

KidsRUN^{RVA}

Coaches' Handbook



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Welcome to Kids Run RVA

Welcome to Kids Run RVA and thank you for volunteering to be a running club coach. As you begin your coaching journey, Sports Backers wants to be sure that you have the resources needed to be the best coach possible. This Coaches' Handbook is intended to be a guide and offers suggestions that you may want to consider as you implement a running club at your school. However, feel free to add your own creative touch and think outside of the box. It is also important to note that every school and thus every running club operate a little differently. Hopefully this handbook will help you throughout your journey, but, please know that you can always contact someone from Sports Backers if you are in need of assistance. We are here to support you in your efforts to create an awesome fitness experience for students across the Richmond region. Ultimately it is the mission of Kids Run RVA to help kids become more active and, through your efforts, Kids Run RVA is sure to achieve that mission. Thank you, and best of luck as you embark on your journey to become a Kids Run RVA coach!

Important Things to Know

How to recruit runners/ start up your running club

As mentioned above, every school and run club will be different. If you are new to creating and implementing a club, it will be best to start small, particularly if you are alone in coordinating the club. You may choose to open run club to a specific grade only and perhaps set a limit or first come first serve via a permission slip/interest form that is sent home. If you start small, your chances of success will be higher. Then, in following seasons, you can open the run club to more participants. As you organize your run club, you need to also think about the duration and frequency of the club. Will your club in the fall and/or spring? Have you thought about starting and ending dates? Will the ending date coordinate with one of Sports Backers' kids' running events? Or will you be having your own finale running event at your school? How many times per week will your club meet? Will it be before, during, or

after school? If your club meets once per week, how will your students supplement their running outside of run club?

Working with the school

Having buy-in from the school's administration can be crucial to the success of a run club. If you as a coach are a teacher or staff at the school, you are already at an advantage. You know how the school day rolls, you can keep up with any last-minute scheduling changes or school functions that may pop up, and you have free access to your building. You are able to copy forms, distribute, and collect them, and have easier access to students and administrators should you need to make an announcement or track anyone down.

If you are a volunteer coach visiting a school for each run session, it is important to have a staff or administrator at the school who can be your "eyes and ears" on the ground during the school day. If there is a sudden change in schedule for the school day due to approaching inclement weather, a lock-down, power outage, etc., that person will be your lifeline to the school. Keeping in touch via text or email will help you avoid a trip to the school should there be an unexpected cancellation of run club. Your contact at the school will also help distribute and collect forms to students that you in turn can return to us here at Sports Backers. This is particularly true for event participation forms which we will need from each and every student in order to be properly registered for one or our events.

How Sports Backers can support your running club

Sports Backers has partnered with the Richmond Road Runners Club to be able to offer grants to help offset the costs associated with implementing a run club, school fundraising running events, and transportation to and from the Sports Backers kids' running races. Sports Backers is in some cases also able to offer discounted and free entries to races that run club kids are invited to attend, such as the Whole Foods Marathon Jr., VCU Health 8k, Virginia 529 Kids Run, and the Ukrop's Monument Avenue 10k.

Outside of the financial support that Sports Backers may be able to provide, Kids Run RVA programs are supported by the kid-friendly training guides that are produced and offered to run club coaches free of charge. In the spring, Sports Backers offers incentives to elementary students who participate in the Kids Challenge as part of their preparation for the Virginia 529 Kids Run.

The greatest way we can be of assistance, however, is just being there to support you as you embark on your coaching journey! Wishing you had some advice from a veteran run club coach? We can link you with that person. Wondering when race day registration forms are due? Jacki Quinlan and Faith Hecht are only an email or a phone call away. Both are sort of experts at this Run Club thing so you can reach out to them anytime you have a question, concern, or just wish to share your success story (you are sure to have one once you get things going at your school)! You can find their contact information in the resource section of this handbook.

General coaching guidelines

The most important thing to remember is that running should be FUN FUN FUN for your young participants. With elementary school-aged children, running should be about participation and developing healthy lifestyle habits, and not about being the fastest in the club. There will be plenty of time for competition as the kids get older. Also, just as each run club is different, each young runner is different. Please help accommodate for differences in ability within your run club. Some children mature more quickly physically and emotionally than others, and this may affect their ability to participate.

Another important thing to think about is the proper and safest way to dismiss your runners at the end of run club sessions. If your club meets before school, what is the school's expectation about how the students will enter the building? Is there a certain time that they must be inside in order to receive breakfast or make it to class on time? Are you expected to walk them in as a group or can they report to the building independently? If your club meets after school, you will likely be expected to remain with the students until the last one is

picked up. You will want to check with your school point of contact to find out how you are expected to handle situations that may arise, such as a student not being picked up or a student saying they are going to friend's house instead of walking home, etc. The key to all of these dismissal scenarios is to know what the school's expectation is and ensure that you maintain consistency with school guidelines.

Emergency procedures

Develop a plan of action should you have a medical emergency during one of your run club sessions. Are you carrying a cell phone on you during training sessions? If you are on campus, and a participant sustains an injury, you should have a quick and direct way to alert someone in the school building to the injury. Be aware if any of your runners have any allergies or asthma - this information should be listed on their permission slips so please be sure to review those. It's a good idea to always keep a copy of their permission slips on you at all times in the event of an emergency.

Run Club Activities and Guidelines

Thoughts on physical activity for youth

Physical Activity is essential for people of all ages and shapes. It's no surprise that you usually tend to look and feel better about yourself after engaging in some exercise. However, it's more than just moving around to burn some calories, especially when you are working with children. Since today's youth are the world's future, it is imperative that we provide them the best opportunities to develop into resilient men and women.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services says the best way to do this is for young people between the ages of 6 and 17 to engage in at least 60 minutes of physical activity daily. More than 1 in 3 kids are overweight or obese, and with less than half of the children aged 6-7 not reaching this activity minimum, we can see effects on development, starting in the classroom. Physical activity goes hand in hand with increased memory and concentration for children. Studies have shown higher reading and math scores for children

who participate in more physical activity. Physical activity also reduces the risk of childhood obesity and other risk factors for chronic diseases.

Making sure that the activities are safe and fun are the most important factors for encouraging the children to get out and be active. If an activity is safe and fun, children will be able to and will want to continue playing and being active. Some great examples of moderate intensity aerobic activity include: running, bike riding, and dancing, all of which can be adjusted and modified appropriately to a child's interests and abilities. Younger children tend to like short bursts of activity with little rest, like jumping around on a jungle gym. Older children like teenagers typically enjoy longer duration exercises and more structured activity, like soccer or strength training exercises.

Kids were born to run, from chasing each other on the blacktop, to participating in after school programs. However, properly assessing everything from footwear needs to a cooldown is crucial to making sure children develop proper running habits. For young kids, it is all about getting them excited to want to be active and continually motivating them to continue with their activity of choice. Studies have shown that children are 54% more active when playing with a friend than by playing alone. Getting active when with friends and around others their age naturally encourages more effort and engagement.

