



Cultural Proficiency Toolkit



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The Tools of Cultural Proficiency can provide coaches and organizations with a comprehensive framework and practical strategies to navigate the complexities of cultural diversity, overcome barriers, and promote inclusive practices that value diversity and foster equitable experiences for all participants. Ensuring all our athletes feel valued, acknowledged, and that they belong is a critical component of a Positive Youth Sports Environment that develops athletes as competitors and people.

The following resources provide your sports organization and coaches with concrete strategies to work towards cultural proficiency and realize the potential of all athletes who participate.

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Context: Defining Cultural Background

The term “cultural background” encompasses a wide range of factors, including race and ethnicity, but it’s not limited to them. In the context of the Tools of Cultural Proficiency, “cultural background” refers to the diverse array of characteristics that make up an individual’s identity. This includes, but is not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religion, ability, and language.

When we talk about cultural proficiency in youth sports, we aim to create an inclusive environment that respects and values the full spectrum of diversity among athletes and coaches. This means recognizing and honoring the unique experiences and perspectives that each individual brings to the team, regardless of their cultural background.

For example, when considering gender identity, it’s important for coaches to use inclusive language, respect athletes’ pronouns, and create policies that support all athletes, including those who are non-binary or transgender. Similarly, understanding and accommodating the needs of athletes with different abilities, socioeconomic backgrounds, or religious practices are essential components of cultural proficiency.

By expanding our understanding of cultural backgrounds to include these various aspects of identity, we can foster a more inclusive and supportive sports environment where every athlete feels valued and empowered to reach their full potential.



The Power of Cultural Proficiency

Cultural proficiency creates an environment where every athlete feels welcomed, valued, understood and supported. It cultivates a space that respects and celebrates their cultural identity. Embracing cultural proficiency in sports is not just about being inclusive; it's about actively engaging and understanding the diverse backgrounds of young athletes to enhance their overall experience and performance. By developing a deeper understanding of cultural proficiency and strategically applying its principles, coaches can foster connections, inclusivity, and success on and off the field/court.

Some of the many benefits athletes can experience when coaches are culturally proficient are:

An inclusive and Supportive Team Environment: An environment where athletes feel a sense of belonging, regardless of their cultural background. This fosters positive team dynamics and enhances overall well-being.

Valuing Diversity: When coaches actively value and embrace diversity they celebrate the unique cultural backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives of athletes which promotes a culture of respect, acceptance, and appreciation for differences.

Enhanced Communication and Understanding: A deeper understanding of the diverse cultural backgrounds, languages, and learning styles of athletes improves communication, builds trust, and facilitates effective coaching strategies tailored to each athlete's individual needs.

Personalized Development and Growth: The individual strengths, challenges, and aspirations of athletes from diverse backgrounds are recognized and used to provide personalized support, guidance, and development opportunities, fostering the holistic growth and potential of each athlete.

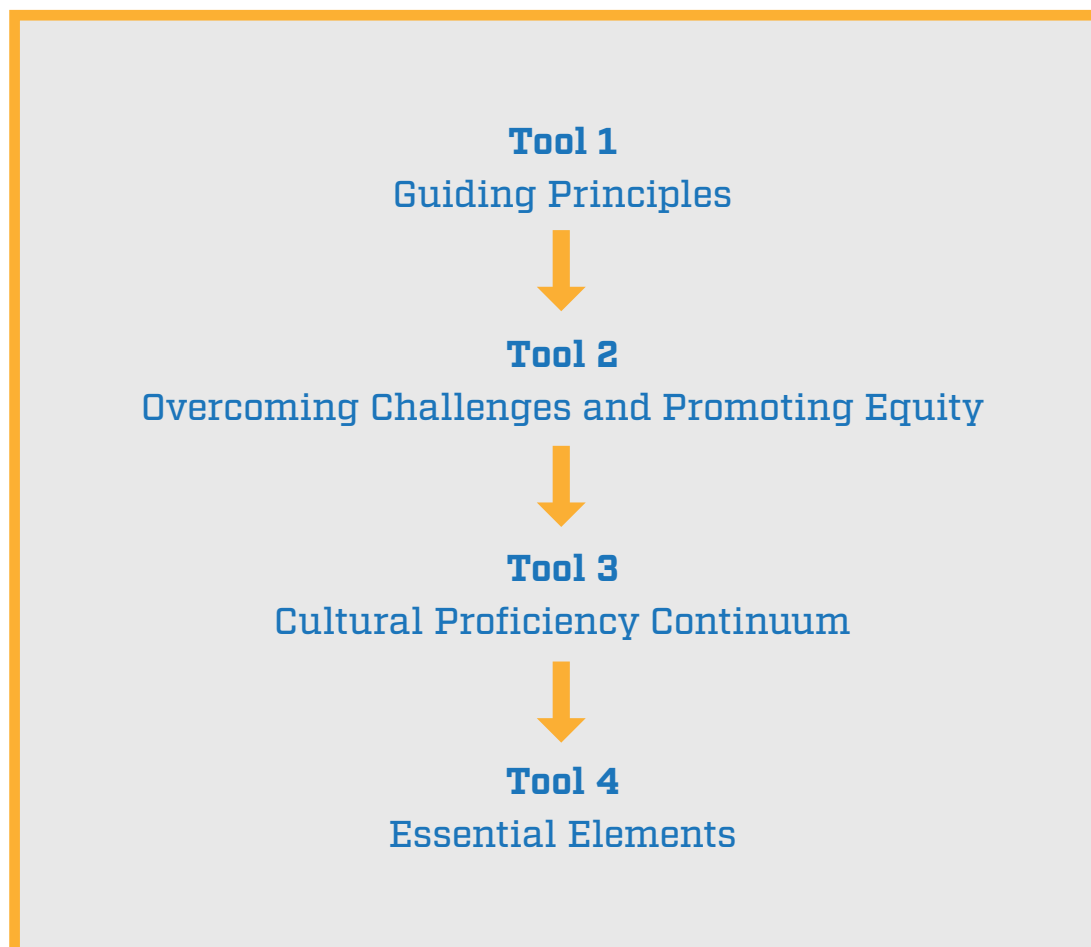
Exposure to Different Perspectives: Opportunities are created for athletes to engage with and learn from peers with diverse cultural backgrounds. This exposure broadens their perspectives, promotes cultural exchange, and nurtures global citizenship.



