

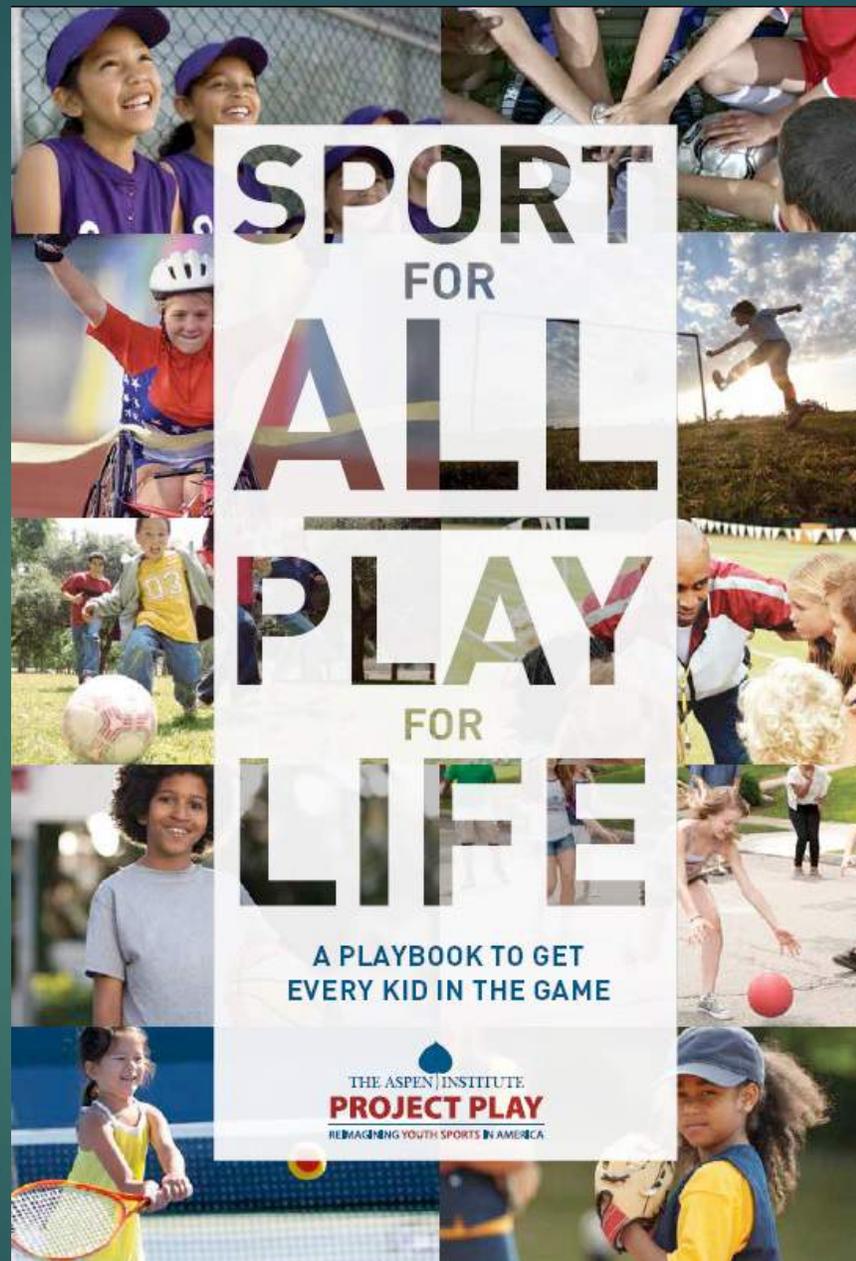
Creating a Youth Movement Movement

PROJECT PLAY & REIMAGINING YOUTH SPORTS IN THE U.S.



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Project Play:
What must we do
to enable all
children to be
physically active
and healthy?