Outside of making running fun, safety should also be a top concern. As simple as it may seem, a discussion about how wearing socks and proper shoes is important to prevent blisters, soreness, and cramps is worthy of a coaches time. Coaches will also want to consider talking about running on the sidewalks behind the designated adult leaders, running against traffic, and obeying all road signs. Also, one cannot run without fuel, so eating properly during the day and 30 minutes prior with a light snack (think fruit or crackers & cheese) is important. However, the most important regardless of age, gender, or running experience is hydration. Drinking water throughout the day and keeping your body nourished is necessary. Children between the ages of 4-13 are recommended to drink 5-8 cups of water a day. However, this

amount should be increased when temperatures rise, if you are increasing your physical activity that day, or if you are thirsty (usually indicating that you are already dehydrated).

Proper stretching and warmups before engaging in running is helpful to prevent injuries and loosen the body up to maximize running ability. While running, it is important to pace yourself and run at a comfortable level. You do not want to go too fast at the beginning and then become too tired to continue. Children typically have faster heart rates than adults. So it is alright if, after the run, children notice their pulse and heart beating faster than normal. In fact, kids between the ages of 4-13 average a heart rate of 98 beats/min, while the average heart rate for adults is 78 beats/min. After a run, you can have the kids use two fingers to find their pulse in their neck or inside of their wrist, counting how many beats they notice in 15 seconds and multiplying that number by 4 to measure their beats per minute.

Just because the run is over doesn't mean you're done. Have the kids walk for a few minutes to lower their heart rate back to a normal range and then stretch as a group to prevent muscle tightness and also to instill a consistent routine. Also encourage the kids to get a good night's sleep so their bodies can repair and refuel. Let's go into a bit more detail on each of these important components!

Warm Up

Before starting a long run, get the group warmed up with some dynamic stretching. Below is an example of a dynamic warm up, specifically for runners (click/go here for video: <https://www.runnersworld.com/training-video/dynamic-warmup-for-runners>)

- Walking Lunges
- Frankenstein Leg Kicks (Kick Leg out forward hitting your hand)
- Leg swings
- Butt Kicks
- Pike Stretch
- Hacky Sack

- Toy Soldier
- Also consider: strides, skipping, grapevine, side shuffle, backpedaling, jumping jacks

The New York Road Runners Foundation website is an invaluable resource as well. You can find short videos highlighting warmup and cool down moves at <http://www.nyrr.org/youth-and-schools/running-start/coaching-videos/elementary-school/warm-up-cool-down> .

How to Structure a Fun Practice

It always helps to be prepared with a plan before practice. You may want to segment your practice with the following:

Dynamic Warm Up

Game (ex - Sharks and Minnows)

Long Run (ex - 1.5 miles)

Cool Down & Stretches

Training Tip (ex - running form)

Dismissal

*Distances and speed of each segment may vary based on the ability of your kids. You can increase the distance and pick up the pace as run club progresses.

How to manage your run club kids

Building Rapport: When working with a new group of kids, one of the first priorities is to get to know each other and build rapport with the kids you will be coaching. Having a good rapport with the kids in your club will make them easier to manage, ensure a healthy coaching relationship, and, ultimately, result in better workouts because they will be more inclined to work hard to please their coach (you!). But how can you build that rapport? For many, engaging with kids just comes naturally but for others it may take a little getting used to.

That's okay! Just remember - you are a runner, their role model, and care about the kids or else you wouldn't have signed up to be a coach! Here are a few tips to help you with building and maintaining rapport:

- Just be yourself! Don't try to portray what you think a coach should be like - just do what comes naturally to you and let your experience as a runner/athlete guide your instincts as you coach the kids on running.
- Use humor! Humor is a great way to build rapport and make running club a fun place to be.
- Greet the kids with excitement each and every time they attend your running group. Let them know you are glad they are there.
- Let your passion shine through! If the kids see that you are excited about the workout for the day or the upcoming race, they will feed off your energy and will be excited with you.
- Honor your commitments. A big part of building rapport is establishing trust. They need to know that they can depend on you. If you say you are going to play a fun game at the next practice, then be sure to do that. If you promise the kids a snack at the end of practice, give them the snack.
- Find something in common. For many kids and coaches their commonalities will be based around a love of sports and running. For some, you may have to find something else that you have in common. Once you figure that something out, use that as a conversation builder or something that you can reference throughout your coaching relationship.
- Figure out what the kids are good at and point out their strengths as much as possible! Kids (and adults too for that matter!) love to be praised so be sure to have something to praise them about as often as possible.

Establishing and Maintaining Structure: Kids need and thrive off of structure. If their experience at running club is chaotic, their behaviors will reflect as such, and your coaching

experience will be less than pleasant. Be sure to create structure from the very beginning because it is harder to come back and clamp down later on down the road after they have gotten comfortable with a relaxed environment. Be firm, but fair. Let them know your expectations and hold them to those expectations. Create rules that are specific to your Running Club. You can use the following guidelines to create an awesome set of rules that the kids will be inclined to follow:

- Create the rules as a team! If the kids are a part of the rule making process, they are more likely to follow the rules that are created! This also helps with building rapport because they will know that their input is valued.
- Keep the number of rules to a minimum. Generally speaking, you don't want to have more than 5 rules because it becomes difficult for the kids (and the coaches) to remember the rules if there are too many of them.
- Condense the rules by combining similar topics. For example, if one kid says a rule should be to not hit anyone and another kid says you shouldn't kick someone, combine that to create an all-encompassing rule such as "Keep hands and feet to self."
- Phrase rules in the positive. Instead of saying "Don't say bad words" you can say "Use positive words" or "Be kind to others."
- Have the kids sign off on the rules. You can create contracts for each kid or you could create one rules poster which the entire team signs on the back indicating their commitment to follow the rules.
- Be sure to include a rule which addresses your expectations for their participation at practice. For example, you may establish a rule that everyone must try their hardest during workouts.
- Establish the consequences for breaking the rules. A few suggestions: time out, push-ups, contacting parents, no participation in the race at the end of the season, etc.

A few more things about managing your running club kids: It is important to know your kids! Know the population you are working with so you can better understand where they are coming

from, how their culture impacts the way they behave, and what they may be faced with in other aspects of their lives. Although you are not expected to meet all their needs, you should be constantly aware of any needs they have and perhaps communicate with school personnel when necessary. A child's basic needs must be met before they can be expected to learn, engage appropriately in a club, or run. If you establish rapport with your runners, create a structured environment, keep them engaged in activities, remain aware of the needs of your runners, and demonstrate a love of running your running club will be successful and managing the runners will be easy!

When it comes to a kid who just doesn't want to be there or do anything: try running/doing the workout with the child. Sometimes you simply doing it with them will make them do what they otherwise would not do on their own. This is one of the reasons it may be helpful, whenever possible, to have at least two coaches - you then have the time/man power to devote one-on-one to a child when need be. Also using a team approach can be helpful. For example, when creating workouts, think about how you can make the kids work as a team and inform them that they cannot leave anyone behind. A lot of times that will motivate a child who otherwise would not want to put forth much effort because they are unwilling to let their team down (sometimes the kids are more willing to listen to and will try to please their peers than the coaches). We have used that technique a lot at Oak Grove.

