



Potomac Valley Amateur Hockey Association:

12-Year History of Acquisition & Retention in the 4-8 Year Old Category

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Background

USA Hockey has been conducting comprehensive research in order to a) gain a deeper understanding as to why certain segments of USA Hockey membership have been shrinking in recent years; and b) create effective methods to reverse the decline in membership and grow the game.

This study focuses on the base of USA Hockey's membership foundation - the 4 to 8 year old age category. Because the majority of our membership base starts playing hockey between the ages of 4 and 8, it is imperative for this segment to grow each year. The 4-8 year old segment is the feeder system for the much larger 9-14 year old youth hockey segment, and therefore any decrease in the younger segment is only magnified at the 9-14 level. For example, while the overall size of the 4-8 year old segment has decreased by more than 6700 total players over the last decade, the 9-14 year old segment has decreased by more than three times that number (20500) over the same period. Therefore, the health of all of youth hockey is tied directly to our ability to grow the 4-8 year old segment.

Acquisition of youth hockey players in the 4 to 8 age category has mostly been in decline since a peak of 47,750 new members in 1998-99. A decrease in new members in the youngest age group has a ripple effect through membership totals for years, and creates a parallel drop in retention numbers. It has been a decline in the acquisition of new first-timers that has been the primary cause of membership slippage in recent years.

On average, 43.1% of kids playing youth hockey leave the sport before age 9. This sobering statistic disproves the theory that "once a kid gets on the ice they are hooked on hockey." Factors such as cost, time commitment and enjoyment level must all be addressed to keep a child, and a family, in our game.

Such conditions require USA Hockey's Membership Development department to travel concurrent paths in mounting future growth initiatives:

- A comprehensive acquisition strategy to insure that we attract as many prospective new members every season in the key 4 to 8 year old age category
- A comprehensive retention strategy to insure that we keep as many members as possible from one season to the next.

Clearly, this two-pronged approach requires a coordinated effort with USA Hockey's Membership Development department and youth hockey volunteers at the grass roots level across the country.

The Membership Development department is providing resources for local associations to use in both the acquisition and retention of 4 to 8 year olds in youth hockey. The 2 & 2 National Challenge, explained in greater detail in this document, is a call to action for local associations to acquire two more players than the previous season and to retain two more players than last year.

Methodology

This study focuses on the membership of the very youngest age groups – boys and girls ages 4 through 8. The research examines the membership characteristics and behaviors of 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 year olds in each of the last 12 seasons, from the 1997-1998 season through 2008-09. This methodology allows us to measure:

- (a) The number of NEWLY ACQUIRED players
- (b) The number of RETAINED players
- (c) The number of LOST players
- (d) The RETENTION RATES of players by age segment in each of the last 12 seasons

This study isolates the results on a National, Affiliate, and Local Association level to determine the appropriate course of action based on years of registration figures.



NATIONAL 2008-09 KEY TAKEAWAYS

Total

- The total number of combined males and females ages 4 to 8 playing youth ice hockey in 2008-09 increased by 2,199 or 2.5% to 91,622 from 89,423 in 2007-08.
- In 2008-09, 91,622 total 4-8 year old males & females played hockey – down 7,483 from the peak of 99,105 in 1998-99.

Acquisition

- Acquisition of new 4-8 year old males & females peaked in 1998-99 with 47,750 players.
- In 2008-09, 39,580 new 4-8 year old males & females were acquired – down 8,170 from the peak but up 1,567 or 4.1% from 2007-08.

Retention

- Retention of 4-8 year-old males & females peaked in 2003-04 at 55,176.
- In 2008-09, 52,042 4-8 year old males & females were retained – down 3,134 from the peak but up 632 or 1.2% from 2007-08.

Rate of Retention

- The rate of retention has averaged 56.9% for the 4-8 year old male & female segment over the last 10 years.
- In 2008-09, the rate of retention was 56.8%; this means 43.2% are out of hockey.

MALES & FEMALES BY AGE SEGMENT

In 2008-09, each of the age segments from 4 to 8 years old increased from the previous year. This is significant in that it was the first time since the mid-1990s that all five of these age segments increased in a non-Post-Olympic season.