Skill Development and Performance Improvement: Coaches draw upon diverse coaching approaches, training methods, and strategies that consider the cultural nuances and strengths of athletes. This comprehensive approach enhances skill development, performance improvement, and overall success in sports.

Empowerment and Self-Expression: Athletes are empowered to embrace and express their cultural identities. They feel they can authentically represent their cultures, fostering a sense of pride, self-confidence, and self-expression.

The Tools of Cultural Proficiency provide concrete strategies for creating a culturally proficient sport environment and realizing all of the benefits detailed above. The framework:



Tool 1

Guiding Principles of Cultural Proficiency in Youth Sports

By understanding and implementing the **Guiding Principles of Cultural Proficiency**, coaches and youth sports organizations can cultivate an inclusive and empowering environment that nurtures the unique talents and cultural identities of athletes. By recognizing differences as strengths, building connections, and boosting respect, coaches will be better able to fuel victories. The following principles offer a roadmap to create strong connections between athletes, instill a sense of belonging, and ultimately shape well-rounded individuals both inside and outside of the sports space.

The Guiding Principles of Cultural Proficiency in Youth Sports

- **Acknowledge the Predominant Force of Culture:**

Recognize that culture influences behaviors, interactions, and expectations and coaches/program administrators adjust their behavior and values to accommodate the full range of cultural diversity represented on their team. Do so by:

- ▶ Embracing cultural awareness: Recognize that culture can shape participation rates and preferences in youth sports.
- ▶ Creating inclusive environments: Create an inclusive space that values and respects the diverse backgrounds of athletes.
- ▶ Understanding the why: Gain insights into athletes' behaviors and motivations through cultural understanding.

- **Value Diversity as an Asset:**

Shift thinking to view differences not as deficits, but as powerful tools to enhance learning, connection, and development. Do so by:

- ▶ Unleashing potential: Embrace the unique perspectives and experiences that diverse athletes bring to the team.
- ▶ Empowerment through representation: Encourage diverse athletes to feel empowered and valued within the sports community.

- **Embrace Inclusivity:**

Ensure that athletes, regardless of their cultural background or circumstances, feel safe, valued, and supported on a team. Do so by:

- ▶ Fostering belonging: Create an atmosphere of acceptance, empathy, and belonging within the team.
- ▶ Establishing effective communication and trust: Encourage open dialogue to build trust and mutual understanding among athletes.

- **Promote Equitable Practices:**

Be mindful of interactions with athletes and intentional in the way practices are planned to provide an equitable experience for all.

- ▶ Equal opportunities: Strive for fairness by providing equal access and opportunities for all athletes.
- ▶ Breaking barriers: Address disparities and barriers that hinder inclusivity and participation.

Toolkit for Implementation: Using the Guiding Principles

Open Communication and Dialogue

- **Create a safe space for sharing:** Establish group agreements and expectations to encourage open and honest communication among coaches, athletes, and families.
- **Actively listen:** Show respect and empathy while actively listening to understand athletes' experiences and perspectives.

Coach in a Culturally Responsive Way

- **Individualized approach:** Adapt coaching methods to cater to diverse learning styles, racial and cultural backgrounds, and communication preferences; i.e. create opportunities for athletes to share their own experiences and perspectives, which can enrich the team's understanding of each other and foster a sense of belonging.
- **Consider cultural nuances:** Be mindful of cultural influences when providing feedback and guidance; i.e. being aware of cultural sensitivities - topics or language that may be sensitive or offensive in certain cultural contexts. This includes avoiding stereotypes or making assumptions based on an athlete's cultural background.

