

SPORTAUS

School to club sport transition

Strategy and product design essentials

Prepared by: Participation Design
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Overview

School is often the first place a child experiences sport. In Australia, this experience can be through the health and physical education curriculum, during or after school organised activities, or through the Australian Government's Sporting Schools Program.

While children participate in sport at school, for many children, the experience stops there. Taking that next step into club sport can be overwhelming for some, and research tells us that sport is not a top priority for many children. Lack of information on how to get involved, low competitiveness and an overall dislike of sport are also barriers to participating in club sport.

Helping children and families transition from school sport into a local club environment provides great benefits for the community; improves children's overall development and wellbeing; and encourages them to be lifelong participants in sport.

The Sporting Schools Program is an opportunity for sports to first engage a child in their sport. This resource has been developed to help NSOs understand the key strategies and product design essentials to create a welcoming transition pathway for children and families and encourage them to continue their involvement in sport from school, into local club sport.

Did you know?

- 30-38% of children do not participate in organised sport or physical activity outside of school, *AusPlay*
- 20% of parents want their child to do more sport, but lack information on how to get involved, *Market Segmentation, 2015*.
- The most effective Sporting Schools transition strategy was when written information about the local club was provided, *Sporting Schools, 2016*.
- Many parents and children believe that the child has to be good at sport to play in a club, *Market Segmentation, 2015*.
- Parents want club sport to be:
 - enjoyable for their child
 - competition not to be at the expense of enjoyment
 - a way for their child to develop their confidence
 - a way for their child to feel a sense of achievement
 - a safe environment
 - flexible so the sport can fit in with their child's other interests
 - a way to try the sport before committing too much money, *Market Segmentation, 2015*.

What children want from club sport

5 to 10 year olds	10 to 13 year olds
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal skill development (less team based) • Rewards based on personal performance • Sense of belonging • Play with friends. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel part of a team/group • Enjoy the social aspect with friends and teammates • Sense of belonging • Validation and praise.



Transition strategies

Apply the strategies below to help children and families transition from school to club sport.

Strategy	Description
Provide a clear transition pathway	<p>Most sports are in schools providing children with an introductory experience to their sport. However, for some, that product lacks a clear transition pathway from school to the local club. Identified through research is that some organisations delivered school products to fulfill a general promotional purpose and funding requirement. Similarly, the volunteer delivering the school product did so reluctantly.</p> <p>Products offered in the school environment need to have a clear transition pathway to a product offered at the local community level. All stakeholders working on and within the school and club products need to apply the vital transition strategies identified in this resource.</p>
Co-design	<p>To ensure a sport offers a product that meets the environment and participant needs, use a co-design approach. Co-design involves target participants (children and parents), delivery partners (state sporting organisations, clubs and schools) and other stakeholders. The ideal scenario is to engage directly with children and learn about them. Similarly, engage with the delivery partners such as clubs and schools to explore how to best create a quality experience for the children.</p>
Empower vital delivery partners	<p>State sporting organisations (SSOs) and local clubs are likely to be vital delivery partners for your school to club transition product. Ensure the SSOs and clubs are aligned and agree to prioritise transition needs in delivery of the school product.</p> <p>Where possible, the local club should take the lead and develop a strong working relationship with their local school community. Often this person is the club coordinator. Where that is not possible, the deliverer should have a good understanding and connection to the club. A representative from a club will know all the relevant information a principal and teacher requires to support children in learning more about the club experience.</p> <p>Ensure the club has the support they need to work with the local schools and effectively promote the club experience.</p>
Engage with parents	<p>Evidence confirms that parent engagement is essential to encourage children to participate in sport because they are the decision-maker in a child's life. Parents have also indicated that they lack information on how to get their child involved, so give them the information they need to make an informed decision.</p> <p>Ways to connect with parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide parent information sessions and include information about the local club environment. • Distribute club flyers and ensure they include the information parents need to connect with the club. • Collect parent contact details and engage through email, social media, etc. • Talk with parents before and after sessions. Speak to every parent at least once. • Consider including a fun interactive session with families. <p>When engaging with parents, be mindful of their time. Sport taking up too much time is a barrier for families and their participation in sport. Keep parent engagement short, concise and fun.</p>
Understand the deliverer	<p>Research shows that children stop playing sport due to poor introductory experiences. Undoubtedly, the deliverer is best placed to influence a child's experience in sport, and therefore they play a vital role.</p> <p>Consider who the deliverers of your school and club products are and whether they align with what children want from sport? Deliverers working with children must have</p>



the attributes required to help children have fun and feel included, supported and valued.

Not surprisingly, our deliverers are passionate and most likely love everything about the sport. Unfortunately, not all children have that same love, especially those who have not transitioned into club sport. Therefore, the deliverer must have the attributes and skills required to work with less engaged children.

When recruiting deliverers, look for someone who:

- is friendly, optimistic, understanding and open
- has the ability to modify practices and behaviours to align with the needs of the children
- is organised and can run sessions on time.

Bridging the gap

Transitioning straight from the school product to the club experience will be overwhelming for many children and their families. Most families will need something extra to help them take that next step and ease them into the club.