If you have a child or a few children who are causing problems, you may need to consider implementing a separate incentive system. Rewarding positive behavior is going to be the best way to get the desired behavior from a child. The type of reward system will vary depending on the age range of the kids you are coaching, but if there are behavior issues present on a team, then the coaches may have to focus on not only rewarding the kids for running (by use of Sports Backers incentives) but may need to reward specifically for positive behaviors (complying with the rules, getting along with teammates, putting forth adequate effort, etc.). A sticker chart could be used - they would have an opportunity to receive the immediate gratification of earning a sticker for that practice as well as delayed gratification

of having to earn a certain amount of stickers to earn a "prize". The prize does not necessarily have to cost money—what about offering options like the child getting to plan the next practice, or ending practice ten minutes early for free time, or a child gets to lead the stretches, etc.

If you have tried the above approaches and are still having difficulty with a particular child, you should try engaging in a one-on-one conversation with that child. Try to find an interest or something to talk about other than running. If a child refuses to participate, try giving them an alternative task like timing, counting laps, setting out cones, have them sit and draw 'cheer posters' for their fellow runners, etc. That way they are still involved in some way. Or try asking them if there is a certain game or drill that they like best and do that one. If a child's behavior is impacting the positive experience of the other kids, you may want to consider using a 3 strike system. First time they misbehave (strike 1), they get a verbal reminder of the rules. Second time they misbehave (strike 2), they have to sit out for 1-2 minutes, or they cannot participate in a game. Third time they misbehave, coach discusses behavior problems with parent.

As a reminder, run club is an extracurricular activity. If a child is simply unwilling to participate appropriately on repeated occasions, then it may be time to consider discussing this child with a school official and deciding if they should be allowed to continue participating. Ultimately, we want all kids to have the chance to participate in run club so we hope that by using the strategies listed above, we can help all kids remain in run

club, even when they present with challenging behavior.

Training Guides

A general distance guideline is to increase mileage by a little each week, and run the race distance (or a little longer) prior to the race. Sports Backers has a training guide available for elementary and middle school-aged students. View the [training guides](#) in the Resources section of this handbook for distance suggestions.

Running Routes/Off Campus Running

Before deciding on the training routes for your club, discuss the details with your school administration and create a permission slip. You can find a [sample permission slip](#) in the Resource section of this handbook. If every child has a signed permission slip, you may take the group off campus for longer runs. To create routes, you can use several online resources, such as www.mapmyrun.com or www.usatf.org/routes/map. When going off campus, make sure to give guidelines to the kids: stay with the group, stop at intersections, and stay within eyesight of the coach. If 2 coaches are present, one coach should stay near the front of the pack, and the other coach towards the back. You may want to print out a map of the route for the coaches.

*If you do not have permission slips, your runs must be done on campus.

Workouts

Figure 8s: If you have a field or blacktop, have the kids run in the shape of an 8 by sprinting a diagonal line from one corner to the opposite corner then jogging the straight edge of the field or blacktop/field and repeating it. You can do this work out for a certain period of time or you may tell the runners that they must complete a certain number of figure 8s. (Variation: You can give some kids the option to walk the straight edge instead of jogging.)

Indian Run: Have the kids line up one behind another. Although this workout can be done anywhere, it may be easiest to do around a field or a track. The runners must jog SLOWLY in a line, being sure to keep the gaps between runners to a minimum. The person who is last in line must sprint past the other runners to make it to the front of the line. Once they make it to the front, they return to a jogging speed and the next person who is last in line sprints to the front. This can continue for a certain period of time (ex - 10 minutes) or after they complete a certain number of laps (ex - 4 laps around the track). If your club is large, you may want to break the kids down by ability level, age, or gender.

Hill Repeats: If you have access to a hill, have the kids run up it repeatedly! Again, you can establish a certain number of times you expect them to run up the hill or just have them run the hill for a given time period. Generally, the rule is that you must run up the hill and you may want to establish a "consequence" if they are caught walking up the hill, such as 10 pushups. (Variations - you may want to encourage your more advanced/skilled runners to jog down the hill in order to create a continual run to challenge them. Novice runners may be allowed to walk down the hill. You can also add in various exercises at the top or bottom of the hill. For example, after the 1st hill the runners must do 10 squats, 2nd hill - 20 sit ups, 3rd hill - 30 jumping jacks, etc.)

Relay Races: Kids tend to love doing relay races! You don't necessarily need a baton or track to do a relay race. Establish a route that each runner will run, create teams (can be 3 or more runners depending on the size of your running club), and give them something to exchange (plastic spoons, unsharpened pencils, etc.). Be sure to create teams that are evenly divided by skill level, such as being careful to mix up the skilled vs. novice runners on each team. Relay races create an awesome opportunity to develop your runners' sportsmanship and teamwork by cheering for each other and stressing the importance of supporting your fellow runners.

Pop the Top: If you have access to a hill (preferably one that offers a gradual incline as opposed to a steep incline) you can do this work out! Give the runners a starting line at the bottom of the hill, place some type of indicator (a cone or a coach would work) a little over half way up the hill, and establish a finish line that is at the top of the hill or a little past. Explain to the runners that they must run up the hill but must switch into "high gear" then they hit the indicator and maintain that level of effort as they "Pop the Top!" This can be done over a period of time or for an established number of times up the hill. (Variation - some kids can jog down the hill while others may be allowed to walk down the hill).

Mile Run: Establish a one mile course, preferably one that involves several laps such as running around a block or use a track. Have the kids run a mile and time them. Be sure to discuss the

importance of pacing themselves, not going out too fast, and finishing strong. It is suggested that you do this workout at the beginning of the season and then again later in the season. If you record the runners' results, it is often encouraging and motivating for the runners to see how much they have improved throughout the season.

Exercise Stations: Using cones, set up several numbered stations that the kids must run to and complete the exercises indicated at each station. Some possible exercises: burpees, mountain climbers, squats, lunges, push-ups, sit ups, jumping jacks. (Variation - Assign participants into teams or pairs and instruct them to do the entire work out as a team. They can't leave anyone behind or move on to the next station until everyone has completed each exercise.)

Running Games

Games are a great way to keep energy levels high, increase endurance, and most importantly, have FUN! Below are some examples, with instructions on how to play.

Game: Sharks and Minnows.

Instructions: Line kids up on one end of the field, they are the minnows. Choose 1 child to be the shark. The shark comes to the middle of the field. The shark yells "Come minnows, come!" and the minnows try to run to the other side without getting tagged by the shark. If the shark tags them, they also become a shark. The minnows stop at the other end, and wait for the shark to call them again. The last minnow alive, wins.

Game: Pac Man Tag (need a blacktop with lines).

Instructions: All players must stay on the lines. You can jump from line to line, but if you fall off, you must do 5 push-ups to get back in the game. The person who is "IT" is the pac man. They are chasing the other players. If tagged, you become the Pac Man. Keep playing until everyone is tired!

Game: Red Light Green Light.

Instructions: Coach is in the middle of the field, the players are lined up at one end. Coach yells "Green Light" to start. Green light = run. Red light = stop. First person to reach the coach gets to become the stoplight.

Game: Relay Races.