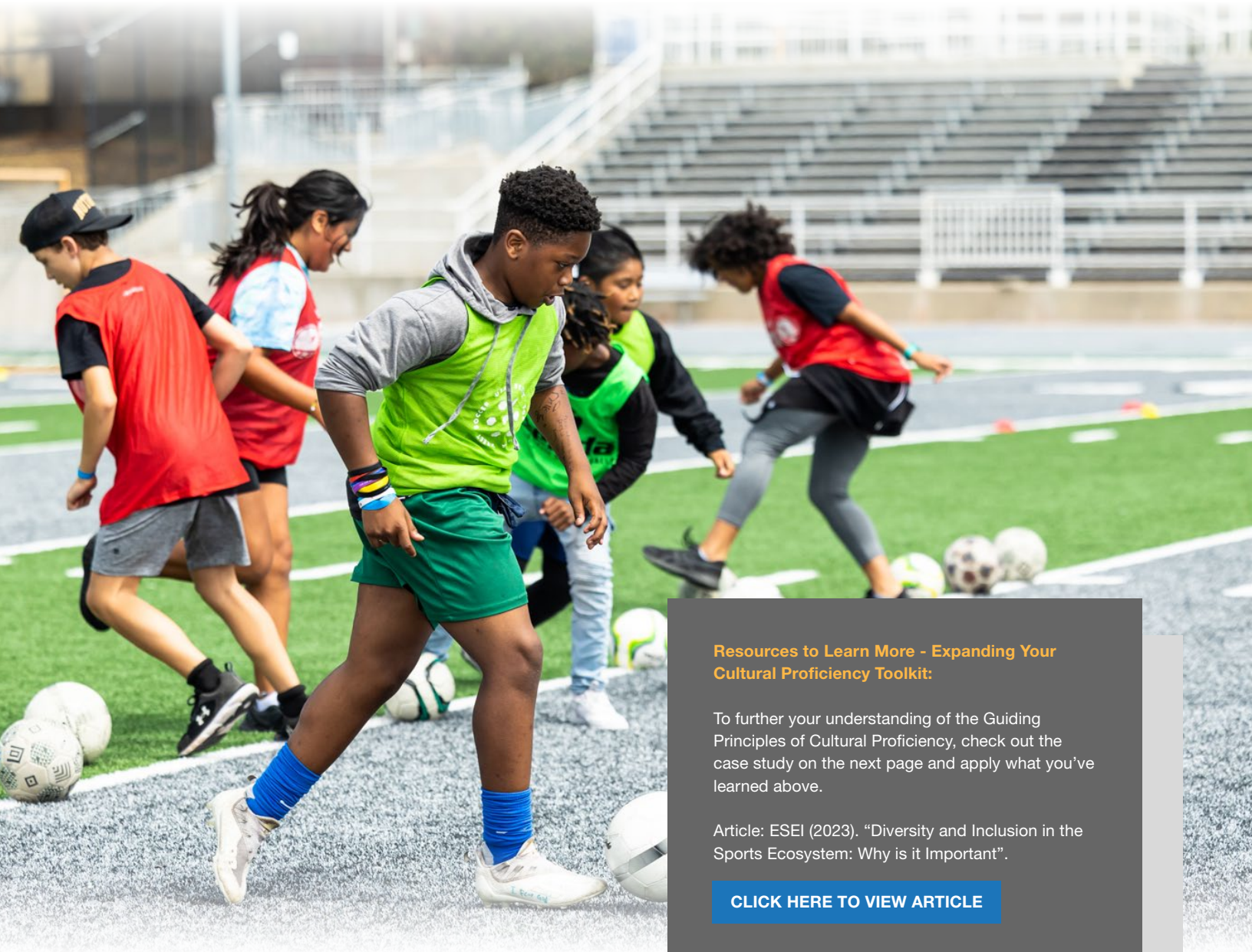
Develop Collaborative Partnerships

- **Community engagement:** Establish collaborative partnerships with cultural groups and schools to promote cross-cultural understanding.
- **Joint activities:** Organize events and activities that encourage cultural exchange and learning.

Celebrate Diversity

- **Embrace diversity:** Organize team activities that celebrate the unique cultural backgrounds of your athletes.
- **Inclusive traditions:** Incorporate diverse customs, holidays, or celebrations within the team to foster inclusivity.

By adopting the guiding principles of cultural proficiency and implementing these easy tips, coaches and organizations create environments where diversity is valued, inclusion is celebrated, and the potential of young athletes is maximized. Let's commit to fostering connections, enhancing success, and empowering our youth through the transformative power of cultural proficiency.



Resources to Learn More - Expanding Your Cultural Proficiency Toolkit:

To further your understanding of the Guiding Principles of Cultural Proficiency, check out the case study on the next page and apply what you've learned above.

Article: ESEI (2023). "Diversity and Inclusion in the Sports Ecosystem: Why is it Important".

[CLICK HERE TO VIEW ARTICLE](#)

Video: SSAC20: Built to Last: The Importance of Inclusion & Diversity in Sports Organizations.

[CLICK HERE TO VIEW VIDEO](#)

Sources: Adapted from Lindsey, R. B., Robins, K. N., & Terrell, R. D. (2019). Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for School Leaders (4th ed.). Corwin.

Case Study

The Guiding Principles of Cultural Proficiency

Consider the following first hand account. Once you have read it, fill out the questions below.

