

# “Writing ... with Young Co-Authors”

Travis Dorsch

10/21/2020



As a recognized name in youth sport parenting research, I often get cold-called (or cold-*emailed*) with a request to contribute to a journal, volume, or book, in my area of expertise. This is not an uncommon occurrence, and I'm sure my colleagues field such requests in their respective fields all the time too. In most cases, we're able to justify declining such an offer – there are only so many hours in the day, right? However, sometimes the request strikes us as so unique and so “in our wheelhouse” that we are compelled to say YES! Last month I experienced the latter, being asked to contribute a research article to a special issue in the journal *Frontiers in Young Minds*. The topic of the issue is “The Psychology behind Sports Performance” and it's being written to a target audience of children aged 8-14 who participate in organized youth sports.

The coolest part of this project for me is the fact that the special issue editors gave me the autonomy to select my own authorship team. With an eye toward exposing my PhD students to a new and different type of scientific-but-also-accessible writing, I invited Dan Fleming and Amand Hardiman, both second-year doctoral students in the *Families in Sport Lab* to collaborate on the manuscript. I also invited an unlikely contributor: my six-year-old daughter Josie! Josie will serve as our de facto reviewer, ensuring that we are using the language of children in our writing. She will also read the manuscript (probably over the course of many bed times) and let us know what issues are most important to her in youth sport. As a young athlete, she spends 300 or so days a year on the ice, on basketball courts, on soccer, football, and baseball fields, on rock walls, and on local, national, and international ski slopes – so we view her as a true “expert”

when it comes to the youth sport experience. She also has a dad who's pretty psyched about his role as a youth sport parent, so there's that too...



Anyway, our article examines the goals parents have for their children in youth sport and how these goals drive their sideline behavior at trainings and competitions. We know that parents of young athletes want their children to develop physically, grow as people, build relationships, and enjoy playing sport. But, parents' goals also change over time based on how much their children like sport, how well they do, and the sport setting. In short, research shows that parents' goals for their children change as the children themselves change. Parents, though, have been shown to be bad at guessing what their children's goals actually are. In fact, research from our lab suggests that parents on the sidelines often don't yell and cheer for the things their kids actually want. So, our take-home message to readers will be that as children grow up and have new goals (for example, “I used to just want to have fun with my friends, but now I really want to win!”), they need to communicate often with their parents about what they want to accomplish most in sport. This will help parents support them and cheer for them while they pursue personally salient outcomes!

So, look for our paper in the March 2021 Issue of *Frontiers in Young Minds*. And if you have school-aged children, share it with them! We hope it will be a nice contribution to the youth sport literature and that it will serve children in better understanding why their parents sometimes act crazy at practices and competitions. As a dad, I selfishly hope it also gets Josie excited about the roles of family in sport – it's gonna be our life for the next decade plus!

Happy science-ing everyone!