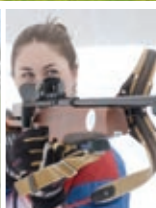


# Long-Term Athlete Development



# Canadian Sport for **Life**

**A Sport Parent's Guide**

Published by the Canadian Sport Centres



## Table of Contents

Table of Contents .....	3
Welcome to Canadian Sport for Life (CS4L) .....	4
Chapter 1: How Does Your Child Experience Sport? .....	5
Chapter 2: Introducing the CS4L Model .....	7
Chapter 3: What Parents Can Do at LTAD Stages .....	16
Chapter 4: Supporting CS4L in Your Home .....	19
Chapter 5: Promoting CS4L in Your Community .....	20
Appendix 1: Phases of Measurement .....	24
Appendix 2: Parent’s Code of Conduct .....	25
Appendix 3: Athlete’s Code of Conduct .....	26
References .....	27

Published by: Canadian Sport Centres, Ottawa, Canada, 2007  
 ISBN 978-0-9738274-4-6

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form for commercial purposes, or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording or from any information stored in a retrieval system, without permission from the authors or Canadian Sport Centres – Vancouver.

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through Sport Canada, a branch of the Department of Canadian Heritage.




## Welcome to Canadian Sport for Life (CS4L)

As parents, we recognize that sports and physical activity play an important role in our children’s healthy growth and development, but in recent times physical activity has suffered serious decline among Canadian children.

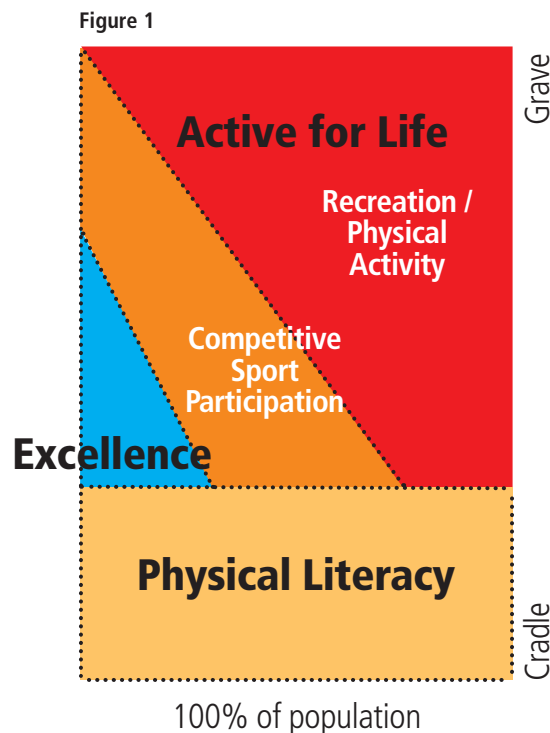
Medical and sport research shows that our children are increasingly at risk for obesity and disease due to low levels of activity and poor nutritional habits. Some experts have also suggested that Canada is producing declining performances in international competition due to a lack of physical activity and sport development during childhood years.

Your child may already be involved in physical activity and sports, or you may be wondering how to get your child started. The goal of this booklet is to help you understand the needs of young athletes and what may be done to promote their best interests in staying active and healthy. In these pages you will read about Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD), a model for development in physical activity and sport that not only provides a safe, enjoyable, and progressive pathway for children to pursue healthy physical activity, but also provides a pathway to excellence.

### CS4L and LTAD

Canadian Sport for Life (CS4L) is an initiative of Canadian Sport Centres and Sport Canada, planning for the sport excellence and well-being of Canadians. As shown in Figure 1, CS4L supports LTAD because it:

- helps all children to be physically literate (competent in fundamental movement skills for sport and physical activity).
- recognizes that children play to have FUN.
- is a pathway to excellence from playground or pond to podium.
- allows all Canadians to be physically active through sport and recreation participation.



## Chapter 1: How Does Your Child Experience Sport?

### Why Your Child Plays Sports

Children have their own reasons for participating in sports and physical activities but coaches and parents are not always in harmony with their motives. Children commonly play sports:

- to have fun.
- to experience thrills.
- to be with friends or make new friends.
- to do something they are good at.
- to feel good about themselves.
- to feel accepted.
- to improve and learn new skills.

Before you sign up or involve your child in a sport or activity, take time to talk to your child about his or her interests. Children are far more likely to continue in the activity if they are satisfying their own motives and have the support of their parents. They are also more likely to want to achieve excellence in competition for the same reasons.

### Why Parents Encourage Sport

Parents often have their own reasons for seeing their children in sports, and problems arise when their motives conflict with those of their son or daughter. The result can be a very negative sporting experience for the child. Some of the most common problems arise when parents:

- place too much emphasis on winning.
- push their children to specialize in one sport too early.
- live their own dreams through their children.