<https://www.aspenprojectplay.org/>

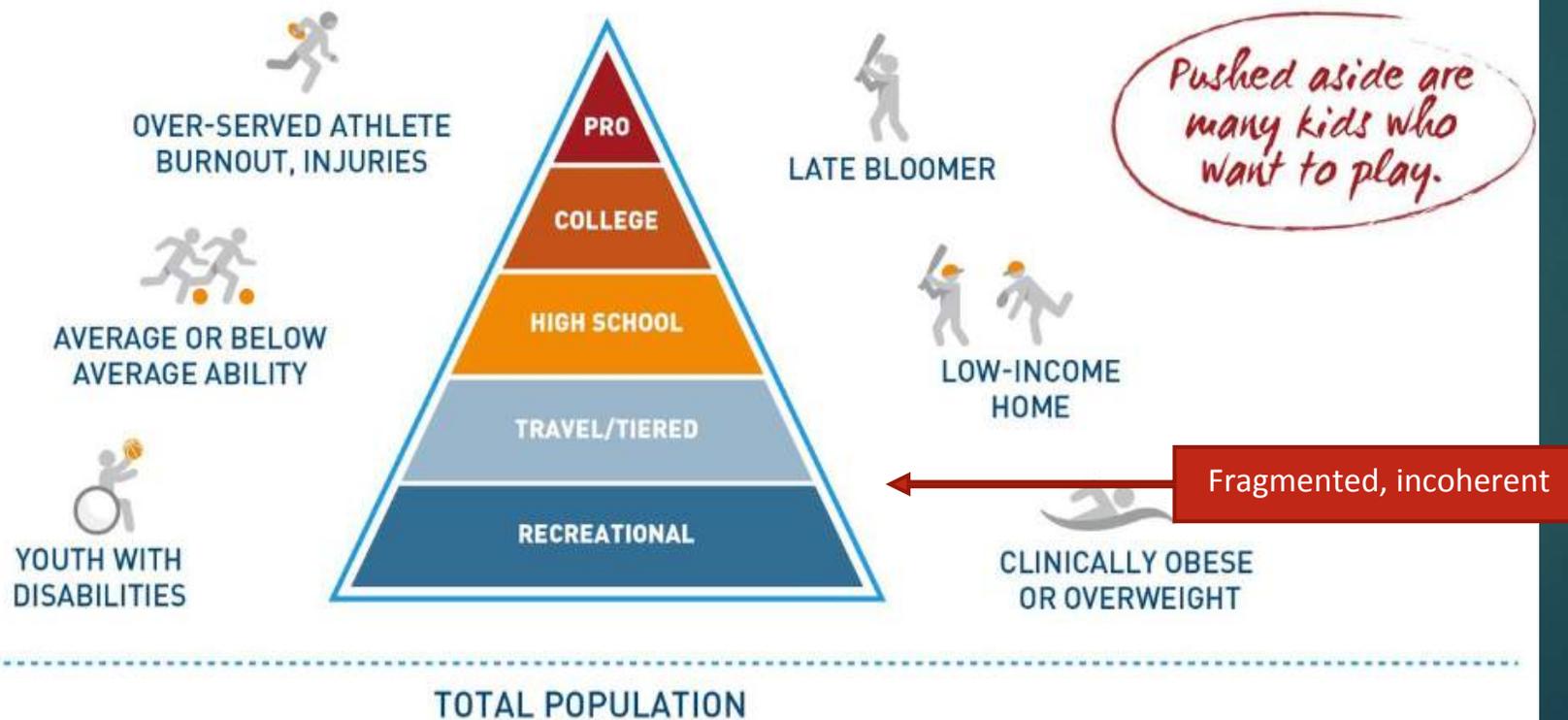
Why Project Play in the U.S.?

- ▶ U.S. children are heavier, rounder, weaker, less physically literate, and more sedentary today than in the past
- ▶ Obesity rates for children and adults are higher in the US than any other wealthy, post-industrial nation
- ▶ Inactivity is a primary factor in creating high costs related to health and undermining quality of life
- ▶ Youth sports in the U.S. generally fail to inspire young people to be physically active past early adolescence

Existing system of sport in the U.S. is built on an elitist & exclusionary model

Today's Broken Model

Pyramid does not make room for all children



How are youth sports failing in the U.S.

