



Long-Term Athlete Development
Supporting Quality Sport Experiences

2.0

LONG-TERM ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT

SUPPORTING QUALITY SPORT EXPERIENCES

2.0

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Introduction

The purpose of this document and the development of the Special Olympics Canada Long-Term Athlete Development Model 2.0 (SO LTAD 2.0) is to better align with the reality of the Special Olympics sport system in Canada. Since the inception of Long-Term Development (LTD) there has been an accumulation of knowledge and the establishment of support tools that have impacted not only the evolution of the framework, but also the implementation of the model. This document has been generated through consultation with Chapter Staff, experts in the field and feedback from Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) 2007. Although a number of factors were considered in creating the content, the focus has remained on work being done in the Quality Sport space, delivering “Good programs, in good places, run by good people.” This theme runs throughout the recommendations contained herein.



2014 Garry Frankel

Building from the generic model developed by Sport for Life, sport organizations across the country have adapted and customized the LTD framework to better suit their context and ensure relevancy to their sport. In the Canadian sport landscape, you will hear various names for this development model. For Special Olympics, which has prioritized the well-being of the athlete for over 50 years, it was critical that the word “athlete” remain in the title of the framework to capture the sense of pride and belonging that defines the experience for so many Special Olympics participants. This revised framework is athlete-centered, sport system supported and reflective of what is best for all Special Olympics athletes given their interests, goals, motivations and skill levels.

The Special Olympics Long-Term Athlete Development 2.0 framework and implementation plan will ensure:

- › Quality programs and services for our athletes, coaches, volunteers and supporters.
- › Quality training for athletes and coaches.
- › A high level of support for athletes in training and competition, including a focus on their personal health, well-being and safety.

The framework outlined here is just the beginning of Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) for athletes with an intellectual disability in Canada. This document is supported by an implementation plan, LTAD specific resources, links to best practices, coaching tools and ongoing development.

This updated framework will serve to guide and inform everyone involved with Special Olympics, from athletes to coaches to administrators and funders. The SO LTAD 2.0 Model is a consolidation of:

- › Long-Term Athlete Development in Sport and Physical Activity 3.0
- › the most up-to-date research on Special Olympics
- › feedback from members
- › physical literacy
- › Quality Sport

The goal of SO LTAD 2.0 programs is to support the physical, social and mental health of athletes through the delivery of Quality Sport programs that are athlete-centered and focused on physical literacy. We create capacity and accountability in our leaders and partners through education and training, mentorship and continuing research.

Special Olympics

Dr. Frank Hayden's ground-breaking research on the effects of regular exercise on the fitness levels of children with an intellectual disability inspired the [Special Olympics movement in Canada](#). In order for Special Olympics sport to have a transformative effect on the lives of those with an intellectual disability, intentional and collaborative planning in support of the Quality Sport principles of "Good people, delivering good programs in good places" is required. This document is meant to inform, train and support the passionate, knowledgeable and caring individuals involved in Special Olympics programs across Canada through a shared and consistent approach and common language.

The Impact of Special Olympics

Athletes

“Special Olympics allows all kids like me to have the opportunity to play and be included as part of a team.”

(Sobey's campaign).

“Now I can participate in sports with my friends! At Special Olympics, all kids like me can play.”

says [Special Olympics Saskatchewan athlete, Emily](#).

“Special Olympics gave me a place to meet other kids like me and have fun.”

says [Special Olympics New Brunswick athlete, Kate](#).

“Brett curls with SO at a competitive level and although he enjoys the competition and cares about how he curls, the social aspect is still by far the most important and rewarding part for him.”

(Parents of Special Olympics athlete, Brett).

“When I'm at Special Olympics, no one is left on the sidelines.”

says [Special Olympics Nova Scotia athlete, Billy](#).

Of the children, youth and adults with an intellectual disability in Canada, approximately 50,000 participate in Special Olympics (2020). On average these athletes take part in at least two Special Olympics programs per year. Overall, individuals with an intellectual disability are at an increased risk of preventable and adverse physical, social/psychological and mental health conditions compared to the general population. In addition to an increased risk of conditions such as heart disease and diabetes, persons with intellectual disabilities have a high prevalence of obesity, visual and auditory issues and musculoskeletal diseases such as osteoporosis.

Increasing levels of physical activity is the most effective single intervention to improve the health status of a population of adults with an Intellectual Disability (cited Robertson et al., 2000).

Participation in Special Olympics is shown to provide improvements across mental, social and physical domains. Athletes who participate in Special Olympics programs benefit as follows:

- › improved physical fitness and conditioning
- › improved balance, coordination and body control
- › acquisition of sport skills and competitive skills
- › improved self-confidence and social skills

“Increased self-confidence and social skills are by far the most important thing our son has gained through SO involvement”

(Parent of SO athlete).

People other than the athletes benefit from involvement in Special Olympics. Parents, caregivers, coaches, community leaders, health professionals and sponsors are positively impacted by their Special Olympics involvement.

Parents and Caregivers

“Special Olympics was my first time seeing her so happy. I have so many videos of her dancing and laughing. She just loves that energy and the crowd and connecting with her friends,”

(Parent of SO athlete).

“Special Olympics has given Benjamin new confidence and new skills to bring home. He can now listen and participate in group activities like his organized sports. Special Olympics gives everyone the opportunity to experience, participate and shine!”

says the mom of Special Olympics Alberta athlete, Benjamin.

“It is so amazing to see your child succeed, belong and flourish – especially if they have struggled and failed to find a place they feel that they belong”

(Greg, Parent of Special Olympics athlete).

There are positive impacts on families of Special Olympics athletes. Research indicates that familial trust and communication improve and family members spend more time together as a result of the Special Olympics experience. In addition, families involved in Special Olympics develop new social networks and support systems with other families, and feel increased optimism and hope. These benefits result from an improved understanding of athletes' abilities, reduced fear of the risks of participation and a greater understanding of the intrinsic rewards of taking part.

Coaches and Boards

“My life has become so enriched... I cannot imagine living my life without this purpose in it”

(Coach Marie Powell).

“It's just pure enjoyment. Everybody is always smiling and everyone has a positive outlook on life. Win or lose, everybody's winning”

(Coach Peter McCormick from Special Olympics Nova Scotia).

Coaches and volunteers report that they benefit from their involvement by contributing to the success of the athletes and the various programs. As their experience and skills increase their confidence to contribute positively also grows.

Communities

“I am no longer hidden or bullied. Special Olympics transforms the self-identity of athletes with intellectual disabilities and the perceptions of everyone watching. Special Olympics teaches the world that people with intellectual disabilities deserve respect and inclusion” (Matthew Williams).

Special Olympics programs can change the attitudes and perceptions that members of host communities may have regarding people with intellectual disabilities. The more someone is involved with Special Olympics, the more positive or accurate is their perception of individuals with intellectual disabilities. Health professionals in locations that offer Special Olympics are more likely to volunteer for the cause, seek education that would improve their contribution, or upgrade skills that pertain to challenges related to persons with an intellectual disability.

Corporate Partners

Corporations that support Special Olympics benefit from the knowledge that they are doing something meaningful, and become associated with the positivity that surrounds the events. Such associations can translate into higher customer satisfaction ratings for a company, increased sales, boosts in employee morale and a stronger connection to community.

Supporting the Special Olympics Athlete Journey

Special Olympics Canada Long-Term Athlete Development 2.0 Framework

The Special Olympics Long-Term Athlete Development 2.0 Framework incorporates several components with the athlete at the centre being supported by the Individual Influences of **Confidence**, **Motivation** and **Competence** that are key to developing Physical Literacy.

The LTAD stages have been replaced with three Athlete Streams: **Discovery**, **Active for Life**, and **Sport Excellence**.