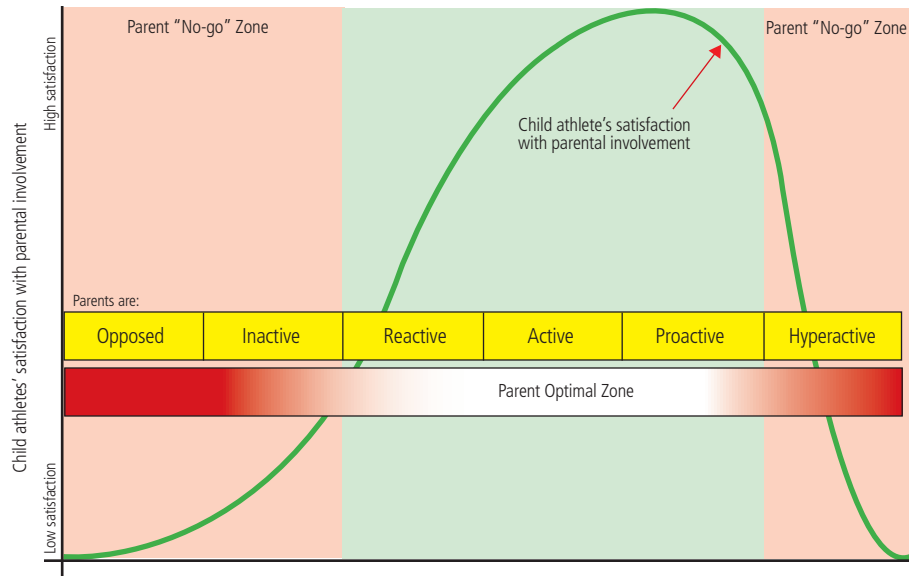
The ideal situation is when your child finds intrinsic reward in participating in the activity – otherwise known as FUN!

When the emphasis shifts towards external rewards from parents (extrinsic motives) or being “pushed” to participate, children are far less likely to enjoy and continue in the activity and they become more susceptible to burnout and dropout.



Figure 2 shows how children respond to their parents' level of involvement in their sport or activity. In the optimal zone of parent involvement, parents are reactive, active and proactive in their children's activity. By contrast, "inactive" parents (those who make no effort to be involved) and hyperactive parents tend to reduce their children's enthusiasm.

Figure 2 LTAD and Parent Involvement



Redrawn from: Engaging Parents, Celia Brackenridge Ltd. 2005

## Challenges in the Sport System

The "sport system" in Canada – made up of the network of schools, community clubs, associations and government agencies that deliver physical activity and sport programs – also contributes at times to the problem of child burnout and dropout from activity.

In recent years, programs have tended to treat young athletes and performers as miniature adults, and the drive to win medals and titles at an early age has resulted in inappropriate training methods and excessive competition schedules. When Canadian children should be focused on appropriate age-specific training and development, they are often over-competing in efforts to "win." It's no fun, it's exhausting, and it frequently drives children to quit the activity altogether.

## Serving All Levels of Ability

Another sport system issue is program access for both able-bodied children and those with a disability, physical and intellectual. The popularity and success of the Paralympics and other competitions for athletes with a disability points the way to what is possible. To continue opening doors for athletes of all abilities, we all need to lend our support to expanded programming for athletes with a disability.

## Chapter 2: Introducing the CS4L Model

### A Sport Pathway is Needed

If we want to encourage our children in sport and lifelong activity, as well as create the potential to compete internationally, we need to build our sport programs around principles that respect the developmental needs of all children. Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) is a progressive pathway of development that recognizes the distinct stages of physical, mental, cognitive and emotional development in child athletes. It addresses the needs of those who are able-bodied and those who have a disability, and it also addresses both early and late developers.

LTAD:

- is based on sport research and principles that have been widely studied all over the world.
- is contingent on an optimal training, competition and recovery program that is based on biological development and maturation versus chronological age (i.e. although young athletes may be the same age, their bodies are at very different levels of development).
- is athlete-centred and coach-driven.
- is supported by sports administration and sponsors.
- is designed according to sport science to allow equal opportunity for recreation and competition.
- encourages lifelong activity and wellness, while providing a training path to possible medal performances for those who choose high performance competition.



## What Sport Research Says

Research points to 10 key factors that influence athlete development. By building sports programs around these factors, LTAD ensures that athletes experience both optimal development in their chosen sport and lifelong retention in physical activity for improved wellness.

### 1. The FUNdamentals

The FUNdamentals are basic movement and sport skills taught through fun games and activities that engage small children and motivate them to continue in activity. While these basics are fun in nature, they also serve another purpose: they teach the essential skills required as a foundation for more complex physical activities and sports. It is important that all children develop a good base of these skills before puberty to optimize both future performance and lifelong activity. This basic set of FUNdamental movement (dance) and sports skills is referred to as “physical literacy” and it includes things such as skipping, hopping, jumping, throwing, catching, hitting, and swimming.

Physical literacy also implies that children need to have the cognitive ability to read and react to their sport environment to make correct decisions. For example, in soccer, children will develop increased confidence and learn not to automatically kick the ball away when it comes to them, but also consider passing to an open teammate. As a parent, you can ask your child’s sport association how their programs address physical literacy.



### 2. Specialization

Sports are classified as either early or late specialization. Early specialization sports such as gymnastics, diving, and figure skating require children to learn complex skills before physical maturation since it is extremely difficult to fully master these skills if they are introduced after puberty. Late specialization sports such as soccer, hockey, basketball, and baseball can still be mastered for elite levels of competition if specialization begins between the ages of 12 and 15, but it is essential that these athletes have already acquired physical literacy prior to adolescence.

As a parent, you should talk to your child’s coaches if you sense they are pushing your child to specialize prematurely. Children need to develop as athletes before they become specialized as *players*.



## Advanced Knowledge

### Five Basic S’s of Training, plus Windows of Optimal Trainability

#### Stamina (Endurance)

The optimal window of trainability for stamina occurs at the onset of the growth spurt. Aerobic capacity training is recommended before children reach their fastest rate of growth. Aerobic power should be introduced progressively after their growth rate decelerates.

#### Strength

The optimal window of trainability for girls is immediately after their fastest rate of growth and at the onset of menarche (first menstruation), while for boys it is 12 to 18 months after their fastest rate of growth.