- 1. Many young people are dropping out, burning out, or being injured out of existing programs**
 - ▶ **over the past decade there has been a significant decline in participation across many youth sports**
 - ▶ **Concussion and injury rates are increasing, and parents are increasingly concerned about physical safety**
- 2. Access to participation is limited for many young people due to increasing costs & “pay to play” programs**
- 3. Programs are often organized to fit the interests and expectations of adults more than children.**
- 4. Programs increasingly emphasize high performance rather than inclusive, age-appropriate, & enjoyable experiences**

The framework

SPORT FOR ALL, PLAY FOR LIFE MODEL BROAD ACCESS LEADS TO SUSTAINED PARTICIPATION



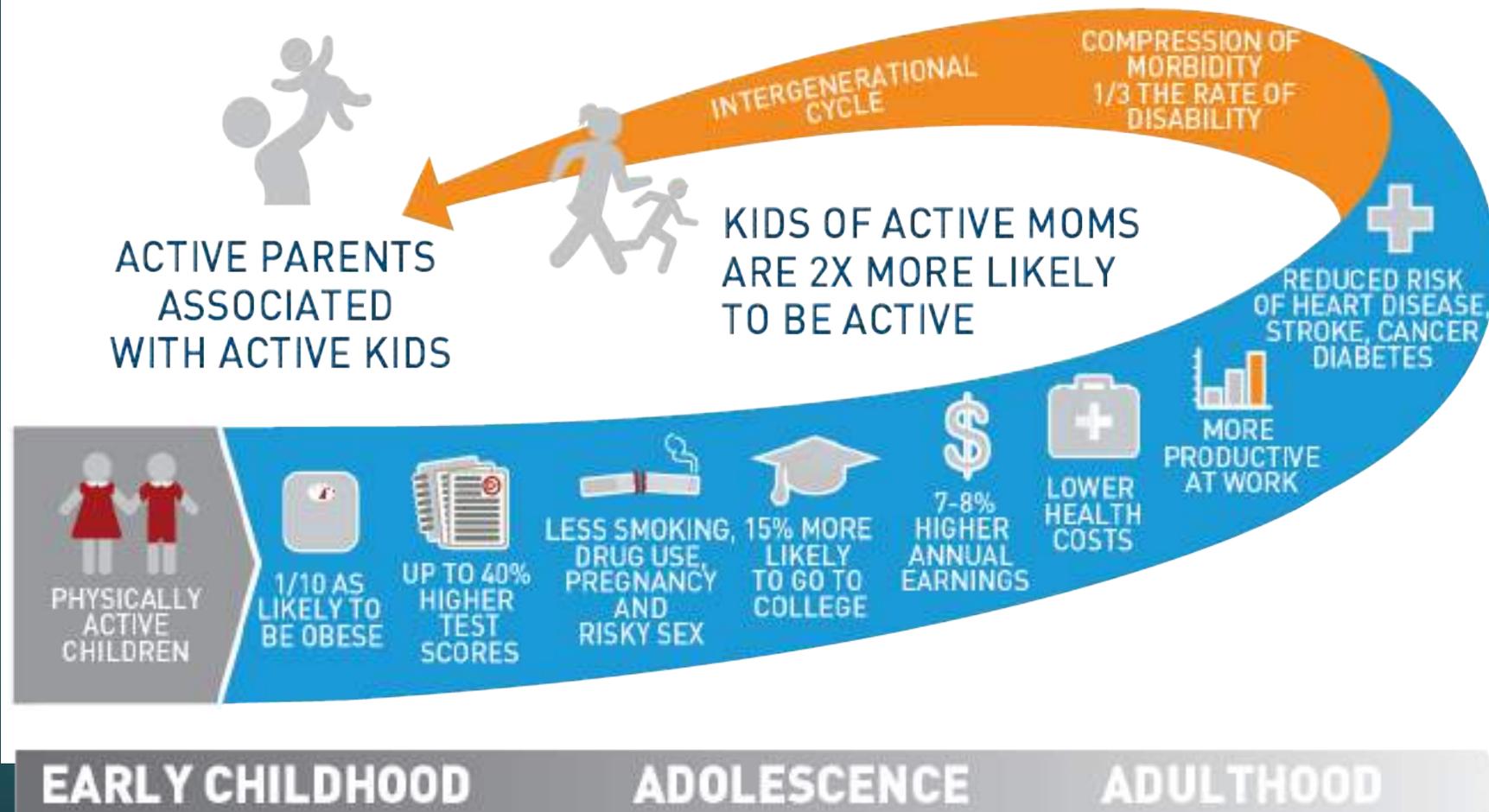
Squaring the pyramid creates athletes for life, at all levels.