MALES & FEMALES	2007-08	# difference from '06-07	% difference from '06-07	2008-09	# difference from '07-08	%difference from '07-08
4 YEAR OLDS	6874	+221	+3.3%	7514	+640	+9.3%
5 YEAR OLDS	13557	-125	-1.0%	14583	+1026	+7.6
6 YEAR OLDS	19544	-166	-0.9%	19879	+335	+1.7%
7 YEAR OLDS	23163	-272	-1.2%	23361	+198	+0.8%
8 YEAR OLDS	26285	-191	-0.8%	26291	+6	+0.1%
TOTALS	89423	-533	-0.6%	91622	+2199	+2.5%

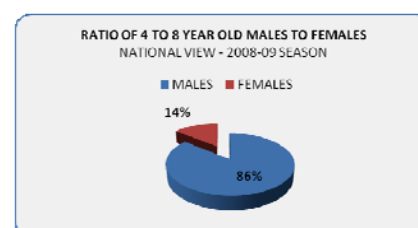
RETENTION INCREASES WITH AGE

As might be expected, the older a player gets and/or the more consecutive seasons a player plays, the more likely that player will stick with ice hockey. Only one in three 4 year olds repeat as 5 year olds, twice as many, or two of three 6 year olds repeat as 7 year olds. So while retention rates are high from Squirts on up, the overall growth of hockey is inextricably dependent on acquiring a growing pool of 4-8 year olds. Retention results for 2008-09 by age segment:

- **32.0% of all 4 Year Olds returned as 5 Year Olds** – or 32 in every 100
 - **52.5% of all 5 Year Olds returned as 6 Year Olds** – or 52 in every 100
 - **67.8% of all 6 Year Olds returned as 7 Year Olds** – or 67 in every 100
 - **76.2% of all 7 Year Olds returned as 8 Year Olds** – or 76 in every 100
- Retention rate for Squirts in 2008-09: 85.6%
 - Retention rate for Pee Wees in 2008-09: 91.2%
 - Retention rate for Bantams in 2008-09: 93.6%

RATIO OF MALES TO FEMALES – 4 TO 8 YEAR OLDS

Males represented 86% of all 4 to 8 year olds in 2008-09 while females represented 14%. The mix has been impacted by a decrease in the male 4 to 8 year-old pool and the increase in the female pool.





NATIONAL SUMMARY - 4 TO 8 YEAR OLDS

MALE & FEMALE YOUTH HOCKEY_ TOTAL 4 TO 8 YEAR OLDS_SUMMARY														
	97-98	98-99	99-00	00-01	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	10-YR AVE	5-YR AVE
TOTAL	94093	99105	98330	96538	95006	97070	95907	92121	88213	89956	89423	91622	93419	90267
		5.3%	-0.8%	-1.8%	-1.6%	2.2%	-1.2%	-3.9%	-4.2%	2.0%	-0.6%	2.5%	-0.8%	-0.9%
NEW	45732	47750	44643	42277	41319	42885	40731	38133	36107	38943	38013	39580	40263	38155
		4.4%	-6.5%	-5.3%	-2.3%	3.8%	-5.0%	-6.4%	-5.3%	7.9%	-2.4%	4.1%	-1.7%	-0.4%
RET	48361	51355	53687	54261	53687	54185	55176	53988	52106	51013	51410	52042	53156	52112
		6.2%	4.5%	1.1%	-1.1%	0.9%	1.8%	-2.2%	-3.5%	-2.1%	0.8%	1.2%	0.2%	-1.1%
LOST	15614	17114	18070	17726	16993	15960	16552	17043	15929	14752	15899	15305	16423	15786
		9.6%	5.6%	-1.9%	-4.1%	-6.1%	3.7%	3.0%	-6.5%	-7.4%	7.8%	-3.7%	-1.0%	-1.4%
RR	51.4%	51.8%	54.6%	56.2%	56.5%	55.8%	57.5%	58.6%	59.1%	56.7%	57.5%	56.8%	56.9%	57.7%