#### Speed

For boys, the first speed training window occurs between the ages of 7 and 9 years and the second window occurs between the ages of 13 and 16. For girls, the first speed training window occurs between the ages of 6 and 8 years and the second window occurs between the ages of 11 and 13 years.

#### Skill

The window for optimal skill training begins at the age of 9 for boys and the age of 8 for girls. This window ends at the onset of the growth spurt.

#### Suppleness (Flexibility)

The optimal window of trainability for suppleness in both girls and boys occurs between the ages of 6 and 10. Special attention should be paid to flexibility during the growth spurt.

### 3. Developmental Age

If we talk about child development, we need to define what we mean because different children develop at different rates. **Growth** and **maturation** are two aspects of development that are often confused with each other. **Growth** refers to measurable changes such as height, weight, and fat percentage. **Maturation** refers to more subtle qualitative changes, such as cartilage changing to bone. **Development** describes the relationship between growth and maturation over time, including social, emotional, intellectual, and motor aspects. Similarly, **chronological age** refers to the number of years and days since birth, while **developmental age** refers to the degree of physical, mental, cognitive, and emotional maturity.

Keeping these growth and maturation concepts in mind, you can identify if your child is an early, average, or late maturer. You can then ensure that coaches design training and competition programs that fit your child’s level of trainability and readiness. (See Chapter 3, page 16 for information on assessing your child’s growth and maturation levels.)

You also need to recognize the relative age effect. Research is showing that selection to top-tier or representative teams favours children born in the first third of the year due to most sports having age cut-off dates based on the calendar year. If your child is born near the end of the year, you should ensure that your child is in a good program with excellent coaching, since research also shows that if children with late birthdays can be kept in quality programs, their development catches up and they do succeed at a later age.

#### 4. Physical, Mental, Cognitive, Ethical, and Emotional Development

LTAD says that training, competition, and recovery programs should be designed to match the physical, mental, cognitive, and emotional development of each athlete. Ethics, fair play, and character building should also be taught according to each child's ability to understand these concepts at different ages.

##### Late Childhood

Prior to puberty, physical training should emphasize large muscle groups and basic coordination, and children should be led with clear, brief instructions through structured routines. Simple trial and error is not enough; children need accurate demonstrations of the correct skills. The development of their self-esteem and confidence also requires that they taste success regularly, so activities should create many opportunities for success and children should be recognized regularly. Ethical and character building values should also begin to be integrated into the training regime.

##### Early Adolescence

In early adolescence, children undergo significant changes in bone, muscle, and fat tissue, and they also undergo mental and emotional changes. They lose much flexibility, so they become more prone to injuries. Mentally, they can be coached to make more decisions and take responsibility for them. Their social relationships become more important, so they need opportunities to interact socially with their peers. They still need to be recognized for their success, but "success" may vary: some children may develop early and make quick progress, while late developers may make slower progress but actually outperform the early developers over the long-term.

##### Late Adolescence

Older teens have mature muscles, though their muscular strength continues to increase into their 20s. Meanwhile, the rate at which they are able to develop new skills decreases. Mentally, they are ready to understand the technical requirements of their sport, and their increasing sense of fairness demands that they become part of decision-making processes. Emotionally, they have needs



#### Advanced Knowledge

### Five Additional S's of Training

#### Structure/Stature

The structure/stature component links the six stages of growth to the windows of optimal trainability. Coaches and parents can use stature measurements (i.e. height) before, during, and after maturation as a guide for tracking developmental age. Such tracking then allows coaches to address the critical or sensitive periods of physical development (endurance, strength, speed and flexibility) and skill development. Diagnostics for identifying strengths and weaknesses are critical for properly considering structure and stature in the design of training plans.

#### (p)Psychology

Sport is a physical and mental challenge. The ability to maintain high levels of concentration while remaining relaxed and confident is a skill that transcends sport and enhances everyday life. To develop the mental focus for success at high levels, young athletes need mental training that complements their physical training, designed specifically for their gender and LTAD stage. Even at young ages, mental training is critical since dealing with success and failure impacts children's continuation in sport and physical activity.

#### Sustenance

When the body performs physical activity, it must be replenished with a broad range of components. Sustenance prepares athletes for the volume and intensity required to optimize training and live life to the fullest. Sustenance includes nutrition, hydration, rest, sleep, and regeneration – all of which need to be applied differently to training and lifestyle plans depending on the LTAD stage.

In managing sustenance and recovery, parents can assist coaches by identifying fatigue. Fatigue can come in many forms including metabolic, neurological, psychological, environmental, and travel fatigue. While overtraining or over-competition can lead to burnout, improperly addressing sustenance can lead to the same result.

#### Schooling

In designing training programs, school demands must also be considered. Programs should account for school academic loads, timing of exams, and school-based physical activities. When possible, training camps and competition tours should compliment, not conflict, with the timing of major academic events at school.

Overstress should be monitored carefully, including the everyday stresses related to schooling, exams, peer groups, family, boyfriend or girlfriend relationships, and increased training volume and intensities. Coaches and parents should work together to establish a good balance between all factors.

#### Socio-Cultural

Sports and physical activities often present children with social and cultural experiences that can enhance their holistic development. These experiences can broaden their socio-cultural perspective by providing increased awareness of:

- Ethnicity
- Geography
- Literature
- Diversity
- Architecture
- Music
- History
- Cuisine
- Visual art

Through periodized annual planning, a child's activity or sport can offer much more than a simple commute between the activity venue and the home or hotel room.

for social interaction and self-expression that must be respected. Parents can talk to coaches and associations to assess how they accommodate these aspects of their child's development.

