



Australian Government
Australian Sports Commission

COACH'S WORKBOOK

Module 2

Active After-school
Communities program
Communication and
behaviour management

**Active After-school
Communities**

Helping kids and communities get active

Community Coach Training Program Module 2

Module time: 2 hours

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Communication and behaviour management

On completing this module, participants will possess strategies for communicating effectively with, and managing groups of, primary school-aged children. They will also be able to communicate effectively with other AASC program stakeholders.

SPECIFIC LEARNING OUTCOMES

On completing this module, course participants will be able to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the key stages of development of primary school-aged children and their implications for coaches
- demonstrate effective communication strategies for working with primary school-aged children
- develop supportive relationships with primary school-aged children
- manage individual behaviour of primary school-aged children
- demonstrate effective group organisation
- outline strategies to provide effective communication to other stakeholders — parents, supervisors and teachers
- effectively deal with conflict using the AASC grievance process.

This module is designed to increase participant awareness of the developmental characteristics of primary school-aged children and the implications of these for coaching children. It will also encourage participants to take a critical look at how they communicate in general, and specifically, to identify how they might need to modify their communication strategies with primary school-aged children in order to ensure that they communicate effectively. The module is intended to help participants realise that some communication strategies are more effective than others when dealing with primary school-aged children, particularly children with a disability or from different ethnic backgrounds. Effective communication is critical to ensure that the correct message is delivered and received. It also minimises problems and maximises the enjoyment and satisfaction of all concerned. The importance of effective communication with other program stakeholders is also considered, as are strategies for managing groups of primary school-aged children and dealing with conflict.

2.1 Key stages of development and their implications for coaches

2.1.1 What a coach needs to know about children

Research has shown that there are a number of important social growth and development characteristics that should be taken into account when coaching children. Coaching sessions should be organised to:

- allow children to contribute to their own learning
- contain a balance between effort and rest
- have a wide variety of activities
- cater for children of different cultural and economic backgrounds
- cater for children with a disability
- cater for children with different levels of ability
- encourage all children, boys and girls, both talented and less talented, to participate to the best of their ability
- include variations of gender and ability groupings
- focus on individual needs

- develop basic skills
- give all children the opportunity to experience success.

Examples of children's physical, social and personality characteristics, their level of understanding and the practical implications for coaches are set out below. These characteristics may vary among children.

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS	COACHES SHOULD
<p>CHILDREN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are concerned with themselves • are learning social roles and skills • are learning how to cooperate and to compete • come from different cultural and social backgrounds • are learning how to cope with winning and losing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promote cooperation, teamwork and fair play during activities • reinforce the contribution all children make to the group • encourage children to strive to win by cooperating with team members and competing fairly with opponents • provide a supportive environment and show sensitivity to individual differences • help children enjoy their sport
CHILDREN'S LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING	COACHES SHOULD
<p>CHILDREN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are learning the best way to do things • are unable to process too much information • do not do things automatically 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use role models to demonstrate good performance • introduce one thing at a time, keep instructions or questions short and simple • allow time for children to absorb information and practise skills
CHILDREN'S PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS	COACHES SHOULD
<p>CHILDREN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are very active • lack fine motor control • develop at different rates • have different levels of ability • are growing, their bodies are changing all the time • are less tolerant of heat and cold 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • plan a variety of activities • allow time to learn skills • vary activities to ability levels • be aware that growth periods will alter the child's coordination and skills • ensure they wear adequate clothing, drink enough fluids and that activities are modified if necessary
CHILDREN'S PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS	COACHES SHOULD
<p>CHILDREN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are easily motivated • have a wide range of reasons for playing sport • are sensitive to criticism and failure • have a short attention span 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listen to what the children say • praise and reward accordingly to reinforce effort and improvement • be positive, compliment effort and the parts of the skill that were performed correctly • maintain interest with a variety of activities, maximum participation and limited talk

Remember

- Recognise children's capacities
- Be patient, understanding and supportive
- Adopt the AASC Community Coach's Code of Ethics
- Give simple precise information
- Do not be discouraged if improvement does not occur immediately
- Treat each child equally, irrespective of ability and background

(Australian Sports Commission 1992, *Coaching Children*, ASC, Canberra)

Children change as they develop. If coaches are to provide the best possible learning and play experiences for children, coaches need to consider where the children are 'at' and what will be most beneficial for the children at their stage of development. This requires careful planning.