I was recruited to play pro volleyball in Belgium in 1990, along with a girl from the Netherlands, for a Belgium premier league team. The team was located in the small town of Maaseik with a population of roughly 10 thousand people. I was nervous about the language barrier and how that would impact my ability to engage. There were three languages spoken on the team and no one person spoke more than two. The coach understood the necessity of our effectively communicating together so at the beginning of the season he spent a lot of time combining sport specific drills with team building strategies. He ensured the two international players were embedded in the program while also honoring the local talent. His early efforts to ensure inclusion and belonging were crucial to our ability to play together effectively. He understood the importance of building community first and not just going about business as usual. All players were honored and respected for what they brought to the table and thus created a welcoming environment where we could all thrive.

How did the coach apply the following Guiding Principles of Cultural Proficiency?

Acknowledge the Predominant Force of Culture?

Value Diversity as an Asset?

Embrace Inclusivity?

Promote Equitable Practices?

For sample answers for this case study, check out appendix page 22



Tool 2

Barriers: Overcoming Challenges and Promoting Equity - Breaking Barriers for Inclusive Youth Sports

The Barriers to Cultural Proficiency tool is a transformative approach that can help coaches and youth sports leaders recognize and address challenges that hinder inclusivity and diversity within their teams and programs. By identifying and overcoming these barriers, coaches can create an enriching, more united, respectful, supportive, and equitable sports experience where every participant shines.

The Barriers to Cultural Proficiency

- **Implicit Bias:** Unconscious biases and stereotypes can influence coaches' perceptions and decisions regarding athletes from diverse backgrounds, potentially limiting opportunities for certain individuals.
- **Systems of Oppression:** Institutional structures and practices may perpetuate unequal access and opportunities for youth athletes based on their cultural backgrounds, reinforcing disparities.
- **Resistance to Change:** Resistance to adopting cultural proficiency principles may arise from ingrained practices or organizational cultures that are hesitant to embrace diversity.
- **Sense of Entitlement:** A prevailing sense of entitlement among some participants or stakeholders may marginalize athletes from different cultural backgrounds.

Toolkit for Implementation: Overcoming Barriers

Cultivate Cultural Awareness

Coaches and youth sports leaders should engage in self-reflection to recognize and address their own biases. By promoting cultural awareness, they can create a more inclusive environment.

Promote Equity and Access

Implement policies that ensure equal access to resources and opportunities for all athletes, regardless of their cultural backgrounds.

Diversity Training for Coaches

Provide training on cultural competence to coaches, enabling them to better understand and connect with athletes from diverse backgrounds.

Foster Open Communication

Encourage open and respectful dialogue among athletes, coaches, and parents to foster understanding and break down barriers.

Celebrate Diversity

Organize team activities that celebrate the diverse cultural backgrounds of athletes, fostering an environment where differences are embraced.

Benefits for Youth Athletes

- **Inclusive and Supportive Environment:** Breaking barriers with cultural proficiency creates an inclusive and supportive sports environment where every young athlete feels valued, respected, and accepted for their unique cultural backgrounds.
- **Enhanced Team Unity:** Embracing diversity fosters stronger connections among athletes, promoting teamwork, and enhancing the overall camaraderie within the team.
- **Boosted Confidence and Empowerment:** Overcoming barriers empowers young athletes to embrace their cultural identities, boosting self-confidence, and promoting personal growth both on and off the field.
- **Improved Performance:** Inclusivity drives optimal performance as athletes feel supported and motivated to excel, leading to improved on-field success.

By embracing the Barriers of Cultural Proficiency tool, coaches and youth sports leaders can create a transformative sports experience for young athletes. Overcoming barriers promotes inclusivity, strengthens team dynamics, and empowers athletes to succeed both in sports and in life. Together, let's break down barriers, celebrate diversity, and create a welcoming sports environment where every young athlete can thrive.

Resources to Learn More - Expanding Your Cultural Proficiency Toolkit:

To further your understanding of the Barriers of Cultural Proficiency tool, check out the case study on the next page and apply what you've learned above.

Article: NESTA "What Coaches Need to Know About Cultural Diversity in Sports Competition"

[CLICK HERE TO VIEW ARTICLE](#)

Video: Harbinger Horizon "Overcoming Cultural Barriers"

[CLICK HERE TO VIEW VIDEO](#)

Case Study

Barriers: Overcoming Challenges and Promoting Equity - Breaking Barriers for Inclusive Youth Sports

Consider the following first hand account. Once you have read it, reflect in the space below.

In 1985 I received a full scholarship to play Division I Volleyball in San Diego and was the first of two Black athletes to ever play on this team. I was 5'10", 190 lbs and strong like an ox. But because I was not the typical build of a volleyball player at the time, the coach assumed I was overweight and spent significant time and energy trying to get my weight down to be more in alignment with my teammates, which was closer to 130 - 150 lbs. I was made to run extra, put on a strict diet by the trainer, and verbally bullied by the coach about my weight. As expected, my body quickly started to break down; my energy was depleted and I started to get multiple injuries. I finally hit my breaking point and insisted the coach do a body fat test to determine if I was as overweight as he thought. The test put my BMI at 17%, needless to say, he was shocked...and I was vindicated. The coach had never worked with Black athletes before and tried to fit me into his limited understanding of what a volleyball player 'should' look like; which was tall, slim and mostly White. He was not a 'bad' guy, nor would I classify him as racist; however, his implicit bias and resistance to change led to injuries and mental anguish for me as an 18 year old athlete and had I not had the courage to challenge him, could have had long term damaging effects.

