

# Promoting Table Tennis in Schools

**By Jim Scott**

This article assumes we are targeting many of the high schools, middle, and elementary schools in metro areas with from 10 to 200 schools. Portland, Oregon has 200 such schools so we can be used as the example.

Portland Table Tennis Club (PTTC) has partnered with 100 schools in our metro area over 18 years. Some of them are no longer active. Every year we meld in about 6-8 new schools or ones we once had. We lose about 3-4 each year, at least until we get them back. It depends on the students, their mentors, and us.

Currently we have a 17-team high school league, 12 middle schools, and 7 elementary schools. This gives us a great base to work from since many kids who already play somewhere would love to have a team which competes with other school teams. The boys' teams each have 6-8 players and the girls have 4-6. The four teams with the most wins from September to April make the semis with the semi winners playing a team final for the perpetual trophies.

**THE WHOLE OBJECT IS TO FORM TABLE TENNIS CLUBS AT ALL OF THE SCHOOLS – AFTER SCHOOL! KEEP FOCUSED ON THAT!** These clubs are open to any students from the school. The clubs are designed for recreational play but also to draw players who wish to become good enough to be selected for the team, boys' or girls'. This accomplishes two major goals of most educational and sports charitable foundations: prevention and excellence: prevention by giving at-risk kids something to do after school while their parents are still at work, and excellence by allowing them practice and training time as well as organized teams to compete against.

If you have no programs going now and you want to, how do you start, and what's next?

1. Call all of your area schools personally and find out how many tables they have and who you should speak to at each school.
2. If they have any tables, ask if they would like to have an organized activity one or more days a week after school.
3. Ask them if you may do an exhibition in or near their cafeteria. If so, do the exhibition and hit balls with as many kids as possible during each lunch period and sign up every one you hit with.
4. Come to their first couple of sessions and demonstrate the basic techniques of service as well as the three basic offensive and defensive strokes...drive, smash, loop...push, chop, block.
5. Help them to obtain affordable tables, paddles, and nets. It may take club funds, car washes, other fund raisers, or donations.
6. Move on to the next school.
7. Form a league.
8. Offer a giant tournament at the end of the season (May) allowing all of the club members at the schools to participate. We call our tournament **THE BIG WHACK**.
9. Repeat the next year with the same schools and add to it.
10. Create some USATT tournaments primarily for the kids. Sponsor the USATT memberships for one year.
11. Sponsor a two-day clinic for your "Top 12" All-stars at season's end. Sean O'Neill will be conducting our All-star clinic this year.

This is what we did beginning in 1989. Now we have new schools calling us every year to see if we can help them organize TT at their schools. Of course, we always do this.

If your local schools mostly do not have tables, contact us at PTTC to find out how we obtained a fleet which were rotated to the schools for two weeks apiece and used for PE classes. We are at [www.portlandtabletennis.com](http://www.portlandtabletennis.com).

Every metro area is somewhat different. These 11 steps are how we did it. It takes staying power besides passion. You can't just quit after five years because you're having a few setbacks.

If I can do this despite having a 40-hour work week at my insurance office, those who do table tennis for a living should be able to do it much better.....eh?