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GOOD PRACTICE PRINCIPLES

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
IN SPORT AND RECREATION



THE ROLE AND INFLUENCE OF COACHES

Coaches can inspire children and young people to continue participating in sport, or they can be the reason that children and young people drop out. Coaches must be aware of the potential impact they have on the experiences of children and young people in sport and maximise their positive impact. Good coaching is one of the key factors in retaining people in sport and developing young New Zealanders.

To be effective, coaches must focus first and foremost on the needs of the participant or athlete being coached. A guide to the characteristics and needs of young participants can be found in [Appendix 1 of the Sport NZ Coach Development Framework²](#).

Participants at different stages of development will have different coaching needs. Most coaches of children and young people will be volunteers and are likely to be classified as Foundation Coaches or Development Coaches.

Foundation coaches

Foundation coaches support participants enjoying their first experiences in organised sport. The vast majority of the participants will be primary school aged children trying out a range of modified sports in either a club or primary school setting.

The ideal Foundation Coach will:

- nurture a love of sport and active recreation
- focus primarily on fun, participation and skill development
- understand the needs of young participants in the Learn Stage – primarily primary school aged children
- encourage participation in multiple sports and the development of a wide range of skills
- introduce the concept of fair play
- understand that they are in the business of creating not only better young athletes, but better young people.

Development coaches

Development coaches support a wider range of participants, including the young people who continue in organised sport through the later years of primary school, the secondary school students in both the school and club setting, and the adults who continue to play organised sport in a non-elite environment.

The ideal Development Coach will:

- nurture a love of multiple sports
- focus on skill development and decision making
- understand the needs of participants in the Participate phase – primarily intermediate and secondary school children, and adult non-elite participants
- reinforce ethical approaches to sport and recreation
- provide for participants needs and aspirations
- understand that they are in the business of creating not only better athletes, but better people.

² www.sportnz.org.nz/en-nz/communities-and-clubs/Coaching/Coach-Development--Education/Coach-Development-Framework1/

THE ROLE AND INFLUENCE OF TEACHERS

Teachers are another key influencer on children's participation in sport and recreation, and the provision of sport and recreation experiences.

Schools have unique opportunities to provide adequate physical activity through mandatory physical education programmes, quality school sport programmes and after school initiatives.

Teachers can influence and support student's participation by:

- providing the enthusiasm, drive, and commitment that will lead to students becoming involved in sport and recreation
- providing leadership in physical education, and sport and recreation experiences
- supporting involvement in sport and recreation through learning in physical education, for example the development of fundamental movement skills
- purchasing the equipment and resources needed for curriculum and co-curricular sport and recreation activities;
- ensuring that learning is enjoyable and that it builds students' confidence and competence in a range of appropriate physical activities
- coaching, managing or officiating school teams.

While schools have a significant role in providing and promoting diverse sport and recreation opportunities for students, schools are not isolated places. They are part of their communities and the wider society, which contribute to the social and environmental factors that influence students' choices, behaviours, and attitudes.

Schools can provide more and better sport and recreation experiences for students when they collaborate with other organisations. When a school and its community have strong links, they can ensure that students and young people receive consistent messages about the importance of sport and recreation, and the opportunities that are available to them.



Parent and coach partnership

Coaches of youth sport often find the most challenging part of their role is managing the relationship with the parents of their players. This is an important relationship to foster. The key to managing this successfully is to meet with the parents before and during the season to ensure that the parents understand:

- your coaching philosophy
- the team's objectives for the season
- what is expected of them and their children
- what the lines of communication are
- how they can be involved and help out during the season
- how to deal with any issues they may have
- the team rules.

Parents as coaches

Many parents end up coaching their child's sports team. This is a challenging situation for both parent and child, which can lead to both positive and negative outcomes. Several studies have been undertaken looking at ways to ensure that the experience is a positive one for both adult and child. These studies concluded that:

- it is important to separate the parent and the coach role. As a parent you have a responsibility to your child, but as a coach you must consider the needs of all of the participants in your care
- when you are coaching, your child is a member of the team and should receive no more or less attention than any other participant. They certainly shouldn't feel any extra pressure to perform
- away from the game, the coach's hat comes off and the parent's hat goes back on. Young people tell us that they don't enjoy the post-mortem discussion in the car on the way home when their parent is also their coach
- it is important to keep the lines of communication open with your child when you are also the coach, so any concerns your child might have can be openly discussed with your child and dealt with
- in some situations, especially with older children or in more competitive leagues, parents may need to discuss the parent-as-coach situation before any coaching roles are agreed to.

