

5. FORMING LINKS

COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION
FOR BETTER DELIVERY OF
JUNIOR SPORT

Introduction

Young people receive their most effective and satisfying sports experiences when there is goodwill and cooperation between stakeholders at all levels. These include

- sport organisations (national, state and local)
- schools and school sports associations
- government (local, state and federal)
- commercial and non-profit providers (eg YMCA, disability sport agencies)
- sponsors.

Successful liaison among all these groups helps the long term participation of young people in sport through the pathways it provides.

The Benefits of Liaison

Consultation between sport providers means a co-ordinated and complementary approach to junior sport by

- identifying gaps and overlaps in delivery and cooperative approaches to them
- allowing consistency in procedures such as competition groupings and rules
- sharing costs, equipment, facilities and human resources.

These particularly assist young people in moving easily between school and club* competitions.

The focus of this guideline is on schools and clubs, however, the same principles apply to all stakeholders.

Gaps and Overlaps

Working together can prevent

- an over supply and duplication of activities
- over-commitment of talented young people as a result of demands from more than one organisation.

5.1 Strategies – Avoiding Gaps and Overlaps

- Form local committees of stakeholders to assess the needs of young people in the area and how to most efficiently meet these.
- Coordinate scheduling of school and community events and competitions at all levels.
- Recognise groups that have established strong community links and benefited junior sport.

Achieving Consistency

Ongoing communication among organisations (especially schools and sport organisations) can avoid inconsistencies in sports delivery (eg team selection, competition models, uniform requirements) due to differences in

- schemes for determining the age of competitors (age at date of competition, start of calendar year, or start of school year).
- age groupings for competition in one sport (under 12, under 14, or junior, intermediate, senior)
- age groupings across different sports
- types of activities, rules and formats (eg size of competing area, game duration, weights in rugby).

5.2 Strategies – Achieving Consistency

- Use the same criteria for activity and competition groupings (eg age, school level).
- Use the same types of activities, rules, formats and modifications (eg size of competition area, game duration).
- Hold regular meetings to maintain good communication among stakeholders.

Sharing Resources

All groups should consider how they can combine or share resources to benefit young people.

Access can be increased and costs reduced with joint provision and dual use of

- facilities
- sporting equipment
- instructional resources
- coaching and other human resources.

This is particularly important in regional and remote areas so as to make the best use of scarce resources.

Individual sports can also gain mutual benefit by liaising and sharing ideas and resources with each other.

How Schools Can Help

Clubs¹ benefit when schools allow use of their facilities for evening/weekend/holiday training and competition.

The school benefits through

- a user contribution to facility and insurance costs
- improved community relations
- reduced vandalism through supervised use of the facilities.

How Clubs Can Help

Clubs can help schools by offering to share their resources. The club benefits from

- the development of the sport in the school with more young people able to play
- the easy transition for young people into community sport*
- an opportunity to show young people how the club works, and encourage them to join.

Junior members of a club are important as potential long-term participants and as volunteers and future coaches, officials and administrators (see Guideline 6).

5.3 Strategies - Sharing Resources

- Identify how you can combine to share resources with other groups at all levels (eg national, state, regional and club).
- Exchange services across sports and organisations (eg coaching, refereeing, professional development for teachers).
- Offer the use of equipment and facilities
- Coordinate an approach to share costs such as maintenance and replacement of equipment.
- Consider possible sponsorship conflicts.
- Recognise individuals and groups who share their resources.

Building Links

All organisations should develop a strategy for networking with others for mutual benefit. Bringing together the experience of all sport providers will help to find common solutions to common problems.

Everyone has a vested interest in providing better sporting opportunities through

- a systematic and coordinated delivery of junior sport
- young people having a pathway for ongoing sports participation
- young people being able to increase their understanding of a range of sports and to specialise in specific sports.

All levels of government assist in providing sport opportunities for young people.

Accessing their expertise and resources in building links and delivering programs is helpful for improving outcomes for young people.

The Role of Schools

Schools are an important provider of the building blocks of sport as well as sporting competition.