“**Good People, Good Places and Good Programs**” located in the outside ring represent the areas of **Quality Sport** through which the framework comes to life.

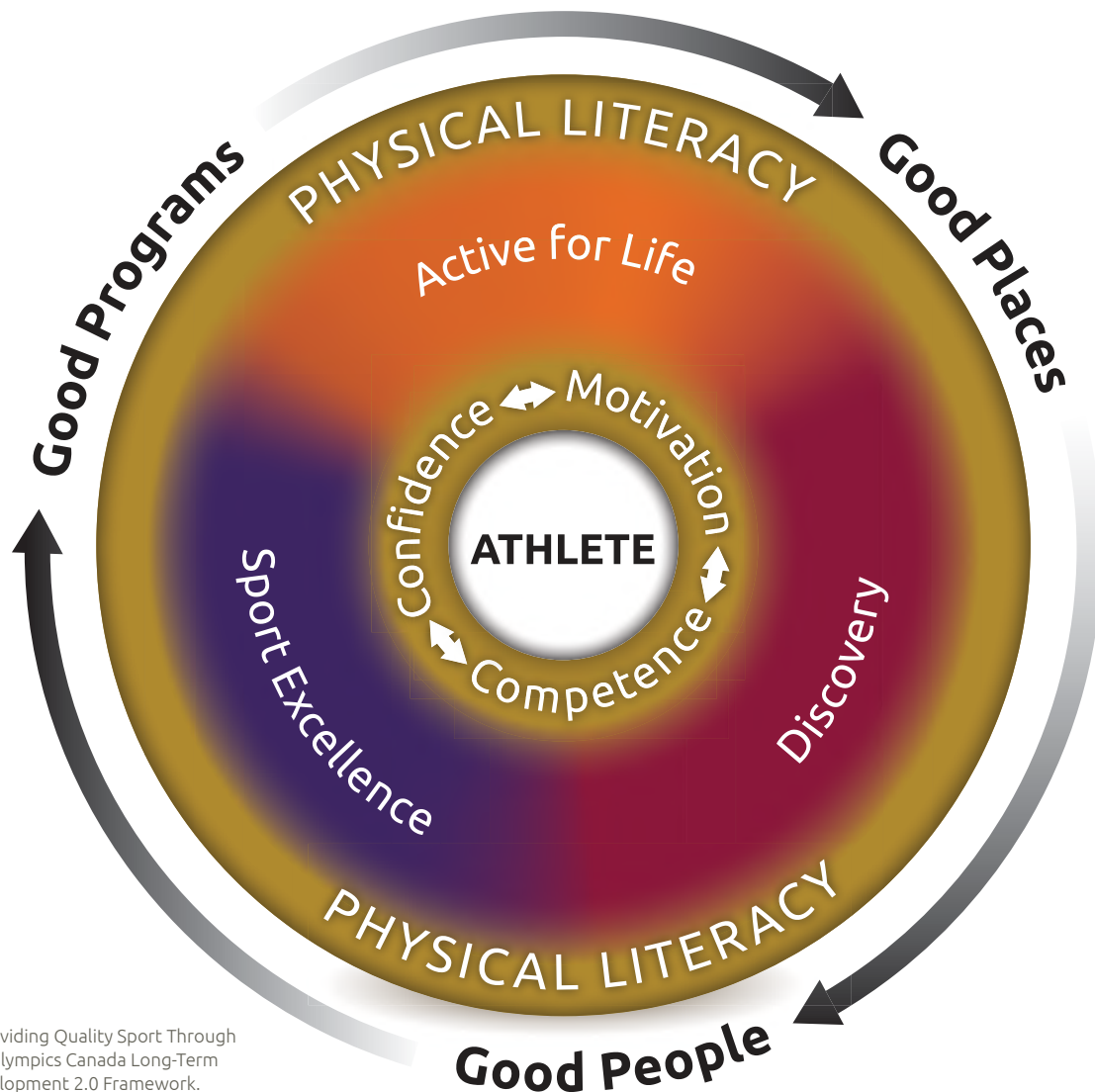


Figure 1: Providing Quality Sport Through the Special Olympics Canada Long-Term Athlete Development 2.0 Framework.

Physical Literacy

What is Physical Literacy?

Physical Literacy is the 'golden thread' of SO LTAD 2.0, supporting athlete development in the following areas:

- › Physical
- › Emotional/Psychological
- › Social
- › Cognitive/Intellectual
- › Life Skills

Physical Literacy is the *“motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life”* (Canadian Physical Literacy Consensus Group, 2015).

Physically literate children grow up to be healthy, active adults. But physical literacy is not just for kids. Physical literacy is a lifelong journey that can be built upon at any age or stage of life.

Competence (Skills) + Confidence + Motivation = Physical Literacy

COMPETENCE: Fundamental movement skills such as balancing, running, jumping, kicking and catching are the building blocks of physical literacy, just as the letters of the alphabet are the building blocks of literacy. These skills don't just happen – like learning to read and write, movement skills need to be taught in a fun and supportive environment. Physical skills do not develop in isolation – physical literacy develops and supports cognitive, psychological and social skills as well.

CONFIDENCE: Confidence in sport is built on a fun and challenging platform filled with successes and failures. Learning to overcome failures and experiencing success at learning a new skill makes us feel good and eager to come back for more.

MOTIVATION: The most commonly cited motivations for Special Olympics athletes are social interaction, a sense of belonging, achieving personal excellence and the experiences and stories that come from hard-won medals. Each athlete has unique motivations that coaches and parents/caregivers work hard to support.

Physical literacy

is the...

motivation

physical competence

confidence

...to be

active for life



Figure 2: Physical Literacy Wheel

Adapted from Sport for Life's *Developing Physical Literacy: Building a New Normal for All Canadians*.

Physical Literacy: The Gateway to Physical Activity

The benefits of sport and physical activity for the general population are well-known, as are the risks of inactive and sedentary lifestyles. For those living with an intellectual disability, being active and developing physical literacy through sport is often life-changing. Persons with an intellectual disability who do not experience exercise miss out on opportunities for joy, fun, improved health and an enhanced overall quality

of life. Regular physical activity also improves performance in daily activities including ones of a social or employment-related nature.

“When we play at Special Olympics, I’m not always last like at school. My mom told me it’s where I ran for the first time,”
 says SO Ontario athlete, Alma.