Instructions: Split the group into even lines. Runners race down to a cone and back. Options for races: running, run backwards, bear crawl, crab crawl, skipping, hopping, grapevine, side shuffle.

Game: Safe Base.

Instructions: Put 1 cone in each corner of the field. Those are the safe bases. Each player starts at a safe base (any one). The person who is "it" stands in the center of the field. When coach says "Go" each player must run to a new safe base and stay there. The person that is "it" will try and tag them. If anyone gets tagged, they are also it. Players must be touching the cone in order to be safe. Everyone that got tagged goes to the middle. They all say "Go" and the remaining players go to a new safe base. Continue until everyone has been tagged.

Game: Steal the Bacon.

Instructions: Split group into 2 teams. Line teams up so they are facing each other.

Number both teams so every player has a number. Place a baton (or pen, some small object) in the middle of the teams. Call out "number 2" - the number 2 from each team must run around a cone, grab the baton, and run it back to their team before the other player. Make sure every number gets a chance to go.

You can also find how-to videos on more running games (animal tag, obstacle medley, toe tag, continuous relay, and bean bag relay) at <http://www.nyrr.org/youth-and-schools/running-start/coaching-videos/elementary-school/games> . Please remember that the objective of the club is to make running fun for the children. There is a good

chance that most of your participants have not had a consistent level of physical activity before this. So, incorporating these games as the "running" piece of the workout may be key for kids who are just getting started on the road to fitness and better health.

Cool Down

At the end of run club, stress the importance of a cool down. A cool down helps your body get back to a resting state efficiently. Here is an example cool down:

- 3 to 5 minutes of brisk walking
- 5 to 10 minutes of stretches, hold each pose for 10-20 seconds
 - o Quad stretch (grab right ankle with right hand)
 - o Hamstring stretch (Place right heel out in front and keep leg straight, bend left leg like you are sitting down)
 - o Butterfly (seated, put soles of your shoes together, gently press down on thighs)
 - o Arms (reach up to the sky, hands can be touching or not, then out to the sides)
 - o Shoulder stretch (reach right arm across body, bring left arm up and gently pull arm against body)
 - o Calf stretch (place hands on a wall or tree, extend one leg back, keep heel on the ground)
 - o Crossover toe touch (cross one leg over the other, bend down trying to touch toes)
 - o You can find more stretches at:
http://www.nyrr.org/sites/default/files/youth-programs/2013/TFTP_supplemental_stretching.pdf .

You can use cool down time to go over any housekeeping items or make any important announcements (remind students to bring in forms, any school information affecting times or

days of run club, etc.) or to take questions from students about any topics covered on that day (nutrition, etc.).

Indoor Options

If weather causes run club to be indoors, below are some options in a confined space (cafeteria or hallway):

Simon Says: Coach can be Simon. Call out exercises like: jumping jacks, high knees, butt kicks, squat jumps, run in place, pushups, etc.

Jump Ropes: Bring jump ropes if you have them and do jump rope drills.

Relay Races: These can be adapted for indoors (just be respectful of the noise level).

Chalk Talk: Discuss any of the training tips above. Tell the kids about your experience running a race (bring in race bibs, t-shirts, photos). Ask the kids if they have questions about running or races.

Goal Cards: Bring an index card for each kid. Have them write down a goal for the race. Emphasize that it doesn't have to be a time. Goals can be: to not walk at all, to make sure I drink enough water, to smile at the finish line.

Training Tips

It may be beneficial to discuss some basic training tips with your running group. Below are some suggestions in order to prepare your group for a race.

Running form: Keep your body relaxed when you run, chin up and eyes forward, arms swing straight ahead (not side to side), smile and have fun!

Eating right: You should eat something small at least 30 minutes before your run

(granola bar, piece of fruit, peanut butter on toast). Anything high in sugar or fat is NOT GOOD. If you eat junk, your run will be junk. After your run, you should eat within an hour to refuel (apple, low fat chocolate milk, pretzels).

Hydration: Water should be your drink of choice, and you should be drinking it all day long. Dehydration can cause headaches, fatigue, and no energy. Bring water to run club!

Dressing for running: Good sneakers are necessary. Running in boots, high heels, or flip flops can hurt your feet and body. Wear proper clothing, including hats and gloves if it is cold. In the heat, try to wear light colored clothing and sunscreen.

Pacing: Always start out slow. It is better to pick up speed gradually, than to go all out at the start and then not be able to finish. Start slow, pick up the speed gradually, and then at the very end you can go all out. During runs, a good guideline of a comfortable pace is you should be able to talk with your friend or coach while running. If you are out of breath, you are running too fast.

Race Day Prep: Lay out your clothes the night before. Know where the start line is and how to get there. To calm nerves, picture yourself running across the finish line and the happy feeling you'll have when you race. Stay positive! Tell yourself you are ready, you will finish, and you'll have fun!

Things to Consider Having for Running Club

Luckily running is one of those sports that does not require a lot of equipment. However, there are a few things that you may find useful as a coach. You can possibly borrow these items from the school or apply for a grant through Sports Backers to purchase these items for your running club! Please see the [resource section](#) of Kids Run RVA website to access the online grant application.

Think about having these items on hand for run club:

- Water cooler and cups
- Cones
- Stop watch
- Clip board
- Large storage container in which to store run club equipment
- Jump ropes
- Other exercise equipment as you see fit for your running club

Preparing for Race Day

Race Day preparation starts at the first practice! Actually it starts even before that because your running club permission slip should mention the race. You will be constantly preparing the runners for their race day. When you are running at practice, you can teach them running etiquette such as cheering each other on, not blocking people in, letting the faster runners get to the front of the start line, etc. Here are a few additional tips to help you prepare for race day throughout your running season:

- Teach the kids how to "run through the line" and practice it periodically. Running through the line is an important skill because often times kids see the finish line and slow down at the finish line because they think they are done. What you can teach them is the importance of running as fast as you can until you have crossed over the finish line.
- Educate the kids on the importance of proper nutrition and hydration in relation to running and race day specifically.
- At least once or twice in the season, plan to run further than their actual race distance. It will build their confidence if they know that the race is a shorter distance than what they have already completed at practice.

- Stress the importance of running form. It can help to simplify this by teaching them the "cheek to cheek" method (one hand is up at the face while the other hand is back towards the buttocks).
- Talk about the race and what race day will be like! Many of these kids have never experienced an event as large as the race they may be participating in. Let them know what to expect and normalize the experience as much as possible. Tell them stories about your race day experiences (if you have any to share and keeping in mind to focus on the pleasant memories!)
- Set limits for walking. Inform the kids that if they must walk, then they should pick a spot in the distance that they are going to allow themselves to walk to but that they must start running again once they reach that spot.

As race day nears:

- You will have race day forms that must be completed in order for them to be properly registered for the race.
- If you are using a school bus to transport your running club to the event, you will need to complete a form for that, as well, and talk to your point of contact within the school to reserve a bus for race day. Please see the resource section for a sample field trip permission slip.
- You will want to get as many volunteers as possible to come with your running club on race day. A few sources of volunteers are parents, school volunteers, church volunteers, other runners, etc. Please see the resource section for the Race Day Info Flyer/Parent Chaperone Form. This form is designed for the Kids Mile Race in the spring but can be tailored for other races as well.
- Be sure to communicate to parents and kids regarding the logistics of race day (what time to arrive at school, what time bus will depart and arrive, location of race, expected time to return, etc.)

