

The Problem

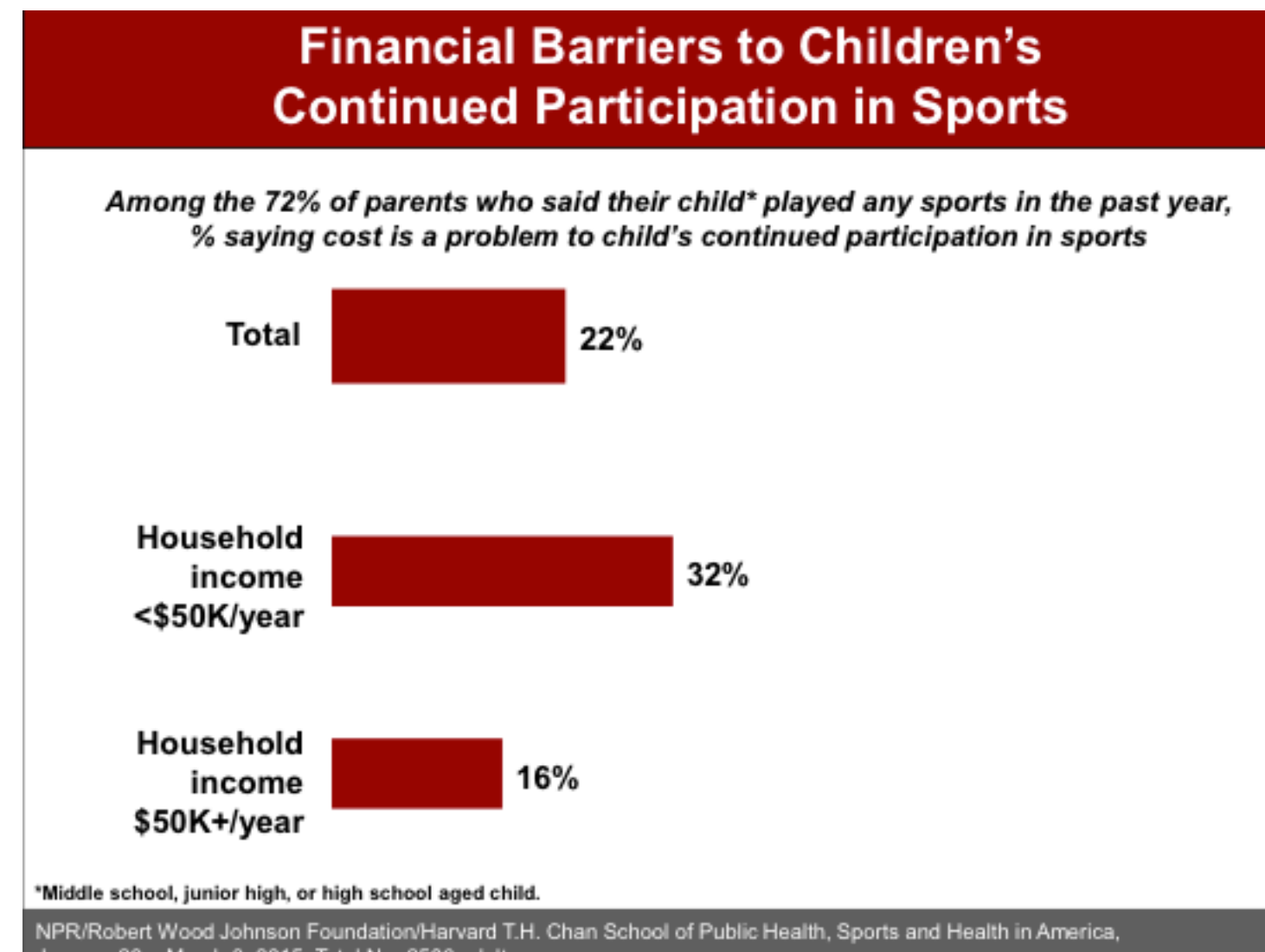
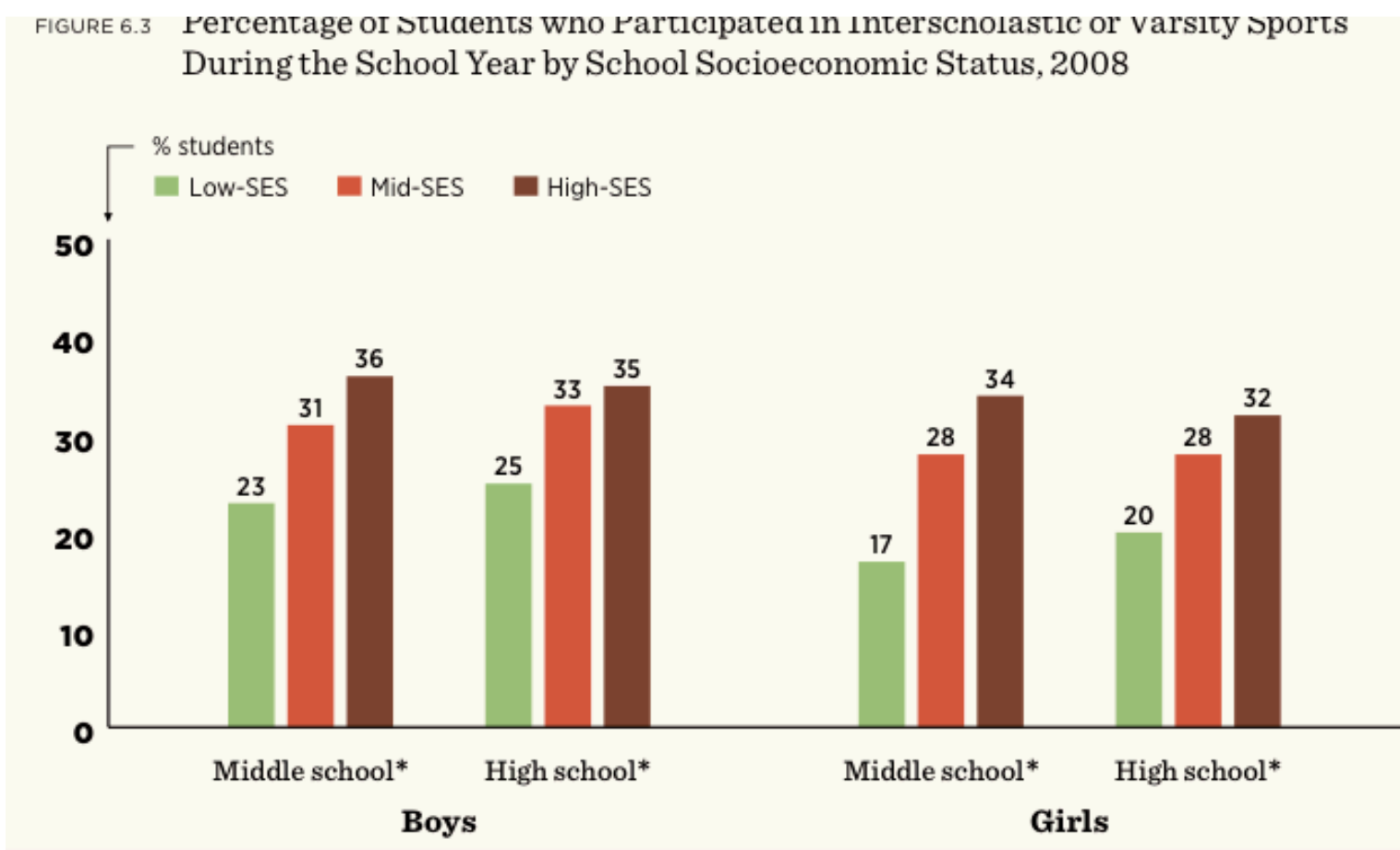
- The number of participants in high school sports has increased since 1989 (National Federation of State HS Association).
- From 2000-2010 7% of public schools cut athletic programs while less than 1% added them (Sharp Center Univ. Michigan).
- Some estimates predict 27% of public high schools will not offer varsity athletics by 2020 (Sharp Center Univ. Michigan).
- School's are dropping athletic programs (as well as music and theater programs) due to budget cuts.
- Alternative approaches schools are taking include "pay to play" which increases the financial burden on students and families.
- In 2011, 3 out of 4 school districts in PA planned to decrease the number of extracurricular activities to deal with increasing budget cuts (Hardy).
- Despite increased participation, high school sports programs are threatened by budget cuts.