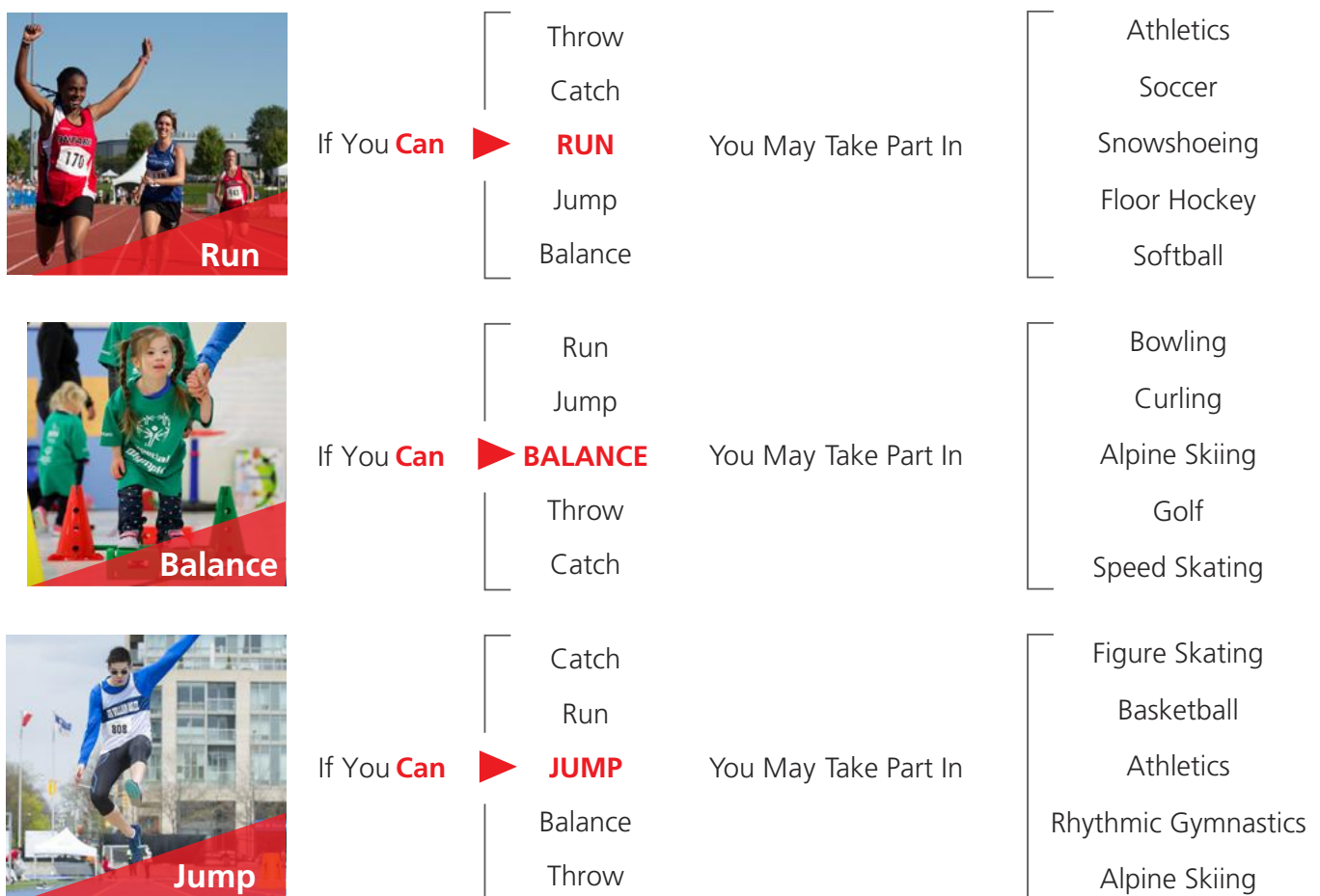


Figure 3: If You Can, You Will...

Adapted from Sport for Life's *Developing Physical Literacy: Building a New Normal for All Canadians*.

The experience of being excluded from an activity, not wanting to participate for fear of being “not good enough,” or simply not knowing where to start or what is safe, are common reasons for persons with intellectual disabilities to avoid physical activity. Special Olympics Canada takes a physical literacy approach to its programming to ensure that our athletes and their families know where and how to access our programs and to reassure them that by participating in Special Olympics programs, athletes will develop not only physical skills, but social, emotional and cognitive skills to enable them to actively participate in sport and in life.

Coaches, administrators, parents, caregivers, funders, educators and health care providers

all have an important role to play in connecting, developing and/or supporting programs that help foster a love of physical activity and sport for individuals with an intellectual disability.

By building confidence and motivation for sport through a planned and intentional balance of physical, social, psychological and cognitive skill development, it is possible to recruit and retain more Special Olympics athletes who may become lifelong participants.

Physical literacy is woven into all SO programs at every level. SO LTAD 2.0 came about as a result of a desire to ensure a balanced approach to program delivery that focuses on personal development.



More information about physical literacy can be found at:

- › LTD in Sport and Physical Activity 3.0: sportforlife.ca/ltd
- › Developing physical literacy – building a new normal for all Canadians: sportforlife.ca/dpl
- › www.physicalliteracy.ca

What does physical literacy enriched programming look like?

For more information on how to create a physical literacy enriched environment in your programs, check out the **5 physical literacy design considerations** – FUN, Always Moving, Everyone Included, Progressive and Challenging, With Purpose [view [Figure 5, page 37](#)].



Development of Physical Literacy in Four Environments

The development of physical literacy happens in and out of Special Olympics programs. It is important that individuals have opportunities to explore movement and develop physical literacy in four different environments – land, water, air and ice/snow.

Physical literacy in these environments is critical, not only for providing opportunities to explore different sport and activity interests in different settings, but also for ensuring personal safety in these environments over each individual's life course.

For example, water will always present a life-threatening risk for individuals who do not learn how to swim, and may also prevent them from engaging in other water-based activities. Similarly, those unfamiliar with walking on snow and ice could be at increased risk for serious falls and injuries later in life when moving through winter environments. Some specific ways physical literacy can be developed in different environments include:

- › **LAND** (indoor and outdoor) – hiking, walking, biking, games, bowling, basketball.
- › **WATER** (in, on, under, around) – floating, aquafit, snorkelling, swimming, going to the beach.
- › **AIR** (controlling the body in space) – dance, outdoor play, swinging, gymnastics, climbing, playgrounds, jumping /landing.
- › **SNOW AND ICE** – ice rinks, slippery sidewalks, skiing, curling, tobogganing, figure skating, hockey, shovelling snow, snowshoeing.

Key Components of Long-Term Athlete Development

1. Athlete Influences: Motivation, Competence & Confidence

ATHLETE INFLUENCE: MOTIVATION

“Special Olympics gives athletes like me a chance to do our best, at our own personal level. When I beat my personal best, I collapsed to the ground with tears because I was so happy, ”

says Special Olympics British Columbia athlete, Arianna.

“Special Olympics has allowed Kelsey to progress at her own pace and celebrate each milestone with peers who appreciate the determination it takes to reach it, ”

says the mother of Special Olympics PEI athlete, Kelsey.

Motivation can be described as the internal and external factors that form the athlete’s reasons for engaging in movement and physical activity, such as:

- › Desiring to seek new movement challenges.
- › Reacting to external input and feedback.
- › Participating in physical activity for enjoyment, health and well-being benefits.

In Special Olympics Canada’s first LTAD document released in 2007, the stage of athlete development was often defined by the level of competition in which the athlete was participating. For instance, any athlete competing at World Games was classified as a “Training to Win” athlete. Based on developmental age, abilities and focus compared to the characteristics of the stage, it was generally not a good or accurate pairing.

One of the unique things about Special Olympics is the selection process and opportunity for all athletes to advance, no matter their ability. Athletes at any level have an equal opportunity to move to a higher level of competition as those athletes who have participated in a more advanced skill level. Athlete selection is determined by their performance relative to their peers of similar skill level and the Special Olympics Divisioning Policy.

Understanding that advancement within Special Olympics is based on equal representation across the spectrum of athletes’ abilities, and that all abilities often practice and train together, this revised model uses motivation as a defining factor for establishing the context of the athlete and therefore the focus of their training, development and competition goals.

Examples of motivators could be:

- › Enjoyment in performing the skill, activity or sport
- › Participating with friends
- › Seeing the coach and volunteers
- › Reaping the health benefits
- › Desire to compete in higher levels of competition
- › Desire to improve

It is worth noting that athlete motivations may differ, and may not match those of the coach. Quality Sport programs have coaches and caregivers who are trained to facilitate and teach the mind, body and spirit of each individual athlete.

ATHLETE INFLUENCE: COMPETENCE (SKILL)

“While I was learning intricate footwork patterns, I was also learning the art of self-regulation – all while others around me shared in the same exercises, kindness and unconditional love. When I couldn’t breathe, my Special Olympics family was there for me. I wasn’t alone anymore.

