

## Checklist to Encourage Sport Sampling – for National Sport Organizations

Here are nine questions that National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of sport and related groups can ask themselves to encourage sport sampling among youth. “Sport sampling” means participation in multiple sport and recreational activities, with no one sport engaged in more than 10 months during the year.

Does your organization:

- Take a position on the age below which it recommends youth not specialize in one sport?**
  - The US Olympic Committee and many NGBs have endorsed multi-sport play through at least age 12, consistent with Project Play and American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations. Others, such as USA Basketball, recommend against specializing until at least age 14.
- Clearly communicate to all stakeholders its official position on sport sampling?**
  - USA Hockey placed a video on the front page of its website stating, “This is hockey” – showing kids skateboarding and playing other sports. Use your website, social media, and other materials to help parents, coaches, and administrators understand your commitment.
- Offer programs and resources to facilitate engagement in more than one sport?**
  - Part of challenge in preventing sport specialization is, often, community providers don’t know how to create or foster multi-sport engagement. Project Play has identified several exemplary models for single-sport clubs, camps, and other providers: <http://bit.ly/2Bmvvid>.
- Include in its coach training resources guidance on how to encourage multi-sport play?**
  - Make sure the courses that you promote incorporate key principles, with specific ways that coaches can create schedules and minimize conflicts that prevent sport sampling. Also give them ideas on how to embed activities in their practices that encourage overall athleticism.
- Educate parents on the value of sport sampling in building better athletes, happier kids?**
  - The USOC’s American Development Model recognizes the benefits of multi-sport play in fostering all-around athleticism, and that most Olympians did not specialize early. Empower parents by distributing materials that ensure they understand what their child needs.
- Discourage national championships and rankings for children (ideally through age 12)?**
  - Offering those competition structures can incentivize local clubs, coaches and parents to promote year-round play in one sport. While entrepreneurs are free to offer such venues, NGBs can show the leadership in embracing models that encourage development above all.
- Encourage community sport providers to partner with schools via PE teachers?**
  - Schools have access to all kids, but often lack the budget, competencies, or time to introduce a wide variety of sport activities. Offer best practices in partnering with PE teachers, with curriculum and low-cost equipment that meets their needs and constraints.
- Embrace Physical Literacy as a youth development objective?**
  - Physical Literacy is defined as “the ability, confidence and desire to be active for life” with a focus on fundamental movement skills. It can be a powerful concept in getting educators, civic leaders and others to support your framework. More: <http://plreport.projectplay.us/>
- Promote partnerships with providers of other sport programs?**
  - Work with competing sports to broker agreements to “share” youth participants, with end-of-season emails to parents highlighting other quality activities in a community. Build credibility with parents as they explore local options on search marketplaces such as SportsEngine.