The Impact of the Pay-to-Play Model on Youth Sports Participation

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Why Is Youth Sports Participation Important?
Youth sports participation offers numerous benefits, including improved physical health, mental well-being, academic performance, and development of important life skills. Active participation in sports correlates with lower rates of obesity, reduced health costs, and enhanced cognitive functioning. Moreover, it fosters better mental health, confidence, and competence. Additionally, involvement in sports correlates with improved academic outcomes and the acquisition of vital life skills, such as teamwork and leadership. Active parents often have active children, contributing to greater benefits for communities.

What is the “Pay-to-Play” Model?
- Any sports clubs or organizations charging fees to participate in programs (~$1.5K/yr)
- typically include cost of equipment, facilities, coaches and tournaments
- Downside: tends to exclude less privileged groups from reaping benefits of youth sports

Alternative Models:
“Pay-What-You-Can”
Families pay what they can and the rest is supplemented through outside revenue streams.

Solutions Within Communities:
- After-School & Public Programs
- Advocating for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Programs
- Promoting Equipment Donation Drives