Figure skating with Special Olympics taught me that sometimes the most powerful thing you can do is just take a big breath. The art of taking deep breaths, inhaling and exhaling, was foreign to me before skating. We used to choreograph deep breaths into our programs – otherwise I would just hold my breath the entire one-minute-forty-seconds I was in front of the judges,”

Jess shares.

Competence is the ability to perform the skills required to participate meaningfully in a given activity or sport. Skills fall into 4 different areas:

- › **PHYSICAL** – basic (fundamental) movement skills, leading to sport specific skills as well as general fitness and sport specific conditioning
- › **COGNITIVE** – safety, risk-taking, rules and tactics
- › **PSYCHOLOGICAL** – enjoyment, self-perception, self-regulation, connection
- › **SOCIAL** – relationships, ethics

Building competence greatly increases the likelihood of a positive experience, leading to confidence and motivation. Development of the physical, cognitive, psychological and social skills and competencies will also enhance the quality of life for persons with intellectual disabilities when applied to activities of daily living. Special Olympics programs that adhere to the LTAD 2.0 framework will provide a foundation not only for sport, but for living, learning, working and playing in outdoor and indoor locations. Program participants will also acquire the ability to read and respond to changing information in the environment.

Although the focus on physical skills may increase as athletes move into higher levels of commitment and competition, the other domains remain crucial in order to maintain the athlete’s long-term participation, performance and overall health. As athletes become more competent in all 4 domains, they are more likely to participate in additional programming and stay involved, thereby receiving all the benefits of participation.

For more information on how to develop the skills or competencies in each of these 4 domains visit [Sport Australia’s physical literacy framework](#).



ATHLETE INFLUENCE: CONFIDENCE

“Special Olympics programs have helped so many athletes like me to gain confidence,”

says [Special Olympics Manitoba athlete, Emalee](#).

Confidence, or a belief in one’s self worth and ability to perform in movement and physical activity, involves:

- › Showing a degree of certainty and assuredness.
- › Showing resilience and maintaining a sense of self-belief after experiencing a setback (e.g. returning from injury, losing a game).
- › Willingness to try new movements or physical activities in front of a group.
- › Engaging with teammates and coaches.

It is apparent that the elements of confidence, competence and motivation are interconnected and feed off one other. Skill or competence is built most effectively in an environment that supports confidence, which then leads to increased motivation. Confidence plays a major role in athlete development and contributes to the enjoyment and involvement of athletes at various stages of the model and within all Special Olympics programming. Athletes that are more confident are more likely to stay in sport, and participate longer in Special Olympics.

“Confidence is built in a fun, safe and caring environment through successes and challenges, supported by trained and caring parents, guardians, coaches, administrators, teammates and friends.” — Dr. Dean Kriellaars

In a sporting context, being able to move well gives participants more confidence to engage in physical activity. Leaders can build confidence in their participants by creating positive experiences for them, as illustrated in the following example:

Eight-year-old Sam loved to play catch with his siblings in the back yard at home, but was very hesitant to participate in the activity at school despite encouragement from his teacher and peers. After some observation by the teacher, it was evident Sam was worried about ridicule from his classmates should he miss a throw. Sam’s teacher had the students play a game called ‘Elastic’ in which partners started playing throw/catch standing one step away from one another. After every 6 successful throws/catches the partners would each take a step back. They continued to challenge themselves with further distances, but would also have to step closer together if they dropped the ball before 6 successful catches. Sam could see that he and his partner were on par with the other groups and soon felt more confident to join recess games.

THE ATHLETE INFLUENCES WORKING TOGETHER: When the elements of motivation, confidence and physical competence come together they are powerful determinants of athlete participation. When Special Olympics athletes love to play and compete, their skills increase and they become even MORE confident and motivated to play and compete.

“Brett has become so confident in his curling skills [because of curling with Special Olympics] that he now curls in a regular mixed league,”
(Parents of Special Olympics athlete, Brett).

2. Awareness and First Involvement

Due to the nature of Special Olympics, athletes may participate in multiple sports across various contexts. Conversely, there are often athletes from multiple contexts participating in the same program.

AWARENESS: Awareness promotes an understanding of opportunities to get involved in sport and physical activity. It highlights how persons of all abilities can participate, become an athlete, and go as far as their ability and motivation will take them. In Awareness, prospective participants and leaders are informed of the various activities they may choose to join.

- › In order to participate in an activity, a person needs to know that it exists and where to find it.
- › You cannot play a sport if you do not know about it.
- › You cannot start playing the sport if you do not know where the sport is played.
- › Chances are you will not try the sport if you do not see others like you playing it.

FIRST INVOLVEMENT: In this phase it is critical that individuals have a positive first experience engaging in an activity since negative first experiences can lead to non-participation. Organizations and leaders should create a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment for participants with developmentally appropriate instruction, adapted equipment and facilities. A well-designed program will ensure those new to an activity have the desire and confidence to participate for life. Clear direction should be provided to participants regarding their second involvement.

“Every SO activity our son has ever been involved in has been so welcoming. Our son now makes a point of being very welcoming to anyone that is new to his program as he knows how important it was to him,” (Parents of SO athlete).

Planning for new participants is essential when engaging athletes with an intellectual disability into a new program or experience. Many potential athletes DO NOT return after their first try at an activity because they did not enjoy themselves. Sport organizations and local clubs need a clear plan for greeting and involving potential athletes on their first visit in order to secure long-term interest in physical pursuits.



3. Transitions

Creating a continuum of support for athletes as they move through the various contexts is vital, but sometimes overlooked. We will address helping athletes in their transitions to new or unfamiliar programs, events, competitions or contexts. Maintaining participants' confidence and motivation is an utmost priority as they experience sport in the *Discovery, Active for Life* and *Sport Excellence* streams.

Athlete Streams

An **athlete-centered approach** is key to Special Olympics programming. In order to meet each athlete's physical, social and mental needs, it is important to learn what those needs are.

Three streams (*Discovery, Active for Life* and *Sport Excellence*) have evolved over time that enable program developers to align athlete needs with program delivery. Each of the three streams will be described using the following categories:

- › Focus for athlete
- › Where the sport is being delivered or played
- › Degree and nature of competition
- › Program characteristics
- › Key components:
 - Athlete Influences
 - Awareness and First Involvement
 - Transitions



Discovery

Program Characteristics

Focus of Athlete Development (considering age, stage and/or ability)

The *Discovery* context is for all ages and is focused on providing a springboard for athletes to enter the other contexts (*Active for Life* and *Sport Excellence*).

The main goal of the *Discovery* context is to provide awareness to a new sport(s) in a safe and fun environment.

This context will include athletes new to the organization (awareness/first involvement), but also athletes that are looking to try a different sport.

The focus is on *physical literacy*—the athlete's confidence, competence and motivation are developed to a level that the athlete feels ready and eager to move into regular participation in one of the other streams.

(Stages as reflected in 2007 model: *Active Start*, *FUNDamentals*, *Learn 2 Train*)

Where the sport is being delivered and played

Discovery sports are generally offered at a local facility and do not require additional travel.

Degree and nature of competition

These programs focus on fun and stage appropriate challenges and competition within the program or event.

Examples

Try-it Day events, Multi-sport programs, *Active Start* (2–6 years), *FUNDamentals* (7–12 years)



Athlete Characteristics

- › First time youth athlete (first involvement)
- › First time older athlete
- › Experienced athlete looking to try a new sport

Motivation

- › The underlying motivation within the *Discovery* phase is a desire to learn new skills or try a new sport. The *Discovery* stage may last one day or more depending on the athlete's progress and how motivated they are to move to either an *Active for Life* or *Sport Excellence* approach.
- › Athlete motivation may still be forming depending on their experience and input into selecting the activity.
- › Understanding the motivations of athletes is crucial for coaching and athletic success. If coaches are able to ascertain the motivation and personal goals of the athletes under their guidance, they can design sessions to suit the identified needs.