¹ The term "club" is used to cover community sporting organisations

Through schools' physical education and sport, the message can be promoted to young people and parents of the

- physical, psychological and social benefits of sport for young people
- need to encourage participation in sports their children enjoy
- relationship between early participation and life-long involvement in sport
- range of ways to be involved (eg coach, official, administrator).

Schools can also provide information on where and how to access local sport programs.

In addition, teachers and senior students are a valuable resource to support administration, coaching, refereeing etc across school and club sport.

5.4 Strategies – Schools forming links

- Identify and liaise with local sporting organisations whether or not the sport is currently played in the school.
- Coordinate sporting programs to avoid clashes.
- Promote, support and recognise strong links across organisations.
- Set up a data base of contacts and programs.
- Provide a checklist of requirements for clubs trying to get access to schools (suitability checks etc).
- Encourage the joint use of facilities.

The Role of Clubs

Clubs play a key role in providing

- education for young people in basic skills and knowledge about their sport
- expertise (eg coaching clinics)
- the opportunity to take talented young people on to elite levels of performance and competition
- the framework to enable young people to continue in the sport beyond their school years as a player and/or in sport delivery (as a coach, official or administrator)
- support to schools when state development officers provide programs in the school.

Clubs can give school teachers and other clubs practical assistance to introduce their

sport effectively. This could include training and support materials for the sport providers who go into schools.

Sports can also work with other sports to share ideas and resources for mutual benefit.

Clubs also provide a valuable social network for young people to meet others with a shared interest in sport.

5.5 Strategies – Clubs forming links

- Identify what your club is able to offer your local school/s or other clubs.
- Appoint a key contact person for your club.
- Make contact with other organisations, and establish how best to work together.
- Keep a data base of key contacts.
- Contact your state sport association and local and state government to see what support they offer.
- Ask schools if you can have registration days at their sports venue.
- Provide a professional service (eg be organised, on time, and have enough equipment) so other organisations want to build links with you.
- Request state development officers tell you when they are conducting programs in schools and follow up on this opportunity.
- Evaluate your links and work towards improving participation of young people in sport.

Key Message

Links among organisations allow a comprehensive sports experience for young people. Working together

- facilitates the systematic and co-ordinated delivery of sport with best use of facilities and resources
- provides a smooth transition between school and community sport helping to keep participants involved long-term.

Key Points – Forming Links

- When schools and community organisations work positively together in providing sport, young people benefit.
- Links among stakeholders can improve gaps and overlaps in junior sport delivery.
- Consistency of procedures (eg age groupings, rules) can be improved through cooperation and collaboration.
- Sharing resources (eg facilities, equipment and personnel) benefits young people.
- Organisations offering different sports should liaise to see what ideas they can borrow and how they can help each other.
- Schools play an important role in introducing and promoting sport to young people and their parents/carers.
- Clubs provide particular expertise in sports and offer pathways for young people to continue in sport in the long-term as a player and/or coach, official, administrator.
- Contact government departments to access their expertise and resources in building links and delivering programs.
- With collaboration and consultation sport providers can enhance the big picture of sport delivery so
 - ◇ all young people will make a long-term commitment to sport
 - ◇ talented young people will continue onto elite levels of sport.

community sports organisations to introduce into a school three sports with active clubs in the area

5. **Active Australian Schools Network** explains how the AASN works in linking schools with clubs.

Resources

Schools and Clubs - Ideas for Working Together. 1993 Australian Sports Commission
This publication presents a comprehensive range of ideas schools and clubs can use to initiate and develop links.

1. IGA Team Athletics

IGA Team Athletics

IGA Team Athletics was developed by Athletics Australia, with the support of the ASC, and is funded by the Independent Grocers of Australia (IGA) for primary school aged children.

Initially the program targeted primary schools that were part of the Active Australia Schools Network.

It is a **team-based athletics program** designed

- ⇒ to make it easy for teachers to run an indoor or outdoor activities program within school hours
- ⇒ with activities removing pressure of individual competition
- ⇒ with fundamental skills and games on a CD Rom to show how the program can work successfully in schools.

The **IGA Team Athletics Program** is aligned with each state curriculum for all primary school year levels so that children achieve the necessary core learning outcomes.

