

The Pyramid of Participation “Building a Program”



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Reasons for Concern

- In 1975-76, there were 355,160 wrestlers in the USA in high school. In 1994-95: 216,453. In 2004-05: 243,009.
- Average tenure of high school coach: 4 to 5 years. It takes longer than that for the pyramid to cycle.
- Of bout results recorded last year, 25% of the high school bouts were forfeits.
- Fewer college programs have taken away the source of many high school coaches.
- Athletics at the high school and college level require the skills of a CEO for a small business. The head coach does not have to do everything. He or she just has to make sure it's getting done.

Positive Response

- Recruit, recruit, recruit.
- You don't eliminate forfeits by reducing the number of weight classes. You reduce forfeits by increasing the number of wrestlers. This secures the future of wrestling in America.
- Colleges will never consider adding wrestling if we're not growing at the high school level.
- We have to be proactive at coming alongside coaches at all levels to help meet their needs and increase their effectiveness. A great teacher never stops learning.
- Let's get excited about improving our people skills, as well as are teaching skills. Organization, organization, organization.

The Pyramid of Participation for USA



World
Olympic

Open/National Club
18 and up

College or College Club
18 and up

Senior High or Club
Ages 14-18

Middle School/Junior High or Club
Ages 12-15

Organized Youth Programs
Ages 9-12

Introduction to Wrestling
"FUN AND FUNDAMENTALS"

The Pyramid of Participation for WRESTLING

Building a Program from the bottom up



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or Club
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Like a Mighty Army

Many years ago, I wrote a series of articles on wrestling called “The Pyramid of Participation”.

These were mostly thoughts on building a program and keeping it healthy.



Like a Mighty Army

Now as the Coaching Development Coordinator for the NWCA, I am involved with wrestlers in the first 5 levels of the pyramid.



Like a Mighty Army

If my prayers are answered in the months and years ahead, America will have more students try wrestling, stay in wrestling longer, and have a quality experience.



Like a Mighty Army

I want to see America dominate at the world and Olympic level as a result of a massive and united effort to expand and enhance wrestling at every level.

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Thoughts about the Pyramid

The Pyramid is a visual way to stress recruitment and retention. Retention is based on quality of experience, which is based on delivery.



Thoughts about the Pyramid

Every wrestler in America started somewhere in this Pyramid and worked their way up.



Thoughts about the Pyramid

Unfortunately, we only hear about the ones that are very successful when they reach the top.



Thoughts about the Pyramid

We must be very careful not to put too much focus on too few athletes and too few programs.



Thoughts about the Pyramid

Obviously, because of various interests, talents, abilities, and priorities, there will always be a lesser number moving up to the next level.



Thoughts about the Pyramid

But how can we ensure more students enter the pyramid and move up the ladder?



Thoughts about the Pyramid

We all have a role and more can be accomplished if none of us cares who gets the credit.

Level 1: Introduction to Wrestling

“Where are the children?”

- How many elementary schools in your system?
- How many private schools in your system?
- How many home schoolers?



Level 1: Introduction to Wrestling

Ideas:

- Have wrestling representative in every elementary building.
- Have assemblies, short 1-day or 2-day clinics, anything to get the child excited about wrestling so the parent will bring them to an introductory class. Be very, very aggressive in recruiting, especially in grades 5 to 8.



Level 1: Introduction to Wrestling

Ideas:

- Offer a 2-3 week program anytime throughout the year to introduce the sport to beginners. Get them on the mats and have some basic drills and games that correspond with the sport.
 - ✓ Offer programs when you have the greatest chance of getting maximum participation.
 - ✓ Remember, the single most important thing is that by the time a student gets to 7th grade, he or she has tried wrestling.



Level 1: Introduction to Wrestling

Ideas:

- Separate the programs: K-3 and 4-6.
- Keep the names and addresses of every athlete and their family, and invite them back out every year.
- Keep it FUN and simply introduce the FUNDAMENTALS.



