



When the COVID-19 pandemic upended all of our lives, PowerPlay refused to falter on our promise to cultivate safe spaces—even if virtual—for girls and gender non-conforming (GNC) youth throughout NYC to develop their physical literacy, social-emotional learning (SEL), and life and leadership skills, and receive meaningful connection to peers and strong female role models. Our participants—many of whom are within the demographic most severely affected by the virus—have been sheltering at home, facing the threats of extreme physical inactivity, obesity, and acute and prolonged stress; and the consequences of these on their brain development. The need for our programming has never been greater.

Mid-March 2020, in response to COVID-19, PowerPlay pivoted to provide all services virtually.

Specifically, and additionally:

- We **retained 100% of our frontline staff**, offering a consistent, reliable paycheck for our Coaches who completed online professional development workshops and webinars with expert facilitators, on topics such as Navigating Through Uncertainty, Effective Virtual Coaching Methods, Trauma-Informed Care.
- We conducted the spring season of our **STARS Series After-School program online** with eleven partner schools, our 2019-2020 SuperSTARS Leadership Academy (SSLA) participants continued to engage in college and career-readiness activities, and Peer Coaches (SSLA participants who receive stipends to serve as assistant coaches for our STARS Series participants) continued to engage weekly for team building and life-skills training.
- We delivered more than **250 PowerUp Care-Packages** to help keep participants physically active and mentally well at home. Packages included a water bottle, resistance bands, a jump-rope, colored pencil set, a journal, and PowerPlay face mask. We also launched a comprehensive COVID-19 resources page on our website.
- PowerPlay quickly innovated to create a [virtual version of SSLA](#) for this summer, structured to be an intensive, five-week session (July 6 - August 6) focused heavily on post-secondary preparation, with expert guest facilitators from Coaching Peace, Girls Write Now, College Code, BRAVE, and many more.
  - PowerPlay never rests on its laurels, and we have enhanced our surveys beyond the original seven social and emotional (SEL) capacities and added two more key capacities we will be measuring for this summer's cohort:
    - Goal Orientation
    - College/Future Orientation
  - These additional capacities are key drivers of college readiness and proven to contribute to longer-term gains such as thriving, decreased risk-taking behaviors, and increased academic performance.
- We also provided gift cards for all 25 participants of this summer's virtual SSLA cohort **to be able to order groceries** from stores that we confirmed were accessible in their neighborhoods. Each participant received the equivalent of \$10 per day for four days over five weeks. This also gave the girls the opportunity to practice budgeting, with PowerPlay Coaches guiding them in small groups through the food options they could buy for the week.

- Additionally this summer, we launched a [brand new STARS Series Day Camp](#), which ran from July 7 - August 6, serving 20 STARS Series participants from 8 partner sites from the school year. The program included structured social-emotional learning activities, sport/play, arts and crafts, and fun games, and Nike Master Trainer Nicole Cardoza led a youth yoga session for participants every week.
- In May, PowerPlay hosted a [live #SelfCareSaturday event](#) via Zoom with our Sports Training And Role-models for Success Citywide Girls Initiative (STARS CGI) partners focusing on movement and dance, offering girls across the city an opportunity to reconnect, express themselves and relieve anxiety.
- In July, PowerPlay and its nine STARS CGI partners hosted [“Reflect & Recharge”](#)—a virtual event inviting girls and GNC youth across all five boroughs to engage in collective dialogue around eliminating systemic racism and fighting injustice through the arts.
- Another recent achievement is that [PowerPlay was one of only 18 local and national organizations recognized as a 2020 ASPEN Institute Project Play Champion](#). This recognition means PowerPlay takes new, meaningful, and specific actions consistent with the [Project Play framework](#)—which essentially asserts that there is a significant barrier to sports participation for youth (the challenge), play is the proposed solution, and that each organization recognized is doing something novel, and distinguishable, to implement that solution. PowerPlay will be featured at the ***Project Play Summit*** this year—the nation's premier annual gathering of leaders at the intersection of youth, sport and health.

We are tremendously thankful to all of our partners and individual supporters who helped to make this all possible, and we look forward to continuing to collaborate with you all to provide the highest quality programming for girls and GNC youth across NYC virtually, until we can all be together in person again.



## TESTIMONIAL:

EBONI MCDANIEL, BRONX, NY  
SSLA, PEER COACH PROGRAM 2018-2020  
GIRLS PREP BRONX MIDDLE SCHOOL

PowerPlay has supported me by showing me how to move out of my comfort zone and how to do things that I've never done before. This gave me a new experience and something to do during quarantine. I got to interact with other people instead of the ones in my household and I can learn new things about being a leader, and a coach through the workshops they provided for us.

They gave us fun and interacting check-ins, fun and useful workshops and fun team building activities. This has supported me because I learned that I need to be willing to face my fears to achieve my goals and now I know how to set an effective long term goals and how to create a purpose and/or meaning for my goals.

I also learned how to make a basic cover letter and how to act on an interview, teaching me how to act in a business or a professional setting. These sessions let me know that people share the same fears as me or have some of the same boundaries that I have.



## TESTIMONIAL:

FELICIA BORJA, NEW YORK, NY  
STARS SERIES DAY CAMP  
P.S 130- BAXTER STREET SACC

Excited to be in PowerPlay again. Experienced virtual power play during the school year and I was excited and anxious to experience it for the summer. I miss my friends and teachers now that everything is virtual.

PowerPlay is a place for you to feel confident and let go. It keeps you motivated. I love it, I learned to be myself and to cheer up your peers if they are feeling down

I felt that I can be myself and trust one another. I learned about empathy and what it means. My favorite activity was today, when we danced. It was fun! No I have not done more physical activities but I do plan to and will do. I also loved when we played jeopardy and it was super fun!