What barriers to an inclusive sports experience did the athlete encounter?

What strategies could the coach use to remove the barriers he created? What strategies could the coach use to remove the barriers that were already in place at an institutional level?

For sample answers for this case study, check out appendix pages 22-23



Tool 3

The Cultural Proficiency Continuum: Progressing Towards Equitable Practices

The Cultural Proficiency Continuum provides coaches, teams, and youth sports leaders a visual action plan to create a sports world that is all about unity, understanding, and shared victories. It defines the spectrum of Cultural Proficiency from unhealthy and harmful practices to healthy, inclusive practices and all the spaces in between. No matter where you start, the Cultural Proficiency Continuum requires self reflection and a sincere desire to grow and learn together to create a positive sports experience where all kids feel safe, valued, and that they belong.



REACTIVE TOLERANCE		
<i>Cultural Destructiveness</i>	<i>Cultural Incapacity</i>	<i>Cultural Blindness</i>
<p><i>Cultural Destructiveness</i> - Coaching or running a sport program in a manner that seeks to eliminate the cultures of others in all aspects of the sports program and in relationship to the community served.</p> <p>Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Do we have any practices that explicitly or implicitly exclude or marginalize certain cultural groups? ▶ Are there instances where we have limited or prohibited the sharing of cultural knowledge? 	<p><i>Cultural Incapacity</i> - Coaching or running a sport program in a way that trivializes other cultures and seeks to make the cultures of others appear to be wrong.</p> <p>Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Have we unintentionally promoted assimilation to the dominant culture in our sports program? ▶ Are we aware of any biases in our coaching methods that may trivialize other cultures? 	<p><i>Cultural Blindness</i> - Coaching or running a sport program in a way that you don't see or acknowledge the culture of others; choosing to ignore the discrepant experiences of cultures within the program.</p> <p>Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Do we treat all athletes the same without considering their cultural backgrounds? ▶ Are we ignoring any cultural aspects that could connect to sports participation and learning?
PROACTIVE TRANSFORMATION		
<i>Cultural Precompetence</i>	<i>Cultural Competence</i>	<i>Cultural Proficiency</i>
<p><i>Cultural Precompetence</i> - Coaching or running a sport program with an increasing awareness of what you and the program don't know about working in diverse settings.</p> <p>Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Are we recognizing gaps in our program that do not include athletes' cultural perspectives? ▶ Have we started incorporating information and resources that reflect our athletes' diverse backgrounds? 	<p><i>Cultural Competence</i> - Coaching or running a sport program with your personal values and behaviors and the program's policies and practices being aligned in a manner that is inclusive of cultures that are new or different from yours and those of the program.</p> <p>Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Do we regularly provide opportunities for athletes to contribute their cultural knowledge to the team? ▶ Are our coaching policies and practices inclusive of different cultures? 	<p><i>Cultural Proficiency</i> - Coaching or running a sport program as an advocate for lifelong learning for the purpose of being increasingly effective in serving the needs of cultural groups in your program and the community.</p> <p>Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Are we actively assessing and addressing the gaps between our culture, the sports program's culture, and our athletes' cultures? ▶ Do we seek ongoing opportunities to learn about and implement culturally responsive coaching practices?

Note: The above table was produced in "Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for Leaders, 4th edition" by R. B. Lindsey, K. Nuri-Robins, R. D. Terrell, and D. B. Lindsey, (p.130), 2019, Corwin. Copyright 2019

Evolving Towards Inclusive Sports Excellence

Picture a youth sports team starting with cultural blindness—a place where everyone is treated equally, but differences are unseen. The problem is, because we don't see differences there is no differentiation for those who need additional support to be able to fully participate. Through coaching sessions, interactive workshops, and embracing diverse team-building activities, the coaches gradually promote cultural competence, encouraging athletes to value diversity and understand cultural perspectives, shining the light on the fact that each of us have different needs that, when fulfilled, strengthen the overall dynamic. As the journey progresses, the team achieves cultural proficiency, creating an environment where individual backgrounds contribute to a stronger, more successful team.

Strategies for Implementation: Empowering Progress through the Continuum

Cultural Awareness Workshops

Organize workshops that expose coaches and athletes to different cultures, helping them recognize their own biases and fostering openness.

Mentorship Programs

Pair athletes from diverse backgrounds with mentors who can provide guidance, support, and insights, promoting cultural competence.

Community Engagement

Encourage athletes to engage in community service projects that expose them to various cultures and enhances their understanding.

Cultural Competence Training

Provide specialized training to coaches on cultural competence, equipping them to navigate diverse team dynamics effectively.

Cross-Cultural Team Building

Organize team-building activities that celebrate the uniqueness of each athlete, strengthening bonds and embracing diversity.

Cultural Proficiency Reflection

Regularly assess team progress on the continuum, encouraging self-evaluation and planning for further growth.

