

# **How to Build a Junior Padel Program Through School Partnerships**

School Outreach Guide from the USPA

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## Why Schools?

Every successful junior sports program in the U.S. has one thing in common: it found a way to reach children before parents had to go looking for it. Dance studios go to elementary school talent shows. Youth soccer leagues post in school newsletters. Swim teams run demos at the end of the school year.

Padel needs to do the same thing, and the good news is that it can, with almost no budget and a portable net that fits in your car. This guide is built on the direct experience of Scott Colebourne, and Pedro Bautista.

Colebourne, Executive Director for the USPA and former CEO of the largest racquet club management company in the USA (65 clubs in 14 countries). During his time as a club coach, Colebourne visited countless schools and attended dozens of community events to grow the junior programs of the clubs he managed.

Pedro Bautista, who, with his father, opened SLC Padel Club in Salt Lake City, Utah, in September 2024 and, within months, built a working school outreach program aimed at converting students into padel fans to eventually join club programs and drive summer camp enrollment.

**The core lesson Pedro learned, and what shapes every recommendation in this guide, is simple:**

*“Without going there, there's no traction at all.”* - Pedro Bautista, SLC Padel Club

Cold emails do not work. Free offers that parents hear about secondhand do not work. In-person visits where children actually swing a racquet and go home talking about it work. This guide shows you exactly how to execute them.

## Section 1: Finding Your Way In

*How to get a school to say yes before you ever set up a net*

The hardest part of school outreach is not the demo itself; it is getting permission to run one. Schools are approached constantly by outside organizations and have developed well-practiced reflexes for saying no. The clubs that break through are the ones that find a warm connection rather than a cold pitch.

### 1.1 Start with People Already in the Room

Pedro's first breakthrough came not from a marketing campaign but from a conversation. Two teachers at a local school happened to be members of his club, Spanish teachers who had grown up playing padel in Spain and were now living and working in Utah on a J-1 cultural exchange visa. Pedro asked them to make an introduction. It worked immediately.

*"There were already a couple of professors at the club that had played padel before, and that worked perfectly."* - Pedro Bautista

This points to a strategy that costs nothing and works consistently: talk to every adult who walks through your door.

- Ask every new club member what they do for a living during intake or their first visit
- When someone says they are a teacher, flag that immediately; they are a potential school connection
- Make your ask simple and low-commitment: "We offer a free padel demo for schools. Is there someone at your school we could talk to?"
- A teacher who plays padel and loves it is your most credible possible ambassador inside a school; they can vouch for the sport in a way no marketing material can
- Beyond introductions to teachers and school administrators, asking club players and members what they do for a living and where they work can open doors to other partnership opportunities. For example, they could be selling a product themselves and be interested in setting up as a vendor at one of your tournaments. They may offer a service your club needs, or they may be interested in sponsoring one of your tournaments.

### 1.2 The Latino Network

Pedro identified a specific and replicable opportunity: Spanish teachers in the U.S. on J-1 cultural exchange visas. There is a formal program that brings Spanish-speaking teachers to the U.S. to teach in schools. Many of them grew up playing padel. Many of them are already looking for ways to connect with their home culture in a new city.

- Search online for "Spanish teacher J-1 visa program USA" to find the administering organizations
- Contact these organizations and explain that you run a padel club and would welcome Spanish teachers as members and as potential connectors to local schools
- These teachers often move to new cities knowing no one, a welcoming club, and a familiar sport are genuinely appealing offers. This is a national opportunity, not just a Utah one. Wherever there are J-1 Spanish teachers, there is likely a padel connection waiting to be made
- In addition to teachers, there are many Latino and international-focused networking groups. Search for these in your local community and reach out to them to discuss partnership opportunities.

### 1.3 Private Schools vs. Public Schools

Not all schools are equally accessible. Understanding the difference will save you significant time and frustration.

	Private Schools	Public Schools
<b>Flexibility</b>	High. Can promote third-party programs, distribute flyers, and host demos with minimal bureaucracy.	Low. Strict rules about what can be promoted or distributed. Must go through formal channels.
<b>Best entry point</b>	PE teacher, board member, activities director, or head of school directly.	Athletic department or PE curriculum coordinator.
<b>Flyer distribution</b>	Teachers can include in student folders; administration is generally supportive.	Often must be approved by district administration; may be declined.
<b>Email to parents</b>	Much easier to arrange; administration is often cooperative once trust is built.	Harder. Requires district approval. May not happen at all.
<b>Timeline</b>	Can often get a demo scheduled within 1–2 weeks of first contact.	Weeks to months. Budget more lead time and patience.