### 5. Trainability

Trainability refers to the genetic endowment of athletes as they respond individually to specific training stimuli and adapt to it. Malina and Bouchard (1991) defined trainability as "the responsiveness of developing individuals at different stages of growth and maturation to the training stimulus."

As a parent, you can help to ensure that your child's training takes advantage of the **windows of trainability** identified in the stages of LTAD (see sidebar and visit [www.ltad.ca](http://www.ltad.ca)).





## 6. Periodization

Periodization is time management applied to training. Over time, it optimizes each child's improvement by providing a logical training schedule that respects their stage of development. Periodized plans specify how much and how often athletes should train through the year, and they often describe a specific sequence of training components over weeks, days, and individual sessions. As a parent, you should check to see that your child is training according to a periodized plan – problems in periodization often arise when children have more than one coach.

## 7. Competition Calendar

For each stage of development, LTAD recommends that sports identify specific training to competition ratios. Every sport is different, but in essence very young children should be neither training nor competing formally. As they get older and develop, they should progress from fun-based activities to a combination of formal training and competition. At young ages, training time should far exceed competition time, but during adolescence competition time will increase and training time may decrease. Parents can check with the national organization for their children's sport to clarify the optimal training-to-competition ratios for different stages.

## 8. The 10-Year Rule

If one of your child's goals is high performance sporting achievement, remember that winning at a young age doesn't guarantee winning performances at older ages. To achieve excellence in the long-term, young athletes have to put more hours into training than they do competing – and to ensure children train for the hours and years required, programs should emphasize fun, development, and wellness, and not necessarily winning. As a parent, if you sense that your child's coach or sport association is emphasizing winning at the expense of fun and development, you should talk to them about LTAD, the dangers of child burnout, and the potential damage to long-term performance.

Sport science research has shown that it takes a minimum of 10 years and 10,000 hours of training for gifted athletes to achieve the highest levels of elite competition. This translates into approximately three hours of training or competition daily for 10 years for athletes who are identified as having a special talent in a particular sport or activity.

## 9. System Alignment

LTAD tries to get everyone in the sport system on the same page: one country, one vision, one system. Because many different institutions, agencies, and groups are involved in delivering sports programs, LTAD recommends that parents, teachers, schools, coaches, clubs, recreation centres, and governments coordinate their efforts for the greatest welfare of the children in their programs. In this regard, LTAD has big implications for the entire Canadian sport system. You can ask your local sports association, recreation centre or school if their rules and formats are consistent with those of the national association.

## 10. Continuous Improvement

LTAD doesn't pretend that everything about child development and sports is already known. LTAD recognizes that new research is constantly emerging and recommends that new knowledge and insight should be reviewed and incorporated into the model as necessary. In this regard, parents have a responsibility to their children to stay informed about new developments affecting their children's activities.



## The Stages of LTAD

To promote each child's healthy and logical development in a sport or physical activity, LTAD identifies sequential stages for training and competition that respects their physical, mental, and emotional development. This approach encourages lifelong physical activity for athletes of all levels of ability and disability, and it also provides an effective route for athletes to pursue excellence at the national and international level of competition.

The number of stages differs slightly between early specialization and late specialization sports, and early specialization sports have especially unique requirements that affect the definition of their LTAD stages. The basic seven-stage LTAD pathway for the majority of sports (late specialization) is described here:

### 1. Active Start

From ages 0-6 years, children need to be introduced to relatively unstructured play that incorporates a variety of body movements. An early active start enhances development of brain function, coordination, social skills, gross motor skills, emotions, leadership, and imagination. It also helps children build confidence, develop posture and balance, build strong bones and muscles, promote healthy weight, reduce stress, improve sleep, learn to move skillfully, and learn to enjoy being active.

### 2. FUNDamentals

From ages 6-9 in boys and 6-8 in girls, children need to participate in a variety of well-structured activities that develop basic skills. However, activities and programs need to maintain a focus on fun, and formal competition should only be minimally introduced.

### 3. Learning to Train

From ages 8-11 in girls and 9-12 in boys, to the onset of the growth spurt (usually around the ages of 11-12), children are ready to begin training according to more formalized methods, but the emphasis should still be on general sports skills suitable to a number of activities. While it is often tempting to over-develop "talent" at this age through excessive single sport training and competition (as well as early positioning in team sports), this can be very detrimental to later stages of development if the child is playing a late specialization sport: it promotes one-sided physical, technical, and tactical development and increases the likelihood of injury and burnout.

### 4. Training to Train

The ages that define this stage for boys and girls are based on the onset and end of the growth spurt, which are generally ages 11 to 15 for girls and 12 to 16 for boys. At this stage, they are ready to consolidate their basic sport-specific skills and tactics. These youths may play to win and do their best, but they still need to focus more time on skill training and physical development over competition. This approach is critical to the development of top performers and maintaining activity in the long-term, so parents should check with their national organization to ensure their child's program has the correct training-to-competition ratio.

### 5. Training to Compete

Depending on the sport, for females ages 15-21+/- and males ages 16-23+/-, this is where things get "serious." They can either choose to specialize in one sport and pursue a competitive stream, or they can continue participating at a recreational level and thereby enter the Active for Life stage (see 7 below). In the competitive stream, high volume and high intensity training begins to occur year-round.