ACTIVITY 2.1: EXTENSION (OR ALTERNATIVE) EXERCISE

It is important to recognise that the developmental characteristics, and therefore the needs, of children in the 4 to 8 years, 9 to 10 years and 10 to 12 years age groups are quite different. This can have important implications for the coach. This activity encourages coaches to consider the developmental differences between these different age groups and the implications that these differences have for coaches.

Using Option 2 'What you need to know about children' at Appendix 2.1 (page 50), complete the right-hand column: 'What coaches should do' in response to the developmental characteristics of different age groups of primary school-aged children (4 to 8 years, 9 to 10 years, 10 to 12 years).

TIP!

If you are working with, or are likely to work with, very young children (K-2) have a look at the section on 'Tips for working with young kids' in the Playing for Life resource kit booklet.

2.2 What do we mean by effective communication?

'Communication is an essential key to good coaching. A coach may possess all the technical knowledge and skills of a particular structured physical activity, but if they are unable to effectively communicate this information, it is of little use'

(Australian Sports Commission 2004, *Beginning Coaching: general principles*, 3rd edn, ASC, Canberra, p. 57).

Some of the benefits of good communication are that it:

- improves morale
- provides a sense of involvement (belonging)
- promotes commitment and understanding
- is more efficient (saves time and effort for coaches and children)
- promotes better teamwork.

Communication is a complex process that involves far more than the spoken word. Effective communication not only involves skill in sending messages, but skill in interpreting messages. Communication skills, like all other skills in coaching, need to be practised to improve coaching effectiveness.

Communication is a two-way process and needs to be a partnership between the coach and child (or parent or school/OSHCS staff member) to succeed.

2.3 Communication skills for community coaches

The three key communication skills that coaches need to master if they are to be effective communicators are:

- verbal communication (the spoken word) — this includes the use of questions, providing feedback and giving instructions
- non-verbal communication (the unspoken word)
- active listening.

2.3.1 Verbal communication: the spoken word³

When coaching, verbal communication can be the most commonly used method of communication. It can direct play, manage groups, organise games, provide instant feedback, instruct children and question to achieve understanding.

Verbal communication has two main levels of meaning:

- what the speaker thinks they are saying
- what the listener thinks is being said.

Both are affected by the experiences of the speaker and the listener. The more similar these two messages, the better the communication. To increase the chance of the correct message being passed on, the speaker should think clearly about what they want to say before they say it.

The importance of questioning

- The use of questioning techniques is critical for coaches who use the Playing for Life approach. Questions allow and encourage children to contribute to the game. They can also appeal to children's imagination, particularly small children, and can encourage children to reflect on what they have done or will do.

Providing positive feedback to children

Giving appropriate feedback is important in helping children develop their skills and confidence. The feedback provided to children should be:

- general (for example 'good throw') and specific (for example 'great shot — you flicked your wrist')
- positive, constructive and corrective (not negative)
- clear and concise
- delivered as soon as possible (ideally immediately) after the action or behaviour for which it is being provided
- discrete — unless all of the children are making the same mistake there is no need to stop everyone. Provide feedback, where required, discretely (that is, quietly to the child concerned without stopping everyone else). This has the effect of maximising participation and also avoids embarrassing or 'exposing' an individual child (if they have not got it quite 'right').
- more for beginners, less as they become better.

Stand back and see the whole picture first — all of the children may be making the same mistake.

³ This section has been adapted from Australian Sports Commission 2004, *Beginning Coaching: general principles*, 3rd edn, ASC, Canberra.

A good method for feedback, particularly with beginners, is to use the **sandwich technique** — layer the 'corrective' piece of feedback with a positive comment either side. An example of this could be, 'Your positioning is good, concentrate on keeping your hands high and wide. Keep up the effort!'

Corrective feedback

2.3.2 Non-verbal communication: the unspoken word⁴

A large percentage (studies suggest over 80 per cent) of the meaning obtained from communication comes from non-verbal cues. If non-verbal cues match or complement the spoken word, the communication can be more effective. If, however, the non-verbal message conflicts with what is said, the message will be confusing. For example, if a coach tells the children that they have done a great job and then lets their shoulders slump and sighs heavily, the children are more likely to get the message that the coach is not really happy with them.

