

Travel Teams (Grades 3-4)

Manchester-Essex Youth Soccer players in grades 3 and 4 play in the Essex County Youth Soccer (ECYSA) travel program in the spring season only (in the fall, we play intramural games, in town).

Children playing travel for the first time will need to purchase a travel uniform and register by the early deadlines as dictated by ECYSA (see below).

Team placement is carried out by Grade Group Coordinators similar to the process described below for Grades 5-8 with the exception that we endeavor to create even teams at this age.

Travel Teams (Grades 5-8)

Manchester-Essex Youth Soccer players in grades 5-8 play as part of ECYSA's travel program. ECYSA divides each gender age group into four divisions and within those divisions there are several groups.

- Massachusetts Tournament of Champions (MTOC) 1 and MTOC 2 – these divisions feed into a state-wide playoff at the end of the spring season
- County 1 and County 2 – these divisions feed into a county-wide playoff at the end of the spring season
- There are no playoffs in the fall

In the ECYSA Travel program, youth soccer players are generally grouped together on teams based upon individual athletic ability, overall skill level, maturity, and the level of skills of the team on which they are placed. It is the objective to place soccer players at a level of competition that is most beneficial for their own development. As a member organization, MEYS follows the below placement process:

- Player evaluations by Global Premier Soccer (GPS) coaches: Our GPS coaches run weekly pool practices for all gender age groups and provide an evaluation of each player's developmental level based on their body of work over the 8-week season. At the pool practices, they look for synergies between players as well as individual skill level.
- Player evaluations by team coaches: Every coach in our program (head and assistant) completes our evaluation template and submits it to their Grade Group Coordinator (GGC). The template covers 5 areas:
 - Technical ability (dribbling/passing, etc.)
 - Tactical ability (situational and/or field awareness)
 - Physical conditioning (speed/stamina)
 - Competitive impact (Scoring, strength on defense, etc.)
 - Attitude (Coach-ability, effort, etc.)
- Role of the GGC: Each grade group is represented by one GGC familiar with the first year players in a given pool and another familiar with the second year players in a given pool. It is the job of the GGC's to analyze the GPS evaluations together with the coaches

evaluations and their own observations of the pool throughout the season in order to determine:

- The optimal number of teams to be submitted to ECYSA, based on enrollment numbers by the registration deadline.
- Initial team rosters
- Placement of each team within the ECYSA program (MTOC 1, MTOC 2, County 1, County 2)
- Coaches Meeting: GGC's lead a coaches meeting to agree initial rosters and allocate remaining and or "bubble" players (those players who would be comfortable on more than one team).

It cannot be stressed enough that registering your child by our deadline each season is vital to maintaining optimal/manageable team sizes and cuts down on the already long hours our volunteers put into this process. Fall deadlines are typically in mid to late June and spring deadlines are typically in December, before Christmas.

We go through the evaluation process every single season with the understanding that children change and grow at rapid rates and over time. Our teams do not carry over from season to season and we instruct our coaches and GGC's to look at each child with fresh eyes from fall to spring, year to year and always provide the mobility that will best support their individual development.

Am I on the "A" team?

In ECYSA and Mass Youth Soccer-speak, for children in Grade 5 and above there are MTOC 1, MTOC 2, County 1 and County 2 divisions as described above.

While there is a perception that we have strictly A, B, C... teams, we often enter more than one team in each division at one group apart and consider them internally to be even. Also, depending on the needs of a given pool, we sometimes create one or two grade-based teams (e.g. a team of all 7th graders).

As such, teams that the children think of as B and C are often better described as B and B, or C and C, and so on. At the field, we discourage over-focusing on divisions and focus instead on play, teamwork, having fun, and doing our best.

We also try to have at least one team per gender grade group playing at the state (MTOC) level every season. That team or teams should be comprised of both first year and second year players and GGC's are instructed to provide mobility onto that team from season to season in recognition of the fact that children change and grow over time.

We recognize that for some of the children, working toward MTOC-level play is important; for others, team chemistry is the priority, and for others it's being with their friends. We are always striving and adapting to put the children on their best-fit team.

While participating as part of a travel program dictates that our teams are placed in different groups, it is the primary goal of MEYS that our children enjoy the sport and develop as players while having fun and building lasting friendships.

All of us, coaches and board members alike, are volunteers working to provide the best environment possible for children in the community to play this incredibly fun sport. Should you have any questions or concerns at any time, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you for playing with us,

Jennifer Keenan

President, Manchester-Essex Youth Soccer