MALE YOUTH HOCKEY_ 4 TO 8 YEAR OLDS_SUMMARY														
	97-98	98-99	99-00	00-01	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	10-YR AVE	5-YR AVE
TOTAL	87600	91323	90192	87826	86090	87207	85205	81578	76849	77755	77128	78782	82861	78418
		4.3%	-1.2%	-2.6%	-2.0%	1.3%	-2.3%	-4.3%	-5.8%	1.2%	-0.8%	2.1%	-1.4%	-1.5%
NEW	41756	42915	39944	37397	36539	37356	34909	32703	30103	32487	31733	33013	34618	32008
		2.8%	-6.9%	-6.4%	-2.3%	2.2%	-6.6%	-6.3%	-8.0%	7.9%	-2.3%	4.0%	-2.5%	-0.9%
RET	45844	48408	50248	50429	49551	49851	50296	48875	46746	45268	45395	45769	48243	46411
		5.6%	3.8%	0.4%	-1.7%	0.6%	0.9%	-2.8%	-4.4%	-3.2%	0.3%	0.8%	-0.5%	-1.8%
LOST	13713	15031	15610	15354	14427	13464	13912	14092	13220	11881	12672	12161	13679	12805
		9.6%	3.9%	-1.6%	-6.0%	-6.7%	3.3%	1.3%	-6.2%	-10.1%	6.7%	-4.0%	-2.0%	-2.5%
RR	52.3%	53.0%	55.7%	57.4%	57.6%	57.2%	59.0%	59.9%	60.8%	58.2%	58.9%	58.1%	58.3%	59.2%

FEMALE YOUTH HOCKEY_ 4 TO 8 YEAR OLDS_SUMMARY														
	97-98	98-99	99-00	00-01	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	10-YR AVE	5-YR AVE
TOTAL	6495	7783	8141	8713	8916	9864	10704	10544	11367	12203	12295	12876	9275	11857
GR		19.8%	4.6%	7.0%	2.3%	10.6%	8.5%	-1.5%	7.8%	7.4%	0.8%	4.7%	5.2%	3.8%
NEW	3978	4836	4703	4880	4783	5532	5823	5436	6014	6461	6285	6604	5652	6160
GR		21.6%	-2.8%	3.8%	-2.0%	15.7%	5.3%	-6.6%	10.6%	7.4%	-2.7%	5.1%	3.4%	2.8%
RET	2517	2947	3438	3833	4133	4332	4881	5108	5353	5742	6010	6272	4910	5697
GR		17.1%	16.7%	11.5%	7.8%	4.8%	12.7%	4.7%	4.8%	7.3%	4.7%	4.4%	7.9%	5.1%
LOST	1901	2085	2461	2373	2570	2498	2641	2956	2714	2875	3234	3145	2747	2985
GR		9.7%	18.0%	-3.6%	8.3%	-2.8%	5.7%	11.9%	-8.2%	5.9%	12.5%	-2.8%	4.5%	3.9%
RR	38.8%	37.9%	42.2%	44.0%	46.4%	43.9%	45.6%	48.4%	47.1%	47.1%	48.9%	48.7%	46.2%	48.0%

Graph Key:

NEW: the number of new players acquired for that season.

RET: the number of players retained.

LOST: the number of players that from the previous season.

RR: the rate of retention percentage is the number of players returning from the year before.

Yellow Shading in the years: recognizes post-Olympic seasons.

Green Shading in data: recognizes the peak seasons.



POTOMAC VALLEY AMATEUR HOCKEY 2008-09 KEY TAKEAWAYS

Total

- The total number of combined males and females ages 4 to 8 playing youth ice hockey in Potomac Valley in 2008-09 increased by 173 (or 11.6%) going to 1,663 from 1,490 in 2007-08.
- In 2008-09, 4-8 year old males & females peaked for the last 12 years at 1,663.

Acquisition

- Acquisition of new 4-8 year old males & females peaked in 2008-09 with 886 players.

Retention

- Retention of 4-8 year-old males & females peaked in 2008-09 at 777.

Rate of Retention

- The rate of retention has averaged 48.1% for the 4-8 year old male & female segment over the last five years.
- In 2008-09, the rate of retention was 46.7%; this means 53.3% are out of hockey by the age of 9.

MALES & FEMALES BY AGE SEGMENT

The overall pool of 4-8 year old males and females continued to shrink in 2008-09 but the decline in recent years is slowing.