Up to age 12, focus on ability, confidence, and desire to be active.

TOTAL POPULATION

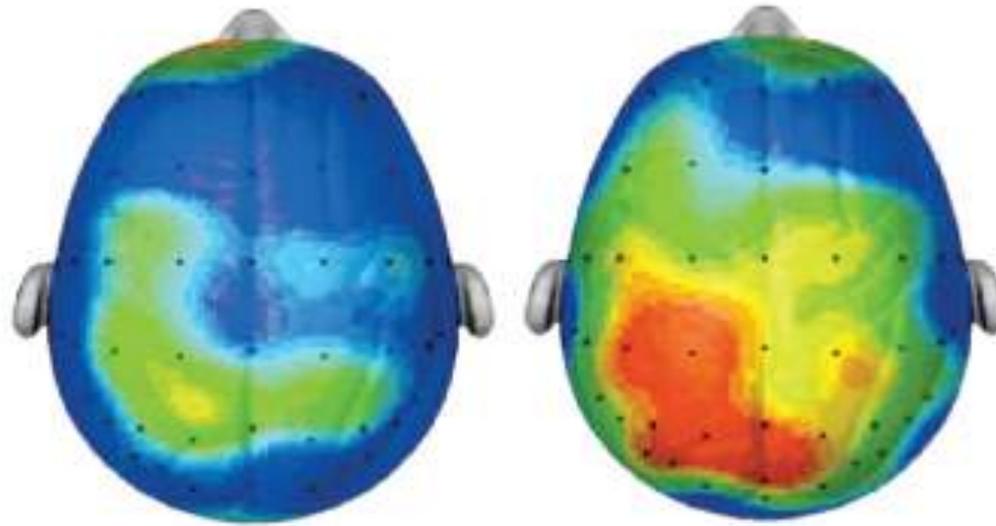
ACTIVE KIDS DO BETTER IN LIFE

WHAT THE RESEARCH SHOWS ON THE COMPOUNDING BENEFITS



MOVE BODY, ACTIVATE BRAIN

WHAT MRI SCANS TELL US*



AFTER SITTING QUIETLY **AFTER 20-MINUTE WALK**

* Schools cut recess [and P.E.] to their own detriment. Even if kids aren't running, they're winning. Above are composites of MRI brain scans of 20 students taking the same test, as measured by University of Illinois researcher Dr. Chuck Hillman. The red sections represent highest amount of neuro-electric activity.

Physical activity is brain-ergizing

Challenges & Sources of Resistance

- ▶ Creating cooperation among people from different sectors of society: health, medicine, sports, community recreation organizations, schools, corporations, public policy, families
- ▶ Preventing people from high performance sport from dominating discussions & strategies
- ▶ Converting people who believe that “*God created sports in certain ways and thou shalt not change those sports*”



Physical Literacy: The foundational goal of Project Play

As defined in the United States via the work of Project Play

The ability, confidence & desire
to be physically active for life

Ability refers to competency in basic *movement skills* & an overall fitness that allows individuals to engage in a variety of games and activities.