There are four main areas of non-verbal communication:

VISUAL	This includes all aspects of body language, such as posture, gestures, facial expressions and eye contact
TOUCH	<p>Touch can be a very effective way of imparting meaning, for example, a pat on the back or hand on the shoulder, or using manual manipulation (physically guiding an athlete through a movement) as a teaching skill.</p> <p>Significant caution must be taken with physical contact. Every athlete will feel comfortable with different amounts of physical contact and closeness, and this should be respected. In addition there are legal implications with sexual harassment. A good rule of thumb is to only use physical contact if it is essential and then ask the athlete if they are comfortable with you using it. Coaches should familiarise themselves with the 'Guidelines for Coaches' document of the Harassment-free Sport series at www.ausport.gov.au/ethics/hfs.asp.</p>
VOICE EXPRESSION	A phrase often used is 'it's not what you say, but how you say it'. The tone and volume of voice, and rate of speech can dramatically change what is being said. For example, depending on how you say 'no', it can express fear, doubt, amazement, sarcasm or anger. How you say something can also gain attention, maintain interest or emphasise points.
ROLE MODEL	This area covers the other things a coach can do to communicate to the children, for example, arriving at training on time and being dressed for action. Making the effort to do these things communicates to the children that you are interested in what you are doing.

⁴ This section has been adapted from Australian Sports Commission, 2004, *Beginning Coaching: general principles*. 3rd edn, ASC, Canberra.

Skilled coaches will use non-verbal communication to improve their coaching effectiveness. Using the SOLVER checklist is an easy way to remember how to use non-verbal communication in a positive manner:

- S** Squarely face the child and move to their height level.
- O** Open posture. Crossed arms or legs puts up a barrier and suggests an unwillingness to listen.
- L** Lean slightly forward. This demonstrates interest and shows you are listening.
- V** Verbal comments are relevant. Comments should also support what the child is saying.
- E** Eye contact. Contact should be made and maintained, without overdoing it.
- R** Relax. Be comfortable and show it.

Effective communication

Children respond differently to various forms of communication. Some will find visual cues most effective, others respond to verbal cues and others to touch. Using a number of forms of communication will not only maintain a group's interest, but increases the chance of finding a communication 'trigger' that works for each individual child. Experienced coaches will know intuitively what forms of communication work best with their children. Communication is also more effective when a coach encourages open communication and welcomes input from their children. This involves establishing an environment of mutual trust and respect between the child and coach.

2.3.3 Active listening

An important skill for coaches to master is active listening. This is when you concentrate completely on what the child is saying, both in their actions and words. This can be one of the hardest skills for a coach, as they feel it is their job to direct and will often want to butt in or solve the problem.

There are large advantages to a coach listening actively to their children:

- It shows interest and fosters a positive environment.
- It reduces the chance of being misunderstood.
- It encourages further communication.
- The child is more likely to listen to the coach if the coach listens to them.
- The coach can learn from the child.

Four simple steps to improve active listening

STOP	Stop what you are doing and pay attention to what the child is telling you. This may be difficult in a coaching situation with other things going on but paying attention, even briefly, lets the child know that they are important. Do not interrupt.
LOOK	Make eye contact with the child by being at their level and facing them. Show interest in your expression and look for non-verbal cues the child might be giving out.
LISTEN	Focus your attention on what the child is saying by listening to their words and the emotion in what they are saying. Use non-verbal cues such as nodding, smiling or frowning, appropriate to the context of the message. Support this with encouraging words such as 'Uh hum', 'I see', 'Really?' to show you are focused on what the child is saying.

RESPOND

Re-state what the child has told you in your own words (paraphrasing). This shows you have been listening, checks that you did understand and can summarise what was talked about. Remain neutral and supportive. Use open questions to prompt the child for more information if needed.

Key points: effective communication

- Convey instructions to the participants clearly and provide a Playing for Life demonstration.
- Check the participants' understanding of the instructions and give them the opportunity to ask questions.
- Provide encouragement and/or feedback (specific, concise, constructive and timely) to each participant to encourage learning.
- Use non-verbal communication techniques effectively (for example, maintain eye contact and provide non-verbal cues) and ensure they are consistent with any verbal communication.
- Use questioning techniques to allow and encourage children to contribute to the game, to appeal to children's imagination, particularly small children, and to encourage children to reflect on what they have done or will do.
- Utilise active listening techniques.
- Use a range of fun communication techniques to suit diverse groups.

