Teaching Social Skills through Sport: The LiFEsports Curricular Model

September 30, 2016

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Get to Know Our Audience

- Please describe your role or affiliation with a school?
- Why were you interested in attending this presentation?
Session Objectives

- Theory of LiFEsports
- LiFEsports Model
  - Social Work
  - Athletics
- Teaching social skills through sport
- Curriculum demonstration
- PYD Principles
- Snapshot: LiFEsports Research
Theory of LiFEsports
Evident Need

- 20% youth have psychological, social, emotional, or behavior problems
- 5-10% classified as having persistent, severe emotional disturbance
- 20% youth have not developed age-appropriate social skills
- As a result, 1 in 3 youth are at increased risk for school dropout and engagement in other risky behaviors
- Poor developmental outcomes disproportionately prevalent among youth living in poverty in urban settings
LiFEsports Mission

“To foster social competence among youth through their involvement in sport, fitness, and education activities.”

Primary Objectives

• Increase social competence among youth participants
• Increase self-control, effort, teamwork, and social responsibility
• Youth will demonstrate a sense of belonging and connection to the LiFEsports program and its staff

Secondary Objectives

• Increase participants’ perceptions of athletic competence and confidence
• Increase participants’ exposure to university/college life and interest in higher education
• Increase participants commitment to lifelong fitness and healthy nutrition
The Theory behind LiFEsports

- Many youth development programs seek to enhance and develop positive youth assets. These qualities, also called protective factors, are shown through research to reduce the presence of risk factors, deter youth problem behaviors, and enhance overall well-being. One important protective factor is social competence.

- Social competence is the ability to adapt with the social environment and get along with others.

- Poor social competence is predictive of a host of negative outcomes:
  - School failure,
  - Substance use,
  - And other related problem behaviors.
Who Wants To Go To Social Skills Class?

- The answer to that question is probably no one.

- Youth participation in PYD programs is associated with improvements in:
  - Emotional,
  - Intellectual,
  - Physical,
  - Psychological, &
  - Social development for youth.

- Youth participation in PYD programs is associated with reduced:
  - Behavioral problems,
  - Delinquency, &
  - Substance abuse.

- Despite the positive effects of sports, research has also shown that sport involvement can lead to less-desirable outcomes as well. In some studies, sport has been linked to increases in risky behavior, such as substance abuse and aggression/violence in the sport context.

- LiFEsports was intentionally designed to focus on improving youth’s social competencies through detailed curricula and lesson plans.
Sport as Medium for Social Skill Interventions

- When used intentionally, research supports use of sport, recreation, and play to facilitate youth developmental outcomes such as social skills
  - “Sport-Based PYD”
- Increase youth outcomes such as: social competence, prosocial behaviors, social skills, life skills
- Increased transfer of skills to other situations and contexts such as with peers, at home, within school, and throughout the community
**LiFEsports Model**

- **LiFEsports Summer Camp** (4 weeks; ages 9-14)
  - Completely free of cost for youth and their families (600-650 youth per camp)
  - Youth are bused in from local community sites (e.g., B&G Clubs, YMCAs, schools)
  - Provided breakfast and lunch daily as well as given free health physicals and screenings

- **Year-round sports clinics**
  - LiFEsports hosts approximately 8-10 clinics to engage youth in sport-based PYD activities (average attendance: 80 youth)
  - Hosted and facilitated with various partnerships with OSU varsity and club sport teams

- **Youth Leadership Academy** (YLA; ages 15-18)
  - Works with approximately 60 high school youth throughout the academic school year
  - Youth attend 10 monthly sessions focused on skill-building and college/career readiness training
  - YLA youth serve as Junior Counselors during the LiFEsports Summer Camp
LiFEsports Theory of Change

19 Day LiFE Sports Camp
- Social Competence Education (1 hr./day)
- Sport Instruction and Social Competence Reinforcement (3 hr./day)

Primary Outcomes
- Self-Control
- Effort
- Teamwork
- Social Responsibility

Secondary Outcomes
- Social and Athletic Competence

Long-Term Outcomes
- Healthy Youth Development
LiFEsports Video Overview

LiFEsports™
at The Ohio State University®
Teaching S.E.T.S. through Sport
## Intentional Programming

### Why?
- Provides the greatest benefit for all youth – maximizes impact
- Ensures youth are more than “busy, happy, good”
- Maximizes time
- Enhances program credibility and sustainability

### How?
- Backwards mapping
  - What outcomes are you trying to achieve?
  - What activities lead to these outcomes?
- Lesson planning
  - Progression, sequencing, & scaffolding
- Intentionality
- Repetition of skills & knowledge
Key Concepts of the LiFEsports: S.E.T.S.

