

2005 Youth Sports National Report card



CTSA

CITIZENSHIP THROUGH SPORTS ALLIANCE

For the first time ever, CTSA convened a panel of youth sports experts from across the country to evaluate youth sports in the United States and articulate its successes and failures. The panel evaluated only community-based youth sports programs, focusing on those that serve children ages 6 to 14. To do so, panel members relied on their own experiences as youth sports leaders, authors, sociologists, sports psychologists, coaches and parents, as well as on current research and academic literature.

For more details on these grades, please turn the page.

The Citizenship Through Sports Alliance (CTSA) is an alliance committed to promoting positive behavior in youth sports by harnessing the collective resources of major U.S. sports organizations to provide practical and proven tools for parents and coaches in youth sports. Members of the CTSA are:



AREA of REVIEW	GRADE
Child-Centered Philosophy	D
Coaching	C-
Health and Safety	C+
Officiating	B-
Parental Behavior/Involvement	D

Grading key for each topic:

A=Outstanding; B=Good; C=Fair; D=Poor; F=Failing

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OVERVIEW

The expert panel that issued these grades was composed of men and women from all over the country whose diverse experiences with youth sports brought a unique perspective. These panelists included authors, attorneys, researchers, youth sports organization leaders, youth coaches and parents. Their common goal was to articulate where youth sports is succeeding and where it is failing. It is the hope of the CTSA that this will become an ongoing evaluation.

The panel recognized that youth sports is a wonderful activity for the children of this country, and that it provides both physical fitness and a means to enhance the character development of young people. The panel also recognized that in most communities youth sports is shepherded by men and women who are sincerely concerned for the well-being and development of youth. The panel does not wish to minimize the significant contributions of the people and programs who are working to provide such positive experiences.

The panel also recognized, however, that there are many areas where youth sports is falling short of its goals.

The panel is greatly concerned that, on the whole, youth sports has:

- Lost its child-centered focus, meaning less emphasis on the child's experience and more emphasis on adult-centered motives, such as winning.
- Suffered from the actions of over-invested sports parents, who maintain unrealistic expectations and fail to behave in a way that promotes the development of their own child and others.
- Failed to provide sufficient background checks, training and evaluations for coaches, who are so instrumental in the youth sports experience.
- Focused on early sports specialization, leading to burnout, overuse injuries and a hyper-competitive atmosphere focused on travel team participation at an ever-younger age.
- Lost the voice of the child, who is participating in sports for his or her own goals, which experts say include fun, friends, fitness and skill development.

The panel hopes that by increasing awareness of these challenges, it can stimulate dialogue about ways to improve youth sports, enabling more young people to benefit from all that youth sports has to offer.



2005 Youth Sports National Report card Areas of Review

Grading key for each topic: A=Outstanding; B=Good; C=Fair; D=Poor; F=Failing

Grading scale for elements within each topic: E=Excellent; S=Satisfactory; N=Needs Improvement; U=Unacceptable

CHILD-CENTERED PHILOSOPHY

Overall Grade (A-F): **D**

1. Youth sports leaders, parents and coaches put the goals of children – fun, friends, fitness, participation and skill development – first.	Unacceptable
2. Each player gets adequate attention and sufficient playing time in games and practices to improve skills and promote physical fitness.	Needs Improvement
3. League leaders and coaches reject a “win-at-all-cost” mentality and instead focus on broader issues, such as life lessons and overall character development.	Needs Improvement
4. League leaders, parents and coaches understand the dangers of early sports specialization.	Needs Improvement
5. Youth sports leaders set expectations and hold parents, coaches and themselves accountable for sportsmanship, civility and commitment to a child-centered philosophy.	Unacceptable

COACHING

Overall Grade (A-F): **C-**

1. An adequate pool of coaches possesses training in coaching techniques and safety, ensuring a safe environment for practices and games.	Needs Improvement
2. Coaches focus on effort, skill development, positive reinforcement and fun.	Unacceptable
3. Coaches cultivate an environment of respect for officials and opponents, modeling sportsmanship and civility.	Needs Improvement
4. Coaches ensure that all players receive enough playing time to promote continued participation and physical fitness.	Needs Improvement
5. Coaches refrain from encouraging early sports specialization and don't penalize youth who participate in multiple sports or activities.	Needs Improvement

HEALTH and SAFETY

Overall Grade (A-F): **C+**

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| 1. League leaders, coaches and officials provide a safe and secure environment for games and practices. | Satisfactory |
| 2. League leaders and coaches promote healthy habits – including fitness and good nutrition – and they discourage the use of performance-enhancing supplements, alcohol and drugs. | Needs Improvement |
| 3. The league conducts formal background checks on coaches and volunteers. | Needs Improvement |
| 4. League leaders and coaches emphasize the health and safety of the participants, and they possess adequate training in first-aid procedures and team safety, including hydration. | Needs Improvement |
| 5. League leaders and coaches establish a reasonable number of games and practices for each age group to promote participation and prevent burnout or overuse injuries. | Satisfactory |

OFFICIATING

Overall Grade (A-F): **B-**

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| 1. Officials possess adequate training in officiating techniques, game rules and safety. | Needs Improvement |
| 2. Officials do their part to promote a child-centered philosophy, focusing on effort, skill development, positive reinforcement and fun. | Satisfactory |
| 3. Officials model sportsmanship and civility, encouraging an environment of respect for all. | Satisfactory |
| 4. Officials ensure that games are played by the rules, with special emphasis on fairness and safety. | Satisfactory |
| 5. An adequate pool of trained officials is available for games and tournaments. | Needs Improvement |
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PARENTAL BEHAVIOR/INVOLVEMENT

Overall Grade (A-F): **D**

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| 1. Parents behave appropriately at games and show respect for officials, coaches and participants. | Unacceptable |
| 2. Parental behavior before, during and after games reflects an understanding of their role as parents and positive supporters – not as unofficial coaches. | Unacceptable |
| 3. Parental expectations are realistic, and parents focus on their child's total development, rather than focusing primarily on their child's potential to earn a sports scholarship or play professionally. | Needs Improvement |
| 4. Parents understand and support children's motivations to play sports – fun, friends, fitness, participation and skill development. | Needs Improvement |
| 5. Parents are willing to volunteer, and they do so without expectations of special privileges for their own children. | Needs Improvement |