For more information on coaching visit the [Sport NZ Coaching webpage](http://www.sportnz.org.nz/en-nz/communities-and-clubs/Coaching/)³.

³ www.sportnz.org.nz/en-nz/communities-and-clubs/Coaching/

Principle	Focused On	Relevant Stage and Development	In Practice
5. Become familiar with developmental ages and stages Developmental age and stage, and the concept of readiness, play an important part in determining when a child or young person should start to play or progress in sport and recreation. Readiness will depend on a child or young person's social, emotional and cognitive development, as well as their physical development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participant-centred Player development pathways 	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage children to be as physically active as possible Emphasise the development and mastery of skills – both individual and team – and help participants develop positive attitudes and values associated with 'good' sport Become familiar with your sport's player development pathway and the learning required at each stage of development Assess the physical, technical and cognitive capability of your participants, and use that assessment as the basis for your participant development plan.
6. Let children play Play enhances every aspect of children's development, not just for sport and recreation but in other areas such as developing self-esteem, learning social skills, developing spatial awareness, brain and language development, and encouraging the development of imagination. It is important to understand that children do not play in order to learn, but play provides a significant opportunity for learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Importance of play Fun and enjoyment 	Explore Learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognise that play is a worthwhile activity for children – it has meaning and value that is often not understood by adults Provide children with the opportunity to play on their own, with friends and with parents on a regular basis Promote and encourage play that facilitates the development of gross and fine motor skills Promote and encourage play environments that stimulate creative decision-making and problem-solving skills.
7. Ensure there is full participation and inclusion Every child or young person has the right and should be encouraged to participate in sport and recreation, regardless of their individual ability, socio-economic situation, ethnicity, gender or any other factor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equity Fun and enjoyment Leadership development 	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accommodate individual differences and abilities by offering a broad range of activities and competition structures Give children and young people a chance to contribute to planning and decision-making in their activities Foster participant-centred protocols.

Principle	Focused On	Relevant Stage and Development	In Practice
8. Modify or adapt activities to suit the ability of participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning • Fun and enjoyment 	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modify the activity to match the developmental stages and skills of the participants. • Modified versions of sports should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – resemble the sport from which they are derived – be safe to play and yet still challenging for participants – provide players with skills that are a relevant base for progressing to the parent sport – reduce excessive physical demand placed on children from adult equipment and field sizes – emphasise fun, participation and skill development over competition – reduce the likelihood of domination by physically stronger or early maturing players.
9. Provide an appropriate amount of activity Sport and recreation providers should consider the needs, wants and perspectives of the children and young people they are working with as a central element of programme planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fun and enjoyment 	Learn Early Participate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children get the greatest benefit from short, action-packed sessions. They do not need to practice formally more than once per week • Encourage children to try a range of sports and activities to discover what they enjoy, and to develop a wide range of skills • Early specialisation can lead to burn-out and stress, and result in a young person dropping out of sport. Children and young people should play a variety of sports for as long as possible • When making decisions or planning children and young people's sport activities, use developmental stage (size, coordination and maturity) rather than a child's age as a primary guide.
10. Prepare children and young people to compete successfully Children and young people cannot compete effectively when they do not have the required skills. Programmes that emphasise skill development and success through effort provide more fun and enjoyment, and increase the likelihood of retaining children and young people in sport over time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant-centred • Fun and enjoyment • Winning vs. success 	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on developing a wide range of basic sports skills that lead to increased mastery, self-confidence and competence • Praise effort, hard-work, improvement and fair play • Do not label children as good or bad at their sport – they will flourish if they are praised for their effort • Implement the New Zealand Coach Approach philosophy through coaching and development programmes. The NZ Coach Approach emphasises the philosophy of participants as learners, and coaches as facilitators of participant learning and development.