For instance, a **soccer shooting drill** for a variety of athletes may incorporate the following motivations:

- › a high five after each shot for the socially motivated.
- › a smaller net or obstacle to dribble around for those wanting to build accuracy (competence).

- › peer teaching for those who wish to develop leadership skills.
- › little to no rest – continuous movement with short lineups for those participants who like to sweat, work hard or improve their health and quality of life (things that their parents may want for them too).

A **basketball drill** in the *Discovery* context may involve these strategies:

- › Encourage athletes to take as many touches as they like when dribbling the ball to the goal.
- › Athletes should shoot at a net set at the appropriate height to ensure an element of success (i.e. score a basket).

Athletes in *Discovery* will enjoy the opportunity to play in a safe environment without time and touch restrictions so they can explore and experiment without added pressure.

Competence

Fundamental Movement Skills and Sport Skills:

In *Discovery* the focus is on introducing and developing fundamental movement skills, otherwise known as the ABCs of movement. Some examples of fundamental movement skills are balancing, running, jumping and throwing. In *Discovery* athletes participate in a new sporting experience and environment,

therefore it is important to ensure athletes are given plenty of opportunity to learn and practice skills in a safe space. As the fundamental skills are learned, coaches can introduce sport specific skills (i.e. going from an underhand throw to bowling a ball).

Life Skills:

In addition to the **fundamental movement skills and sport skills**, athletes in this context/stream will benefit from being introduced to the relevant life/planning skills that will enable them to fully and confidently participate in the activity. These skills could include: time management, communication, meeting expectations for behavior, abiding by the rules of the sport, securing transportation, accessing the necessary facilities, wearing the appropriate clothing and using the right equipment.

A **training session for Alpine Skiing** may include:

- › how to greet other athletes and the coach.
- › an introduction to the equipment.
- › how to work and react on snow/ice.
- › a focus on balance and development of the sliding action.

Confidence

Confidence is built when athletes feel welcome, know what to do, have appropriate support and receive instruction on required skills. It is important that strategies be in place across all aspects of the program.

Priority is put on the objective that each athlete experiences some level of success within their new sport or activity; a goal can be met through a variety of methods. Ensuring that the task at hand is not too

easy or hard is critical to the development of confidence in the sporting context.

It is important for coaches to build confidence in their athletes who may be starting a new sport, continuing something they have done for years or going for gold in a competitive environment.

During an **introductory curling session**, the following considerations help to build confidence:

- › Introduce the ice surface by providing opportunities to practice sliding and throwing stones in a controlled and safe environment.
- › Adapt the equipment, such as the broom, so that athletes may lean on the stick more than is usual.
- › Use the whole house as the target in order to position the athlete for success and build confidence.

Important Aspects of / Recommendations for the Program

- › Teach movement patterns for fundamental movement and sport skills.
- › Use games and unstructured exploration to develop movement skills and increased activity.
- › Develop a positive attitude towards physical activity.
- › Structure a safe environment to explore different ways of moving without fear of being criticized, and one in which participants may fail or fall without risking injury.
- › Teach participants to use the right skill, at the right time, in the right situation.
- › Use the program as a vehicle to enhanced social, mental and physical enrichment.

Discovery Athletes: Fatima and Pierre

Fatima is seven years old and has just heard about Special Olympics at a *Try It* event hosted at her school. Fatima normally spends her summers at art camp and has not shown much interest in physical activity or sport in the past, but she has an older brother who is on the school athletics track and field team. Fatima wants to try track and field herself, but her parents worry (since their daughter has never participated in organized sport before) that she will get hurt. Some of Fatima's friends have spoken about the Special Olympics program and would like to try it too.

Pierre was just at the World Winter Games where he won 3 Gold Medals in the Snowshoe event. It was his second time competing at the international level and he has accomplished his goals in the sport. Many of his friends no longer participate in Snowshoe and Pierre wants to meet new people. He loves Special Olympics, is interested in staying involved, would like to try a new activity, but isn't sure where to start. He thinks it might be fun to learn a team sport.

Awareness and First Involvement

How and where is the program promoted?

In Fatima's story she heard about the program from friends, which increased her interest in participating.



What plans are there for welcoming and orienting new athletes?

When Fatima arrived at the program the leaders greeted her and gave her the option of having her friends join her on the tour, which put her at ease. The leaders also allowed her to observe the first few events until she felt comfortable joining in.

Pierre's snowshoe coach connected him with a basketball coach he met during a coaching clinic. The coach invited Pierre to try a session with his community team to see how he would like it.

Transition from *Discovery* to *Active for Life*

What supports are available for athletes who move from one stream/context to another? Fatima attended several of the track and field *Try It* events before she was ready to sign up for a track and field program. When she discovered one of her favorite coaches from *Try It Day* was going to be leading the program, she became very excited. The coach gave her, as a new participant, an example of a typical practice plan and suggestions as to what gear to wear. He also told her parents where to park on the first day, and asked them to arrive a few minutes early so he could show them around the grounds and introduce Fatima to the other athletes.

Active for Life

Program Characteristics

Focus of athlete development (considering age, stage and/or ability)

The goal in the *Active for Life* stream is to ensure the athlete is having fun, being challenged appropriately, accumulating physical activity minutes and developing skills that lead to improved health, social connection and a feeling of belonging.

Physical literacy enriched programming is the “golden thread” supporting the social, psychological, physical and cognitive development of the athlete.

Active for Life is for athletes of all ages.

The focus is on being active and social, while providing ongoing opportunities for athletes to stay involved in Special Olympics.

Athletes could be involved at the *Sport Excellence* level in one sport, but may also participate in the *Active for Life* context in other sports.

In *Active for Life* there are many opportunities for social inclusion. *Unified* programs would be an example.

(Stages as reflected in 2007 model:
Active for Life, Competitive for Life)

Where the sport is being delivered and played

Travel to events is available/optional and varies depending on the program and family/personal preferences.

Degree and nature of competition

These programs include competition, but the focus is more on fun and opportunity, as opposed to advancement and personal bests.

DIVISIONING FOR COMPETITION: The fundamental difference that sets Special Olympics competitions apart from those of other sports organizations is that athletes of all ability levels are encouraged to participate. Events are structured so that athletes compete with people of similar ability in equitable divisions.

Examples

Community programs, Unified Sports, fitness clubs

Athlete Characteristics

- › Come from all age groups
- › Represent multiple ability levels
- › Are looking for social opportunities
- › Are looking for complimentary sports for off-season training
- › Are looking to participate in Unified programming

Motivation

Athlete motivation in *Active for Life* is often focused on the social aspect, but it is the physical aspect that initially draws potential participants to a program. It is important for athletes in this context to feel connected to the coach, volunteers and teammates while developing skills that build confidence and facilitate a sense of belonging. Although different people are inspired by different factors, motivation will likely focus on staying active and social, and having the opportunity to participate in a number of sports. Planning the key elements of fun, social interaction, fitness and friendly competition into practices and competitions is a priority (Fun Days, local tournaments).

Competence

In the *Active for Life* context skill development may not be the athlete's main objective, but it is an important factor in promoting participation.



Naturally, athletes are more apt to engage in a sport if they feel a sense of belonging as a result of adequate skill capability. Competent athletes performing their activity in a safe environment will increase enjoyment and participation, as well as facilitate social opportunity.

Athletes receive assistance as needed to reinforce lessons, skills and rules learned in *Discovery*.

