MSYSA) to launch a new program as part of Baltimore-Maryland 2026 World Cup Legacy Efforts; Seeking local volunteer coaches to work with students

(BALTIMORE, Maryland) -- The Maryland State Youth Soccer Association (MSYSA), as part of the legacy efforts of the Baltimore-Maryland 2026 World Cup Candidate Host City bid, announced today the creation of the Let's Play initiative, an afterschool program for students in select schools across the State of Maryland, starting in Baltimore City, Hagerstown, and Silver Spring.

"I could not be more proud or excited for MSYSA to be collaborating with our amazing community partners to bring the Let's Play program to so many wonderful young people in Elementary Schools across Maryland," said **MSYSA Executive Director Greg Smith**, adding, "Let's Play will undoubtedly, positively impact the lives of all who participate and will create the opportunity for the beautiful game of soccer to leave a lasting legacy!"

"One of the most important goals that we have for the Baltimore-Maryland 2026 World Cup Candidate Host City bid is the impact we leave as a result of being a host candidate city. The Let's Play initiative will help to grow the sport of soccer (football) in our local communities, giving more children the opportunity and access to play and learn the 'Beautiful Game'," said **Terry Hasseltine, President of the Baltimore-Maryland 2026 World Cup Host Candidate City**.





Let's Play is an after-school program designed to transform the lives of students by providing a safe, community-supported program that helps to teach social and emotional skills while fighting obesity and related illnesses, and building character and self esteem. The beautiful game of soccer is used as a vehicle to directly, positively impact the lives of participants while indirectly, strengthening and positively impacting communities. Additionally, Let's Play is designed to reduce negative behavior, improve mental health and well-being, and improve educational and academic achievement all while growing excitement around the beautiful game of soccer.

With an overall goal of spreading to more schools across the State of Maryland, the three schools that will pilot Let's Play for the 2021-2022 school year will be Southwest Baltimore Charter School, Cherry Hill Elementary School and Arundel Elementary School in Baltimore City (Baltimore City), Bester Elementary School in Hagerstown (Washington County) and Jackson Road Elementary School in Silver Spring (Montgomery County).

"We are so thrilled that Southwest Baltimore Charter School was chosen to be an MSYSA site! After 18 months of being cooped up, we know that our students cannot wait to get out to Carroll Park, learn some skills, and just PLAY! Soccer is a universal sport that will open up the world to our students and spark a lifelong love of team sports. Through MSYSA, our students will experience the joy of exercise, collaboration, and being part of something larger than oneself. We are so excited about this partnership and look forward to helping MSYSA spread the love for soccer all over Baltimore City," **Erika Brockman, Executive Director of Southwest Baltimore Charter School.**

"We are very excited to expand our partnership with Liverpool FCIA MD, MSYSA and the Baltimore-Maryland 2026 World Cup Bid in providing quality programming to our students. With our intentional focus on wellness the soccer program will foster critical social and emotional skills while promoting a lifelong love for sports," **Amanda Boyle, Site Coordinator at Bester Elementary School, Bester Community of Hope.**

Elev8 Baltimore, Inc. is incredibly excited to partner with MSYSA and the Baltimore-Maryland 2026 World Cup Bid to offer Let's Play to our students. This initiative will provide students enrolled in afterschool program with an opportunity to learn about the game of soccer, in a fun setting, that also promotes physical fitness and an active lifestyle. It will also allow our students a chance to build relationships with mentors and their peers while learning the importance of collaboration beyond a classroom setting. We look forward to working with MSYSA and the Baltimore-Maryland 2026 World Cup committee to provide this opportunity to the children in our community." - **Alexandria Adams (Executive Director of Elev8 Baltimore)**

The program will take place at the individual school, one day a week, for eight (8) weeks in the fall (September through October) and again in the spring (April through May). Each session lasts 60-75 minutes, focusing on soccer training and incorporating nutrition and life skills training (SEL).

Each participant will be provided with a branded soccer ball and t-shirt. Player gear, including cleats and shin guards, can be provided free of charge by Leveling the Playing Field, where needed. All coaches are trained with key Coaching for Character and Coaching with Empathy fundamentals by Coaching Corps.

MSYSA is currently recruiting qualified individuals to serve as coaches for the upcoming Let's Play school year. For more information, visit:

[www.msysa.org/recreationgrassroots/lets-play-positions-available/](http://www.msysa.org/recreationgrassroots/lets-play-positions-available/)



**About MSYSA:**

MSYSA is a member of the US Soccer Federation as a National State Association and is affiliated with US Youth Soccer. MSYSA serves as the primary advocate for youth soccer in the state of Maryland and the District of Columbia. MSYSA is dedicated to offering the highest quality soccer education, player development, and programs while fostering sportsmanship, fitness, diversity, teamwork, and passion for the game. Learn more at [msysa.org](http://msysa.org) or on Facebook (@MDStateYouthSoccer), TikTok (MarylandSYSA), and Twitter (@MSYSA).

**About Baltimore-Maryland 2026 World Cup Host Destination:**

Our mission is to secure the 2026 FIFA World Cup™ matches for M&T Bank Stadium, Team Base Camp locations in Maryland, and for Baltimore to serve as the host site for FIFA Team Workshops. We intend to leverage World Cup activities to enhance the communities of Baltimore-Maryland for the benefit of residents and visitors to our destination. We will host events that are sustainable, promote human rights, and provide a catalyst for positive change in our city through sport. We intend to build the most scenic, welcoming, and inclusive FanFest in World Cup History.

Our vision is to showcase the City of Baltimore and State of Maryland; to represent the progress of uniting our nation's past with the global environment of the present and future. Our destination's diverse cultural history has made us a global city for centuries, uniting people of ethnic backgrounds from around the world. Baltimore-Maryland will continue to lead the effort to welcome the world to America. We will lead the effort to unite citizens, cultures, commerce, medicine, education, environment, religion and sport to create a better future for our community, the world and its people.

The Baltimore-Maryland 2026 World Cup Host Destination Delegation is an affiliate of the Sport and Entertainment Corporation of Maryland (The Sport Corp.). Follow Baltimore-Maryland 2026's bid online and on social media: Website ([baltimoremd2026.us/](http://baltimoremd2026.us/)), Twitter (@BaltimoreMD2026), Instagram (@BaltimoreMD2026), Facebook (@BaltimoreMD2026)