A Coach for All
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ABSTRACT
Numerous studies have shown the high level of influence interscholastic coaches’ yield at their respective campuses (Côté & Fraser-Thomas, 2007; Fredericks & Eccles, 2006; Greendorfer, 2002). This influence is not confined to athletes only, but extends to a large portion of the general student body as well. Coaches, especially interscholastic coaches, can become centers of influence (COI) for physical fitness and physical activity participation throughout the entire student body. This often unsolicited influence can have dramatic effects on how non-participants view initiatives and opportunities encouraged by “their” coach. For example, coaches can personally recruit new athletes, provide mentoring, and/or encourage participation in after-school activities.

To accomplish this broader goal, however, coaches must first view the National Standards for Sport Coaches (NSSC) as a guide for coaching all students, and not just the athletes they’re currently coaching. As coaches become experts in these areas, it is critical that they become advocates for the benefits of physical activity for all students. National coach certification and training programs exist; however, at the local level few states require more than basic sport/association rules, CPR/AED certification, and ethics training. The more comprehensive programs/models go beyond the basics and delve into the physiological, psychological, social aspects of coaching, and this is where collaboration and understanding can build a better program for all students, regardless of natural ability and competitive athletic interest.

The National Association of Sport and Physical Education’s (NASPE) program proposes a quality comprehensive program that covers many of the topics previously discussed. Additionally, researchers have developed a model that highlights the areas deemed essential to quality coaching, the 4 C’s of coaching: competence, confidence, connection, and character/caring (Côté & Gilbert, 2009).

- Competence: Coaches should stay current on the latest research concerning physical activity enhancement and best practices. A quality coach knows how to improve the ability and skill of athletes and non-athletes alike.
- Confidence: By adhering to the previous action, coaches will naturally convey an aura of confidence that translates over to the participant, knowing that what is being learned is being taught by someone of knowledge and experience.
- Connection: While making connections beyond athletics to those students who currently do not participate in sport/physical activity is important, just as vital is the collaboration and support coaches can provide to others (i.e., PE and Health teachers) to ensure the probability of a sustainable inclusive physical activity solution.
- Character/Caring: Since not all potential players make the team, especially in interscholastic varsity sports, coaches should be staunch supporters of other options within the school.
system to keep students active and encouraged (Casper, et al., 2011). Take the time to find alternative options to those who fail to make the team, and encourage those not participating to become involved.

Coaches can truly make a difference in all young people’s lives by becoming a coach for all. Natural motivators, coaches should take the lead on this initiative to ensure opportunities to participate in sport become attractive to all.
References


Authors’ Note

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