

The AAI FAMES model

Training and Competition guidelines for children and adults

Athletics is one of New Zealand's premier Olympic sports, with nearly every school conducting an athletics day during the academic year. Therefore, most children in New Zealand will get exposure to the sport of Athletics during their education. At AAI, we recognise the importance of age appropriate Athletic experiences on the development in the long term of physical, psychological, social and cognitive growth. In general, we have influence over club athletics with a somewhat lesser degree at school level. Our goal needs to encourage school athletes to experience the benefits of been a club member.

We have set some guidelines for club administrators and coaches in the following 2-page FAMES model, based on World Athletics (IAAF) Introduction to Athletics coaching 2009 by Peter Thompson. The FAMES model is based on the above model plus current research into the development of young children. The primary objective of this model is to ensure age appropriate activities and competitions are delivered to our young adults.

As advised by medical professionals, we need to ensure that athletes are not subjected to excessive training regimes, which can have a negative effect on a developing child. Appropriate exercise structures are required to ensure the proper development of muscles, bones, ligaments. Overuse can also impact on their health into adulthood. Note that excessive training and competitive activities, can stop children from continued improvement. This can lead to poor performances in the short and long term and effect adversely in a children's overall health and wellbeing.

The sporting journey is a long-term process, with Athletics in particular, a late specialisation sport, with performance peaks generally long into adulthood. Whether an athlete seeks a lifelong involvement in sport or seeks success at a high-performance level, an athlete must progress through a series of developmental stages, from childhood to adulthood. At each stage, the athlete needs to adapt to the new training stimulus and advanced technical skills, thus performing at a higher level. Along with the physical demands, young athletes need to manage psychological, social, and academic transitions happening at the same time. As mentioned, Athletics is a late developmental sport which requires a generalised and diverse approach to the early years of training. A diverse range of physical activities will set up the young athlete with the ability to develop the physical, psychological, social and cognitive skills and behaviours to succeed in sport and recreational activity, in the long term.

Looking at the physical development, the focus for the 4-9-year-old, should be on improving fundamental movement skills. From 10 years and above, the child needs to progress through the developmental stages to 18 years of age and beyond. It is important for all stakeholders (athletes, parents, coaches, teachers and club administrators) to understand these stages of development.

To assist with the understanding of the developmental stages, AAI have produced the FAMES model, to clearly define some guidelines and recommendations. This information is based on past and current research into the development of young people in sport. Note that children develop at different rates and there can be large differences in the chronological and developmental age. Therefore, note that this model is a guide only.

We at Athletics Auckland recommend the use of this guide as a framework to meet the needs of the athletes under your guidance. The stages of development are included in the attached two tables.