Abilities are best developed through a mix of informal play & intentional teaching of movement skills

Abilities come in 3 major forms:

Locomotive abilities involve negotiating physical environments and taking the body from one point to the next. They include, but are not limited to:

- Walking
- Running
- Hopping
- Jumping
- Skipping
- Swimming



If you have **locomotive abilities** you can enjoy ***track and field events, swimming, hiking, tag games, triathlons, jogging, racing....***

Object control abilities involve controlling implements such as balls, hoops, racquets, sticks, etc by hand, foot, or other part of the body. They include, but are not limited to:

- Throwing
- Catching
- Kicking
- Striking
- Bouncing
- Dribbling



If you have **Object control abilities** you can enjoy **soccer, basketball, baseball & softball, football, tennis, ice & field hockey, lacrosse...**

Body management abilities involve controlling and balancing the body while in stillness or in motion and are key to injury prevention. They include, but are not limited to:

- Bending and stretching
- Landing
- Rolling
- Twisting and turning
- Swinging and Climbing
- Lifting
- Dodging
- Falling



If you have **Body management abilities** you can enjoy **yoga, skateboarding, gymnastics, biking, rock climbing.....**



Confidence is knowing that you have the ability to play sports and enjoy other physical activities.

Confidence is tied to context, and it is maximized in settings that are welcoming, age-appropriate, inclusive, and supportive.



**Desire is the intrinsic
enthusiasm for physical
activity, whether in organized
or unstructured formats, in
traditional or alternative**

Desire is born in early positive
experiences that are fun, and it is
nurtured by opportunities to be creative



PHYSICAL LITERACY IN THE UNITED STATES

A MODEL, STRATEGIC PLAN, AND CALL TO ACTION



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



THE ASPEN INSTITUTE
PROJECT PLAY

<http://plreport.projectplay.us/>



8 Project Play Strategies

to build *Sport for All, Play for Life*
communities



1) Ask children what they want & observe what they do and enjoy in their physical activities

- ✓ **Action**
- ✓ **Personal involvement in the action**
- ✓ **Controlled challenges**
- ✓ **Positive, reaffirming relationships**
 - ✓ **With peers**
 - ✓ **With coaches**

2) Reintroduce Free Play

- ❖ Culture of childhood play has largely disappeared
- ❖ Parental fears keep children inside
 - ❖ Fear of what might happen to their children
 - ❖ Fear of what groups of unsupervised children might do
- ❖ Computer games have captured the interest of young people
- ❖ Play is seen by many adults as a waste of time