Provide children with the opportunity to visit the local club. Include opportunities to watch teams train or play, have tours of the facility and provide information sessions about the club and the specific club transition product you are offering.

Successful bridging opportunities:

- Invite families to be part of the club community.
- Create school teams that can participate at the local club.
- Encourage a group of students to join the club together.
- Develop a gala sports day or sports fair at the school and work with other sports to help deliver the event. Children can explore different sports and hear about the club sport experience.
- Develop inter-school sports days and work with schools in the local area.

Bridging the gap also applies to the club experience and what that looks like for a child. Some clubs will have an established competition structure, but most children will find that too much of a leap. A less competitive, modified product that prioritises developing a children's confidence and motivation, will help ease them into club sport.

Align messaging to what parents want

Parents are key decision makers in a child's life, so it is important the club aligns to what the parent wants for their child.

When asked, parents described club sport in the following ways:

- structured competition with training through the week
- win at all costs, favouring strong players and leaving weaker players out
- exclusive and discriminating
- highly disorganised and chaotic
- bullying, with poor management
- a place where their child will be seen as letting others down if they do not turn up
- inflexible with large commitments required.

Explain to parents what club sport is really about and dispel the above misconceptions of your sport.

Flexible system

When a child enjoys their sport experience through school and wants to take the next step to be part of the local club, the club needs to have the capacity to welcome and accept that child directly into the club system. Making the child wait till next season or even a few weeks' time could result in them losing enthusiasm and interest in your sport. This may be a challenge for some clubs who have a structured membership system. Consider flexible payment options and encourage try before you buy, pay as you go, or discounted memberships for a reduced term/season.



Products and experiences

The better the school experience is for the child, the more likely they will transition to a club. Apply the below strategies to facilitate a positive experience for a child.

Strategy	Description
Make it fun	<p>Fun is one of the biggest drivers of participation in sport and applying this should be top priority in both the school and club transition product. What constitutes fun is different for everyone, but children tell us that sport is fun when they are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being challenged to improve • with friends • trying their best • in a group that is positive • coached by someone friendly • getting playing time.
Playing with friends	<p>Children tell us they want to play sport with their friends. Yet, we still see teams selected and children moved up or down a grade with little consideration of their friendship groups. Help children play with their friends by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • considering the children's friendships before moving them into different groups/grades. If in doubt, ask the child or parent what they would like to do. • asking the child or their parent to identify children they would like to play with at registration. • balancing facilitation of existing friendships with the opportunity to make new friends, all while ensuring the child is learning and developing new skills. • having flexibility in membership structures, teams and sessions to accept children's friends when they enquire about joining.
Target audience	<p>An effective school product needs to be specific in terms of the target audience you want to attract. A one size fits all approach is ineffective and it is difficult to deliver with too many different age groups and abilities involved. Consider catering to children who are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • within a particular age category, i.e. 10 to 12 year olds • not participating in club sport. Include messaging that aligns with what these children want from sport, in promotional material. Learn more about the less active target audience of 5 to 11 year olds. • Target children with similar interests, i.e. those who show interest during school sport days/activities, group of friends wanting to try something new etc.
Holistic development	<p>Research tells us that a holistic approach including all four physical literacy domains (physical, psychological, social, and cognitive) in an activity, increases the likelihood children will participate. Similarly, research has shown that transition to a club occurs when school sports prioritise holistic development. Consider these approaches:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify which of the 30 physical literacy elements align to your school and club products and ensure they are embedded. Use the Physical Literacy Program Alignment Guidelines to help with this. • Use some of the Playing for Life activities in your school and club products. Search for the physical literacy elements you want to include in your sessions and a list of fun and appropriate activities will be displayed.
Build effective relationships	<p>When connecting with a school, the principal should be the first point of contact. Establishing an effective relationship with the principal will help facilitate their support of your school product and drive messages through school newsletters, emails, assemblies, social media, and parent-teacher nights.</p>



When meeting with the school, outline what you require from them. You could ask them to:

- promote the school product to children, parents, and teachers.
- coordinate student interest and permission forms
- understanding legal responsibilities and who is ultimately responsible
- ensure school insurance covers out of school participation in sport
- book the school space and equipment required for the product offering
- coordinate any applicable grant applications and acquittals
- coordinating the transport of children to the local club, when and if applicable.

Align to curriculum

Schools need to deliver curriculum outcomes for children, so providing a product that supports those outcomes is crucial. Consider how your school product contributes to the following outcomes.

- Develops students' general capabilities outlined in the Australian Curriculum, including:
 - critical and creative thinking
 - personal and social capability
 - ethical understanding
 - intercultural understanding.
- Aligns with national health and physical education propositions such as:
 - Focuses on the educative purposes
 - Takes a strengths-based approach
 - Helps children value movement
 - Helps children develop health literacy
 - Includes a critical inquiry approach.

Learn more about the [Australian Health and Physical Education Curriculum](#).

Resources

Use the information in this resource to help inform your school to club transition products/strategy. Following the Design Approach can also help if you are looking for a thorough review or design of school to club transition products. Learn more about how the [design approach](#) can help your sport.



Learn more about [Spring Schools](#) and how the program helps students build the confidence and capability to be active for life.



References

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