Resources to Learn More - Expanding Your Cultural Proficiency Toolkit

To further your understanding of the Cultural Proficiency Continuum tool, check out the case study on the next page and apply what you've learned above.

Book: "Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for School Leaders" by Randall B. Lindsey, Kikanza Nuri Robins, & Raymond D. Terrell

[CLICK HERE TO VIEW VIDEO](#)

Case Study

The Cultural Proficiency Continuum: Progress Towards Equitable Practices

Consider the following first hand account. Once you have read it, reflect in the space below.

Club sports have been on the rise for decades, providing young athletes with access to specialized instruction, more time on task with a specific sport, and increased playing opportunities. It has also widened the divide between those with access to financial resources and those without. This divide also usually follows along a color line which continues to marginalize ethnic minorities. The pay to play model all but eliminates life changing access to sport simply based on how much money a family has and falls squarely under cultural blindness. Choosing to ignore the impact of such models perpetuates inequities and robs us of the benefits of true diversity. Using the continuum as a guide, in order to move toward cultural proficiency we must be willing to create equitable access to these programs that acknowledge and support increased and diverse participation. This will require us to think outside the box, remove paywalls that impede participation, and ensure the quality of coaches and facilities are equitable.

Clubs that have taken up this mission, like Starlings Volleyball Club in San Diego, have made a significant impact on the lives of the young athletes they serve. Starling's stated mission is to provide a safe place for disadvantaged girls to find empowerment, direction and love within the setting of quality volleyball training and competition. Starlings Volleyball, USA began with a single, under-resourced volleyball team of 11 girls in 1996. Today, Starlings is the nation's largest junior volleyball club with teams in more than 50 cities and Native American reservations throughout the U.S. Approximately 3,000 girls currently participate in the Starlings program annually. They have demonstrated the value of being culturally proficient in sport.

What strategies can be used by pay-to-play club sports to start to move forward on the Cultural Proficiency Continuum?

What strategies have Starling Volleyball implemented?

For sample answers for this case study, check out appendix pages 24-25

Tool 4

Essential Elements: Valuing Diversity and Shaping Organizational Culture

The Essentials Elements help to lay the groundwork for an incredible sports experience. Imagine these essentials as the secret ingredients that make your sports journey extraordinary. Whether it's shaping how we act as individuals, coming together as a team, or setting the tone for the whole organization, these essentials empower coaches, teams, and youth sports organizations to create a sports world where everyone's unique talents shine, differences are celebrated, and success is the name of the game.

The Essential Elements

- **Assess Culture:** Identify the differences between the people in your environment by getting to know them as individuals, conducting surveys or interviews, and creating a safe space where sharing is encouraged. Differences may not always be clear and visible.
- **Value Diversity:** Embrace the differences as contributing to the value of the environment.
- **Manage the Dynamics of Difference:** Reframe the differences so that diversity is not perceived as a problem to be solved.
- **Adapt to Diversity:** Teach and learn about differences and how to respond to them effectively.
- **Institutionalize Cultural Knowledge:** Change the internal program and professional development systems to ensure healthy and effective responses to diversity.



Toolkit for Implementation: Laying a Strong Foundation

Values Exploration

Engage athletes in discussions about their values, helping them understand their own cultural identities and fostering empathy for others.

Inclusive Codes of Conduct

Develop codes of conduct that explicitly promote respect, understanding, and inclusivity among athletes, coaches, and staff.

Diverse Role Models

Highlight diverse sports role models, showcasing the achievements of athletes from various backgrounds.

Cross-Cultural Communication

Incorporate communication skills training that focuses on effective cross-cultural interaction among team members.

Cultural Celebration Events

Organize events where athletes can share and celebrate their cultural traditions, fostering a sense of belonging.

Equity in Resources

Ensure access to resources such as coaching, equipment, and training for all athletes, irrespective of their background.

Resources to Learn More - Expanding Your Inclusivity Toolkit

To further your understanding of the Essential Elements tool, check out the case study on the next page and apply what you've learned above.

Book: "Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for School Leaders" by Randall B. Lindsey, Kikanza Nuri Robins, & Raymond D. Terrell

Webinars and Workshops: Participate in workshops tailored to integrate Cultural Proficiency Essentials into youth sports programs [i.e. The Center for Culturally Proficient Educational Practice (CCEP)]

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT CCEP](#)

Article: Mind First Performance "Acknowledging and understanding cultural differences in sports"

[CLICK HERE TO VIEW ARTICLE](#)

Article: Human Kinetics "How to diversify sport and create an inclusive environment"

[CLICK HERE TO VIEW ARTICLE](#)

Case Study

Essential Elements: Valuing Diversity and Shaping Organizational Culture

The Oakland Lacrosse Club in Oakland, CA, exemplifies how youth sports organizations can integrate the **Essential Elements** tool to foster cultural proficiency. Their approach, particularly through their Community Outreach Program, showcases their commitment to valuing diversity and shaping an inclusive organizational culture.

This club's Community Outreach Program focuses on engaging with the local community in various meaningful ways. By partnering with local schools and organizations, the Oakland Lacrosse Club brings the sport into new spaces, focusing on inclusion and community engagement rather than just competition. This strategy helps introduce lacrosse to a broader audience, especially in areas where the sport might be less known or accessible.