### 6. Training to Win

At ages 19+ in males and 18+ in females, elite athletes with identified talent enter a stage where they may pursue the most intense training suitable for international winning performances. At this stage, both world-class athletes with a disability and able-bodied athletes require world-class training methods, equipment, and facilities that meet the demands of the sport and the athlete.

### 7. Active For Life

Young athletes can enter this stage at essentially any age. According to LTAD, if children have been correctly introduced to activity and sport through Active Start, FUNDamentals and Learning to Train programs, they will have the necessary motor skills and confidence (physical literacy) to remain Active for Life in virtually any sport they like. They may decide to continue playing their sport at the recreational level, or they may become involved in the sport as a game official or coach. They might also try new sports and activities: examples could be a hockey player taking up golf or a tennis player starting to cycle.



## Chapter 3: What Parents Can Do at LTAD Stages

As a parent, you have the ability to encourage your child in sport and physical activity at each stage of LTAD. Here are some of the things you can do:

### 1. Active Start - girls and boys 0-6

- Provide organized physical activity for at least 30 minutes a day for toddlers and at least 60 minutes a day for preschoolers.
- Provide unstructured physical activity – active play – for at least 60 minutes a day, and up to several hours per day for toddlers and preschoolers. Your toddler or preschooler should not be sedentary for more than 60 minutes at one time except while sleeping.
- Provide physical activity everyday regardless of the weather.
- Promote key values: fun, inclusion.

### 2. Fundamentals - girls 6-8, boys 6-9

- Consider enrolling your child in a variety of seasonal sports activities.
- Be sensitive to your child's preferences for activities. For example, don't insist they play basketball if they show an interest in gymnastics or dance.
- Ask coaches and activity leaders about their training program and if they follow LTAD principles.
- Find out if the physical education program at your child's school is supporting LTAD principles and the teaching of FUNDamental skills. (See page 11 for more information or visit [www.cahperd.ca](http://www.cahperd.ca))
- Check if your child's activities address the ABC's of athleticism: agility, balance, coordination, and speed.
- Your child should be active in several physical activities or sports each year.
- Continue to encourage your child in unstructured play outside of formal activities.
- Turn off the TV, computer, and video games!
- Promote key values: fun, inclusion, fairness.



## Advanced Knowledge

### Measuring Growth

Coaches and parents can use stature measurements (height) before, during, and after maturation as a guide for tracking the developmental age of children. Tracking allows coaches to address the critical or sensitive periods of physical development (endurance, strength, speed and flexibility) and skill development.

The age of an athlete can be examined from seven different perspectives:

_ Chronological age	_ Relative age
_ Biological age	_ Skeletal age
_ Developmental age	_ Training age
_ Sport-specific training age	

#### How to Measure Growth Spurt (GS)

- Stand straight against a wall, no shoes, heels touching the wall.
- Measure from floor to top of head.
- Measurements should be taken at the same time of day (AM or PM).

#### Phase 1: Age 0 to 6

- Very rapid growth.
- Measure standing height and weight on birthday.

#### Phase 2: Age 6 to the Onset of GS

- Steady growth until the onset of GS.
- Measure standing height and weight every 3 months.
- If measurement takes place outside of home, replace birthday with an annual starting point of measurements.

#### Phase 3: From the onset of GS to peak of GP

- Rapid growth until peak is reached.
- Measure standing height, sitting heights, and arm span every 3 months.

#### Phase 4: Peak of GS to Slow Deceleration

- Rapid deceleration.
- Measure standing height, sitting heights, and arm span every 3 months.

#### Phase 5: From Slow Deceleration to Cessation

- Slow deceleration of growth until cessation of growth.
- Measure standing height every 3 months.

#### Phase 6: Cessation

- Cessation of growth.
- Measure height and weight on birthday.



### 3. Learning to Train - girls 8-11, boys 9-12

- Identify sports and activities where your child has fun and experiences success: narrow the focus to 3 sports or activities through the year.
- If your child has taken a special interest in a late specialization sport such as soccer or baseball, monitor the activity and training program to make sure your child is not over-training, over-competing, or specializing too early. Talk to the coach or teacher if you have concerns.
- Training should occupy about 70% of the time your child participates in a given activity or sport. Formal competition (e.g. league games) should occupy about 30% of the time.
- Find out if your child's training and development is being supported by quality physical education programs at school.
- Check whether the coach is trained or certified ([www.coach.ca](http://www.coach.ca)).
- Continue to encourage your child in unstructured play outside of formal activities.
- Promote key values: fun, inclusion, fairness.

### 4. Training to Train - girls 11-15, boys 12-16

- In late specialization sports, it is acceptable for coaches or teachers to begin identifying and encouraging "talent" at the Training to Train stage, but caution should still be shown against premature specialization. Children mature at different rates, so your child may still have undiscovered capacities in other sports. As well, parents should be cautious that their children are not pushed to over-train or over-compete as injury and burnout can result.
- WARNING: This is the stage when many young athletes quit their sport or activity due to burnout or excessive pressure from coaches and parents.
- Team sport coaches should individualize training based on maturation.
- Promote key values: fun, fairness, respect.

### 5. Training to Compete - females 15-21+/-, males 16-23+/-

- At this stage, your child needs the most skilled and qualified coaches to ensure their physical, mental, and emotional needs are correctly addressed within their activity.
- The role of the parent is to seek the best training situation for their child, and to support the training guidelines as prescribed by coaches and teachers who are aligned to LTAD principles.
- Your child's certified coach should be supported by a Performance Enhancement Team.
- Promote key values: fun, fairness, excellence, respect.