### 1.4 The Initial Pitch

When you have a warm contact or are approaching a school directly, keep your pitch short and make it easy to say yes. Schools are not looking for a curriculum overhaul; they are looking for something that is easy for them to execute and support. A “free padel pop up at lunch time” is much more appealing than a 4-week structured curriculum that requires the teacher to be present. Lead with what it costs them: nothing.

**SAMPLE PITCH:** "Hi [Name], I'm [Your Name] from [Club Name]. We're a padel club right here in [City], and we'd love to come in and give your students a free intro session during lunch or recess. We bring everything: a portable net, racquets, and balls. It's free, could last as little as 20 minutes, and the kids love it. We'd just ask to hand out a one-page flyer at the end. Would that be something you'd be open to?"

#### Key elements of an effective pitch:

- Free: say it early and say it clearly
- You bring everything: zero logistical burden on the school
- Short time commitment: a lunch period, not a half-day
- One small ask: flyer distribution. This is your only “ask.”
- No follow-up pressure: “we’d love to come back if it goes well”, not a pitch for a formal partnership

## Section 2: Running the Demo

*What to do once you're on campus*

The demo is your best marketing asset. It is also where most clubs underperform, either by trying to teach too much too fast or by treating the visit as a one-time event rather than the first step in a multi-visit relationship.

### 2.1 Go Multiple Days. Minimum Two, Ideally Three

One day is not enough. Pedro learned this quickly and made multi-day visits a core principle of his approach.

*"We try to go for at least two or three days. One day is not enough. By the third day, they're already excited about it, they're waiting for us." - Pedro Bautista*

**Here is why multiple days matter:**

- **Day 1:** Pure chaos. Most children have never seen a padel racquet. Attention is scattered, and behavior is unpredictable. A few children get genuinely interested, but most are just curious.
- **Day 2:** The word has spread. The children who were excited yesterday told their friends. Attendance is larger and more motivated. You start to see real rallying.
- **Day 3:** They are lining up before you arrive. The children who are most interested have self-selected and bring energy that converts the skeptics. This is the day you hand out the balls and the flyers.

### 2.2 The Demo Setup

#### Working with School Walls

You may not need to bring a portable net to every school. Pedro found that most schools already have at least one brick wall in their outdoor space, and some have two facing walls, which creates a near-perfect padel setup. Assess the school's outdoor space before your first visit if possible.

- One wall: Set up the portable net perpendicular to the wall and use the wall as a back boundary
- Two facing walls: Set up the net between them, which creates the closest approximation to a real padel court
- No suitable wall: Use the portable net across an open flat surface and play tennis-style with padel racquets

The full padel court experience with four glass walls can be introduced later at the club; the goal of the school visit is contact with a racquet, a ball, and a rally, not a perfect simulation of the game.

#### Setup Time

A portable net takes about 1 minute to assemble. Ensure you are ready before the first students arrive. Build this into your pitch to the school, and you will not take up their time getting ready.

## 2.3 What to Do on Court

Keep it simple, keep it moving, keep it fun. You are not teaching padel technique at a school demo; you are giving children a positive first contact with the sport and a reason to want more.

- Start with basic hand-eye coordination games before introducing the racquet, velcro catch pads, cone targets, and footwork ladders can be used if you have large numbers.
- Introduce racquets only once children have some movement warm-up
- Focus on hitting a ball, not instruction, and get every child hitting a ball within the first minute. This could be as simple as every child has a ball and a racket and hits it up in the air, or with a partner, throwing a ball underhand and their partner attempting to hit it back to them.
- Ensure you move quickly so children are constantly moving, children who are waiting not only become bored but they also become a distraction to others who may be trying to focus.
- Use age-appropriate progressions: younger children can throw the ball over the net before using a racquet
- Do not teach scoring, rules, or formal technique in a first visit; save that for the club

**AVOID THIS:** Do not run line drills where one child hits one ball and goes to the back of the line. It kills energy within minutes. Every child should be in motion at all times.

