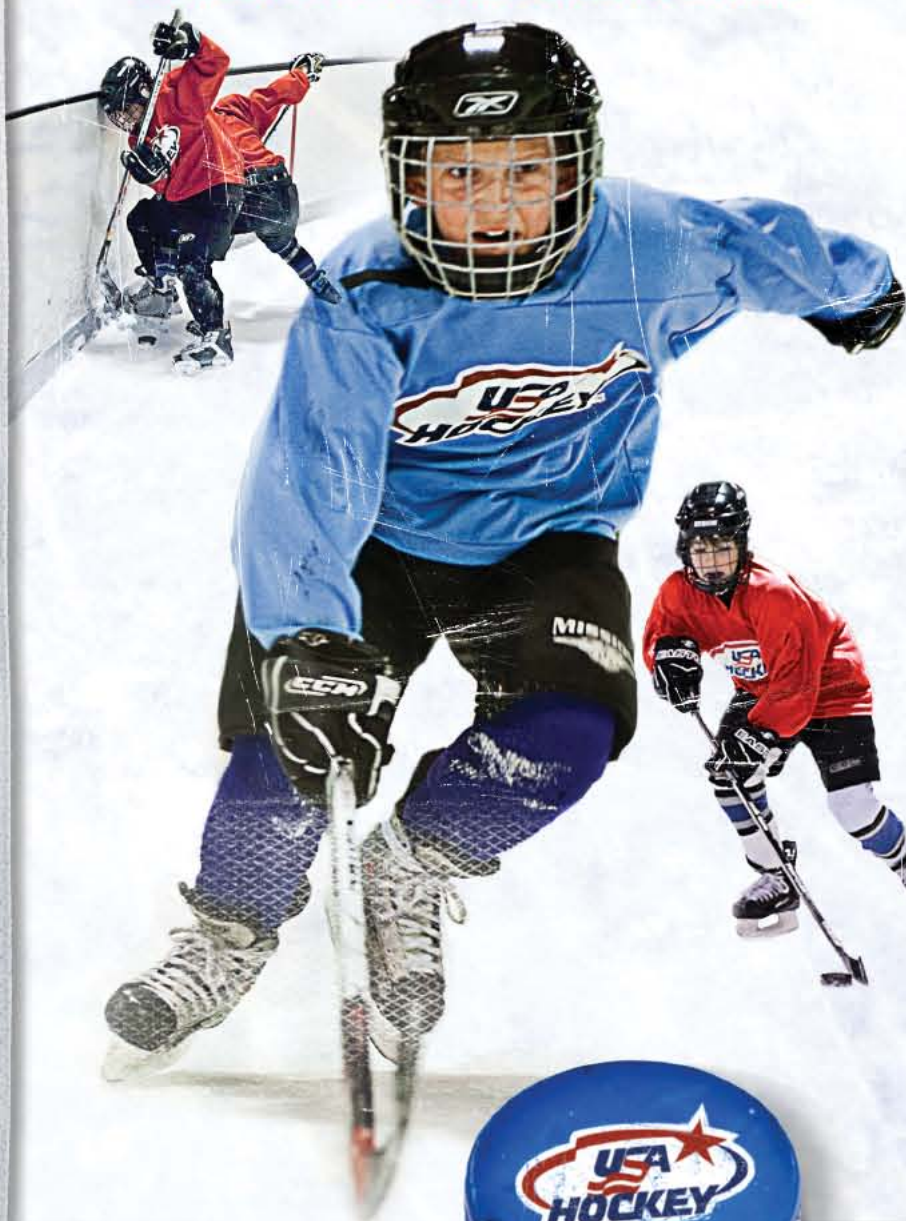


RED WHITE & BLUE HOCKEY

A PROGRAM FOR 8-AND-UNDER PLAYERS



INTRODUCING USA HOCKEY'S RED, WHITE AND BLUE HOCKEY INITIATIVE.
WHY CROSS-ICE HOCKEY WORKS FOR 8-AND-UNDER PLAYERS.

THE FUN PART OF PRACTICE SHOULD ALWAYS LAST A FULL 60 MINUTES.

With USA Hockey's Red, White and Blue Hockey program — which promotes the integration of cross-ice practices and games into youth hockey — we can raise the level of creativity among players, increase player participation, and create a positive environment for kids to learn and play.