ACTIVITY 2.2: EXTENSION EXERCISE

Using the self-evaluation (or peer evaluation) form at Appendix 2.2, honestly assess your current communication strengths and weaknesses. Then set yourself some specific and realistic, yet challenging, goals to improve your weaknesses.

2.4 Make it fun: communication techniques to suit diverse groups

ACTIVITY 2.3: COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES

Children want to have fun while they are participating in structured physical activity. What communication techniques can you employ to help make it fun? What have other participants in the group tried with children they have worked with?

2.6 Inclusive communication

Although there are some general characteristics and communication needs to be considered when coaching children, every child is different. In addition, some children will have more varying needs than others.

It is important to emphasise that the AASC program, and physical activity and sport in general, is for everyone. A coach should not see the inclusion of children with varying needs as a problem, but consider it a challenge. All children can be included if a coach learns to 'think outside the square'. By learning to vary communication methods to suit the needs of, for example, children who have a disability or who do not speak English, a coach actually improves their ability to communicate with all children. Effective communication with all children is simply good coaching.

ACTIVITY 2.5: INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION

How would you modify your communication strategies (types of communication, positioning of yourself or the child, etc.) if there was a child present who:

a had difficulty hearing instructions

b had 'tunnel vision' (in other words, had a very narrow field of vision)

c was easily distracted

d had difficulty understanding or speaking English

Things to consider include:

a difficulty hearing instructions

- attract the child's attention before speaking to them (for example, a tap on the shoulder)
- make sure you are facing the child and that they can see your face as you speak
- speak clearly
- be aware that you may need to repeat instructions
- move to a quieter area if practical
- use visual cues/demonstrations
- if all else fails, write it down, or draw or show a picture

b 'tunnel vision'

- make sure you are facing the child
- speak clearly in a normal voice
- describe requirements as well as using visual cues
- always introduce yourself by name, and if moving on to another child, let them know verbally

c easily distracted

- keep instructions concise

d difficulty understanding or speaking English

- speak clearly and slowly
- try to avoid the use of slang
- use visual as well as auditory cues.

2.7 Managing group and individual child behaviour

Good discipline and strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour are essential to carrying out an effective coaching program.

2.7.1 Why do children misbehave?

A lack of interest and attention or inappropriate behaviour may be caused by:

- the coach talking too much
- activities that continue for long periods
- children waiting too long between turns
- activities that are boring, and not providing sufficient challenge to the children
- unclear rules or expectations
- a failure to show concern for the wellbeing of the child.

In other words, sometimes the coach's program, organisation or style are at fault in causing disruptive behaviour.

It is important that the coach is prepared to evaluate each activity session, especially if things do not seem to be working (for further information about coach self-evaluation, see Australian Sports Commission, 2004, *Beginning Coaching: general principles*, 3rd edn, ASC, Canberra. The Playing for Life session planner also provides space for you to evaluate your session).

ACTIVITY 2.6: WHY DO CHILDREN MISBEHAVE?

Consider any behavioural problems you may have in your program, or you know of in another. What might be contributing to the problem?

2.7.2 Strategies for preventing behavioural problems⁵

Programs that provide variety, fun, motivation, active participation and development of skills, and where the coach demonstrates interest in the wellbeing of every child will help to reduce behavioural problems.

By implementing the following strategies from the beginning of the program (it is hard to implement or change behaviours once bad habits have formed), coaches can minimise behavioural problems:

- **create the right group atmosphere** — get to know each child personally, listen, encourage, involve in decision-making, be happy, guide behaviours, encourage good sporting attitude
- **establish expectations, develop group rules** — establish clear expectations about attendance, punctuality and behaviour
 - develop group rules
 - ask: ‘Who makes the group rules?’ Suggestion: the coach makes and shares rules (explains the reason for each rule) and the group develops consequences (time out, call parents, miss a session, pick up gear). Do not use physical activity as a punishment, make it relative to the offence and deliver respectfully not with anger
 - inform administration and parents of expectations, rules and initial disciplinary measures that will be used
 - peer guidelines and rules are probably the most effective, yet take time to implement
- **create group routines** — children are more likely to misbehave if they do not know what to do, for example, where to stand at the start of a session, during demonstrations or when the whistle is blown. Be prepared to change the routine if participants become bored
- **be fair and consistent** — applying rules fairly and consistently will ensure children are prepared to accept disciplinary actions. The coach’s attitude towards all children, regardless of their ability, gender or cultural background should be the same
- **catch them doing ‘good’** — let children know and look less for mistakes, more for good behaviour or performance. Give them personal attention when they are not demanding it
- **reward positive behaviour with praise and privileges**
 - what could be some suitable privileges?
 - use role modelling
- **conduct fun activities that maximise participation**
 - understand what motivates children to be involved, plan carefully, use a variety of activities and simple instructions, maximise participation time and skill learning
 - ensure there is enough equipment available for the number of children
 - activities must be challenging to prevent boredom. Consider modifying the rules to create something different and fun. For example, try a Playing for Life net/court activity where children (or at least the children with better motor skills) are restricted to using only one hand

⁵ This section has been adapted from the ‘Essentials to Coaching Children’ course, Volunteer and Coach Education Centre, Office for Recreation and Sport SA, 2005; Australian Sports Commission 2004, *Beginning Coaching: general principles*, 3rd edn, ASC, Canberra.

- **plodders/youngest/smallest/tallest** — praise small improvements, ask how they are going, feeling or their opinion on the game so far, praise them publicly and give them small challenges
- **group clowns** — give them more responsibility, do not always acknowledge their attention-seeking behaviour.

ACTIVITY 2.7: PREVENTING BEHAVIOURAL PROBLEMS

What could you do (or have you done previously) to prevent behavioural problems in your AASC program? What have other participants found effective?

2.7.3 Strategies for dealing with inappropriate behaviour⁶

Children come to AASC programs from a variety of backgrounds and experiences and, no matter how well the coach has prepared, problems may arise from time to time. Following are some strategies to effectively deal with inappropriate behaviour:

- initially, quietly correct the child's behaviour
 - children, even young ones, know that there are rules of behaviour that are considered acceptable. Just drawing the child's attention to the fact that they have been noticed is usually enough to get them to change their behaviour
 - do this as soon as possible after the inappropriate behaviour occurs
 - alternatively, use non-verbal cues where possible — move closer, nod, wink, frown slightly or stare
 - join in and partner the problem child, without commenting
 - divert their attention — ask a skill-related question: 'John, how is that serve coming along?', 'Sarah, can you organise this activity with your group, please?'
 - praise a good aspect of their involvement
 - ask them if they are having difficulty
 - remind them of the group rules and appropriate behaviour (privately)
 - address the behaviour, not the character, of the child — 'That's a silly thing to do, Matthew', not 'You are silly Matthew'
 - find out why they are misbehaving and ask if it is helpful to the group (privately).

If the behaviour is not corrected, then:

- relate the problem back to group rules
 - the coach might ask the child, 'What are you doing? Is this against our rules?' then ask what they should be doing

⁶ This section has been adapted from the 'Essentials to Coaching Children' course, Volunteer and Coach Education Centre, Office for Recreation and Sport SA, 2005; Australian Sports Commission 2004, *Beginning Coaching: general principles*, 3rd edn, ASC, Canberra.

ACTIVITY 2.9: DEALING WITH INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR

How would you deal with the following situations? How could you prevent them occurring in the future?

Problem 1

You notice one of the children who has well-developed motor skills telling off a less-gifted child for missing a catch and losing the game. What do you do?

Problem 2

One of the children's parents is constantly yelling out negative remarks to other children in your group. What should you do?

Problem 3

A few of the children in your group are making fun of one of the other children who wears traditional headwear for religious reasons. What do you do?

Problem 4

The children have lost interest in the activity and are starting to misbehave.

2.8 Effective group organisation: key components

In addition to effective communication skills, effective organisational skills can assist the coach to manage group and individual child behaviour, and to maximise participation, learning and enjoyment.

