

Dear Academy Coach,

We appreciate all that you do as a coach to mentor and teach the kids of the youngest level. At times they are trying, but mostly the rewards far outweigh the effort put in! At the CIYSL we are always looking to improve our league in the name of developing children. The Academy model is one such way.

We have sent an evaluation to all the club directors who put teams last fall into the academy and have received some good feedback. If you weren't able to put your "two cents" in, please let us know and we will get a survey to you for evaluation purposes.

After our first season in the Academy format we have found that I can do to improve the quality of the experience for the children.

1. **Site Coordinators** - When hosting a friendly game or a Festival, please be sure to have a Site Coordinator there. Much the same as if you are running a tournament, you need someone that can direct traffic and also to help herd the young children from field to field as they are looking to play their next game. Your site coordinator may want to drop an email with directions and a site map for teams coming in. Remember, most Academy parents are in travel soccer for the first time... we would like them to have a great experience and continue playing soccer for the rest of their lives.
2. **Game Format** - Another question that came up was the format for the Academy Friendly games. Please understand that the friendly games are up to the individual teams / clubs to organize with other academy programs. For instance, last fall, IL Fusion set up a friendly with LISC – IL Fusion traveled over to LISC for an afternoon of fun. They played games of 5 v 5 with GK's and then had a field with 4 v 4 and a GK. – There are no mandates as to what the games should look like. The teams ended up playing a large inclusive (parents and siblings) game of "Capture the Flag" / "Ethiopian Escape" – The children had a BLAST! This spring, LISC is returning the trip to IL Fusion per the agreement between the clubs. It is also suggested that the teams can play Street Soccer, Multiple Goal games or other fun soccer related games. The idea is to encourage kids to play games for the love of playing sport.
3. **Importance of Sportsmanship** - Lastly, please realize that we are promoting good sportsmanship and defeating a team 17 – 1 is counterproductive to the mission of the Academy. An 8 year old player's psyche can be easily damaged and discourage young players to continue through with soccer as a love. There is a reason that we don't put standings on line nor do we keep track of the results from this age. If your team is in a position to wallop another team, please tug on the reigns and help promote good sportsmanship.

If you have questions about the Academy, please feel free to contact Ryan Lakin (IL Fusion DOC / CIYSL Board of Directors) regarding ideas and process for the CIYSL U9 Academy at rlakin@iwu.edu or 309-556-2033.

Yours in Soccer

CIYSL Board of Directors