One key aspect of their outreach is organizing events and clinics within the community. These activities aren't solely about developing lacrosse skills; they serve as crucial engagement points between the club and local residents. These events help to cultivate a deeper appreciation for the sport, encouraging community participation and fostering a sense of belonging among diverse groups.

Volunteerism is also a significant component of the club's approach. Encouraging club staff and athletes to participate in community service initiatives, the Oakland Lacrosse Club demonstrates its dedication to social responsibility and community building. This involvement goes beyond sports, highlighting the club's role in fostering a positive and inclusive community atmosphere.

Through their Community Outreach Programs, the Oakland Lacrosse Club has strengthened its connection with the wider Oakland community. Their commitment to the Essential Elements of inclusivity and diversity in youth sports is evident in their efforts to extend the sport's reach and create a more inclusive environment. The club's initiatives in engaging diverse communities and promoting cultural proficiency set a commendable example for other youth sports organizations.

In what ways has the Oakland Lacrosse Club implemented the Essential Elements of Cultural Proficiency?

What strategies have they used to lay their foundation of cultural proficiency?

For sample answers for this case study, check out appendix pages 25-26



Appendix

The following appendix provides sample answers to each of the 4 case studies presented in this toolkit.

Sample Answer For Case Study 1: The Guiding Principles of Cultural Proficiency

How did the coach apply the following Guiding Principles of Cultural Proficiency?

Acknowledge the Predominant Force of Culture: *The coach recognized that the diverse cultural backgrounds and languages of the players were significant factors that could impact team communication and connection. By addressing the language barrier and integrating team-building strategies, the coach acknowledged the importance of culture in creating an inclusive team environment.*

Value Diversity as an Asset: *The coach saw the diversity of the team as a strength rather than a challenge to be overcome or tolerated. By ensuring that both international and local players were honored and respected, the coach demonstrated that he valued the unique contributions of each player. This approach helped to create a sense of value and appreciation for diversity within the team.*

Embrace Inclusivity: *By spending time on team-building strategies and making efforts to include all players in the program, the coach fostered an inclusive environment. He ensured that everyone felt like an integral part of the team, regardless of their language abilities or cultural background.*

Promote Equitable Practices: *The coach's approach to team building and communication ensured that all players had equal opportunities to contribute and participate. By focusing on building community first and respecting each player's contributions, the coach promoted equitable practices that allowed everyone to thrive.*

Overall, the coach's actions in this case study exemplify the application of the Guiding Principles of Cultural Proficiency in a sports team setting. His focus on acknowledging cultural differences, valuing diversity, embracing inclusivity, and promoting equity contributed to the team's success and cohesion.

Sample Answer For Case Study 2: Overcoming Challenges and Promoting Equity - Breaking Barriers for Inclusive Youth Sports

What barriers to an inclusive sports experience did the athlete encounter?

Implicit Bias: *The coach held unconscious biases about what a volleyball player should look like, leading to assumptions that the athlete was overweight based on her build, which was different from the typical build of the team's players.*

Resistance to Change: *The coach was not open to the possibility that a successful volleyball player could have a different body type, leading to a lack of flexibility in his coaching approach.*

Systemic Oppression: *The athlete faced systemic barriers related to body image and racial stereotypes in sports, which assumed a certain physique for volleyball players that did not align with her build as a Black athlete.*

Presumption of Entitlement and Unearned Privilege: *The coach's actions reflected a presumption of entitlement, as he tried to enforce a standard that aligned with his privileged understanding of what a volleyball player should look like, disregarding the athlete's unique strengths and characteristics.*

Unawareness of the Need to Adapt: *The coach demonstrated a lack of unawareness of the need to adapt his coaching practices to accommodate the diversity of his athletes, instead expecting the athlete to conform to his narrow view of a volleyball player's build.*

What strategies could the coach use to remove the barriers he created? What strategies could the coach use to remove the barriers that were already in place at an institutional level?

To remove the barriers he created:

Education and Self-Reflection: *The coach could educate himself about the diversity of athletic builds and the importance of embracing different body types in sports. Reflecting on his own biases and assumptions would be crucial.*

Adaptation: *The coach should adapt his coaching practices to recognize and value the unique strengths and needs of each athlete, rather than imposing a one-size-fits-all standard.*

Open Dialogue: Engaging in open and honest conversations with the athlete about her experiences and needs can help the coach better understand how to support her.

Inclusive Practices: *Implementing inclusive practices that celebrate diversity and accommodate different body types and cultural backgrounds can help create a more welcoming environment.*

To remove barriers at an institutional level:

Policy Changes: *Advocate for changes in policies and practices that perpetuate systemic oppression and discrimination in sports, such as reevaluating standards for athletes' builds.*

Diversity Training: *Implement mandatory diversity and inclusion training for all staff and coaches to raise awareness of biases and the importance of cultural proficiency.*

Support Systems: *Establish support systems for athletes from diverse backgrounds, including mentorship programs and resources that address unique challenges they may face.*

Community Engagement: *Engage with the broader community to foster a culture of inclusivity and understanding, both within and outside the sports program.*

Sample Answer For Case Study 3: The Cultural Proficiency Continuum: Progress Towards Equitable Practices

What strategies can be used by pay-to-play club sports to start to move forward on the Cultural Proficiency Continuum?