In an *Active for Life* **floor hockey program**:

- › Athletes should have the opportunity to shoot at the net with an emphasis on continuous movement to improve conditioning.
- › Performing a partner drill with some free time set aside before and after the exercise should encourage socialization and improve motivation among participants.

Confidence

Trained leaders get to know the athletes and tailor the experience to individual motivations and needs. In *Active for Life*, it is important to keep building on the confidence of the athlete by ensuring success while also celebrating their accomplishments in their peer group. Recognizing the strengths of each athlete with friends and teammates will build confidence for everyone involved. Of course, the praise should be genuine – not simply lip service for the sake of checking a box.

In an *Active for Life* **curling session**:

- › Athletes should have the opportunity to work in pairs or on a team of four to experience social interaction and have a chance to play all parts of the game (shooting, sweeping, etc.).
- › Coaches can explore creative ways to support skill development (i.e. play a hybrid of bowling and curling, hold a skills competition) so that everyone has a good time, and shines in an area of the sport.

During an **Alpine Skiing lesson**:

- › Sessions should be focused on interaction, enjoying the outdoors and having the opportunity to socialize while skiing.
- › Practices may involve fun races with basic gates while teaching technical skills.

Important Aspects of the Program:

- › Participants can be at any age or stage of life enjoying movement.
- › Social connectedness is promoted through activities that are fun and engaging.

- › Varying levels of competition and structure are put in place to meet the needs of the individual and group.
- › Activities include just about anything and everything that involves expending physical energy, from gardening to walking, dancing, jogging, camping, etc.
- › Different types of activities may be introduced as an individual's body, life circumstances, and interests change.
- › A combination of aerobic, strength, and balance-building activities should be part of every adult's routine (Sport for Life Society, 2019, p. 52).

Active for Life Athletes: Omar and Chloe

Omar is new to Special Olympics and hasn't played sports since he was a young boy. He met a number of Special Olympics athletes through his group home and they convinced him to join their local basketball team. Although Omar hasn't played basketball since high school he is committed to the team, attends practices regularly and always has a smile on his face. Much like his teammates, Omar has very little desire to practice more than once a week and doesn't want to travel because it would conflict with his work schedule. Omar readily admits that the best part of Special Olympics is being part of a team with his friends and the year-end barbeque.

Chloe has been involved with Special Olympics since Active Start and loves the organization. Chloe's first sporting love is curling which she plays in Special Olympics programs and in generic clubs to get more ice time. Chloe attends a local high school and has recently been introduced

to the sport of Bocce through the Unified program at her school. Now Chloe participates at lunch hour a couple times a week with her Unified partner and they are excited about the year-end school tournament. Although both she and her partner are competitive, they have really enjoyed the social aspect of getting to know each other while playing a sport.

Awareness and First Involvement

How and where is the program promoted?

Omar heard about the basketball program from his friends, but the local Special Olympics chapter also advertises to group home leaders and social and disability service agencies in the area. Schools and newspapers spread the word about Special Olympics offerings too. Some of the coaches provide free sessions at group homes once a month to build relationships and encourage more participants to join the program.

What plans are there for welcoming and orienting new athletes?

Chloe and her partner have been asked by the coaches to look out for new participants, welcome them by being friendly, inquire about their interest in sports and share helpful information. This peer approach has proven very successful as many new athletes are shy, nervous or prefer to just 'blend in' or observe for a few sessions.

Transition from *Active for Life* to *Sport Excellence*

Chloe's curling coach suggested she try out for the upcoming Winter Games. Chloe was interested, but had no idea what to expect. The coach set up a meeting with Chloe and her parents and invited the provincial coach to attend. By the end of the meeting Chloe felt much more confident about the sporting event and how to prepare for it. Likewise, her parents felt better equipped to handle the planning, travelling and registration aspects.



Sport Excellence

Program Characteristics

Focus of athlete development (considering age, stage and/or ability)

“Brett curls with SO at a competitive level and although he enjoys the competition and cares about how he curls, the social aspect is still by far the most important and rewarding part for him,”
(Greg and Shannon, parents of Special Olympics athlete).

The goal of *Sport Excellence* programming is to provide opportunities for athletes ages 12 and older to develop social, psychological/mental, physical and cognitive skills through an athlete-centered, sport science/National Sport Organization informed, training and competition plan.

Programs emphasize sport specific training, personal bests and competition.

Athletes are striving to improve in one main sport per season in preparation for highly competitive situations. Programs are for participants to seek national/international advancement.

Leaders and caregivers continue to support each athlete's physical literacy journey by teaching athletes to value

and take increasing responsibility for their physical literacy and health.

(Stages as reflected in 2007 model: *Train to Train, Learn to Compete, Train to Compete, Train to Win*)

Where the sport is being delivered and played

This type of program may be delivered locally or in a regional training centre. Travel will be necessary since competitions may be local, regional, national or international.

Degree and nature of competition

COMPETITION PROGRAMS: Begin at the local level and, depending on an athlete's interest, athletes may compete at regional, provincial/territorial, national and international levels.

In this context athletes will participate in multiple competitions per year with developmentally appropriate challenges.

DIVISIONING FOR COMPETITION: The fundamental difference that sets Special Olympics competitions apart from those of other sports organizations is that athletes of all ability levels are encouraged to participate. Events are structured so that athletes compete with other people of similar ability in equitable divisions.

Examples

Regional/provincial/territorial teams; national training programs; competitive clubs; generic clubs; Provincial, National and World Games.

Athlete Characteristics

- › Are prepared to focus on one primary sport per season
- › Focus on competition
- › Strive for personal bests and are results-oriented

Motivation

In *Sport Excellence* the athlete's motivation is primarily on individual performance and competition compared to the *Active for Life* athlete who is more focused on fun and social connection. *Sport Excellence* athletes are concerned, above all else, with personal bests, medals, competition advancement and improving technical sport skills. These athletes have set goals within the sport and continue to strive for improvement and the next competitive experience. Athletes of all abilities can be in the *Sport Excellence* stage if their motivation is concentrated on competition, advancement and personal bests.

Competence

With the focus being on physical skill development, personal bests and competition in the *Sport Excellence* context, competence is a major objective. Athletes who have chosen a main sport will concentrate on improving and fine-tuning the various movement skills as opposed to developing or maintaining such skills.

During a *Sport Excellence* stream **soccer practice**, athletes:

- › are challenged to minimize touches to get the ball under control and shoot on the net with purpose.
- › focus on consistency and confidence with their shot while trying to score on a goalie.
- › will be motivated by seeing improvement in their touch, dribbling and shooting skills.
- › During a *Sport Excellence* stream **Alpine skiing day**:
 - › Coaches can ensure improvement in developing skills such as turns and speed.
 - › Athletes are challenged to analyze and study course management and optimal racing paths.
 - › Coaches should expose athletes to different types of snow and terrain to prepare them for competition.

Confidence

Trained leaders provide sport-specific technical and tactical training opportunities through activities and drills that incorporate fun, socialization and acceptance.

In order to achieve personal bests, competition goals and expert ability, athletes need to be highly confident. In the *Sport Excellence* context, confidence building can be largely developed through monitoring and tracking progress combined with goal setting. When goals are clearly laid out at the beginning of the season, ideally with metrics that are measurable, athletes can build confidence as they accomplish what they have set out to do.

During a *Sport Excellence* stream **curling practice**:

- › Athletes work on gameplay and strategy.
- › Each practice or competition opportunity can start with goal setting and end with a reflection on those goals, accomplishments and opportunity for improvement.
- › Numbers and data from the game can be used to evaluate performance.
- › Goals should be designed to match ability and competence so the confidence of the athlete is not negatively impacted.
- › High 5's or other forms of encouragement and camaraderie are important for confidence.