MALES & FEMALES	2007-08	# difference from '06-07	% difference from '06-07	2008-09	# difference from '07-08	% difference from '07-08
4 YEAR OLDS	55	+8	+17.0%	57	+2	+3.6%
5 YEAR OLDS	177	+12	+7.3%	211	+34	+19.2%
6 YEAR OLDS	305	-1	-0.3%	338	+33	+10.8%
7 YEAR OLDS	418	0	0.0%	501	+83	+19.9%
8 YEAR OLDS	535	+39	+7.9%	556	+21	+3.9%
TOTALS	1,490	+58	+4.1%	1,663	+173	+11.6%

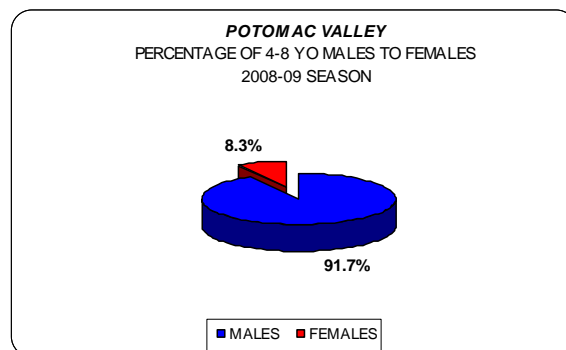
RETENTION INCREASES WITH AGE

As might be expected, the older a player gets and/or the more consecutive seasons a player plays, the more likely that player will stick with ice hockey. So while retention rates are high from Squirts on up, the overall growth of hockey depends on acquiring a growing pool of 4-8 year olds. Potomac Valley Amateur Hockey Association's retention results for 2008-09 by age segment:

- **17.5% of all 4 Year Olds returned as 5 Year Olds** – National Average 32.0%
 - **37.3% of all 5 Year Olds returned as 6 Year Olds** – National Average 52.5%
 - **51.3% of all 6 Year Olds returned as 7 Year Olds** – National Average 67.8%
 - **63.3% of all 7 Year Olds returned as 8 Year Olds** – National Average 76.2%
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- Retention rate for Squirts in 2008-09: 74.0% National Average: 85.6%
 - Retention rate for Pee Wees in 2008-09: 83.8% National Average: 91.2%
 - Retention rate for Bantams in 2008-09: 85.6% National Average: 93.6%

RATIO OF MALES TO FEMALES – 4 TO 8 YEAR OLDS

Males represented 91.7% of all 4 to 8 year olds in Potomac Valley in 2008-09 while females represented 8.3%. Nationally, males represented 86% of all 4 to 8 year olds in 2008-09 while females represented 14%.





POTOMAC VALLEY AMATEUR HOCKEY ASSOCIATION SUMMARY - 4 TO 8 YEAR OLDS

MALE & FEMALE YOUTH HOCKEY_4 TO 8 YEAR OLDS_ SUMMARY														
	97-98	98-99	99-00	00-01	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	10-YR AVE	5-YR AVE
TOTAL	1106	1330	1283	1235	1319	1375	1393	1266	1178	1432	1490	1663	1363	1406
		20.3%	-3.5%	-3.7%	6.8%	4.2%	1.3%	-9.1%	-7.0%	21.6%	4.1%	11.6%	2.6%	4.2%
NEW	611	810	674	694	732	742	713	592	608	832	742	886	722	732
		32.6%	-16.8%	3.0%	5.5%	1.4%	-3.9%	-17.0%	2.7%	36.8%	-10.8%	19.4%	2.0%	6.2%
RETAINED	495	520	609	541	587	633	680	674	570	600	748	777	642	674
		5.1%	17.1%	-11.2%	8.5%	7.8%	7.4%	-0.9%	-15.4%	5.3%	24.7%	3.9%	4.7%	3.5%
LOST	202	217	234	252	222	197	244	228	198	214	218	239	225	219
		7.4%	7.8%	7.7%	-11.9%	-11.3%	23.9%	-6.6%	-13.2%	8.1%	1.9%	9.6%	1.6%	0.0%
RR	44.8%	39.1%	47.5%	43.8%	44.5%	46.0%	48.8%	53.2%	48.4%	41.9%	50.2%	46.7%	47.1%	48.1%