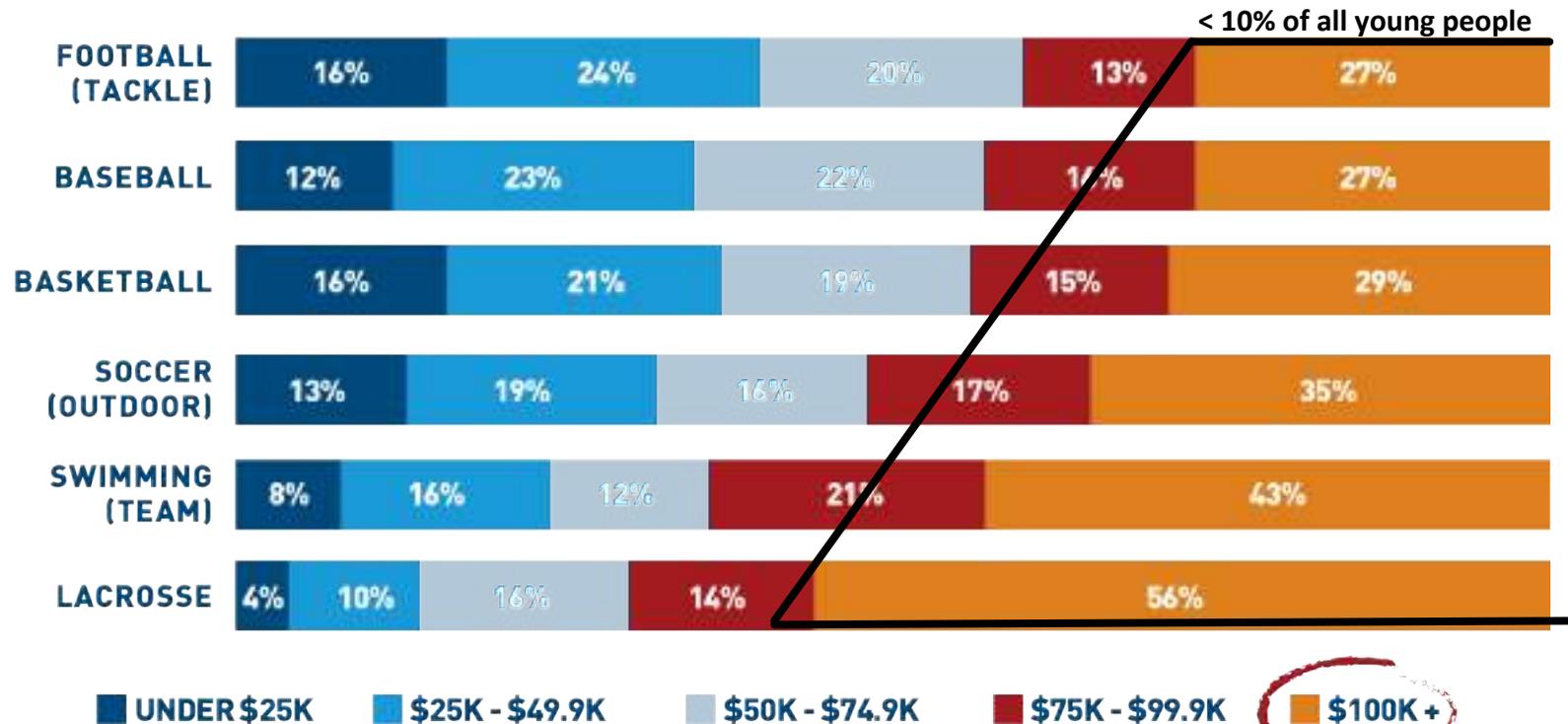
3) Encourage sport sampling and multiple sport participation

Early specialization in one sport year round is not the way to create excellence or lifelong participation in physical activity

- Research on Long Term Athletic Development (LTAD) affirms this
- Coaches of elite sports know this
- USOC & nearly all NGBs now endorse the American Development Model

4) Revitalize accessible, local leagues

INCOME IMPACTS SPORT PARTICIPATION PERCENTAGE OF CORE PARTICIPANTS, BY HOUSEHOLD INCOME



Families that can afford more, play more.

5) Think Small

MORE FUN WITH LESS SPACE

HOW TO ENGAGE AN ENTIRE PE CLASS WITH ONE TENNIS COURT

The U.S. Tennis Association's Youth Tennis initiative divides a 78-foot court into four playing spaces and uses the surrounding area for tennis-related games. Smaller racquets and lower-bouncing balls make it all possible and help kids find success.



Coaches & parents



This is how a regulation court looks to 10 year olds

6) Design for Development

HOW TO BUILD AN ATHLETE FOR LIFE

USA HOCKEY'S FIRST THREE STAGES OF AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT MODEL



ACTIVE START

PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES
TO BE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE
EVERY DAY IN A SAFE,
FUN ENVIRONMENT

