Session Outline
ACSM Health and Fitness Summit
April 6-9, 2017

A Coaches Dozen: 12 Proven Ideas for Building Healthy Kids

Avery D. Faigenbaum, Ed.D., FACSM
Professor, Department of Health and Exercise Science
The College of New Jersey
faigenba@tcnj.edu
@afaigenbaum

Summary
Troubling trends in youth physical activity indicate that a majority of boys and girls are not meeting physical activity recommendations and cardiovascular disease risk factors are present in inactive youth. Consequently, developmentally appropriate interventions that are consistent with the needs, interests and abilities of boys and girls are needed to spark an ongoing interest in exercise and sport. The coaches dozen provides a framework of 12 ideas that can help youth fitness specialists optimize training outcomes, build healthy kids, and spark an ongoing interest in daily physical activity. The list is not meant to be definitive or complete, but rather a collection of ideas that fitness specialists should think about when designing youth fitness programs.

Introduction and Overview
A. Global trends in youth physical activity
B. The science of pediatric exercise science
C. The “art” of coaching kids
D. History of the coaches dozen

I. Build a Strength Reserve
   A. Secular trends in muscular fitness
   B. Benefits of youth resistance training
   C. Developing an integrative approach to training

II. Develop Movement Competency
   A. Building a movement vocabulary
   B. Learn to move

III. Train the Developing Brain
   A. Neuroplasticity of brain development
   B. Synergistic adaptations
IV. Become Physically Literate
   A. What is physical literacy?
   B. Qualified instruction is key

V. Value Deliberate Preparation
   A. Importance of preparatory conditioning
   B. Youth sport is not enough

VI. Diversify the Portfolio
   A. Consequences of early sports specialization
   B. Broad-based participation in a variety of sport activities

VII. Understand the Process
   A. Balance effective pedagogy with program design
   B. Best coaches are the best teachers

VIII. Foster Creativity
   A. Is creative thinking declining in kids?
   B. Imagination and ingenuity that can optimize training-adaptations

IX. Be Patient in Your Practice
   A. Quick fixes don’t work
   B. Progression should be “earned” and based on a participant’s skill proficiency

X. Enjoy the Game
   A. Children cite “fun” as the number one reason for participation
   B. Balance skill and challenge

XI. Think Long-term
   A. Physical activity is a learned behavior
   B. Long term physical development models are useful tools

XII. Stay Coachable
   A. Never stop learning
   B. Stay up to date with evidence-based practice
   C. Network with other youth fitness professionals
Three take-away points

1. Troubling trends indicate that a majority of children and adolescents worldwide are not meeting physical activity recommendations and cardiovascular disease risk factors are present in inactive youth. Consequently, long-term interventions, public health policies and effective coaching practices that prepare children and adolescents for a lifetime of physical activity are desperately needed.

2. Just like the skills of reading and writing, physical activity is a learned behavior that is influenced by family, friends, teachers, and coaches. With proper guidance, skilled instruction, and enduring support, youth can learn the technical and tactical aspects of exercise and sport while making friends, having fun and learning something new. Consequently, the science of pediatric exercise needs to be balanced with the “art” of coaching kids which is the glue that holds it all together.

3. The “coaches dozen” is a collection of 12 principles that youth coaches, physical education teachers, and pediatric exercise specialists should think about when designing exercise programs for modern day youth.

Selected References


Useful websites for more information

American College of Sports Medicine (www.acsm.org)
American Academy of Pediatrics (www.aap.org)
American Orthopedic Society for Sports Medicine (www.sportsmed.org)
National Strength and Conditioning Association (www.nsca.com)
North American Society of Pediatric Exercise Medicine (www.naspem.org)

2017 Health and Fitness Summit
Avery Faigenbaum, EdD, FACSM