- Have a question and answer session with your runners. As race day nears, they are likely starting to think about it more and may have questions that they want answered.

On race day:

- You will likely want to provide snack bags for your runners. Suggested snacks include a bottle of water, some type of fruit, and a granola bar. Be careful to refrain from including any peanut products to prevent any allergic reactions.
- Establish a meeting place and explain to all runners/volunteers that everyone will meet back at that spot at the conclusion of the race.
- Normalize the race day by implementing your normal routine as much as possible. For example, be sure to do any regular stretching, drills, and warm up routines that they are accustomed to from practice.
- Run with the kids! If you are the only one running, you may want to start at the front of your pack. See those kids through to the finish line and then work your way back to help others finish. Be sure that every runner on your team sees you at some point on the race course.
- Have volunteers waiting at the finish line to receive the kids.

After Race Day:

Just because the big day is over doesn't mean running club has to be over! In fact, you are encouraged to continue your running club well after race day to reinforce the point that running is part of a healthy lifestyle. Most running clubs offer a fall and a spring session. Please work with your school point of contact to determine the start and end dates for your running club.

During your first practice after the race, you may want to consider just letting the kids share their race day experience. They tend to enjoy telling about their race experience because for many of your runners, this is new for them. You may also want to consider doing an end of the season celebration. You can bring in snacks, have the kids share their

favorite part of Run Club, and may even want to give out certificates for participation. By this point, you and your group of runners will have accomplished something that is worthy of celebration!

Conclusion

As you have perused the information contained in this handbook you may be thinking "wow - there is a lot to this coaching thing!" Admittedly, there are certain responsibilities that come along being a coach of any sport. However, the impact that you will undoubtedly have is well worth the work and the reward of knowing that you helped a child develop lifelong healthy living habits makes it all worth it. Still having doubts? Check out the resources section to read the "Thoughts from a running club coach" piece.

We have covered a lot of information in this handbook, but to be honest with you - coaching a running club is actually pretty easy. Once the kids see how passionate you are about running they will be into it, too! Remember - the ultimate mission of Kids Run RVA is to help kids become more active. Through your efforts, Kids Run RVA is sure to achieve that mission. We thank you for taking on this challenge and for devoting your time to helping kids develop healthy living habits. As a reminder, Sports Backers is here to support you throughout your coaching journey! Now let's getting running GO KIDS RUN RVA!!!

KidsRUN^{RVA}

Appendix

Resource Section



A Program of Sports Backers



SCHOOL NAME is offering a Running Club!!!

We are pleased to announce that the Running Club will be offered this season on days and time of practice at name of school. The first day of Running Club is date. A few things to know about our running club:

- Runs are held every days and time for practices
- You are responsible for getting your child to practice (or from practice for evening clubs)
- Name of coach and name of coach are the head coaches
- There will be a race on date of race – more information to follow
- Runners will run off the school campus during some of the practices
- Runners will need to wear comfortable clothing and tennis shoes during all practices
- Runners are expected to come to all practices unless there are extenuating circumstances
- Runners must be ready to have FUN but also ready to WORK HARD to prepare for the upcoming race!

If you wish for your child to participate, please sign and return the bottom portion of this permission slip tomorrow. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact head coach at phone number. We look forward to working with you and your child as they become awesome runners!

PLEASE RETURN THE BOTTOM PORTION (KEEP TOP FOR INFO!) TO name of person who collects the forms

My child, _____, has permission to join the name of school Running Club.

Student's name: _____ Room #: _____

Home Address: _____ Phone #: _____

Emergency Contact Name: _____ Phone #: _____

Email address: _____

I give permission for my child's photograph to be taken and used by Sports Backers. ☐ Yes ☐ No

Does your child have special medical needs during exercise? (Ex. inhaler, medication, allergies, etc.)

☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, please explain: _____

I know that running is a potentially hazardous activity. My child will not run unless qualified, in good health and medically able. On behalf of my child I assume all risks associated with this running club including but not limited to: falls, contact with other participants, the effects of weather, including high heat and/or humidity, traffic and the conditions of the running surface, all such risks being known and appreciated by me. I acknowledge that if I believe conditions are unsafe, I will immediately discontinue my child from participating. Having read this waiver, knowing these facts, and in consideration of accepting this form, I for my child and anyone that can act on my child's behalf, discharge, waive and release Name of the School, Sports Backers, and Communities in Schools along with their officers, directors, agents, volunteers and employees from all claims or liabilities of any kind arising out of my child's participation in the program.

Parent/Guardian Printed Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

[illegible]

P = Present T = Tardy A = Absent

Sample Training Guides

Five weeks to a 1-mile fun run

Week	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
1	1 1/2 mile run	Rest	1/2 mile	1/2 mile	Rest	1/2 mile	rest
2	1/2 mile run	1/2 mile	1/2 mile	1/2 mile	Rest	1/2 mile	Rest
3	1/2 mile run	Rest	1 mile	1/2 mile	Rest	1 mile	Rest
4	1 mile	1/2 mile	1 mile	1/2 mile	Rest	1 mile	Rest
5	1/2 mile run	1/2 mile	Rest	1/2 mile	Rest	Fun Run!	

Five weeks to a 2-mile run

Week	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
1	1 1/2 mile run	Rest	1/2 mile	1/2 mile	Rest	1/2 mile	rest
2	3/4 mile	Rest	3/4 mile	1/2 mile	Rest	3/4 mile	Rest
3	1 mile run	Rest	3/4 mile	1/2 mile	Rest	1 1/4 mile	Rest
4	1 mile	1/2 mile	1 mile	1/2 mile	Rest	1 mile	Rest
5	1 mile run	Rest	2 miles	1/2 mile	Rest	Fun Run!	

Six weeks to a 5k for youngsters

Week	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
1	Rest or walk	1.0 mile run	Rest or walk	1.0 mile run	Rest	1.5 mile run	30-45 minute walk
2	Rest or walk	1.5 mile run	Rest or walk	1.5 mile run	Rest	1.75 mile run	30-60 min walk
3	Rest or walk	2 mile run	Rest or walk	1.5 mile run	Rest	2 mile run	40-60 min walk
4	Rest or walk	2.25 mile run	Rest or walk	1.5 mile run	Rest	2.5 mile run	45-60 min walk
5	Rest or walk	2.5 mile run	Rest or walk	2 mile run	Rest	3.0 mile run	50-60 min walk
6	Rest or walk	3 mile run	Rest or walk	2 mile run	Rest	Rest	5k Race!



Sample Lesson Plan

Arrival

Attendance/Name Game

Warm Up:

3 laps around field/basketball court

Warm Up Stretches (across field or parking lot):

Walking Lunges

Butt Kicks

Side Shuffle

Jumping Jacks

Training Run:

1 mile

Running Game:

Sharks and Minnows

Cool Down:

Easy 5 min jog

Stretching:

Quad stretch

Hamstring stretch

Calf stretch

Dismissal



A Guide for Parents

Welcome to Kids Run RVA! We are excited to have your child participate in our running club. We hope it is a great experience and we hope that this experience will help them develop life-long healthy living habits. Below are some tips to help your child be successful in their running.