Overall Considerations

Measurements of Success

- Skill acquisition
- 30 7th graders and/or 10 seniors (or the number of students who wrestle all the way through junior to senior high)
- 1st grade is the class of 2019; 5th grade - class of 2015



Overall Considerations

Measurements of Success

- Note: I am very concerned that according to the National Federation of State High School Athletic Associations, as referenced in the August 12, 2005 edition of WIN magazine, Pennsylvania's average high school squad is 18 students. This is embarrassing when we lay claim to being the strongest wrestling state in the United States.



Level 2: Organized Youth Programs

Red Level & Black Level

Level 2 actually consists of two levels.

You can use your school colors, for example, to differentiate between the two groups.

Level 2: Organized Youth Programs

Red Level

- ✓ 2nd or 3rd year student, or perhaps some first year students who advanced rapidly.
- ✓ These athletes would begin to compete, but with stricter guidelines. You would try to make an effort to see that each student has some success.
- ✓ It has to be FUN!
- ✓ The length of season may be shorter.
- ✓ Control the number of practices per week and the length of those practices.
- ✓ Control the amount of competition and the environment of the competition to keep the stress level down.

 STRESS

Level 2: Organized Youth Programs

Black Level

- ✓ Students would attend outside competitions and begin to see where they fall on a district, regional, and state level.
- ✓ You are trying to mentally prepare them to move to the junior high school
- ✓ Familiarize them with the coaches at the next level.
- ✓ The emphasis on weight management should be on physical fitness and good nutrition.
- ✓ The rewards at this level should reflect the level of accomplishment.
- ✓ Be especially aware of preparing the 6th graders to move to the next level. “TOP DOG” to “UNDERDOG”.

Overall Considerations

- Winning is important, but more important is the process of preparing them to win at the next level.
- Don't forget: **Skill acquisition and 30 7th graders!**
You will need to provide enough competition to compete with other youth sports experiences and to give them an appropriate challenge for their gifts and abilities.



Other Overall Considerations

Youth Level

- The head high school coach is the CEO.
- Success is determined by how many wrestlers continue through high school.



Other Overall Considerations

Youth Level

- Recommendations:
 - ✓ 1. Never stop recruiting.
 - ✓ 2. Provide opportunities for competition.
 - ✓ 3. Teach fundamental skills at each level.
 - ✓ 4. Make sure everyone feels important to the program.
 - ✓ 5. Have free admission to varsity matches for the youth.
 - ✓ 6. Never use the term “JV Team”, use future varsity.
 - We need to work to have wrestling viewed more like track and count the number of competitions per individual, not per team. It may be best for 3 of your athletes to go to the Beast of the East, but it may be better for the others to go to another event. Wrestling should provide this flexibility.



Other Overall Considerations

Youth Level

- Recommendations: (con't.)
 - ✓ 7. Never stop looking for students
 - Never stop looking for students, never stop using the re-entry concept. Every student who was ever out for wrestling should always be invited back out for wrestling. Priorities change.
 - ✓ 8. Keep everyone in the program informed
 - Have an email newsletter and a website. We send out a weekly update to over 1,000 emails. If you want to be on our list, just send me an email.
 - ✓ 9. Be sure everyone has a positive experience.
 - Be sure you understand the value of a good sparring partner. In wrestling, training partners should be assigned at every level.



Other Overall Considerations

Youth Level

- Staff training
- Make videotapes
- You are working with “Muscle Memory”
- Poor teaching is hard to correct
- Location of training
- T-shirts that only have “(your school) Wrestling”
- If the high school coach does not take charge, someone else will and you may not like the results. When there is a vacuum of leadership someone is going to fill that vacuum. Many times this is done by someone with wrong motives and inadequate preparation. Coaching is teaching. A coach must understand child development and the delivery of a physical education component, which in this case is wrestling. When I work with youth I also try to add a gymnastics component. My theory is if you can't control your own body you will have a hard time controlling someone else's.