Acknowledge and Address Cultural Blindness: *Recognize the impact of pay-to-play models on marginalized communities and commit to creating more inclusive policies - such as:*

- **Sliding Scale Fees:** Implement a sliding scale fee structure that adjusts the cost of participation based on a family's income, ensuring that financial barriers do not prevent talented young athletes from participating.
- **Community Partnerships:** Partner with local businesses, organizations, and schools to secure funding and resources that can help subsidize costs for athletes who need financial assistance.
- **Outreach and Recruitment:** Actively reach out to and recruit athletes from diverse backgrounds, making a concerted effort to break down barriers to access and participation.
- **Inclusive Policies and Practices:** Review and revise club policies and practices to ensure they are inclusive and do not inadvertently exclude or disadvantage certain groups of athletes.

Move Towards Cultural Precompetence: *Begin by assessing the current state of diversity and inclusion within the organization and identifying areas for improvement. This may involve gathering feedback from athletes, families, and coaches.*

Develop Cultural Competence: *Implement training and development programs for staff and coaches to increase their understanding of cultural diversity and inclusivity. Encourage an environment where diverse perspectives are valued and integrated into the organization's practices. Ensure that coaching staff and club leadership reflect the diversity of the community so that all athletes feel represented and valued.*

Strive for Cultural Proficiency: *Commit to ongoing learning and improvement in serving the diverse needs of athletes. This could include creating scholarship programs, reducing financial barriers, and actively recruiting athletes from underrepresented communities.*

Promote Equity: *Ensure that all athletes have equal access to resources, opportunities, and support, regardless of their financial background or cultural identity. Ex: Offer scholarships and financial aid to athletes from underrepresented or low-income backgrounds, providing them with equal opportunities to participate in club sports.*

What strategies have Starling Volleyball implemented?

Cultural Competence: *By focusing on providing a safe place for disadvantaged girls, Starling Volleyball demonstrates an understanding of the unique challenges faced by these athletes and creates an environment where they feel supported and valued.*

Cultural Proficiency: *The organization's commitment to life-long learning and serving the diverse needs of its athletes is evident in its mission to empower and direct young girls within the setting of quality volleyball training and competition.*

Addressing Cultural Blindness: *Starlings Volleyball has recognized the impact of the pay-to-play model on marginalized communities and has taken action to create more equitable access to sports.*

Promoting Equity: *By offering volleyball programs in more than 50 cities and Native American reservations, Starlings Volleyball ensures that athletes from diverse backgrounds have access to quality sports experiences.*

By implementing these strategies, both pay-to-play club sports and organizations like Starling Volleyball can make significant progress along the Cultural Proficiency Continuum, creating a more inclusive and equitable sports environment.

Sample Answer For Case Study 4: Essential Elements: Valuing Diversity and Shaping Organizational Culture

In what ways has the Oakland Lacrosse Club implemented the Essential Elements of Cultural Proficiency?

Assess Culture: *The club actively engages with the local community, understanding the cultural context of Oakland and tailoring their outreach programs to meet the community's needs.*

Value Diversity: *By bringing lacrosse into new spaces, particularly in areas where the sport might be less known or accessible, the club demonstrates its commitment to diversity. Their activities are designed to introduce lacrosse to a broader audience, including diverse groups.*

Manage the Dynamics of Difference: *Organizing events and clinics within the community serves as engagement points between the club and local residents. These activities are not just about sports; they foster a sense of belonging among diverse groups, managing the dynamics of difference by creating inclusive environments.*

Adapt to Diversity: *The club's volunteerism initiatives, where staff and athletes participate in community service, show their adaptability to diversity. By going beyond sports, they address broader community needs and promote social responsibility.*

Institutionalize Cultural Knowledge: *Through their Community Outreach Program, the Oakland Lacrosse Club institutionalizes cultural knowledge by making inclusivity and community engagement integral parts of their organizational culture.*

What strategies have they used to lay their foundation of cultural proficiency?

Community Partnerships: *Partnering with local schools and organizations to introduce lacrosse and engage with different community segments.*

Inclusive Events: *Organizing events and clinics that focus on community engagement and inclusion, rather than just competition.*

Volunteerism: *Encouraging club staff and athletes to participate in community service initiatives, demonstrating a commitment to social responsibility.*

Community Engagement: *Actively involving the club in the local community, fostering relationships, and creating a sense of belonging among diverse groups.*

Education and Training: *Providing education and training for club staff and athletes on cultural competence and inclusivity, ensuring that these values are embedded in their practices.*

Overall, the Oakland Lacrosse Club’s approach to implementing the Essential Elements of Cultural Proficiency and their strategies for laying a foundation of cultural proficiency serve as a model for other youth sports organizations looking to promote inclusivity and diversity.



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Robert Marcus,

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Our Mission

To change the culture of youth sports so that every child, regardless of social or economic circumstance, has access to a positive youth sports experience.