What to wear:

Good sneakers are the best thing for run club. If your child wants to wear other shoes to school, please have them bring their running shoes to change into after school. If you need assistance obtaining proper running shoes for your child, please speak to the Run Club Coach.

In cold weather, hats and gloves are good to have, as well as a thick sweatshirt or jacket. In warm weather, light colored and loose fitting clothes are best.

Eating Right:

It is best to eat something small before Run Club. Avoid anything high in sugar and fat. Good options pre run include: granola bar, piece of fruit, peanut butter on toast. After Run Club, you should eat within 30 minutes. Some post run options include: apple, low fat chocolate milk, pretzels.

Hydration:

Please bring a water bottle to each Run Club practice. It is important to keep hydrated before, during, and after run club. Dehydration can cause headaches and fatigue.

Training Runs and Cross Training:

Your child is encouraged to run or cross train during the week. Your Run Club Coach can provide you with suggested distances to run each week. Some ways to cross train include:

- Walking
- Swimming
- Playing sports
- Other exercises such as push ups, jumping jacks, sit ups



Running with your child:

Getting out and getting active with your child is the best way you can encourage your child as they pursue physical fitness. This is something that you can do with your child and it doesn't cost you a thing! It is a great way to spend some time together with none of the distractions such as TV and cell phones. Moreover, by getting out and being active with your child you are serving as a role model for them.

Not a runner? Not to worry! The most important thing is that you are out there trying. You can walk while they run or you can do part of the workout with them while cheering for them when you need to take a rest. Better yet - have them help you by teaching you what they are learning at run club. Have them show you some stretches and exercises that they have learned. They will feel proud of themselves for being able to teach you something and you may just learn something along the way!

Places to Run:

- Your school or neighborhood high school track
- Byrd Park: 600 S. Boulevard, Richmond VA. (This park has a 1 mile fitness trail.)
- Bryan Park: 4308 Hermitage Rd, Richmond VA. (There is a paved path that goes around the park.)
- Deep Run Park : 9900 Ridgefield Parkway, Henrico, 23233. Paved paths and trails.
- Capital Trail: Paved trail connecting Richmond and Williamsburg. Richmond trail head is just west of the Canal Walk-- <https://www.virginiacapitaltrail.org/>
- Huguenot Park: 10901 Robious Road, Richmond, VA 23235. Walking trails.
- Robious Landing Park: 3800 James River Road, Midlothian, 23113. Walking trails.
- Dorey Park: 2999 Darbytown Road, Henrico, 23231. Connector to the Capital Trail and trails within the park
- And so many more!!

If you have any additional questions, please contact your Run Club Coach or you can contact Jacki Quinlan at jacki@sportsbackers.org.



Race Day is almost here! On date of event the school name Running Club will participate in the Whole Foods Market Marathon Jr. race. This kid-friendly running event for kids ages 4-12 features a half mile and a one mile course around Byrd Park. They'll kick off the morning by warming up with music, enjoying pre-race festivities, and mingling with some local mascots until it's time for the race to start. After racing their little hearts out, they'll get a commemorative medal and head into a secure meeting area. There will also be a costume contest so feel free to dress your child in their Halloween getup - they could win a prize for having the best costume!

In order to make this event a success, we will need the help of as many parents as possible. We will have an school district bus that will transport us to and from the race. We welcome all parents to ride with us on the bus. If you are planning to ride the bus, please know that you will not be able to bring any siblings of our running club athletes. You are not required to ride the bus, as anyone is welcome to come out to the event but please be aware that parking may be difficult due to the volume of people that will be in the Byrd Park area on the day of the race. If you are unable to join us on race day, please be sure to have your runner ready for the bus departure and plan to be back at name of school to pick them up after the race.

Bus Departs from school name: state departure time

Bus Returns to school name: state return time

Please complete the bottom portion of this form and return by date so we can know how many parents to expect on Race Day. Thank you so much for your continued support of the school name Running Club! If you have any questions, please contact Coach name at coach phone number.

Please check the one that best describes your plans for race day:

☐ I will ride the bus with the Running Club and will help chaperone at the event.

☐ I will be driving to the event but cannot help chaperone.

☐ Other (please describe your plans): _____

Parent/Guardian Signature



Race Day is almost here! On date of event the school name Running Club will participate in the Virginia 529 Kids Run. This one-mile event for kids ages 5-12 features all of the excitement of the Ukrop's Monument Avenue 10k. They'll kick off the morning by warming up with music and mingling with some local mascots until the start gun goes off. After racing their little hearts out, they'll finish to the roar of a crowd through the same chute as the 10k-ers, where they'll get a commemorative medal and head into a secure meeting area. Once they have been picked up by our chaperones and coaches, post-race food and festivities await!

In order to make this event a success, we will need the help of as many parents as possible. We will have a school bus that will transport us to and from the race. We welcome all parents to ride with us on the bus. If you are planning to ride the bus, please know that you will not be able to bring any siblings of our running club athletes. You are not required to ride the bus, as anyone is welcome to come out to the event but please be aware that parking will be difficult due to the volume of people that will be in the Munroe Park area on the day of the race. If you are unable to join us on race day, please be sure to have your runner ready for the bus departure and plan to be back at school name to pick them up after the race.

Bus Departs from school name: state departure time

Bus Returns to school name: state return time

Please complete the bottom portion of this form and return by date so we can know how many parents to expect on Race Day. Thank you so much for your continued support of the school name Running Club! If you have any questions, please contact Coach name at coach phone number.

Please check the one that best describes your plans for race day:

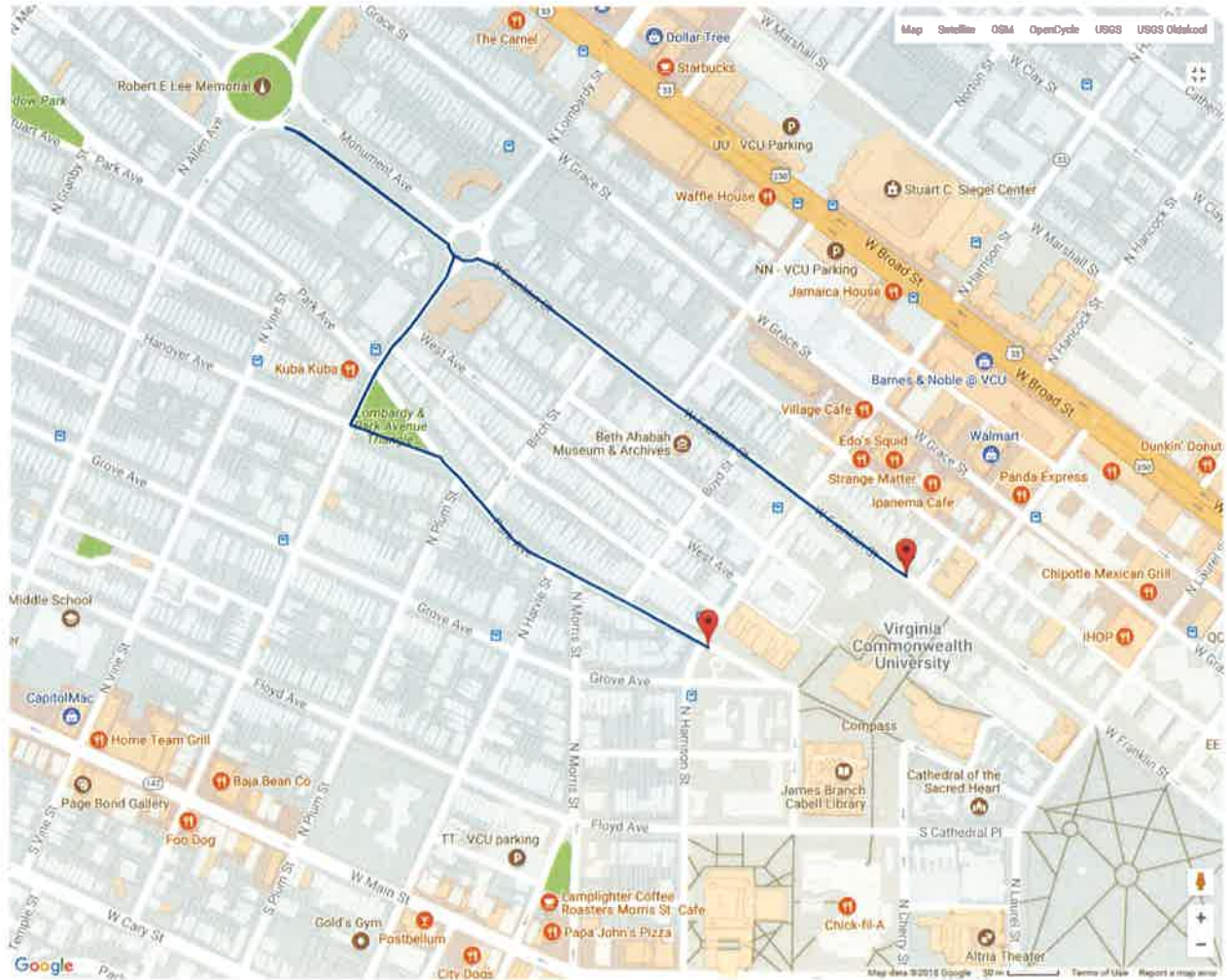
_____ I will ride the bus with the Running Club and will help chaperone at the event.

_____ I will be driving to the event but cannot help chaperone.

_____ Other (please describe your plans): _____

Parent/Guardian Signature

Virginia529™
Kids Run





Race Day is almost here! On date of event the school name Running Club will participate in the Ukrop's Monument Avenue 10k, RVA's biggest block party. As they near the finish line, they'll encounter the roar of the crowd, receive a commemorative finisher's medal, and enjoy post-race food and festivities!

In order to make this event a success, we will need the help of as many parents as possible. We will have a school system that will transport us to and from the race. **We welcome all parents to ride with us on the bus (optional).** If you are planning to ride the bus, please know that you will not be able to bring any siblings of our running club athletes. You are not required to ride the bus, as anyone is welcome to come out to the event but please be aware that parking will be difficult due to the volume of people that will be in the Monroe Park area on the day of the race. If you are unable to join us on race day, please be sure to have your runner ready for the bus departure and plan to be back at your school or location to pick them up after the race.

Bus Departs from school name: state departure time

Bus Returns to school name: state return time

Please complete the bottom portion of this form and return by date so we can know how many parents to expect on Race Day. Thank you so much for your continued support of the school name Running Club! If you have any questions, please contact Coach name at coach phone number.

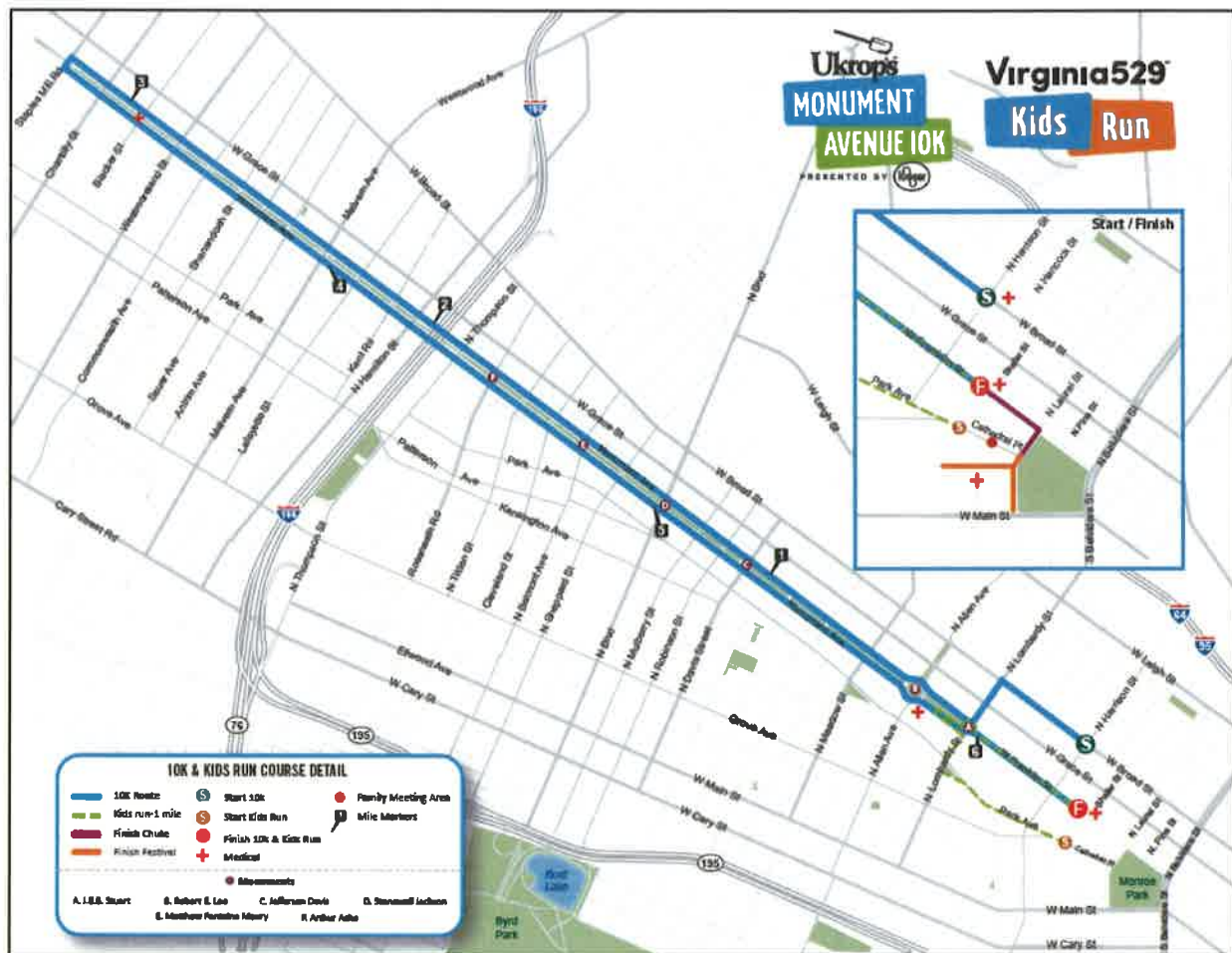
Please check the one that best describes your plans for race day:

☐ I will ride the bus with the Running Club and will help chaperone at the event.