## 2.4 Managing Different Age Groups

Pedro discovered that he could run demos across all age groups in a single school day by working class by class, with each group cycling through in 15 - 20 minute windows when they had lunch time. Unlike some schools outside the USA, where the entire school has lunch break at the same time. Most US schools have different lunch breaks for different classrooms. This is perfect for a school visit, as it allows you to teach multiple classes during lunchtime in a single visit.

- Grades 6–8: Can often rally after just a few minutes. Introduce basic court positioning and simple scoring.
- Grades 3–5: Focus on contact and movement. Short rallies, lots of praise, keep score informally.
- Grades K–2: Simplify everything. Throwing and catching before racquets. Parallel play over a low net. Don't worry about padel, worry about fun.

## Section 3: What to Leave Behind

### *Converting student excitement into parent action*

The school visit creates excitement in children. Your job is to convert that excitement into a parent who books a class, buys a membership, or registers for a summer camp before the excitement fades. Everything you do in the days following a school visit is aimed at that conversion.

#### 3.1 The Padel Ball Giveaway

Pedro's single most effective take-home tactic is also one of the simplest: at the end of the final day at each school, he gives every student a padel ball.

*"We give out the balls after the entire week. We give one to every single one of them."* - Pedro Bautista

#### **Why it works:**

- Children bring the ball home, which prompts a conversation with parents, "What is this?" "We learned padel at school!"
- The ball has the club's name or "Padel" printed on it, so parents see the brand
- It is a tangible souvenir that keeps the experience alive for days after your visit

**SPONSOR YOUR BALLS:** Talk to your equipment partner about sponsoring ball giveaways for school programs. Most ball manufacturers in the USA want to grow the sport just as much as we do, and a conversation about providing balls specifically for school visits could result in them being donated in full. Frame it as brand exposure to hundreds of new families per visit.

#### 3.2 The Flyer

Your flyer is the bridge between the school visit and the club visit. It needs to do one job: make it effortless for a parent to find out more or sign up. Design with that in mind.

- **Headline:** Simple and benefit-driven. "Learn Padel, Free Intro Classes for Kids" or "Your child just played padel. Here's what's next."
- **QR code:** Link directly to a Google Form sign-up (not your club management software, too much friction)
- Club name, contact details, address, and website
- What you're offering: Summer camp, junior program, free first class
- One clear call to action: scan the code to register interest

**Flyer distribution depends on the school. Work with the administration to find the method that fits:**

- Student folders (teachers include in the child's folder that goes home each day)
- The school administration distributes to all students
- Email to parents from the school, only works if the school is willing, and students have already visited the demo and are familiar with padel)

### 3.3 The Email. When It Works and When It Doesn't

Pedro tested email-only outreach early on. The results were unambiguous.

*"We sent emails to one school offering free classes, free court time, free everything. Nobody showed up. Without going there first, there's no traction at all."* - Pedro Bautista

Email is only a follow-up to an in-person visit, not a replacement for it. The sequence matters:

1	In-person demo	Children experience the sport directly. Excitement is created at the source.
2	Flyer goes home	The parent sees the flyer. The child explains what they did at school.
3	School sends an email	Parent now recognizes the name from the flyer. Email reinforces rather than introduces.
4	Parent scans QR code	Interest form submitted. You now have a parent in your pipeline.
5	Club follow-up	Personal email or text from the club. Invite to a free trial class.

The email without steps 1 and 2 does not work. Parents receive dozens of promotional emails every week about programs their children have never mentioned. An email about a sport nobody has heard of, from a club they have never visited, offering something free, sounds suspicious rather than appealing.

## Section 4: Deepening the Relationship

*Turning a one-time demo into a long-term school partnership*

A one-time demo is valuable. A school that sends students to your summer camp, hosts you as a speaker, promotes your programs, and gives your club a mention in their newsletter is a partnership that can drive meaningful enrollment for years. The clubs that build these deeper relationships become pillars of their community.

### 4.1 The Motivational Speaker Angle

Many schools, both private and public, run regular programs where they invite outside speakers to talk to students about careers, entrepreneurship, or life skills. Pedro identified this as one of his most effective low-effort entry points.