As it relates to cross-ice practices and games, you may be asking yourself a lot of whys and hows. "Why should my son or daughter practice in a way that doesn't look like how I perceive hockey to be? How will they learn the game if they're on the ice with 40 other kids?" Well, let's start with this fact:

HOCKEY IS THE **ONLY** MAJOR SPORT THAT DOESN'T SHRINK ITS PLAYING SURFACE TO MATCH THE AGE GROUP.

We would never consider having our children at 8 years of age play on a big-league-sized diamond. Instead, they play on an appropriately sized Little League diamond. When attempting to teach your 8-year-old to play golf, you would not have them tee off from the black tees. Football shrinks the playing field. Soccer uses a smaller ball and smaller field. Basketball uses a smaller ball and lowers the rim. Sensing a theme?



SOCCER

A pro-size ball measures 28 inches, while a youth-size ball measures 24 inches.



BASEBALL

In pro baseball, the distance from the pitcher's mound to home plate is 60 feet 6 inches, while in Little League it's only 46 feet.



BASKETBALL

A pro basketball hoop measures 10 feet high. Younger kids play with a hoop that's as much as 2 feet lower.

In hockey, we have 6- to 8-year-old kids skating the full rink surface, hardly touching the puck. How can we expect our kids to develop their skills — or a passion for the game — if they aren't really participating?

Playing cross-ice hockey works for hockey players of all ages. From Mites to Olympians, players split up the ice surface to hone their skills. Not only that, but it's fun for everyone because everyone is involved. And with kids, the more they're participating, the more likely they'll develop a passion for the game.

PLAY. LOVE. EXCEL.

To love hockey, kids first need to strap on the skates and play it. Simple enough concept. But it's more than just playing. Because the more they play and participate, the more likely they are to develop a passion for the game. And it's this passion for hockey that fuels their desire to excel. Too often we have our kids skip the passion part and go right from playing to excelling. It can't work that way. We can change this by shrinking the ice surface down to their size.

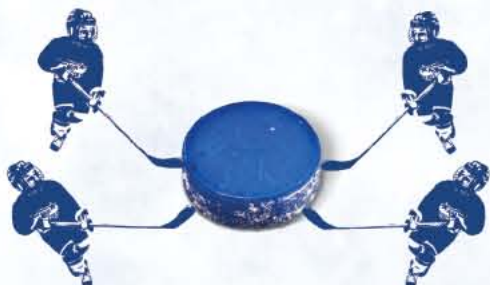
In this cross-ice environment, a player's activity level skyrockets because their participation increases, leading to an increased skill set and love of the game. Drills are designed to focus on multiple skills and situations, increasing time with the puck and situational repetition. The goalies are also more involved in the drills because they get more shots to stop. It's nonstop action for everyone involved.

MORE PUCK TIME DEVELOPS THEIR "I LOVE THIS GAME" SKILL.



**PUCK TOUCHES IN A
CROSS-ICE PRACTICE**

**PUCK TOUCHES IN A
TRADITIONAL PRACTICE**



There's a direct correlation between the amount of time a player spends with the puck and their passion for the game. A study of hockey games played on the full-ice surface was originally done by George Kingston in 1976 and has since been replicated in USA Hockey's 2002 Olympic study.



THE ORIGINAL RESULTS FOUND THE FOLLOWING:

- In a 60-minute hockey game between 6- to 8-year-old children, the average player had possession of the puck for 20.7 seconds.
- Top NHL and international players were also timed and no player exceeded 85 seconds of puck possession time.
- Youth players took an average of less than 0.5 shots per game and only 1.5 shots per game for junior and professional players.

THE STUDY CONCLUDED THAT:

- For young players in the "full-ice game model" of development, the youngest players would require 180 games and the older youth players would require 80 games to enjoy 60 minutes of actual puck possession time to execute their stickhandling, passing, pass-receiving and shooting skills.
- Professional and international players would require 60 games to ensure 60 minutes of puck-control skill development.
- Many players never touched the puck in the game, especially in youth hockey.

With all the increased touches and playing time they'll get with cross-ice hockey, kids will remain active over the course of an entire game. And the more active we can keep them, the more enjoyable their experience will be. Because at the end of the day, all that matters is how much they love the game.

EVERY INCH OF ICE HAS ITS

Hockey is a game of inches. And playing cross-ice will use every one of them. But implementing cross-ice practices is one thing. How does a cross-ice game work?

With 4 teams, there should be a minimum of three coaches on the ice, with two officiating the games and one organizing practice in the neutral zone. The practice in the neutral zone is designed to keep the kids focused on developing their skills and then applying them to the game format as they move between the zones. If there are 6 teams, you can substitute the practice zone for a third game.