☐ I will be driving to the event but cannot help chaperone.

☐ Other (please describe your plans): _____

Parent/Guardian Signature



KidsRUN^{RVA}

CERTIFICATE OF PARTICIPATION

Fill in name of runner

Is hereby recognized for phenomenal participation in the

FILL IN NAME OF RUN CLUB



PRESENTED BY:

Fill in name of coach

ON THIS DAY:

[Click to select a date]



Thoughts from a Run Club Coach

By Jacki Quinlan, Oak Grove-Bellemeade Elementary School

July 2014

The running club at Oak Grove has impacted a number of kids. When I think back to kids first joining the running club, they have no idea what to expect. After several seasons, the kids now return ready and able to run miles with new kids jumping on board with this local "fad" along the way. But it is not what they are able to do physically that I have noticed the most (although their race times are impressive and I am proud to have a group of elementary school kids that can run an entire mile without stopping!). What stands out the most is the life lessons that they are learning along the way. As evidence of this learning that is occurring, the behavior presented by the kids at running club has improved since we first started. It wasn't that long ago that we were breaking up fights and having to tell the kids to cheer for each other. Now there is no fighting. The kids have become a team - something that they would otherwise likely not had the chance to do at such a young age. They don't just cheer for each other - they finish their workout and then run back to help their teammates who are struggling. Being a part of that team has taught them a lot about life and is preparing them to be productive citizens. To illustrate, I will give you a few examples. Some of these examples will include the positive physical results we are seeing (it is running club after all!) but primarily you will see the characteristics that are being developed within these youth.

Not all of our team members are great runners - some of them just love being a part of running club. It fulfills their need to experience a sense of belonging and, luckily for us, they have chosen to belong to something that is positive. I work with a few students who don't run that much during practice. But they never give up and they never do less than anyone else. When we run the mile they jog some of the mile and walk a good majority of it. But they don't stop until they have completed an entire mile. One of the values that I believe running club instills in our youth is that "it's not always about winning." They are learning to set their own personal goals, practicing putting forth the effort needed to achieve those goals, and learning how to self-motivate. Life doesn't always hand you a medal for everything you do or give you a prize for every answer you get right - our youth have to learn the value of intrinsic motivation and running club is helping them with that every day!

Many of our runners haven't experienced much success in the school setting. Some have behavior problems, mental health diagnoses, and learning difficulties that make it hard for them to meet the rigorous expectations of an academic environment. Running club is a place where those kids can experience a sense of achievement. Every day at running club the kids are given a task, such as running a mile, doing hill repeats, or other vigorous activities such as pushups, etc. If they achieve that task, they have met the expectations and thus experience a sense of achievement. This undoubtedly boosts their self-esteem, which in turn helps them to believe in themselves in other aspects of life as well.

Without a doubt, running club helps instill a level of work ethic and teaches kids the value of hard work. Long distance running is not easy and very few people are born with an innate ability to run miles without stopping. It takes hard work and determination. You have to learn to pace yourself. So many kids, when they first come to running club, start out their mile running way too fast. They quickly learn from their mistake and over time learn how to control their pace. Again, this translates into a learned life lesson. Many kids that couldn't run a block when they first started can now run three blocks and then ask to run some more. The kids at Oak Grove don't dread running the mile - they beg to run the mile. Is it because running is super fun? Maybe, but even an experienced runner like myself doubts that. They want to run that mile because they want to feel proud of themselves. They want to be told "good job!" They want their teammates to cheer for them. They want to know that they CAN.

What they don't necessarily think about is how being a part of running club is impacting their life in the long run. They don't think about the healthy habits they are forming at such a young age. They don't think about how they have now established a love of running and physical activity that will likely carry them throughout their adulthood. They surely haven't thought about the scholarships that will likely come their way if they stick with this (yes - many of them are that good!). But I do. Each day I wake up early to go coach this group of kids I think about all of those things. They are a great group of kids who are putting forth extra effort to be the best they can possibly be. At Oak Grove Running Club we end each practice and race in a huddle and we all yell "Oak Grove-Bellemeade . . . WE RUN THIS!" I give them all high fives and tell them how great they did but I walk away thinking "You will run this. You will be the leaders of tomorrow." How awesome to be able to play a role in the development of tomorrow's citizens.

*Please note: Jacki Quinlan can be reached by email at jacki@sportsbackers.org with any questions that you may have.



Contact Information & Online Resources

Faith Hecht - Sports Backers' Youth Programs Manager knows everything from run clubs to the Richmond Times-Dispatch/ Sports Backers Scholar-Athlete program - and everything in between! She has lots of experience running the elementary school-based Kids Challenge, has helped coach a couple of run clubs, and helps coordinate the VA529 Kids Run each spring. She also helps manage the grants that are given to run clubs - a good person to have on your side!

Contact Faith at 804-513-5184 or faith@sportsbackers.org

Jacki Quinlan - Sports Backers' Director of Community Outreach works mostly with Title 1 schools. She has coached a running club for several years and has lots of experience working in underserved communities. She is a great resource if you have any questions specific to coaching and the logistics of running a run club! She is also charged with reaching the underserved adult population, as well. So, if you have any questions about fitness programs for adults - she's your girl!

Contact Jacki at 804-218-7947 or jacki@sportsbackers.org

A few websites that you may find useful during your coaching journey:

www.sportsbackers.org: This is the Sports Backers website, where you can find lots of information about Kids Run RVA and the events that Sports Backers are hosting! Click on the Kids Run RVA link on the left column for information on all of our programming.

www.sportsbackers.org/program/kids-run-rva/grant-funding: This is the link to the Kids Run RVA grant funding section of the Sports Backers website! Through a joint effort with the Richmond Road Runners Club, we provide grants to local schools who seek to implement run clubs or host their own running event. Kids Run RVA offers additional support for Title I schools, including discounted and/or complimentary entries to Sports Backers running events and funding to cover transportation costs. Our grants help kids and their schools in a number of ways! Follow the link from this page to begin the online application process. We have streamlined our grants so that you only have ONE application



to complete. Tell us what you need and how you plan to use it, and we will do our best to get your kids running.

www.nyrr.org/youth-and-schools/running-start/coaching-videos/elementary-school/warm-up-cool-down : This is the New York Road Runners Foundation website. You can find short videos highlighting warmup and cool down moves.

www.mapmyrun.com or www.usatf.org/routes/map: These websites are helpful when creating running routes.

www.nyrr.org/youth-and-schools/running-start/coaching-videos/elementary-school/games: This website offers how-to videos on kid friendly running games.