### 6. Training to Win - females 18+, males 19+

- Celebrate that your child has become an international champion.
- Encourage your child to give back to other kids and act as a positive role model.
- Recognize that other parents will now "look up" to you; therefore, help them by directing them to become aware and informed.
- Promote key values: fun, fairness, excellence, respect.

### 7. Active for Life - any age

- You might encourage your child to enter this stage at any age, especially if you sense an aversion to competition.
- To help your child make the transition to non-competitive involvement in physical activity, you should provide a positive example by practicing your own activity.
- You should also explore and expose your child to new activities.
- The active parent is the best role model!
- Promote key values: fun, fairness, staying healthy, giving back.



## Chapter 4: Supporting CS4L in Your Home

### Finding Good Programs

To encourage your child in sport and physical activity, your first step is to identify activities and good programs that suit your child's interests. (These might not be the same as YOUR interests!) You should do some research to see what programs are available in your community, considering whether or not the activity is suitable for lifelong activity or promotes skills that are transferable to other activities.

When researching programs, here are some of the questions you can ask:

- Does the program emphasize skill development or competition?
- What is the ratio of training to competition?
- How is playing time determined? Do all children get equal time? Do they get to play all positions?
- Are children grouped according to calendar age or degree of maturation?
- Are the coaches trained and/or certified? What type of training do they receive?

### Ensuring Healthy Habits

Once your child is settled into an activity, talk to the coach or instructor to see how you can best support your child's physical requirements at home. Ask your child's coach or instructor if they have recommendations for eating and sleep regimens around training and competition. You can also do some of your own basic research (see "Other Resources" page 22).

### Promoting Self-Esteem & Character

The self-esteem and character of children is affected by the mental and emotional messages they receive during participation in sport and physical activity. Many of these messages are spoken in the form of direct praise or criticism by coaches and parents, while many others are quietly implied by how much playing or competition time they receive, or how often they are selected for training demonstrations.

Managing self-esteem and character issues requires sensitivity and skill on the part of parents, coaches, and instructors, but it need not be complicated. Here are some basic things parents can do to promote healthy self-esteem and character development:

- Encourage your child to talk about his/her favourite aspect of the activity.
- Invite your child to retell the story of a particular personal success or achievement.
- Acknowledge the details and successes they find important – remember that what is important to them is what should be most important to you!
- Never use bribes or threats to push your child into participating.
- Discuss values which may be "challenged" during your child's participation in a sport or activity.

In general, remember that children learn better in a non-stressful environment: Don't add more stress or anxiety at home. Encourage balanced self-esteem by reinforcing your child's positive self-talk: "I am capable: I can do this."

### Living the CS4L Example

Children watch their parents' habits and copy them. Studies have shown if parents make physical activity part of their daily routine, their children are much more likely to get involved in activity and stay involved. You can encourage your child to be physically active by making sure you stay active!

**Fact:** A Canadian study showed that a mother's participation in sport had a greater effect on the child's likelihood of involvement than the father's participation.

## Chapter 5: Promoting CS4L in Your Community

### Being an CS4L Advocate

If you believe physical activity and sport is important for children and youth, you can help to promote LTAD by talking about it in your community. You can talk to your child's school, your local recreation centre, local sports associations, and government officials and let them know that you think physical activity should be encouraged with logical programming that follows an LTAD philosophy. This includes providing programs for both able-bodied athletes and those with a disability.



### Relating to Coaches, Officials, & Other Parents

You can also promote CS4L through your relationships with coaches, officials, and other parents. Here are some issues to be aware of and suggestions to resolve them:

**Cheating** – If you encounter a coach who encourages cheating, you need to inform the coach that teaching children to cheat is not acceptable, and you should let the other parents know that this has happened. If the coach refuses to change, or denies the allegation, the parents should go to the activity or sport's local governing body and request action. If no action is taken, you may have to remove your child from the activity or seek a program elsewhere.

**Verbal abuse** – If your child's coach, a rival coach, or parent targets your child or others with verbal abuse, you need to take action. With rival coaches and parents, you should report incidents of verbal abuse to the activity's organizing body, being careful to identify the person or persons and the date, time, and place of the incident to the best of your knowledge. If the source of verbal abuse is your child's coach or team parent, you should approach them directly and tell them that verbal abuse is not an acceptable coaching or spectator behaviour. Again, if the behaviour persists, you may have to remove your child from the activity.

**Sexual abuse** – Unfortunately, many sporting environments provide increased opportunities for sexual abuse by adults involved in sport. Locker rooms, change room showers, competition trips, and tournaments often provide potential abusers with additional access to obedient young athletes who may have difficulty saying "no" to unwelcome advances. Be wary of situations that may be inappropriate, such as your child training alone or visiting a coach's house unattended. Try to ensure that a second adult is present and that any individual coaching is witnessed by other athletes or adults.

## Rating Schools for Physical Education

It is well known that school-based physical education programs have undergone significant decline across Canada in recent years. While groups such as the Canadian Medical Association and the Heart and Stroke Foundation point to the public health risks of this trend and the need for physical education programs in our schools, the trend shows no immediate signs of changing. Parents who care about physical education may want to review their children's school options in this regard and assess different school programs. The Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance ([www.cahperd.ca](http://www.cahperd.ca)) created the following series of questions to help parents evaluate physical education programs at their child's school:

1. Does the school provide children with at least 30 minutes of instruction in physical education each day?
2. Does the program include participation in school intramural activities and student leadership opportunities?
3. Are a wide variety of physical activities offered?
4. Does the program include a cardiovascular component with activities such as running, skipping, aerobic dance, or swimming?
5. Does the program encourage children of all body types and abilities to participate?
6. Does the program emphasize fun, socialization, and active living rather than just competition and traditional team sports?
7. Are the teachers qualified and trained in teaching physical education?
8. Does the school provide a safe learning environment for physical activity?
9. Does the school make use of other facilities in addition to a gymnasium such as a school skating rink or community pool?
10. Does your child look forward to physical education classes and intramural activities?