Other Overall Considerations

Middle School & Junior High Levels

- Continue recruiting
- The most important statistic is...
- The 2nd and 3rd ranked wrestlers must compete
- Ranking/challenge bouts vs. eliminations
- Junior High – 2 Mats for competition
- Success of Jr. High = Number of wrestlers sent to the varsity each year
- Developing other Character Traits
- Approach teaching wrestling as an academic discipline
- Dealing with the “Multi-sport athlete”



Other Overall Considerations

High School Level

- This level will reveal if your pyramid is working. There will be no forfeits. There will be back-ups at every weight class.
- The head coach must be known by every wrestler below the varsity level. You should try to coach the other levels at least occasionally.
- Idea of varsity helping at middle school level and middle school helping at youth level. You learn more when you have to teach it.



Other Overall Considerations

High School Level

- Myth: Compete more and you will be better.
- Truth: All 3 styles will help you. To improve you must be willing to change, not just do the same thing more.
- Words are very important. Practice – training – rehearsal
- Live wrestling – sparring – positional competition – competition rehearsal
- Every student must know how they can make a contribution. $9 \times 3 = 27$. $5 \times 6 = 30$. Iron sharpens iron. Augsburg 45 rings, not 10.
- Tournament scoring

Other Overall Considerations

High School Level

- Attendance will help depth. Part of the successful whole.
- Marketing, promotion, presentation of event, every dual meet is a happening. Media relations.
- Once they're in the gym, your wrestling must give them a reason to want to come back. Non-stop attack and counter attack. Non-stop pressure. Never go off the mat. Keep your hands on your opponent.
- Only winners and learners. Never lose but might run out of time.
- Fans bond with athletes who are good sports and relentless in their approach to wrestle

Other Overall Considerations

High School Level

- Mental toughness is a 24/7 thing. A 6 a.m. will develop more mental toughness than an 11 a.m. run.
- You must have a system of teaching and training that meets the needs of the specialist and the multi-sport athlete. If you don't meet the needs of the multi-sport athlete, you will not have the best athletes on your team.
- Have an assistant coach in junior high football.
- Have an assistant coach in junior high soccer.
- Middle school physical educators are your best friends.

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Concluding Challenges

- Head coach, you must take charge. You are the authority figure for wrestling in your school district. You can delegate this authority, but you can not say it is not your responsibility.
- You must have the human resource skills to work with a wide variety of people, each coming into the process from a different angle and with different perspectives. You must be able to build alliances.

Concluding Challenges

- School board members – you must have one person on the school board who appreciates what you're trying to do. Always focus on the total education of the total person. Winning will take care of itself. Never forget the anxiety prayer, *“Lord give me the courage to change the things I can, the peace to accept the things I cannot change, and the wisdom to know the difference.”* Endow me with a ton of diplomacy without losing the intense focus necessary for individual and team success in wrestling.

Concluding Challenges

Other Groups & Individuals

- Fellow coaches, both in wrestling and other sports
- Fellow teachers in every building in the district
- Administrators at every level – they must all see you as a person with a tremendous focus and philosophy on educating the whole student.
- Families
- Fans – everyone motivates me if they believe in me. I am encouraged by their trust. If they don't believe in me I am motivated to prove them wrong.
- Business leaders – supplemental fund raising is essential
- Service clubs

Concluding Challenges

Other Groups & Individuals

- Remember: every student is a potential wrestler and every adult is a potential supporter and fan. Your wrestling must give them a reason to cheer, rather than their cheering giving you a reason to wrestle.

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My Reasons for Staying in Wrestling

- My faith in Christ – examples: Athletes in Action, Fellowship of Christian Athletes. *“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”*
- Jim Elliot
- The feedback that I have received from many wrestlers as to the value of their character development and education as a result of being involved in wrestling.
- The need that I see for all of us to work at “growing” wrestling. Celebrating the achievements of the past may provide motivation for the future but there needs to be day-to-day planning and hard work to grow the Pyramid larger and larger in America.

The Pyramid of Participation for WRESTLING

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