

# RISE PARTNERSHIP IN ACTION

## Students Run Philly Style



## Overview

Students Run Philly Style (SRPS) is a youth mentoring program that uses goal-setting and long-distance running to build impactful relationships between youth from Philadelphia and Camden neighborhoods and adult volunteers. Volunteer mentors help students set and reach their goals through mentorship, training, and competing in races alongside their students.

SRPS started as a youth anti-obesity initiative under the theory that increasing activity will result in better health outcomes. But the program has evolved into much more – growing from about 50 youth across a handful of community centers to serving about 1,500 youth across 67 schools annually. For some students, the program might be a draw to school, resulting in fewer days missed; for others, it might be their dream to run in the Philadelphia Marathon.



What I really appreciate about this partnership is that we were taught the skills. Just learning those skills and being able to modify it to adjust anything that we need, I think is so important to building capacity in the future.”

**Amanda Millatt**, associate director of compliance and project management  
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“It was very evident that the impacts were much greater than health impacts,” said Andy Kucer, executive director at SRPS. “From goal-setting to confidence, to even academics, we were seeing the whole plethora of social-emotional impacts.”

SRPS is further enhancing its impact as one of 15 organizations selected to participate in the RISE Partnership’s “Implementation” phase.

For years, SRPS had done a good job of collecting data from participants. From paper to electronic spreadsheets to a database, they would collect data throughout a season and use it to inform the following season. But despite possessing this rich information, SRPS did not have a sophisticated system to analyze it to drive programming and inform current activities.

“We were trying to get a good sense of our data and how it can inform our programming in real time,” said Lauren

Kobylarz, program director at SRPS.

“Our goal coming into this was finding ways to visualize our data that would help us inform our feedback loop with our volunteers and then students.”

With the help of the RISE Partnership and technical partner Tech Impact, SRPS has moved beyond Microsoft Excel to Microsoft Power BI, a database and visualization tool that makes it easy to create reports and dashboards to analyze data more efficiently and effectively.

“We have so much data and we really want to start looking at it and make sure that we’re making decisions based off the data we’re collecting,” said Amanda Millatt, associate director of compliance and project management at SRPS.

This real-time data is deeply valuable. Since volunteer mentors log how many miles students run at practice, the dashboard can help SRPS identify needs and areas of support. For example, if

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nearly all teams are averaging 20 miles a week, and one team is not, that could mean a team may not know how to log miles yet, or that they haven't been able to hold practice, or perhaps there's an issue at the school. Regardless, the information can prompt SRPS staff to reach out to the team to better understand what's going on and find how they can offer support.

The dashboard also has mapping features to help SRPS better understand city and neighborhood demographics, which inform the recruitment of students and volunteer mentors.

Mapping can be used to match students and mentors based on geography and develop teams based on where students are clustered.

Crucially, the dashboard is not static and can easily be modified to fit the needs of SRPS as time passes – and the staff has been taught how to make those changes.

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And while SRPS had been ahead of the curve when it comes to data collection and analysis for continuous improvement, the new dashboard has further strengthened them in their quest to become more of a learning organization.



“Our data is never done,” Kobylarz said. “Our collection is never done. Our learning is never done. So, the dashboard is not done.”

“This data that you’re looking at today is going to raise another question tomorrow, and then you’re going to have to go investigate that,” Kobylarz continued.

For SRPS, RISE is all about impact and improvement.

“[RISE] really did force us to have conversations that gave us a lot of clarity on how we can really show the impact of our program, but more importantly, how we can improve the program,” said Kucer.



*Established in 2018, The RISE (Readiness, Implementation, Sustainability for Effectiveness) Partnership supports promising Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey nonprofit organizations. The RISE Partnership Evaluation Funders Learning Community is the first convening supported by a network of funders in the region. The Learning Community is a collaborative effort with the Barra Foundation, Campbell Soup Company, Horner Foundation, Nelson Foundation, Philadelphia Foundation, PropelNext/Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, Scattergood Foundation, and United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey, and a partnership with YaleEVAL of The Consultation Center at Yale. The Partnership provides nonprofits with resources and training to strengthen organizational effectiveness and ensure a greater impact on social, economic, health, and educational conditions in communities, including the effects of racism, intergenerational poverty and trauma.*

For more information visit [therisepartnership.org](https://therisepartnership.org)

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