

## Youth Sport Education for Parents: An Investment in Your Child

Participating in youth sport is a great opportunity for young people to be active while gaining valuable lessons and experiences. However, for sport to create a positive experience for youth, there must be an investment by several key groups. The four key groups that constitute youth sport are:

1. Kids participate and have fun.
2. The Organization offers a place for youth to gather and play, while also organizing leagues and other community services.
3. Coaches are volunteer their time to enrich the life of your child.
4. Parents support their own children and other parents' children.

Each of these key groups has an equal part in maximizing the youth sport experience. Many youth sport organizations mandate training clinics for staff and coaches to aid them in maximizing the youth sport experience for your child. However, as parents, you play as big a role in the youth sport experience as the coaches and staff. Some organizations have partnered with the AIA Academy to bring youth sport education to parents. Your attendance in a parent education clinic can help maximize the youth sport experience for your child in a variety of ways:

- Firstly, parent education can teach you more about the youth sport experience, understanding your child and his/her needs, and how to communicate effectively with your child not only about sport, but also about life and healthy choices.
- Secondly, parent education can provide information about expectations regarding acceptable behavior at games and practices. Sources from some of our partnering organizations have suggested that at least 50% of the problems experienced during games are due to unruly parent behavior. Recently, a youth sport organization in the valley was forced to end a basketball game in the first quarter and call the police to disperse a large group of irate parents. This not only left the children without a conclusion to the game, but also left both teams in tears as they watched their parents become combative. Several of these parents have been banned from this organization's property. At the high school level, there have been several incidents in Maricopa County of fans fighting on the field of play during the school year. Therefore, parent education can serve as a helpful reminder of the youth sport organization's expectations regarding parental behavior.

It is common to see or hear other parents make comments about opposing players, referees, or coaches at a game. This is not only unsportsmanlike, it is embarrassing to the children. Parent education can make a difference in parent/spectator behavior and several organizations have mandated that parents attend AIA Academy parent clinics over the past three years. As a result, these organizations have seen a dramatic reduction in parent incidents, which has improved the sport experience for their children. Therefore, we ask you to consider investing in your child's youth sport experience by attending parent meetings and parent clinics when your child's



organization offers them. It is not only an investment in your child, but it benefits all of the children participating in youth sport.

Parents attending an AIA Academy parent clinic can expect the clinic to last approximately 90 minutes. During this time, parents will learn about the following topics:

- The Objectives of Youth Sport
- Communicating Effectively with Your Child and His/Her Coach
- Developmental vs. Professional Models of Sport
- Why Kids Play Sport and Why Kids Drop Out of Sport
- Parental Responsibilities, Commitments, and Conduct
- The Healthy Sport Experience
- Updates From Your Youth Sport Organization

Each clinic is followed by a question and answer period where specific questions can be addressed. If you would like more information about how your youth sport organization can host a parent clinic, please contact the AIA Academy at (602) 861-6198 or visit our website [www.aiaacademy.org](http://www.aiaacademy.org).