**Grading** – If all 10 answers are "yes", the school has an excellent program. If there are 6 to 8 "yes" replies, then the program ranks as good. If there are less than 6 "yes" responses, this school's program needs review and improvement.

Encourage the parent association at your child's school to grade the physical education program. Then go to [www.cahperd.ca](http://www.cahperd.ca) to find resources which will encourage your school to hire a physical education specialist and provide quality daily physical education so your child has a healthy body as well as a healthy mind!



## Linking CS4L to your Community Recreation Programs

Almost every Canadian community has a parks and recreation department which delivers services promoting community health and vibrancy. These services often address recreation, physical activity, environment, facilities, sports, public health, crime prevention, and social services. The boards of these departments often include parents who guide decision-making in these various areas.

You can ensure that your local leaders – ranging from the mayor to the parks and recreation board members – are aware of CS4L and LTAD so they can consider these factors in their decision making. Their allegiance can ensure that:

- Programs are accessible to all children and youth whether they are able-bodied or have a disability.
- Programs for the pre-adolescent children are multi-sport with a focus on skill development.
- Programs are delivered by trained or certified coaches or instructors.
- Sport tourism and local events hosting use CS4L as a template to design legacy programs.
- Facility design addresses all seven stages of CS4L, including the option to host international competition in some sports.
- Training opportunities are made available at reasonable cost to ensure access for all children.
- Sport and physical activity programs are considered solutions to other social problems.
- Communications materials at community centres help inform parents about CS4L and LTAD.

## Learning More about CS4L and LTAD

If you would like to learn more or direct others to information on CS4L and LTAD, please visit [www.ltad.ca](http://www.ltad.ca), the official Canadian Sport Centres LTAD web site. At this site you can:

- Review LTAD guidelines and programs online.
- Download copies of LTAD resources.
- Find links to more LTAD and related information.
- Find a speaker at [www.ltad.ca](http://www.ltad.ca) who can present on CS4L to your local or national organization.

## Other Resources

In addition to CS4L and LTAD, there are many other organizations and web sites that provide resources for parents who want to learn more about sports and physical activity for their child. The following list describes national resources and organizations – parents should note that there are also many provincial and community resources that complement these organizations:

Aboriginal Sport Circle ([www.aboriginalsportcircle.ca](http://www.aboriginalsportcircle.ca))

- Canada's national voice for Aboriginal sport, bringing together the interests of First Nations, Inuit and Metis peoples.

Active Living Alliance for Canadians with a Disability ([www.ala.ca](http://www.ala.ca))

- Promotes, supports and enables Canadians with disabilities to lead active, healthy lives.

AthletesCAN ([www.athletescan.com](http://www.athletescan.com))

- Association of Canada's national team athletes, with news and events.

Canada Games Council ([www.canadagames.ca](http://www.canadagames.ca))

- Information on the biennial Canada summer and winter games.

Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (CAHPERD) ([www.cahperd.ca](http://www.cahperd.ca))

- Advocacy group for quality, school-based physical and health education.

Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport ([www.cces.ca](http://www.cces.ca))

- Addressing ethical issues in sport such as drugs and doping.

Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute ([www.cflri.ca](http://www.cflri.ca))

- Conducts research and makes recommendations to increase physical activity in Canada.

Canadian Paralympic Committee ([www.paralympic.ca](http://www.paralympic.ca))

- Organization promoting the Paralympic sports movement in Canada.

Canadian Parks and Recreation Association ([www.cpra.ca](http://www.cpra.ca))

- Organization promoting parks and recreation services for community health.

Canadian School Sport Federation ([www.schoolsport.ca](http://www.schoolsport.ca))

- Parent body promoting results, upcoming events, information on new projects and initiatives.

Canadian Sport Centres ([www.pch.gc.ca/progs/sc/prog/cns-nsc](http://www.pch.gc.ca/progs/sc/prog/cns-nsc))

- Network of training centres for high performance athletes, including those with a disability.

Coaches Association of Canada ([www.coach.ca](http://www.coach.ca))

- Information on coaching and certification programs available to your child's coach.

Coaches of Canada ([www.coachesofcanada.com](http://www.coachesofcanada.com))

- A members' organization advancing the profession of coaching in Canada.

Coalition for Active Living ([www.activeliving.ca](http://www.activeliving.ca))

- Action group that focuses on health promotion and disease prevention through physical activity.

Joint Consortium for School Health ([www.jcsh-cces.ca](http://www.jcsh-cces.ca))

- Information on the work being done by Canada's governments on school-based and school-linked health promotion.