	ZONE 1	ZONE 2	ZONE 3
Game 1:	4 v 4	Skating	4 v 4
Game 2:	4 v 4	Puck Handling	4 v 4
Game 3:	4 v 4	Passing	4 v 4

Kids would spend five minutes warming up in each zone. They then play a 17-minute game with a one-minute break in between sessions before rotating through and playing two other opponents. The game works like any regular hockey game, with face-offs used after goals and coaches changing lines every 90 seconds or so. With the smaller ice surface, kids would need to make quick decisions with the puck and lean on the skills they developed in practice.

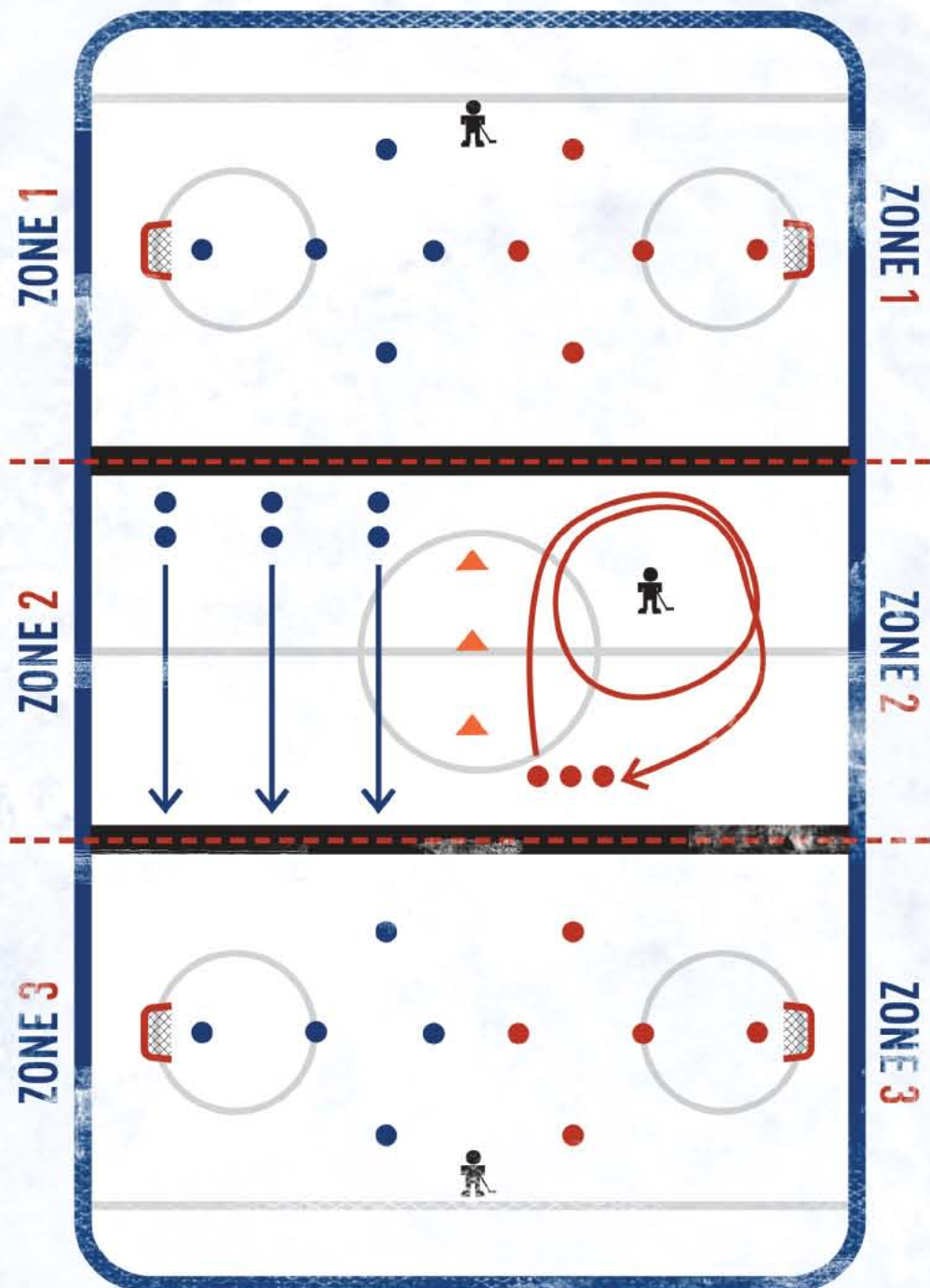
The optimum playing situation is 4-on-4, plus a goalie. But in some situations, coaches can be flexible; using whatever combination works best — one shift at 4-on-4 and the next shift 3-on-3. They may even change the combination per shift, to give players different looks. Coaches will try to group players by ability and try to match lines, and while no penalties are called, coaches can instruct as to proper fair play and respect.