Components of effective group organisation include the following:

- **Planning** — following and adjusting your session plan to suit the needs of the group, ensuring safety elements such as warm-up, braking and finish-up activities are completed.
- **Communicating clearly** — and define playing area boundaries and instructions to the children.
- **Using space and resources** — allocate sufficient space and resources for the activity and/or game for all children.
- **Safety practices** — brief the children on safety practices, procedures and appropriate behaviour.
- **Playing formations to maximise communication and group control** — utilise a range of playing activities, formations and group organisation strategies to maximise communication with the group.
- **Dealing with mixed abilities** — include children from a wide range of ability levels using strategies such as grouping by ability or mixing ability levels where appropriate.
- **Maximising participation and time on task** — maximise participation and interaction, while adjusting or refining skills discretely on an individualised basis.
- **Maximising safety and enjoyment** — maintain group control to ensure the safety and enjoyment of the individual and group.
- **Reviewing your group organisation strategies** — self-evaluation post-session to determine how you could improve future sessions. (Use the Session Evaluation section on the Playing for Life session planner [page 123] to record your self-evaluation comments.)

TIP!

For some ideas on gaining children's attention and organising children into groups quickly, fairly and kindly, see the 'Forming groups' activity cards in the Playing for Life resource kit. The 'Essentials for Coaching Children' course resource (Volunteer and Coach Education Centre, Office for Recreation and Sport SA, 2005) also has some good ideas for organising children into groups.

ACTIVITY 2.11: EFFECTIVE GROUP ORGANISATION

What are six things that you need to do to ensure your group is effectively organised, for example, equipment; rehearsed plans; contingency activities; energisers; start-up, transition and forming groups activities; high activity strategies?

2.9.1 Developing effective and supportive relationships with parents⁷

What do parents seek from physical activity programs?

A first step in developing an effective and supportive relationship with parents is to understand why they have involved their children in the AASC program in the first place. Parents will have different reasons for doing so and will be looking for varied outcomes. Some of these will include:

- safety
- fun
- child-minding service
- family involvement
- success
- groundwork laid for future sporting success.

Working with parents

Parents play a vital role concerning the involvement of children in structured physical activity programs. Parental expectations have a significant bearing on the attitudes of children towards participation, behaviour, levels of performance and enjoyment.

Establishing effective communication with parents is important. Through a cooperative effort, parents can contribute to a child's experience in structured physical activity programs, so coaches should take time to interact with them and do everything possible to see they understand the coaching role and responsibilities. (Note: given that the Playing for Life approach to coaching is different to the traditional approach, it is also important to effectively communicate the benefits of this approach to parents early in the program.)

Parents' attitudes can go from one extreme to another — from the over-protective to the aggressive 'demander', while others take no interest at all. Some can make a coach's task nearly impossible, while others are totally supportive and of great assistance.

Involving parents

Get parents on side and involve them from the beginning of the program. This can be achieved by:

- keeping them informed of:
 - your expectations of them and their children (punctuality, attendance, behaviour, etc.)
 - any important developments
- explaining your coaching philosophy and the benefits of the Playing for Life approach
- encouraging their help and participation — many will not feel they can spare the time or have the confidence to take on a major role, but will be happy to help out with smaller tasks
- encouraging them to follow your lead of providing positive feedback — discourage destructive criticism of children; offer to help parents who are interested in better understanding the Playing for Life approach
- respecting parents' needs and the concern they have for their child — be prepared to listen when parents have concerns or issues to raise. Although the coach has the final say in matters affecting the program, the parent may have a valid point.

If coaches can:

- develop a rapport with parents from the outset
- share similar goals for their children
- have parents helping

fewer problems will arise during the program.

Opening the lines of communication will help — this must be reinforced during the program.

⁷ This section has been adapted from the 'Essentials to Coaching Children' course, Volunteer and Coach Education Centre, Office for Recreation and Sport SA, 2005; Australian Sports Commission 2004, *Beginning Coaching: general principles*, 3rd edn, ASC, Canberra.

Strategies for gaining parents' support

Strategies for gaining parents' support include:

- introductory letter or meeting
 - **introduction and welcome** — introduce yourself, briefly outlining your coaching experience and qualifications
 - **aims of the AASC program** — discuss some of the aims and objectives of the AASC program (to enhance physical activity and to develop a lifelong love of structured physical activity) and research findings about why children like to get involved in physical activity or sport programs. Ask parents to think about why their child wants to get involved
 - **briefly explain the Playing for Life approach and why it is used in the AASC program** — it maximises involvement and learning, includes all children, caters for all ability levels, allows children to learn at their own pace and it is fun. In addition, a good multi-skill program such as Playing for Life provides an excellent foundation for children who may wish to play a sport (it will be necessary to assuage the concerns of some parents)
 - **cover housekeeping matters** — explain things such as session times, where to meet at the beginning and end of a session, what their child should bring and wear, etc.
 - **seek assistance where appropriate** — anything that helps to involve parents more (you should talk to your school/OSHCS first to determine their policy and procedures regarding this). This can be a bit fuzzy and parents are often afraid of an 'unlimited' commitment. Instead say, 'I need help to do ... ,' Give a start/finish time and let them know that they can do a 'one-off' if that's all they want or are able to do
 - **program rules** — provide a broad outline of your rules and expectations (children should have input into rules at an early activity session). Cover what you expect concerning behaviour and how you intend to enforce the rules
 - **parents' roles** — point out the value of parents taking an active interest in their child's involvement and what they can do to help at home. Discuss how you expect parents to act if they attend sessions
 - **question time** — provide an opportunity for parents to ask questions
- engage their help
- exchange phone numbers
- maintain open lines of communication
- thank them for their support when appropriate.

2.9.2 Other useful resources for building relationships

- Including Children and Young People, information sheet, NSW Commission for Children and Young People, Sydney. (A copy of this information sheet is at Appendix 2.3. A pdf version can be downloaded from www.kids.nsw.gov.au/files/factsheet1.pdf.) The NSW Commission for Children and Young People web site has a range of useful information and resources regarding young children and is well worth a look.
- VicHealth has also developed a useful resource for establishing, developing and maintaining productive partnerships. The 'Partnerships Analysis Tool: for partners in health promotion' can be found on VicHealth's web site at www.vichealth.vic.gov.au.

It is very important to promote the benefits of the Playing for Life approach to all stakeholders and to share program objectives and philosophies, engaging parents and families, and influencing their attitudes towards physical activity.

**ACTIVE AFTER-SCHOOL COMMUNITIES
COMMUNITY COACH TRAINING PROGRAM**

Module 2 Appendixes

Appendix 2.1

What you need to know about children

What you need to know about children (Option 1)

Children's social characteristics	Coaches should
Children: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are concerned with themselves • are learning social roles and skills • are learning how to cooperate and to compete • come from different cultural and social backgrounds • are learning how to cope with winning and losing 	
Children's level of understanding	Coaches should
Children: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are learning the best way to do things • are unable to process too much information • do not do things automatically 	
Children's physical characteristics	Coaches should
Children: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are very active • lack fine motor control • develop at different rates • have different levels of ability • are growing, their bodies are changing all the time • are less tolerant of heat and cold 	
Children's personality characteristics	Coaches should
Children: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are easily motivated • have a wide range of reasons for playing sport • are sensitive to criticism and failure • have a short attention span 	

What you need to know about children (Option 2)

General characteristics — 4 to 8-year olds	Coaches should
<p>4 to 8-year olds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are starting to become more socialised • learn by seeing, hearing, smelling, feeling, tasting and moving • express themselves through movement • thrive on vigorous activity, developing as they climb, run, jump, hop, skip or keep time to music • have a relatively short attention span, but are very curious about their environment 	
<p>General characteristics — 9 to 10-year olds</p>	<p>Coaches should</p>
<p>9 to 10-year olds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have a wider range of interests and a longer attention span • work more as a group • are developing skills in good leadership and teamwork as well as in body control, strength and endurance • have improving fine motor skills and coordination • are beginning to learn more through vicarious experiences • use communication skills and the number system to deal with situations both in and out of school 	
<p>General characteristics — 10 to 12-year olds</p>	<p>Coaches should</p>
<p>10 to 12-year olds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are sometimes self-conscious about appearance • differ widely in physical maturation and emotional stability • can grow rapidly and sometimes have poor posture and coordination and are restless • peer approval is often more important than adult approval • are ready for a higher level of intellectual skills that involve reasoning, noting cause-and-effect relationships, drawing conclusions, etc. 	

Appendix 2.2

Extension exercise: self or peer evaluation of communication strengths and weaknesses

Complete this work sheet honestly, identifying your communication strengths and weaknesses.

Skill	Strengths	Weaknesses
Verbal communication		
Non-verbal communication		
Active listening		
Practical demonstration		
Feedback to children (types of comments made to children concerning the task/s they are executing)		
Feedback from children (what type of feedback did the child give the coach pertaining to the execution of task/s?)		