Important Aspects of the Program

ATHLETICISM: Deliberately and systematically developing a wider range of movement skills, in increasingly more challenging environments is a priority.

INJURY PREVENTION: Focusing on developing physical literacy and better technique during development can help build durability and reduce the likelihood of injury.

SYMMETRY: Some activities use one side of the body far more than the other (e.g. softball, bowling, golf), and can lead to muscle imbalances between the left and right side of the body. To offset such imbalances, athletes can do other activities that support consistency in muscle development.

LONG-TERM PERFORMANCE: By developing physical literacy and engaging in training/activities that improve muscle symmetry (and therefore prevent injury), long-term performance is possible. (*Sport for Life, 2019*)

SELF-CARE: For the athlete's health and life balance to be maintained, self-care must be prioritized.

Sport Excellence Athletes: Morgan and Robbie

Morgan, a high-performance athlete, has advanced from the Regional, Provincial and National games to the National Team Program in figure skating. Morgan's hard work has resulted in an invitation to compete at the World Games. They are highly ranked and expected to do well. After starting a competitive figure skating journey in Level 3, they have succeeded in securing a Level 5 placement for the Games. Throughout the Games cycle, Morgan has focused on refining sport specific skills while prioritizing improvement at each competition, ultimately with an eye on the gold medal.

Robbie is a player on the Floor Hockey team headed to the Provincial Games next year. After four years on the roster Robbie is still considered a relatively new member, but he embraces the competitive nature of the sport and the opportunity to hone skills alongside his peers. Although Robbie is not the best player, he is determined to contribute to his team's goal of advancing to the National Games. Each practice he focuses on raising the puck and improving pass accuracy. To complement his hockey training, increase speed and build stamina, Robbie participates in athletics in the summer.

Awareness and First Involvement

How and where is the program promoted?

Morgan and Robbie were encouraged to advance by their coaches. However, the provincial and national team administration and coaching staff also reach out to local chapters to inform them of upcoming opportunities. Local chapter coaches are invited to coach development sessions that provide them with the skills and information necessary to help prepare athletes who show an interest in competing in the *Sport Excellence* context.

What plans are there for welcoming and orienting new athletes?

The leadership of each major games and event host work together to ensure new and returning athletes receive information on logistics, training, equipment, expectations, cost, etc. Meetings aimed at properly preparing athletes

for competitions are followed by Q & A sessions. In addition, ongoing check-ins are done with athletes and their families to confirm everyone has the necessary details.

Transition from *Sport Excellence* to *Discovery* or *Active for Life* (in a new sport)

Morgan decided to take some time off figure skating to try bowling. Morgan and their caregiver spoke to Morgan's coach who, supportive of the idea, made a few calls to find a Special Olympics bowling program in the local area. The caregiver communicated to the bowling instructor that Morgan wanted to have fun and make friends in their hometown. Thrilled to have an eager new member join the team, the instructor helped the new recruit meet personal goals over the course of the season. Morgan was able to share tips with their new teammates that they had learned from their figure skating experience, such as taking deep breaths when you feel nervous, the importance of stretching before activity and how to stay focused in the presence of distraction.



Quality Sport Experience

Special Olympics aims to provide quality sport experiences and promote individual excellence and health by supporting “Good people, good places, good programs.”

What do “Good people, good places and good programs” look like?

The goal of Quality Sport is to create positive experiences in supportive environments. Ultimately, if sport participation and physical activity are not fun, progressive, positive, or welcoming, persons with intellectual disabilities may turn to unhealthy activities. Quality Sport is developmentally appropriate, safe, inclusive, and well-run.



Quality sport

based on Long-Term Development
in Sport and Physical Activity is...



...leading to
**individual excellence
and optimum health**

Figure 4: Quality Sport Cycle

Adapted from Sport for Life's *Long-Term Development in Sport and Physical Activity 3.0*.

Special Olympics *Quality Sport Checklist*

Quality Sport and physical activity are achieved when the right people do the right things at the right times, resulting in positive experiences for everyone involved in Special Olympics. This Special Olympics Quality Sport Checklist* defines the elements that lead to quality sport experiences in any sport program. This customized checklist can be used as a tool by chapter and club leaders to identify areas in their sport programs which they may wish to improve. It is recommended that users of the checklist visit their Provincial/Territorial [Chapter websites](#) or resources to confirm Chapter specifics.

1. Complete the Quality Sport Checklist separately with at least one other person from your organization/club/program.
2. Compare your interpretations and reflections.
3. Identify an area that would be:
 - the easiest to address, and
 - the most impactful to address.
4. Go to the [Quality Sport web page](#) for ideas and resources.

GOOD PEOPLE, who are caring and knowledgeable, include:	
Coaches and Volunteers Who:	
Are Trained and Qualified	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Coaches are trained in appropriate SOC and sport technical NCCP training, along with completion (including evaluation) of the Making Ethical Decisions module (MED) [coach.ca/nccp-make-ethical-decisions]. Check minimum standards and requirement for your P/T Chapter through Coaching Association of Canada.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Coaches are provided with, and partake in, ongoing learning opportunities such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SOC eLearning modules on the Locker [thelocker.coach.ca/onlinelearning#SPE] • Coaching Athletes with Autism • Coaching Athletes with Down syndrome • Diversity and Inclusion in Action • CAC Coaching Athletes with a Disability Module [coach.ca/nccp-coaching-athletes-disability] • Aboriginal Coaching Modules [aboriginalsportcircle.ca] • Gender Equity [WomenandSport.ca] • Physical Literacy Instructor Program [sportforlife.ca] • HIGH FIVE® [highfive.org]. • Other regional or provincial/territorial workshops
<input type="checkbox"/>	Support mentorship and build capacity for future coaches and volunteers.

<p>Prioritize Safety and Meet Coaching/Training Standards for Special Olympics Canada (check minimum standards and requirements for your P/T Chapter) Including:</p>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Current Criminal Reference Check with vulnerable sector is on file with P/T Chapter.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Code of conduct is read and signed by all volunteers and staff.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The completion of Safe Sport (CAC) or Respect in Sport eLearning modules.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Implementation of Safe Sport policies which are focused on creating sporting environments free of harassment, abuse and discrimination.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The “Rule of Two” is implemented to ensure open and observable interactions and there is support of the Responsible Coaching Movement. [coach.ca/responsible-coaching-movement]
<input type="checkbox"/>	Adherence to the mission, vision and values of Special Olympics Canada. [www.specialolympics.ca/learn/about-special-olympics-canada/our-mission]
<p>Take an Athlete-Centered approach (Athlete needs are prioritized when planning and delivering programs and competitions)</p>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Demonstrate the organization’s stated principles and integrate values-based sport in training and competition.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Use language appropriate to the athlete’s ability and comprehension, have the capacity to communicate equitably and clearly, and involve participants in discussion and feedback.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Understand and consider the athlete’s developmental stage and abilities when implementing programs ([sportforlife.ca/ltd] and Special Olympics athlete section (page 30-) of the <i>SOC Introduction to Competition Sport Resource</i>).
<input type="checkbox"/>	Understand developing physical literacy and how to apply it in programs across all ages (<i>Developing Physical Literacy – Building a New Normal for All Canadians</i> [sportforlife.ca/dpl]).
<p>Parents, Caregivers and Supports, Who:</p>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are respectful [respectinsport.com/parent-program].
<input type="checkbox"/>	Receive and seek out information to improve their knowledge on potential benefits [www.specialolympics.ca/learn/special-olympics-programs/benefits-our-programs] of sport and physical activity for their SO athlete and how to support them.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Support the consistent participation and meaningful involvement of athletes in programming and competition.
<p>Organizational Administration (Chapters and Communities), that:</p>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Align with the Special Olympics mission, vision and values [www.specialolympics.ca/learn/about-special-olympics-canada/our-mission].
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are accountable for decisions, policies, risk management, and operational practices as well as utilizing the latest in active and safe tools.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Regularly assess, continually improve, and modernize governance.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Seek opportunities to engage with programs and organizations in the community, province/territory and nation-wide to advance Quality Sport and increase opportunities for participants.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Use sport for social change and community development [www.specialolympics.org/our-work?locale=en].