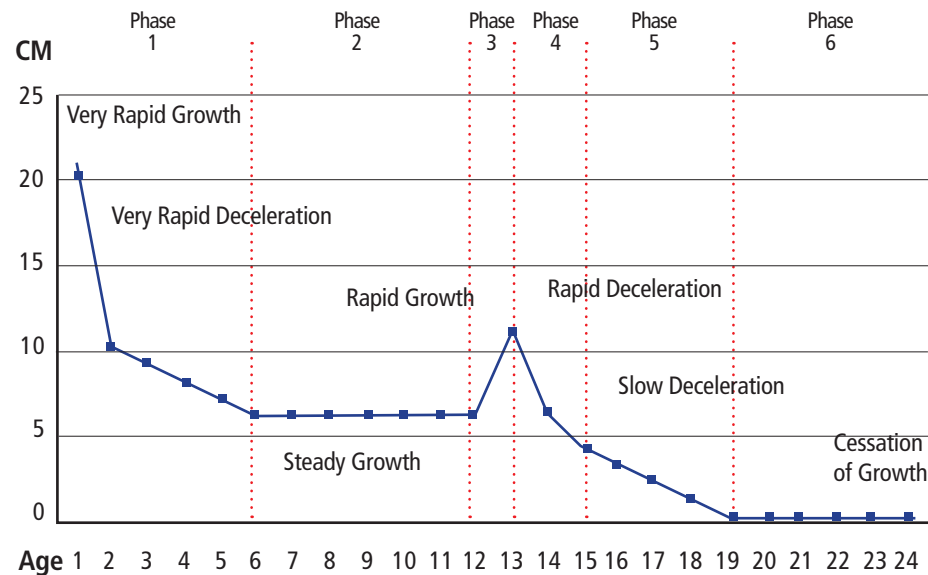
Special Olympics Canada ([www.specialolympics.ca](http://www.specialolympics.ca))

- Dedicated to enriching the lives of Canadians with an intellectual disability through sport.

True Sport Foundation ([www.truesportpur.ca](http://www.truesportpur.ca))

- Advocacy organization promoting positive values in Canadian community sport.

## Appendix 1: Phases of Measurement



## Appendix 2: Parent's Code of Conduct

If children are to grow and develop in their sport or physical activity, an environment of positive communication and respect must exist. Parents should observe the following Code of Conduct with their child athletes. The following code is taken from a resource manual developed for community coaches by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (CCES).

- I will remember that my child plays sport for his or her enjoyment, not for mine.
- I will encourage my child to play by the rules and to resolve conflicts without resorting to hostility or violence.
- I will teach my child that doing one's best is as important as winning, so that my child will never feel defeated by the outcome of a game/event.
- I will make my child feel like a winner every time by offering praise for competing fairly and trying hard.
- I will never ridicule or yell at my child for making a mistake or losing a competition.
- I will remember that children learn best by example. I will applaud good players' performances by both my child's team and their opponents.
- I will not force my child to participate in sports.
- I will never question the official's judgement or honesty in public.
- I will support all efforts to remove verbal and physical abuse from children's sporting activities.
- I will respect and show appreciation for the trained volunteer coaches who give their time to provide sport activities for my child, understanding that I have a responsibility to be a part of my child's development.

I agree to Play Fair. \_\_\_\_\_ (signature of parent)

Canadian Sport Centres gratefully acknowledges the Promotion Plus Women in Coaching Committee in conjunction with the Coaches Association of BC and the Recreation and Sport Branch for use of this document.



## Appendix 3: Athlete's Code of Conduct

If children are to grow and develop in their sport or physical activity, they need to participate in building an environment of positive communication and respect. Parents and coaches can discuss the following Code of Conduct with their child athletes. The following code is taken from a resource manual developed for community coaches by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (CCES).

- I will play by the rules and in the spirit of the game.
- I will control my temper – fighting and “mouthing off” can spoil the activity for everybody.
- I will respect my opponents.
- I will do my best to be a true team player.
- I will remember that winning isn't everything – that having fun, improving skills, making friends and doing my best are as important.
- I will acknowledge all good plays/performance – those of my team and of my opponents.
- I will participate because I want to, not just because my parents or coaches want me to.
- I will remember that coaches and officials are there to help me. I will accept their decisions and show them respect.

I agree to Play Fair. \_\_\_\_\_ (signature of athlete)

Canadian Sport Centres gratefully acknowledges the Promotion Plus Women in Coaching Committee in conjunction with the Coaches Association of BC and the Recreation and Sport Branch for use of this document.



## References

Balyi, I. et al, Canadian Sport for Life: Long-Term Athlete Development Resource Paper. Ottawa: Canadian Sport Centres, 2005.

Brackenridge, Celia. Engaging parents in children and young people's sport: An analysis of programmes and products. Unpublished report to the NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit and Sport England, 2005.

Botterill, C. & Patrick, T. A Guide for Sport Parents. Winnipeg: Sport Manitoba, 2003.

Canadian Association of Health, Physical Activity, Recreation and Dance. Parents Information Kit. Ottawa: Canadian Association of Health, Physical Activity, Recreation and Dance, 1992.

Hagger, M. Coaching Young Performers. Leeds: Sports Coach UK, 2003.

Higgs, C. et al. No Accidental Champions, Supplement to Canadian Sport for Life. Ottawa: Canadian Sport Centres, 2006.

LeBlanc, J. & Dickson, L. Straight Talk about Children and Sport. Ottawa, Coaching Association of Canada, 1997.

Malina, R.M. & Bouchard, C. Growth, Maturation, and Physical Activity. Champaign, Ill.: Human Kinetics, 1991.

Stafford, I. Coaching for Long-term Athlete Development: To Improve Participation and Performance in Sport. Leeds: Coachwise, 2005.

**Written by** Richard Way, Istvan Balyi, Colin Higgs, Mary Bluechardt, Charles Cardinal, Colin Higgs and Steve Norris (LTAD Expert Group) with Jim Grove

**Design by** McAllister Media



# Long-Term Athlete Development