Benefits of Sports

- **Physical**
 - 17% of people under 18 fall short of the 60 minutes of recommended physical activity (CDC).
 - High school athletes are 3x more likely to participate in physical fitness activities than non-athletes (Dept. of Ed).
 - Athletes are even more likely to remain physically active after graduation (Dept. of Ed).
- **Educational**
 - High school athletes are more likely to achieve post-secondary education, attain a bachelors degree, and be employed 8 years after graduation than non-athletes (Dept. of Ed).
 - Employment status and educational level are social determinants of health recognized by the CDC.
- **Social**
 - Children who play sports have higher levels of self-esteem and increased connectedness to the community (Trudeau).
 - Initiative, identity exploration, emotional learning, teamwork skills, and forming ties with community members are all benefits of athletic participation (Hansen).

Socioeconomic Barriers to Participation

Figures show socioeconomic status and financial concerns limit athletic participation.



Inequity of Athletic Participation

- **Socioeconomic Status (SES)**
 - 25% of boys in low SES school districts participate in athletics compared to 31% and 36% of boys in middle and high SES school districts respectively (Bridging the Gap).
 - 20% of girls in low SES districts participate in sports compared to 28% and 34% respectively (Bridging the Gap).
 - The trend is similar for intramural sport participation.
 - Putnam reports participation in extracurricular activities is increasing among upper/middle class adolescents while it is steady or declining among lower class adolescents.
- **Race**
 - Athletic participation rates in predominantly white schools are higher than those in predominantly black or Latino schools for both boys and girls (Bridging the Gap).
- **Sex**
 - 53 athletic opportunities for every 100 boys vs. 41 for every 100 girls (Sharp Center).

Addressing the Problem

- Increased time and resources spent on physical education programs by 10% increases the average student's time spent doing moderate to vigorous physical activity by 50% (CDC).
- However, this approach does not address the "intangible" benefits of athletics like self-esteem, goal-setting, and leadership.
- High school athletic programs need funding to be advocated on a local, state, and federal level.
- Aspen Institute suggests community sports programs should partner with businesses and other organizations in the community
- Aspen Institute "8 Plays" include asking kids what they want, outfitting the spaces available in communities to maximize productive usage, and revitalizing youth programs.