Overall comments:

Set yourself some specific and realistic, yet challenging, goals that you would like to achieve in relation to your communication:

a Verbal

b Non-verbal

c Active listening

d Practical demonstrations

e Feedback to children

f Feedback from children

Appendix 2.3

Including children and young people

This fact sheet is from the NSW Commission for Children and Young People. A PDF version can be downloaded at <http://www.kids.nsw.gov.au/files/factsheet1.pdf>.

Participation is an important way of helping to build a sense of connection between people and the communities in which we live. It helps people gain access to the things they need to ensure a sense of wellbeing and a good quality of life. Participation means being involved in the processes where decisions are made that may have an impact on our lives.

The participation of children and young people

Children and young people already participate in society in varying ways. They live in families, go to school, play sport, belong to organisations, are employed, pay taxes and are consumers.

When children and young people develop strong, caring relationships with their communities, they are more likely to grow up safe and healthy, participate in education, culture and employment and not become involved in violence and crime.

Involving children and young people in decisions helps them understand how decisions are made and develops their judgement. What they learn from participation will be carried through to their adult lives where they continue to benefit the community.

Children and young people have ideas and opinions on what directly affects them. While their attitudes may differ from the people who have always made decisions on their behalf they want to feel that their family and communities value their contributions.

'Children have the right to express their views freely in all matters that affect them and that their views must be given due weight' (The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child [Article 12]).

What happens if people don't participate?

When people are excluded from family life, schools, neighbourhoods, work and so on, they can become isolated and cut off from the rest of the community.

This can make their lives difficult and make them more vulnerable to social and other problems.

Strong communities encourage and value the participation of all its members, including children and young people.

'Engaging with young people and getting our views is one very important way of helping to rebuild that sense of connection between us and the community in which we live. It is an opportunity to feel respected and be confident that our views were being taken seriously' (young person, World Forum Conference).

'I think it's really important that we do have a forum to have a say. It can be hard to make a difference, but we're all trying!' (young person, World Forum Conference).

'Young people come in different shapes and sizes' (primary school student).

Organisations and children and young people

There are many organisations whose work involves and impacts upon children and young people, like schools, churches, hospitals, welfare agencies, local councils, financial institutions, recreational and sporting bodies.

Working alongside children and young people will help the organisation become more relevant to the children and young people who are affected by its policies and services.

Involving children and young people helps them understand how organisations function and the important skills and experience children and young people acquire will continue into their adult lives.

What can organisations do?

Rather than trying to fit kids into an adult work environment, the challenge for organisations will be to change their culture and systems so that all contributions are valued.

This can mean changing the physical layout of your office space, or arranging meetings to fit in with school timetables. It can also mean providing background information to participants so they understand how decisions are made.

This amount of change will require planning, restructuring and budgeting for staff time, resources and all the other considerations in changing into a child friendly, inclusive and flexible organisation. It means changing the way you do business.

What can families do?

Although every family works in different ways and its members come from different backgrounds, the following tips may help you to encourage the participation of the children and young people in your family:

- keep your child informed about what is happening in the household
- take the time to talk with them
- give them choices about things that will affect them, eg what they would like to eat or where to go for holidays
- help them understand what the consequences may be for their choices and actions
- listen to their points of view

Participation: a case study

A Sydney school has established regular meetings about the running of the school.

Students and teachers chair the meeting and parents can propose motions. Children and teachers share the decision making.

The school prides itself on having a fresh approach to democracy.

The school's guiding principles are founded on self-determination, creativity, cooperation and student participation in the affairs of the school.

For more information

The NSW Premier's Department Register of Boards and Committees lists hundreds of organisations dealing with almost every issue the government manages including:

- training and education
- the environment
- transport

- recreation and sport
- health
- the arts
- community services
- housing
- police and justice

Young people who want to be involved with one of these organisations can have their name considered by contacting (02) 9228 4199 or visiting the NSW Commission for Children and Young People web site: www.kids.nsw.gov.au

The Commission for Children and Young People was set up to promote the participation of children and young people in community life at all levels, especially when it involves making decisions that affect their lives.

Some ways in which the Commission brings children and young people together include:

- offering traineeships for young people
- creating a Young Peoples Reference Group to give children and young people a voice in decisions being made
- involving young people in selection panels to employ staff
- seeking young people's guidance about what they wanted on the Commission's web site
- providing an ongoing discussion forum on the web site for young people to put forward their views on issues that affect them