The beauty of the cross-ice game is that it's flexible. Coaches can decide how each zone is run, and whether it's a game or a practice. Any way they decide to run it, kids are getting more puck touches, they're playing against increased competition, they're learning the game at an age-appropriate level and parents are saving money on ice time.

**IT'S A WIN-WIN-WIN SITUATION
FOR EVERYONE INVOLVED.**

OWN STORY TO TELL.

With 4 teams, the neutral zone becomes a practice, as shown here:



-  COACH
-  PLAYERS
-  CONE
-  GOAL

For young kids, splitting up the ice does a lot more than make the rink smaller. It promotes creativity, increases player participation, encourages self-learning, speeds up the learning process, and improves decision-making skills. Best of all, cross-ice hockey creates a positive environment and a passion for the game. Many countries and national associations include cross-ice hockey as part of their 10-and-under practice and game routines.



**FULL POTENTIAL
IS EASIER TO REACH
WHEN YOU DON'T HAVE TO
SKATE AS FAR TO FIND IT.**

And it isn't just about the physical skills development of a player, but their mental development as well. Kids quickly learn on the full-ice surface that they can't get the puck before the opponent in different situations, so they may learn not to try hard all the time. In the cross-ice environment, players are closer together and are much more engaged in the action. For younger players, the full-ice game makes them susceptible to building poor competition and effort-related habits.

Kids 8-and-under are at the FUNdamentals and Active Start stages of development, important phases of a child's development that lay the groundwork for the rest of their playing days.

**FOCUS IS
HERE**

LONG-TERM ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT STAGES

- 8 Hockey for Life**
- 7 Training to Win**
19+ Junior (NCAA, NHL)
- 6 Training to Compete**
Junior, NCAA
- 5 Learning to Compete**
18-and-under (Midgets)
- 4 Training to Train**
16-and-under (Midgets), 14-and-under (Bantams)
- 3 Learning to Train**
12-and-under (Peewees), 10-and-under (Squirts)
- 2 FUNdamentals**
8-and-under (Mites), 6-and-under (Mites)
- 1 Active Start**
6-and-under

1 ACTIVE START (0–6 YEARS OLD)

- Help ensure participants gain physical literacy
- Develop a passion for hockey in all children
- Encourage daily physical activity
- Provide the opportunity to explore a new surface (ice) and mode of locomotion (skating)
- Develop on-ice balance, coordination and agility
- Introduce basic skating skills through a Learn to Skate program, preferably without use of a hockey stick

2 FUNDAMENTALS (6–9 YEARS OLD)

- Help ensure participants gain physical literacy
- Develop a passion for hockey in all children
- Encourage participation in a variety of complementary sports to help children maximize their ability to reach their genetic potential in hockey
- Develop on-ice balance, coordination, agility and speed
- Introduce basic puck-control skills

It has been proven that children who begin their hockey training in an age-appropriate way have an outstanding hockey experience and develop a better base of skills as they progress. Red, White and Blue Hockey puts kids in an environment where they will play, love and excel at hockey.



