PCA’S APPROACH: A SELECTION OF FOUNDATIONAL RESEARCH

Category: Benefits of Youth Sports

- Participation in sports doesn’t necessarily build character in youth, sports done right does.
- High-quality adult leadership in sports increases the physical, social, and psychological benefits for athletes.

Category: Developing Youth Character, and Life/SEL Skills

**Subcategory: Growth mindset is a critical skill for youth for both life success & athletic performance**

- Athletes who have a *growth mindset*—who believe that their ability is due to practice and effort—improve in performance more than athletes who believe that their ability is fixed.
- It is possible to teach youth to have a growth mindset. Youth who believe that they can learn and change are more resilient when facing challenges in life, from the classroom to the sports field.
- Athletes coached in a “mastery” approach win more than those coached in a “scoreboard” approach.

**Subcategory: Resilience is a critical skill for youth for both life success & athletic performance**

- Being able to respond constructively to setbacks and failures improves athletic performance.
- Resilience can be increased through high quality relationships (such as with coaches) and connections to positive organizations (such as sports clubs).

**Subcategory: Teamwork is a critical skill for youth for both life success & athletic performance**

- Coaches play a critical role in developing a culture of teamwork among their athletes.
- The teamwork and leadership skills athletes develop on the field transfer to other areas of their lives.
Category: How Coaches can Help Develop PYD in Youth by Intentionally Transferring Life Skills Through Sports

- Exceptional coaches promote positive youth development by providing opportunities to practice life skills (not just talk about them) and discussing how life skills learned through sports transfer to other areas of life.
- Highly successful coaches integrate the development of life skills into their coaching; it’s not something separate.

Category: What a PYD Culture/Environment Looks like in Youth Sports Organizations and School-Based Athletic Programs, and How to Develop It

- The primary conditions in a youth sports environment that lead to positive youth development (PYD) include 1) a PYD climate that is created, sustained, and supported by surrounding adults, and 2) intentional transfer of life skills by coaches and other adults.
- Youth sports organizations that incorporate the five “C’s” of positive youth development—competence, character, connection, confidence, and caring—pave the way for a sixth “C”—contribution—as youth grow up into emotionally, intellectually, physically, psychologically, and socially healthy young adults who can foster positive youth development in the next generation.
- Programs are most successful in promoting positive youth development when they work with youth for an extended period of time, provide structure and consistency, promote healthy relationships, provide behavioral expectations, build self-efficacy, and strengthen behavioral, cognitive, emotional, moral, and social competencies.