

FEATURED RESEARCH BRIEF

***SPORTS-BASED
YOUTH
DEVELOPMENT***

AUTHORS

Daniel Perkins, PhD., Pennsylvania State University

Kristine Madsen, MD, MPH, University of California, San Francisco

Cory Wechsler, Team-Up for Youth

Youth's discretionary time, often referred to as out-of-school time, can be either an opportunity for youth to engage in positive activities that enhance their development and foster their competencies, or a time to involve themselves in activities potentially harmful to their well-being. Out-of-school youth development programs support the healthy growth and development of young people by providing engrossing learning opportunities that emphasize life skills.¹

The premise of sports-based youth development programs is that sports can be excellent mediums to engage youth and foster positive development, provided that they are “youth-centered”. Youth-centered SBYD programs provide youth, both individually and in groups, opportunities to be actively engaged in learning. These programs provide a venue to learn life skills and are explicitly designed to have coaches intentionally engage their players in these learning opportunities.² Some sports-based youth development programs also instill life skills into programs and/or activities that are carried out in tandem with the sport activity.

SPORTS-BASED YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

is a methodology that uses sports to provide the supports and opportunities youth need to be healthy contributing citizens now and as adults. A sports-based youth development program offers youth an experience in which they learn and master sports skills along with life and leadership skills in a safe, fun, supportive, and challenging environment. This experience involves caring relationships, facilitated learning, experiential learning, and vigorous physical activity.

Thus, sports-based youth development programs establish clear goals and utilize youth development best practices to create opportunities for young people to connect to others, develop skills, and utilize those skills to contribute to their communities in ways that, in turn, increase their ability to succeed.³ Specifically, research on youth participation in sport and physical activity has demonstrated the following benefits:

- the development of pro-social behavior⁴
- reduced antisocial and criminal behaviors⁵
- lower rates of school dropout and delinquent behavior⁶
- improvements in moral reasoning⁷
- greater attention to “fair play” and sportsmanship⁸
- increased personal responsibility⁹
- and greater adult career achievement.¹⁰

SOURCES

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