AGES 0-6



FUNDAMENTALS

REFINE FUNDAMENTAL
MOVEMENT SKILLS WITH
FOCUS ON FUN, AND
BEGIN TO ACQUIRE
BASIC SPORT SKILLS

AGES 6-8 FEMALES, 6-9 MALES



LEARN TO TRAIN

REFINE OVERALL SPORT
SKILLS, AND DEVELOP
SPORT-SPECIFIC
SKILLS

AGES 8-11 FEMALES, 9-12 MALES

7) Train All Coaches

WHAT KIDS WANT FROM A COACH THE ANSWERS THEY GAVE RESEARCHERS

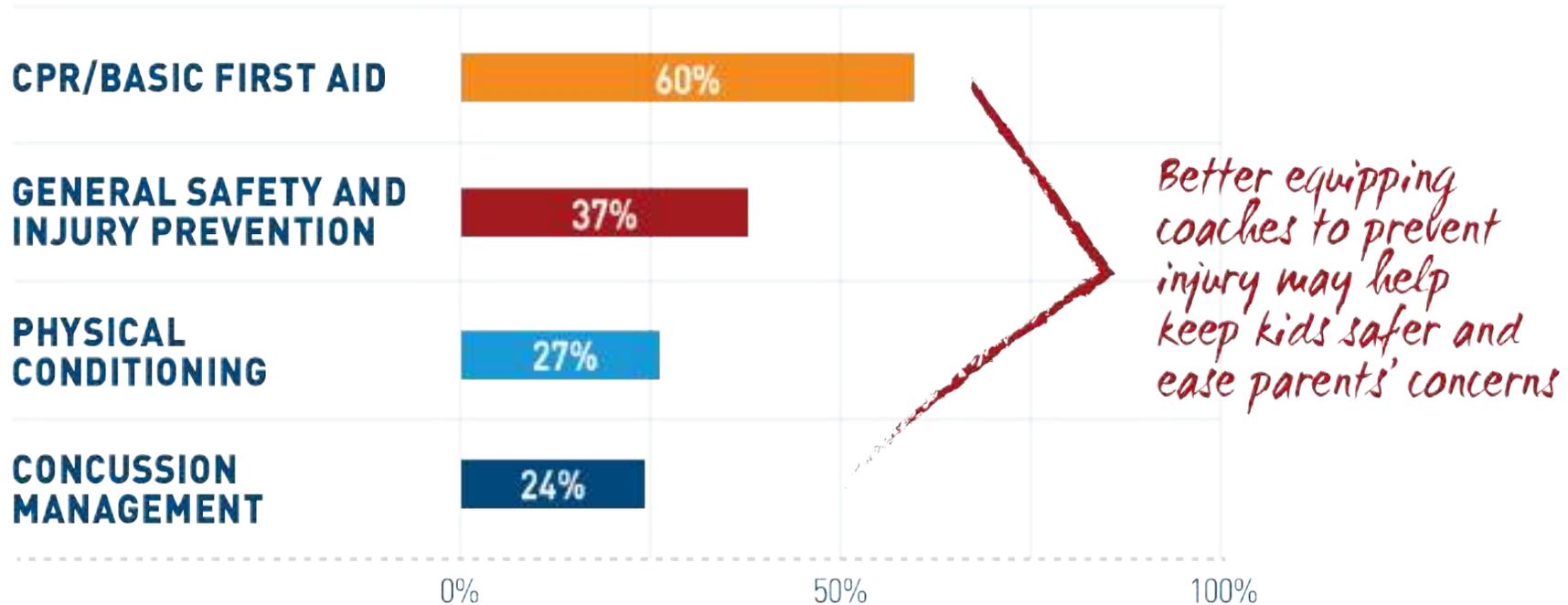
1. RESPECT AND ENCOURAGEMENT
2. POSITIVE ROLE MODEL
3. CLEAR, CONSISTENT COMMUNICATION
4. KNOWLEDGE OF SPORT
5. SOMEONE WHO LISTENS



*Adults who work with kids
should know these fundamentals.*

8) Emphasize Prevention

HEALTH, SAFETY PROTECTIONS ARE LACKING YOUTH COACHES WHO SAY THEY ARE TRAINED IN KEY AREAS



What You Can Do: Model Communities

- Convene local leaders from across sectors
- Reflect on research reports
- Do an audit of where you are as a community
- Set shared agenda