

# 4-6 Year Old Parent/Child Sports Program To Enhance Physical Literacy

**4-6 year old children are amazing? Here's what we know and can expect of them in this program!**

## Understanding Psychomotor Development

- Movement education approach (Anne Torbert)
- Body segments grow at different rates
- Differences between boys and girls are minimal
- Weight range for boys and girls is approximately 30 – 50 pounds
- Height range for boys is approximately 35" – 45", girls is approximately 37" – 45"
- Progress in motor development starts with the head and moves downward to the feet and from the center of the body outward
- Easy fatigue, rapid recovery, heart rate around 90 bpm for boys and girls
- Emphasis of fundamental movement skills
  - Locomotor – walking, running, leaping, hopping
  - Non-locomotor – bending, stretching, twisting, pulling, pushing
  - Basic manipulative – throwing, catching, striking
- Increased use of all body parts
- Need to explore qualities of a rolling or bouncing ball

## Understanding Cognitive Development

- Preoperational Stage of cognitive development (Jean Piaget\*)
  - Intelligence demonstrated through the use of symbols
  - Language use matures
  - Memory and imagination are developed
  - Thinking is done in a non-logical and non-reversible manner
- Play consists of a high degree of imagination and pretend activities
- Beginning to use symbols to represent objects in environment
- Tend to only one task at a time in problem solving situations
- Process small bits of information at a time, long sequential instructions are not processed
- May understand simple rules that are explained briefly and demonstrated
- Immature understanding of time and space relations
- Tend to be egocentric and struggle to see things from the perspective of others

\* Piaget's theory of cognitive development helped add to our understanding of children's intellectual growth. It also stressed that children were not merely passive recipients of knowledge. Instead, kids are constantly investigating and experimenting as they build their understanding of how the world works.

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## Understanding Psychosocial Development

- Development of self-concept, body awareness, and self-image through movement
- Egocentric, see world only from their perspective (demonstrated through parallel play)
- Need generous praise, play without pressure
- Influential person in their life is most likely their mother or significant parent
- May verbalize team, but does not understand group or collective play
- Things you can expect as a coach
- Most players cry immediately when something is hurt, some cry even when something is not hurt
- No matter how loud we shout, or how much we practice it, they cannot and will not pass the ball
- Don't even consider teaching positional play
- Twenty seconds after the start of every game every player will be within 5 feet of the ball
- Several players will slap at the ball with their hands, or pick it up. Several parents will yell at them not to do that
- A model rocket that is launched from a nearby field will get 99% of the player's attention. By all means, stop whatever you are doing and go watch for a couple of minutes.
- During a season, you will end up tying 40-50 shoelaces
- They will do something that is absolutely hysterical – Make sure that you laugh!

## Our Coaching Rational

- Each session should be geared around touching the ball as many times as possible. Involve the ball in as many activities as possible. Basic movements such as running, hopping, skipping, etc...need to be emphasized. If these can be done while kicking, catching, rolling or dribbling a ball...all the better!
- Training should not last for more than one hour. This is primarily due to physical fatigue and attention span considerations.
- Train once a week. Any more than this may lead to their and your burnout.
- Have as many different kinds of activities ready as you can get into one hour. Emphasis needs to be placed on what is fun!
- Every player should have his or her own ball.
- Team play and passing is an alien concept to these players. They know that if they pass the ball, they may never get it back. In fact, they often will steal it from their own teammates. Do not get uptight if they do not pass, let them dribble until their heart's content.
- Plan plenty of water breaks. Their cooling system is not as efficient as in older players.