Further Reading

Guideline

- 4 *Sport Pathways*

Case Studies

1. **IGA Team Athletics** illustrates how a program was provided in schools by the team efforts of four organisations
2. **Play Ball** illustrates school-club links to increase access to baseball for students and increase club membership
3. **Henley High School Links** shows the benefits of linking with state sporting organisations, clubs and government.
4. **Kingston Community Action Plan** illustrates links between state government, schools and

2. Play Ball

The Victorian Baseball Association (VBA) and the Victorian AASN instigated discussions in an effort to get serious about school/club links. The outcome was the development of the **Play Ball** program conducted through the Geelong Baseball Club at the Geelong Baseball Complex.

Key Stakeholders include

- 6 AASN Primary Schools, 1 AASN Secondary School
- Victorian AASN Coordinator
- Geelong Baseball Club
- Victorian Baseball Association (VBA)
- Barwan Regional Sports Assembly
- Geelong Local Government Network
- Baseball Australia.

Aims of the program are to

- improve links between schools and baseball clubs in the area
- develop ongoing relationships with schools to sustain these links
- increase club membership.

To **promote** the program the Victorian AASN contacted 7 AASN schools in Geelong, the VBA, Geelong Baseball Club and Barwan Regional Sports Assembly. Bringing the stakeholders together helped to

- develop personal club/school connections
- plan individual school strategies for promotion
- learn about successful programs from teachers.

Funding was provided by Baseball Australia, Major League Baseball International in conjunction with the ASC, Baseball Australia and the VBA.

This money was used to provide participating school teams with packaged equipment.

The VBA has also pledged additional funds to employ a competition coordinator.

3. Henley High School Links

Henley High School, a specialist physical education and sports school relies heavily on links and partnerships with state sporting organisations and clubs and government.

The school offers 7 sports each semester and involves accredited coaches provided by the state sporting organisations to run parts of the courses.

The coaching sessions occur weekly and often involve the use of state level facilities for sessions.

Students benefit through

- high level coaching
- exposure to sport pathways
- elite programs.

Teachers benefit by

- undergoing coaching accreditation
- attending professional development courses
- interaction with state coaches.

Links with the local council, sporting clubs and the Education Department of South Australia resulted in the development of new sport facilities (eg new netball and tennis courts).

Benefits include

- sharing other facilities (eg the oval with the local cricket club)
- maintenance done by the council to mutual benefit of all parties.
- involvement of students in

Importantly, the partnership resulted in students accessing better facilities and pathways to club sport.

4. Kingston Community's Action Plan

Kingston was recognised by the Department of Housing as an area suffering from multiple disadvantage and designated a Community Renewal Area.

A project supported by the community's action plan provided school children with free access to an **8 week sports program** at the school outside school hours.

Three sports (soccer, Australian football, and tennis) ran in a rotation in three schools. They were selected based on

- local clubs in the area
- girls and boys could play
- clubs had development officers to assist in delivery.

Objectives were to

- provide all primary school children with regular physical activity
- increase opportunities for clubs to develop links with the community through schools
- develop partnerships between the community and sport clubs
- increase local volunteers' skills in delivering school-based activities.

Benefits include

- equipment provision in schools increasing in-school sport
- improved skills for volunteers (ie group management, administration, liaison with schools).

5. Active Australia Schools Network

The Active Australia Schools Network (AASN) helps to facilitate better links between young people and sporting organisations.

State and territory coordinators help schools interested in fostering sport in the school and its community.

AASN can provide assistance by helping to set up initial contact with local sports clubs and community organisations, and by providing information about how to

- build sustainable relationships with local sports clubs
- optimise sports participation in schools.

The **AASN** is coordinated through the Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (ACHPER).

It has more than 950 member schools and many others have expressed an interest in joining the network.

A **national coordinator** provides a conduit for information across Australia and assembles and shares resources among all states and territories.

Schools benefit through

- displaying the AASN logo to indicate to the community their commitment to students' participation in physical activity, including organized sport
- using the provided research information to educate teachers and parents
- professional development for teachers and community members
- better use of community resources (eg club volunteers and sport facilities)
- meeting national education policies that support broader community involvement in the education and development of young people.

Clubs benefit from

- better access to students to encourage sport participation
- increased involvement of school teachers and students in club activities
- better use of school facilities.