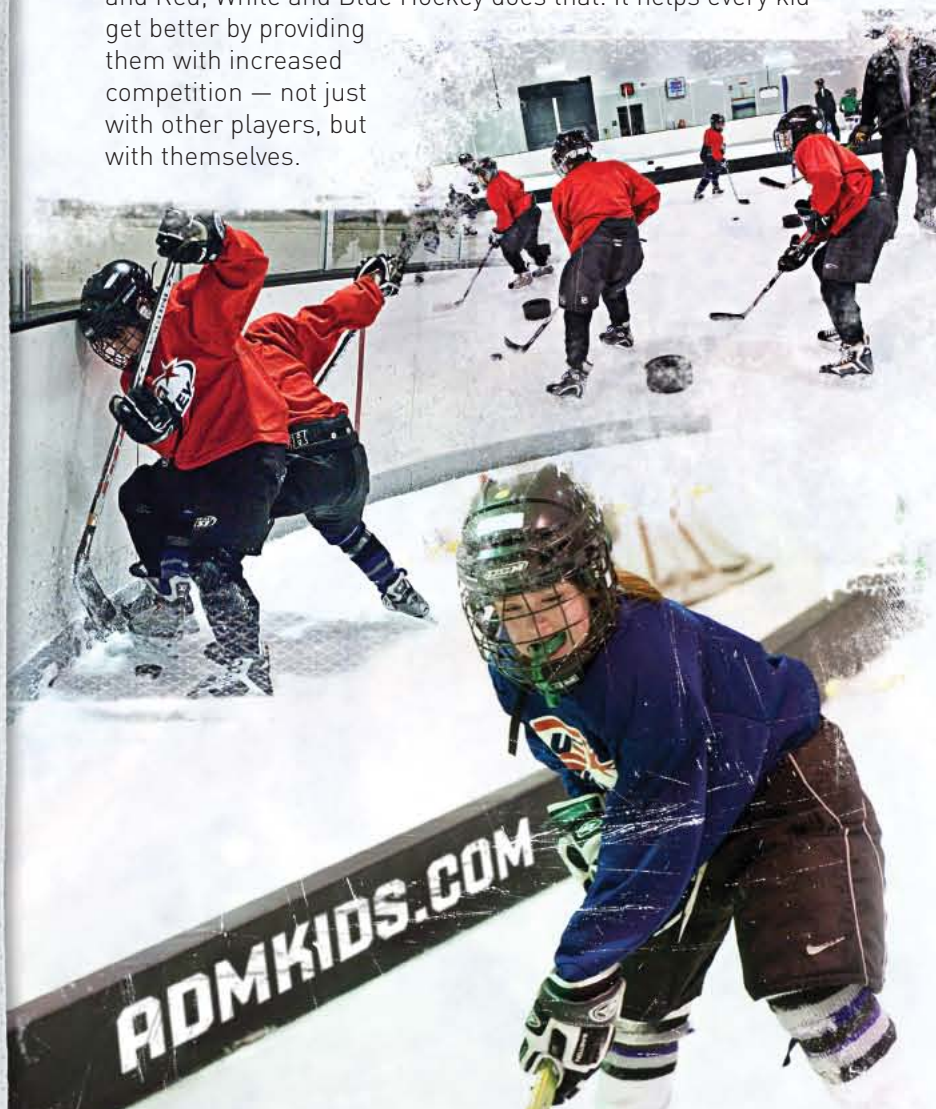
THE SMALLER THE ICE, THE BIGGER THE COMPETITION.

When the ice is sectioned, the better players get better because they're working in tighter spaces and are forced to make quicker decisions. Instead of capitalizing on a breakaway, they're practicing their stickhandling and decision making.

And the players who need a little more help get better because they're touching the puck more. They get to see the better players up close and learn from them and, not only that, they get more individualized instruction from coaches. Since the ice is smaller, coaches have more time and ability to work with players who need their help the most.

Cross-ice games and practices are crucial to a player's development. There are surely people out there who insist their kids need to learn offsides and positioning. But at a young age, the focus should be on skill development and long-term benefits for the kids, whereas the specific details of the game can come later. One step at a time.

We need to focus our resources on using our ice time efficiently, and Red, White and Blue Hockey does that. It helps every kid get better by providing them with increased competition — not just with other players, but with themselves.



A WALLET-FRIENDLY WAY TO KEEP THEIR GEAR BAG STINKY WELL INTO THEIR TEENS.

COST SAVINGS



As you very well know, hockey isn't an inexpensive sport to play. Red, White and Blue Hockey can help ease the financial burden on parents and associations. By splitting the ice into sections, with multiple teams sharing practice time, the overall cost per player goes down. And when games are played between multiple teams, the overall cost for tournaments goes down as well.





PROUD PARTNERS IN HOCKEY™

THE BENEFITS OF A CROSS-ICE PRACTICE OR GAME:

-  More puck touches
-  Maximum ice utilization
-  Increased competition
for all the players
-  Fun for all participants
-  Everyone is involved
-  Cost savings for parents

“We play small-area games during our practices and it helps us become better players. It’s great to see cross-ice hockey as the standard for young players. There’s no need to play full-ice at the youngest ages. In cross-ice, you really get a chance to improve your puckhandling, among other skills.”

Zach Parise
New Jersey Devils
2010 U.S. Olympian



For more information go to admkids.com