*“I went as the owner of this club and talked to them about how to get outside of your comfort zone, and then, of course, I introduced padel. I showed them a video. I’m sure every single school has that program. That day, I didn’t even play. I just gave a five-minute speech. And that’s it.” - Pedro Bautista*

#### How to pursue this:

- Ask your teacher contact or the school administration whether they have a “community speaker” or “career day” type program
- Offer to speak for 10–15 minutes on a topic relevant to students: entrepreneurship, starting a business, moving to a new country, building community through sport
- End every talk with a 2-minute padel introduction and a video clip
- The school posts or films these, ask if you can be featured on their social media page or parent newsletter
- Pedro had an interview recorded by a student and posted to the school’s page. It reached every parent connected to the school.

### 4.2 The Teacher Appreciation Strategy

Teachers are your most valuable advocates inside any school. They can promote your program in a hundred small ways that no marketing campaign can replicate: an offhand comment to a parent, a note in a student folder, a mention in a class. Building genuine goodwill with teachers is worth a significant investment.

- Invite the teachers from every school you visit to a free play session at your club, one evening, no strings attached, just a thank-you for letting you come in
- Offer a standing teacher discount on membership or court rentals
- Teachers who play padel become ambassadors in a way that no paid promotion can match. They will talk about your club to parents at pickup, at school events, and at the school gate

### **4.3 The School Fundraising Partnership**

Most schools run a fundraising program that partners with local businesses; typically, a restaurant or business donates a percentage of sales on a particular evening or week when families come in. This can be a natural fit for a padel club.

- Approach the school’s PTA or fundraising coordinator with a simple proposal: for the month of [month], any school family that visits the club will have a percentage of their spending donated back to the school
- This brings families into the club in a positive frame of mind. They are doing something for the school, not just trying out a new sport
- It also creates a named, promoted event that the school distributes through all its usual channels
- Cost to you: a percentage of revenue from a defined window, likely with net new customers who otherwise would not have come in
- If a monthly standing discount is not manageable for the club, identify times of the week with very low occupancy and offer to donate a large percentage of the income from those times to the school. Use this to encourage families from the school to bring both their parents and children together to experience padel.

### **4.4 After-School Programs and PE Integration**

The longer-term goal for school relationships is integration into the school’s formal programming, either as an after-school activity option, as part of in-school PE, or as an out-of-school PE option.

For small schools or private schools with flexible PE programming, pitching a “padel PE day” at your club is realistic, or you may go to the school and conduct the PE class at the school in the same way you did for the lunchtime classes.

Some schools allow students to complete PE requirements through approved outside programs.

- Research “out-of-school PE program” or “off-campus PE credit” policies in your state or district
- If a pathway exists, approach the PE coordinator with a proposal for formally approved padel sessions
- Even without formal PE credit, an after-school club endorsed by the school is a powerful pipeline

## Section 5: What to Bring

### *The complete school visit kit*

One of the most important features of the school outreach model is its genuinely low cost. Here is everything you need.

#### 5.1 Equipment Checklist

Item	Est. Cost	Notes
Portable tennis or pickleball net	\$40–\$80	Available on Amazon. Folds into a carry bag. Sets up in less than a minute.
Padel racquets (6–20)	Provided by your club	Use club demo racquets or low-cost models. Ask your equipment sponsor if they will provide school-specific demo inventory.
Junior padel racquets	Provided by club or sponsor	If you have junior ones, these are perfect
Padel balls		For demos. Separate from giveaway balls. Ask the equipment sponsor to donate.
Giveaway balls (1 per student)	\$1–2 per ball in bulk	Branded with the club name or the sport name. Give on the final visit day. Approach your ball sponsor to provide at no cost.
Coordination gear (optional)	\$20–50 total	Velcro catch pads, agility cones, footwork ladder. Makes warm-up more engaging for younger students.
Club flyers with QR code		Print in color. QR code links to Google Form. Leave with the school administration and student folders.
Foam / low-compression balls (optional)		Easier for very young children. Lower bounce, more forgiving on first contact.

#### 5.2 The Google Form Sign-Up

Your flyer’s QR code should point to a Google Form, not your club management software. The goal at this stage is to collect contact information and expressed interest, not to complete a registration.

