

2010 North American Society for Sport Management Conference (NASSM 2010)

A Synthesis of Research on the State of Youth Sports

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Governance

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**75-minute symposium,
roundtable, or workshop
(Sandhill Crane)**

Abstract 2010-144

9:00 AM

The economic recession that gripped the United States in 2008 and 2009 has affected countless industries and businesses, yet one affected area is not as visible as others but could have a lasting impact. Youth sports have been hit hard by cuts in funding to public schools and community organizations. Although sport in general plays a vital role in our culture, the role of youth sports in developing individuals and benefiting society is often understated and misunderstood. For every professional athlete who garners media attention due to selfishness or criminal activity, there are countless youth from inner cities and rural enclaves who benefit from the values that well run sport programs offer. In October 2009, an international team of people led by the organization Up2Us delivered that message to the White House.

Up2Us, a national coalition of organizations dedicated to utilizing sport as a positive tool for individual and social change, has been influential in bringing together practitioners and researchers. Along those lines, the organization commissioned a research and policy report designed to examine the impact of the decline in youth sport funding (Up2Us, in press). A few of the highlights of the report scheduled to be released in December of 2009 include:

(a) State budget deficits have caused many school systems to make cuts to their afterschool sports and activities budgets for the 2009-2010 school year with a conservative estimate of over \$2 billion dollars being cut from afterschool sports and activities budgets nationwide (Up2Us, in press).

(b) Participation in sport among low-income children of color is already drastically lower than middle-class white children. 40% to 60% of low-income children of color participate in sports compared to 75% of their white counterparts (Simpkins, Ripke, Huston, & Eccles, 2005). Yet, pay-to-play policies have been enacted for sports in high schools in 43 states (Up2Us, in press).

(c) A study conducted by the Michigan High School Athletic Association of 558 Michigan High Schools found that fees up to \$100 cause a 10% decrease in participation while fees up to \$200 dollars affect a 20% decline (Rausch, 2006).

(d) Research conducted in Los Angeles county compared the number of school-based extracurricular sport programs with crime rates in the respective school's district (Cohen, Taylor, Zonta, Vestal, & Schuster, 2007). When controlling for race/ethnicity of the neighborhood and poverty, schools with more extracurricular sport activities had shockingly lower juvenile crime rates (1.7 per 10,000 youth) than those schools with fewer sport offerings (30.9 per 10,000 youth).

(e) 92% of athletes in Harlem RBI, a program that combines baseball and literacy, go to college, compared with 60.7% of students in New York City (New York City Department of Education, 2009).

(f) The National Survey of Children's Health showed non-athletes to be 60% more likely to be overweight than athletes (Terzian & Moore, 2009).

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This symposium will detail the findings and policy recommendations synthesized in the report, discuss the future of youth sports in America, and present funding opportunities for continued collaboration between practitioners and researchers.

References

Cohen, D. A., Taylor, S. L., Zonta, M., Vestal, K. D., & Schuster, M. A. (2007). Availability of high school extracurricular sports programs and high-risk behaviors. *Journal of School Health*, 77 (2), 80-86.

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Rausch, K. (2006). Pay-to-play: A risky and largely unregulated solution to save high school athletic programs from elimination. *Suffolk University Law Review*. Retrieved from
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Simpkins, S. D., Ripke, M., Huston, A. C., & Eccles, J. S. (2005). Predicting participation and outcomes in out-of-school activities: Similarities and differences across social ecologies. *New Directions for Youth Development*, 105, 51-69.

Terzian, M., & Moore, K. A. (2009, May). Physical inactivity in U. S. adolescents: family, neighborhood, and individual factors (Research brief). Washington, DC: Child Trends. Retrieved on September 1, 2009, from,
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Up2Us (in press). Going, going, gone...Why we have to save youth sports before it's too late.