

## **Important News About the Future of Athletic Fields at Bancroft School**

The Andover Soccer Association's executive board would like to provide our soccer families and supporters with an important update on the status of the design and planning for the new Bancroft School. ASA also wants to provide information related to the current and possible future athletic fields at the Bancroft School site. ASA urges you to support Andover youth sports by expressing your opinion by ***e-mail to the School Building Committee*** at [SBC@APS1.net](mailto:SBC@APS1.net).

### **The Current Situation:**

#### **Town wide Field Crunch-**

***Existing athletic field space throughout Andover is at maximum capacity for all youth sports.*** ASA was proud to field over 1,650 soccer players between the ages of 7 and 14 for the Fall 2009 season. However, the loss of even a single field location in the future could keep ASA from fielding all the kids that want to play. Other youth sports associations are in a similar situation. Although not ideal, ASA already rents several private and other non-Town field locations to supplement what is available from the Town of Andover and is constantly looking for creative field space opportunities.

**Bancroft-** There are currently two soccer fields developed on the Bancroft School site, along with some additional grassy play space, a paved play area, and two play structures. ASA is currently the only youth sports organization that is authorized to use the Bancroft School fields. For 20 weeks a year, 10 in the spring and 10 in the fall, approximately 140 youth players call the Bancroft athletic fields their soccer home. These players are typically 3rd or 4th graders. They have a single, weeknight practice session and play one game on each Saturday of the 10 week season. These are Andover kids playing other Andover kids in recreational soccer games, designed to promote teamwork, sportsmanship and good health. In order to play on these fields, ***a rental charge is paid by ASA to the Town of Andover*** for each of these players through their soccer registration fees. This field rental fee is paid in addition to the "per player" fee also assessed to ASA and most other youth sports associations by the Town. Of course, these fields are used by Bancroft School for physical education classes and recess and, are open informally to Town residents outside of school hours and ASA's designated time slots. ***Bancroft has the least developed athletic field space of any Andover public school***, excluding Shawsheen, a choice pre-K through 2nd grade school. Although located on a smaller site, Bancroft School provides much less athletic field space than is currently in place at any of the Town's other neighborhood primary schools. Much of the Bancroft School property is currently undeveloped.

**The Future of Bancroft Under Consideration-** For many reasons, including overcrowding and concerns about the long-term structural integrity of the school building, the Town's School Building Committee is currently considering the replacement of Bancroft School on its current site. Various possible school designs and site plans are being discussed. All of these designs include a possible redistribution of the Shawsheen School population with a large increase in the Bancroft School population. The future of the Shawsheen School site and its athletic field is currently unclear. However, several of the preliminary alternative plans under consideration appear to have either a small reduction or no material increase in current field space at Bancroft, despite the planned increase in school population. If the Shawsheen field becomes unavailable, many of the alternatives could result in a **material loss of field space**.

At their meeting on February 3, 2010, the School Building Committee heard from youth sports representatives concerned with the future of athletic space at Bancroft. The Committee kindly recognized the field space issue, noted that field layouts are only at a schematic stage, and **welcomed additional community input** on the topic. However, it is not clear what priority athletic field space will garner in the Building Committee's process. ASA recognizes the legitimate concerns of Bancroft neighbors. ASA is not advocating for the development of a massive fields complex at Bancroft or any field lighting. **ASA believes that a net loss of field space in Town is unacceptable.** Further, a **failure to design field space consistent with that provided at the Town's other neighborhood primary schools represents a wasted opportunity.** Less field space at Bancroft means longer drive times for Bancroft students and their parents, more stress and damage to existing field space and unsuitable playing hours.

### **Andover Youth Sports Need Your Support-**

ASA's executive board is requesting your help in communicating a clear message to the School Building Committee:

- **Any plan for the new Bancroft School must, at a minimum, preserve or recreate the existing amount of youth athletic field space currently in place at both Bancroft and Shawsheen schools.**
- **To the maximum extent feasible, the Committee should consider increasing the amount of field space at Bancroft School to make it more comparable to the Town's other neighborhood primary schools.**

Andover Soccer Association wants to be a partner to the School Building Committee, with input on the design of the new Bancroft school field space. ASA hopes to help the school and all Andover youth sports, while minimizing impact on neighbors to the school property. ASA is willing to consider providing financial support for the project in order to insure installation of proper drainage under the new playing fields. This would improve field playing conditions, child safety and extend the useable season on the fields for both Bancroft School and youth sports. ASA is also willing to reach mutually agreed upon limits for hours of use and age restrictions to maintain the space as purely youth fields.

Although the School Building Committee is charged with planning and design of a new community school, that charge must include consideration of appropriate play spaces that fit into the neighborhood while benefiting the entire town of Andover. ***Athletic field spaces are critical to the fabric of our community and the youth of Andover.***

ASA urges you to ***support Andover youth sports*** by expressing your opinion by ***e-mail to the School Building Committee*** at [SBC@APS1.net](mailto:SBC@APS1.net) or, by attending the Committee's public meetings, posted at [www.AndoverMA.gov](http://www.AndoverMA.gov) under "Bancroft Elementary Project" and at [www.AndoverSoccer.org](http://www.AndoverSoccer.org).