On any given afternoon, in school gymnasiums, playing fields and running tracks across the country [USA], the sounds of balls being hit by bats, rackets, feet, sticks and basket rims punctuate the noise from runners racing around 400-meter tracks, high jumpers flopping onto pads, swimmers diving into pools, wrestlers slamming into mats, and more. These are the sounds of America's youth involved in organized sports, and a vast body of research demonstrates that it is not just athletic prowess that these youngsters are developing.

This report is the first of a series of monographs designed to explore what is known about the healthy development we seek for children and youth, and how participation in sports-based youth development activities can contribute to reaching this goal. With increasing public pressure to concentrate on student achievement, we focus this first report on the educational benefits of youth participation in organized sports activities.