MALE YOUTH HOCKEY_4 TO 8 YEAR OLDS_ SUMMARY														
	97-98	98-99	99-00	00-01	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	10-YR AVE	5-YR AVE
TOTAL	1067	1269	1210	1179	1248	1286	1294	1178	1097	1288	1356	1525	1266	1289
		18.9%	-4.6%	-2.6%	5.9%	3.0%	0.6%	-9.0%	-6.9%	17.4%	5.3%	12.5%	2.2%	3.9%
NEW	590	764	629	663	684	684	646	547	565	726	672	798	661	662
		29.5%	-17.7%	5.4%	3.2%	0.0%	-5.6%	-15.3%	3.3%	28.5%	-7.4%	18.8%	1.3%	5.6%
RETAINED	477	505	581	516	564	602	648	631	532	562	684	727	605	627
		5.9%	15.0%	-11.2%	9.3%	6.7%	7.6%	-2.6%	-15.7%	5.6%	21.7%	6.3%	4.3%	3.1%
LOST	191	201	217	233	204	181	219	203	181	182	186	204	201	191
		5.2%	8.0%	7.4%	-12.4%	-11.3%	21.0%	-7.3%	-10.8%	0.6%	2.2%	9.7%	0.7%	-1.1%
RR	44.7%	39.8%	48.0%	43.8%	45.2%	46.8%	50.1%	53.6%	48.5%	43.6%	50.4%	47.7%	47.8%	48.8%

FEMALE YOUTH HOCKEY_4 TO 8 YEAR OLDS_ SUMMARY														
	97-98	98-99	99-00	00-01	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	10-YR AVE	5-YR AVE
TOTAL	39	61	73	56	71	89	99	88	81	144	134	138	97	117
		56.4%	19.7%	-23.3%	26.8%	25.4%	11.2%	-11.1%	-8.0%	77.8%	-6.9%	3.0%	11.5%	11.0%
NEW	21	46	45	31	48	58	67	45	43	106	70	88	60	70
		119.0%	-2.2%	-31.1%	54.8%	20.8%	15.5%	-32.8%	-4.4%	146.5%	-34.0%	25.7%	15.9%	20.2%
RETAINED	18	15	28	25	23	31	32	43	38	38	64	50	37	47
		-16.7%	86.7%	-10.7%	-8.0%	34.8%	3.2%	34.4%	-11.6%	0.0%	68.4%	-21.9%	17.5%	13.9%
LOST	11	16	17	19	18	16	25	25	17	32	32	35	24	28
		45.5%	6.3%	11.8%	-5.3%	-11.1%	56.3%	0.0%	-32.0%	88.2%	0.0%	9.4%	12.4%	13.1%
RR	46.2%	24.6%	38.4%	44.6%	32.4%	34.8%	32.3%	48.9%	46.9%	26.4%	47.8%	36.2%	38.9%	41.2%

Graph Key:

NEW: the number of new players you acquired for that season.

RET: the number of players you retained.

LOST: the number of players that left your association.

RR: the rate of retention percentage is the number of players returning from the year before.

Yellow Shading in the years: recognizes post-Olympic seasons.

Green Shading in data: recognizes the peak seasons.



2 & 2 NATIONAL CHALLENGE

Recently the number of children between the ages of 4 to 8 playing hockey has been shrinking. Shockingly, over the last 10 years, acquisition of new players has dropped from 47,752 to 39,212 in 2008-09. To add to the shrinking numbers, 43% stop playing hockey by age 9, proving that retention is as important as recruitment.

The 2 & 2 National Challenge is a call to action for local associations. We are asking each association to acquire two more players than last year. For example, if your association brought in 22 new 4 to 8 year olds last year, then next year you want to get 24.

The second half of the challenge is to improve the retention of your 4 to 8 year olds by two more players. If your club kept 30 players from the previous season, next year you need 32 hockey players back on the ice.

NATIONAL 2 & 2 CHALLENGE GOALS

- **Achievement of Goals 2009-10 Season**
 - **Based on 1,391 associations**
 - **41,994 new kids acquired**
 - **54,781 kids retained**
 - **96,775 total youth hockey 4-8 year olds**
 - **6.1% increase**

	2008-09	2009-10	+/-
NEW	39,212	41,994	+2,782 +7.1%
RETAINED	51,999	54,781	+2,782 +5.4%
TOTAL	91,211	96,775	+5,564 +6.1%

POTOMAC VALLEY'S 2 & 2 CHALLENGE GOALS

- **Achievement of Goals 2009-10 Season:**
 - **Based on 36 associations**
 - **958 new kids acquired**
 - **849 kids retained**
 - **1,807 total youth hockey 4-8 year olds**
 - **8.7% increase**

	2008-09	2009-10	+/-
NEW	886	958	+72 +8.1%
RETAINED	777	849	+72 +9.3%
TOTAL	1,663	1,807	+144 +8.7%