##### Keep the form to four or five fields:

- Parent name
- Child’s name and age
- Email address and phone number
- What are you most interested in? (Summer camp / Junior program / Free trial class / Just want to learn more)

Once you have 10–15 families in a Google Form, you have enough to send a personal follow-up email and invite them to a free trial class. That is where formal enrollment begins.

### 5.3 Do's and Don'ts when building a school's outreach program

✓ DO	✗ DON'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Go in person always</li> <li>● Visit the same school for multiple days</li> <li>● Let the school distribute flyers in their preferred way</li> <li>● Give every student a ball on the final day</li> <li>● Invite teachers to a free club session as a thank-you</li> <li>● Keep the demo fast and fun; every child should be moving</li> <li>● Tag @usapadel when posting content from school visits to amplify your coverage</li> <li>● Follow up personally with every Google Form submission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Send a cold email without visiting first</li> <li>● Expect one visit to produce enrollment</li> <li>● Require parents to create an account on your club management software to express interest</li> <li>● Run line drills where kids wait and watch</li> <li>● Teach formal scoring or rules to beginners</li> <li>● Lead with competition rather than fun</li> <li>● Treat each school as a one-time interaction</li> <li>● Give up on a school if at first they aren't welcoming. (Keep a diary of your outreach and follow up at the end of every term to ask about the following term.)</li> </ul>

## Section 6: Beyond Schools

*Other community channels that amplify your outreach*

School outreach is your most direct pipeline to junior students. But Pedro built his club's community presence through several other channels simultaneously. None of them costs money. All of them compound over time.

### 6.1 Chamber of Commerce

Pedro joined his county's Chamber of Commerce and attends meetings twice a month. At each meeting, there are approximately 70 local entrepreneurs. Pedro talks about his club at every meeting.

- Join your local or county Chamber of Commerce
- Offer to host a Chamber event at your club. Pedro hosted an elite member group of 20 people. They left as ambassadors.
- Consider a ribbon-cutting event with the Chamber, even if you have already been open for months. Pedro did this and got newsletter coverage and social media posts at no cost

### 6.2 Youth and At-Risk Programs

Explore partnerships with city-affiliated youth programs for children who may need structured activities and community connection. These programs are often funded, enthusiastic about new partnerships, and genuinely grateful for programming opportunities.

- Contact your city's parks and recreation department or youth services division
- Offer a free padel session for program participants at your club or on-site with a portable net
- Document and share these visits; they are strong community stories for your social media.

### 6.3 The USPA Connection

Every school visit, every youth program, every community event is a story worth telling. The USPA actively promotes examples of clubs growing the sport at the grassroots level. Share your work with us.

- Tag @usapadel in all school visit content, the USPA will reshare to its followers
- Send a brief email recap of school programs to [info@padelusa.org](mailto:info@padelusa.org) for potential coverage on [padelusa.org](http://padelusa.org)
- Ask about the USPA's \$500 Junior Grant Program. Qualifying events with 10+ participants, documented with photos and free USPA memberships, are eligible
- Your story could help clubs across the country replicate what you have built

## Getting Started: Your First School Visit

1	Identify your first contact	Ask your current club members who works in a school. One conversation is all you need to get started.
2	Prepare your kit	Portable net, 6+ racquets, 2 tubes of balls, giveaway balls, flyers with QR code to Google Form. Total cost under \$100 for your first visit.
3	Make your pitch	Free, you bring everything, just a 30-minute lunch session, and one flyer handout. Keep it simple.
4	Book multiple days	Not one day. Three. The first is chaos. The third is magic.
5	Run the demo	Movement first. racquets second. Fun always. No line drills. No formal rules.
6	Hand out balls and flyers	On the final day. Every student gets a ball. Every student gets a flyer. The school distributes, or students take home in folders.
7	Follow up with parents	Personal email or call to everyone who submitted the Google Form within 48 hours. Invite them to a free first class.
8	Invite the teachers	Email the teachers who helped you. Thank them. Offer a free play session at your club on a quiet evening.

Questions and support: [info@padelusa.org](mailto:info@padelusa.org)

Additional USPA Resources

[How to Start a Junior Program](#)

[How to Market Your Tournaments \(and Club Events\)](#)

[Tournament Director Resources](#)

[Padel Rules and Regulations](#)

USPA | [padelusa.org](http://padelusa.org) | [@usapadel](https://www.instagram.com/usapadel)