GOOD PLACES, that create good feelings, are:	
Inclusive and Welcoming	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Everyone feels safe and that they belong regardless of ability and background (Canadian Disability Participation Project: [cdpp.ca], <i>A Blueprint for Building Quality Participation in Sport for Children and Youth with Intellectual Disabilities</i> : [t.co/V6HN7dPCIS]).
<input type="checkbox"/>	Access is affordable and barrier free.
Challenging, Fun and Fair	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Facilities and equipment are modified for the ability, size, and LTAD stream of the participants (when necessary).
<input type="checkbox"/>	Programs and environments, rules and policies are designed to balance positive development, fun, and safety.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Program runs on a regular basis – once a week for 8 weeks at a minimum.
Safe	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Equipment is in good condition.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Facilities are safe and inclusive; the space is welcoming, suitable, clean, well-lit, and well-maintained. Personnel are trained in first aid.
<input type="checkbox"/>	There is adherence to Safe Sport principles; the facility has policies and information readily available addressing bullying, harassment, emotional, physical and sexual misconduct, concussions, emergency action plan and up to date medical information for each athlete.
<input type="checkbox"/>	There are appropriate environments that engage participants effectively for the LTAD stream (<i>Discovery, Active for Life, Sport Excellence</i>).
GOOD PROGRAMS, that are developmentally appropriate, consider:	
Appropriate Ratios	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ratios are in place for athlete safety and supervision. SOC recommends a ratio of coach to athletes 1:4 (summer) and 1:3 (winter and young athletes).
Athlete-Centered Planning and Delivery	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ability, age, size, and maturity are all considered when grouping Special Olympics athletes.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Athletes are actively engaged in the game or activity and fully included by teammates.
<input type="checkbox"/>	All holistic aspects of participation are considered, including learning/cognitive, social/emotional, and physical/motor domains (<i>SOC Competition Introduction Sport Reference Guide</i>).
<input type="checkbox"/>	Athlete motivation is considered when organizing training and practices and identifying competitions (e.g. skill development, fun activities, involving peers and friends).
<input type="checkbox"/>	Programs include appropriate reinforcements (e.g. music, videos, verbal praise, encouragement, positive extrinsic reinforcement).
Progressions and Appropriate Challenge	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Athletes are learning and building on their existing skills.

<input type="checkbox"/>	There are options to make an activity more or less challenging based on the athlete's skills and capabilities.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Based on interest and ability and context, participants get to play different positions and/or try different events and sports [physicalliteracy.ca].
<input type="checkbox"/>	Skill development and technique are taught through correction, skill analysis and feedback.
Holistic Planning	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Programs and practices are well-prepared and are delivered to meet the needs of the athletes and in alignment with the LTAD stream (<i>Discovery, Active for Life, Excellence</i>).
<input type="checkbox"/>	The program is aligned with Special Olympics LTAD 2.0, along with appropriate consideration of the National Sport Organization's Long Term Development Framework [sportforlife.ca/sport-frameworks].
<input type="checkbox"/>	The club connects participants to developmentally appropriate programs and opportunities, which may include different contexts, types of play, generic clubs, competition, or activities.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Programs incorporate coach and volunteer mentors to build capacity and succession planning.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Programs reinforce healthy behaviours through information, training and connecting to service providers (i.e. Healthy Athletes [www.specialolympics.ca/learn/special-olympics-programs/healthy-athletes], Fitness and Health programs, etc.).
Meaningful Participation and Competition	
<input type="checkbox"/>	In order to optimize development, where appropriate, the participants play small-sided games with fewer players, compete in shorter distances, or play for modified lengths of time. These strategies allow for maximum engagement and time actively involved in a practice or a game.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Rules are modified in practice/training based on the ability and context of the participants.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Various competition models are considered to best suit athlete's development, competence and ensure meaningful participation.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Where appropriate based on the athlete stream, teams, groups, lines, or categories are balanced so that participants of similar ability compete against each other, giving everyone a chance to be challenged and succeed.
<input type="checkbox"/>	All participants get to play and practice equally.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Competition is timed appropriately for learning and is affordable and accessible.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Qualified and trained officials are recruited to oversee competitions.
<input type="checkbox"/>	A Teaching Games for understanding approach is applied wherever possible [www.playsport.net/about-playsport/teaching-games-understanding-tgfu-approach].

*Extracted from Sport for Life's Long-Term Athlete Development 2.0: Supporting Quality Sport Experiences

Appendix

What we have learned from LTAD (2007)

The revisions include:

› **Chronological age has been removed.**

Ages have been removed and the focus is on experiences/contexts where athletes participate in sport and physical activity. Stages will be used to connect to National Sport Organization's (NSO) Athlete Development Matrices and the NSO Quality Sport Programs when identifying sport specific developmentally appropriate training and competition.

› **Stages remain relevant but focus is on Sporting Contexts.**

The focus of this framework is on experiences and goals/motivation of the athlete. Stages remain relevant with the introduction of the NSO Athlete development matrices. All 2007 stages can be represented within the current experiences.

› **Athlete Development Matrix (ADM) remains with the NSOs.**

NSOs have developed athlete development matrices that will act as a resource for coaches in physical, technical and tactical development of their athletes. Some elements of psychological, social/emotional and lifestyle will also be included and provide guidance for developmentally appropriate sport resources for coaches and administrators. It will be important here to connect the ADM to the NSO Quality Sport Program.

› **Competition does not define an athlete's stage or context.**

Athletes are now grouped by the sport experience, the competition goals, and/or the motivation behind participation as opposed to the competition they are participating in.

› **A greater understanding that there is no linear approach to Athlete Development.**

The new SO framework recognizes that the pathways are not linear and better reflects the SO athlete pathway. It shows there is a strong likelihood of changing between experiences based on motivation, games cycles, available sports, etc.

› **An Implementation Plan will be developed to better support roll-out.**

This plan will develop or identify tangible resources and tools (videos, etc.) for the end user whether athlete, coach, family member or additional stakeholder to support implementation.

› **A greater focus will be on providing coaching support and engraining the content into coach education.**

The model remains as a crucial piece of the NCCP, and will be supported by aligned tangible tools/resources for coaches.

› **Focus is on more applicable and appropriate terminology.**

There is a large focus on using Quality Sport terminology that has inclusive and accessible language for all abilities.

› **There will be a connection in resources to the Three Domains within the SOC NCCP program.**

Based on the importance of the three domains (learning/cognitive, social/emotional, physical/motor) in SO NCCP this terminology and principles will be intertwined and allow for a holistic approach to Athlete Development – reflective of the NCCP

material. The three SO domains are reflected in NSOs Athlete Development Matrix's five skills and attributes (physical, technical/tactical, psychological, social-emotional, life skills) and will connect these two.

› **A focus and value in the multi-sport delivery system.**

In this framework there is a clearly defined role for multi-sport involvement and its contribution to the development of physical literacy and sport specific goals and the athlete's sport calendar and participation. This framework also outlines the fluidity between the various experiences.



Figure 5: Five session characteristics plus five design considerations for developing physical literacy. Extracted from *Developing Physical Literacy 2.0*, pg 19, ©Sport for Life

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