

Youth Ice Hockey Coaches' Perceptions of a Team-Building Intervention Program

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The purpose of the current study was to explain youth ice hockey coaches' perceptions of the effectiveness of a team-building intervention program. Eight Peewee-level hockey coaches implemented the same team-building activities with their teams throughout the regular season. Data were gathered using 3 methods. Specifically, coaches answered questions on a pre- and postintervention form after each team-building activity, coaches' behaviors were observed by members of the research team, and each coach completed a semistructured exit interview after the completion of the regular season. Results highlighted the benefits of the team-building intervention program. Specifically, coaches felt athletes enjoyed this experience and improved or acquired a variety of important life skills and abilities. Coaches also felt that athletes bonded during activities and improved their abilities to work together as a group. Finally, coaches felt that their own personal communication skills improved.

Regular physical activity has numerous physiological (e.g., Haskell, 1994), cognitive (e.g., Etnier et al., 1997), and psychological (e.g., Landers & Petruzzello, 1994) benefits for individuals of all ages (Carron, Hausenblas, & Estabrooks, 2003). A major component of physical activity for youth is participation in team sports at both the recreational and competitive levels (cf. Wankel & Mummery, 1996). Unfortunately, youth-sport participation begins declining after the age of 12; this finding is especially critical given that it is also a crucial time for the development of children's social skills and self-esteem (Hedstrom & Gould, 2004; Lindner & Johns, 1991). A number of reasons have been proposed to account for this dropout behavior. These include individual aspects such as lack of desire and environmental aspects including negative experiences with coaches (Wankel & Mummery).

In Canada, attention to appropriate coaching behaviors is central to various coach-education programs including those conducted by the National Coach Certification Program (NCCP). One of the mandates of the NCCP is to establish

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