- Self-Control
- Effort
- Teamwork
- Social Responsibility
S.E.T.S. Curriculum

• **Self-Control**
  ○ Control of one’s self and own actions

• **Effort**
  ○ Self-directed behavior and initiative

• **Teamwork**
  ○ Working together as a group to achieve a common goal or outcome

• **Social Responsibility**
  ○ Helping others and having an understanding of how one’s own behavior impacts others
The LiFEsports Education curricula is progressive, so that skills continue to build upon one another.

As campers progress through camp, staff reinforce and support all skills focused on in previous weeks with particular attention paid to given topic or skills being addressed during that particular day.
Curriculum Format

- **LiFEsports Curricula**
  - 8 Sport-specific curricula
  - 1 Chalk Talk curricula
  - 1 LiFE Coach curricula

- Each curriculum includes a daily lesson plan for each of the 15 days of social skill and sport activities.

- Each lesson plan includes the specific S.E.T.S. of that day, a brief description of the specific S.E.T.S., helpful hints, intended outcomes, activities (including amount of time needed), a supply list, and debriefing questions.
Staff Roles & Responsibilities

- **Chalk Talk Leader**: The primary role of the Chalk Talk leaders is to implement the Chalk Talk curriculum as it is designed to promote and facilitate social competence development. The Chalk Talk leader guides campers through the structured curriculum by providing quality instruction and maximum opportunities for participation.

- **Recreation Leader**: The primary role of the recreation leaders is to implement the curriculum as it is designed to promote and facilitate sport (i.e. Health & Fitness) and social competence development. The recreation leader is responsible for assigning roles within the session to other staff members and volunteers as needed to implement the curriculum. For example, the recreation leader may ask the nursing student interns to lead small group discussions about the topic of the day.

- **LiFEsports LiFE Coach**: The primary role of the LiFE Coach is to promote and facilitate social competence development while serving as the youth participants’ main role model and mentor. LiFE Coaches are responsible for reinforcing the daily SETS lesson through active facilitation and debriefing. They are also responsible for constant supervision of youth between activities.
Positive Behavior Supports

- Youth can earn “Buckeye Leaf Buttons” by demonstrating S.E.T.S.

- Each button has one of the S.E.T.S.

- Each session the Recreation Leaders (Chalk Talk) and LiFE Coach will be given buttons to distribute.
Curriculum Demonstration
Utility in Other Settings

- After School All-Stars Ohio
  - Uses curriculum in after school model
- Pickerington Local School District
  - Afterschool service-learning component
- Recreation programs
- Physical education
Enhancing the Curriculum: Integrating Key Youth Development Principles to Maximize Youth Impact
Positive Youth Development Principles

- Understanding individual differences
- Providing feedback
- Creating belonging and relationships
- Motivating and engaging youth
Key Sport Design Principles

1. Organize Activities that are Structured, Focused, & Intentional
2. Teach Both Sport & Life Skills
3. Promote a Master Motivational Climate
4. Foster Initiative
5. Be Youth-Centered
6. Engage School, Family, & Community Partners
7. Provide Physical & Emotional Safety
8. Use Data to Drive Decision-Making
9. Create Opportunities for Connectedness & Belonging
10. Be Enjoyable & Fun
LiFEsports Research and Evaluation
Research and Evaluation

- Program evaluation
  - Pre- and post-test measures with youth
  - Self-efficacy of “S.E.T.S”, college and career readiness
- Intervention research
- Self-assessment measures for implementation research
  - Fidelity to curriculum (i.e., site observation tools)
  - Staff oversight and support (i.e., rec leader logs)
2016 LiFEsports Camp Results

Athletic Competencies

Social Competencies (S.E.T.S.)

Sport Competence Growth

- Basketball
- Football*
- Lacrosse*
- Soccer*
- Social Dance*
- Softball*
- Tennis*
- Volleyball*

Social Skills Growth

- Self-Control*
- Effort*
- Teamwork*
- Social Responsibility*
- Social Competence*
- Transfer*
Healthy Lifestyle Choices

- 1 Hour of Physical Activity: 70%
- Eats 5 Fruits & Vegetables: 60%
- Choose Water Over Pop: 80%
- Uses S.E.T.S. for a Healthy Lifestyle: 90%

Youth Leadership Academy

- Pretest: Leadership 3.8, Communication 4.1, Problem Solving 4.3, Teamwork 4.4
- Posttest: Leadership 5.5, Communication 5.3, Problem Solving 5.1, Teamwork 5.2

Legend:
- Red: Leadership
- Grey: Communication
- Black: Problem Solving
- Blue: Teamwork
2016 LiFEsports Camp Results Cont.

LiFEsports Longitudinal Growth

Year 1 Pretest  Year 1 Posttest  Year 2 Pretest  Year 2 Posttest

- Effort
- Teamwork
- Social Competence
- Sport Specific Ability

Self-Control  Effort  Teamwork  Transfer
Learn More About LiFEsports

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