

CALLS FOR COACHES

Coaching Social and Emotional
Skills in Youth Sports



This brief was commissioned by the **Susan Crown Exchange** (SCE) to explore the role sports can play in developing young people's social and emotional skills.

FOREWORD

As a child stepping onto the tennis court, I felt like I grew three feet taller. My first coaches helped build my self-esteem and self-worth. They made the tennis court a safe place where I was challenged and encouraged to dream my dreams. And they kept me in the game, when I wanted to quit.

I was 17, facing setbacks, ready to leave the professional tennis world behind. I threw my tennis rackets into the forest, certain I was done playing. My coach, Tarik Benhabiles, asked me to give him four more months before I gave up. He challenged me to focus on learning and getting better each day. With Tarik developing my skills and confidence, I became the number one junior in the world and the world number 14 player the next year — all because my coach believed in me.

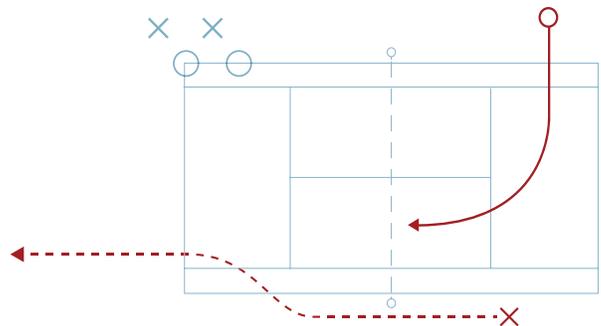
When I started my own programs, I built on what I learned from Tarik. At the Andy Roddick Foundation, we emphasize the development of social and emotional skills by setting clear goals on what we want children to achieve. We develop intentional learning opportunities with a focus on the process of learning not just the specific sports skills, but also on skills like persistence, regulation and communication.

The most important thing we do is build lasting relationships between children and adults. We provide a safe space, which means creating clear expectations and limits along with room to learn and play. We take the time to get to know each child personally and appreciate their strengths and areas for growth. We understand their frustration triggers and how to help them regulate their emotions. We celebrate often and encourage the children to celebrate each other. Finally, we partner with families, letting them know the great things their child has done each week — like learning to hit a ball or being a good friend. We tell the families why we are grateful for them, for simple things like attending the program each day.

We do all of this to help children be confident, resilient and persistent so they are ready to explore their world and own their future. We understand the profound impact that a coach can have on a kid — something I've experienced firsthand — and this report demonstrates just that. Coaches create safe spaces to learn and know when to give encouragement, even when we've already thrown in the towel. It's the high-quality relationships I've built with my childhood coaches, including Tarik, that helped me grow into the person I've become.

Thank you for everything, Tarik.

Andy S. Roddick
Founder and Chair
Andy Roddick Foundation



WARMUP

Beyond simply winning games, the purpose of coaches is to develop their athletes. When coaches focus on the social, emotional, cognitive and physical needs of the whole child, they help youth athletes feel safe and supported, they foster important traits such as responsibility and perseverance, they guide them in building an emotional foundation for success, and they teach teammates to respect and listen to one another.

Many children play sports, in both structured and unstructured settings. The Aspen Institute Sports & Society Program's *State of Play: 2018* report, drawing on the most recent Sports and Fitness Industry Association data, shows that 69 percent of youth ages 6 to 12 participated in a sport at least one day during 2017. The percentage of kids who participated on a regular basis in a team sport is lower, 37 percent and down from 41 percent in 2013, which has become a focus of Project Play, a Sports & Society Program initiative that helps stakeholders build healthy children and communities through sports. The hallmark of a high-quality sports experience is often a young person's relationship with a coach, yet only 36 percent of youth coaches surveyed say they have received training in effective motivational techniques.¹

It's a missed opportunity. Sports, which combine physical activity and play, represent an important environment to intentionally build important skills such as teamwork and cooperation, empathy, and planning and problem solving — just to name a few. However, it is important to remember that the development of these skills requires intentional effort and a structured approach. This brief offers a plan of action for coaches.



The Aspen Institute Sports & Society Program and National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development have forged a partnership with the goal of exploring the role youth sports can play in developing young people's social and emotional skills. With funding from the Susan Crown Exchange (SCE) and guidance from a strategic advisory group of researchers, program providers, coaches, and athletes including young people, we commissioned the EASEL Lab at the Harvard Graduate School of Education to produce a white paper, *Coaching Social and Emotional Skills in Youth Sports*, which synthesizes and explains the evidence behind effective strategies youth coaches can use to build these skills in their young athletes.

This brief translates the white paper into actionable calls for coaches to implement in after-school and community-based sports leagues. The brief's goals are to:

- Help coaches understand why youth sports is a great venue for developing social, emotional and cognitive skills.
- Provide strategies and best practices for coaches to name, model and create environments for youth athletes to develop and practice these skills.

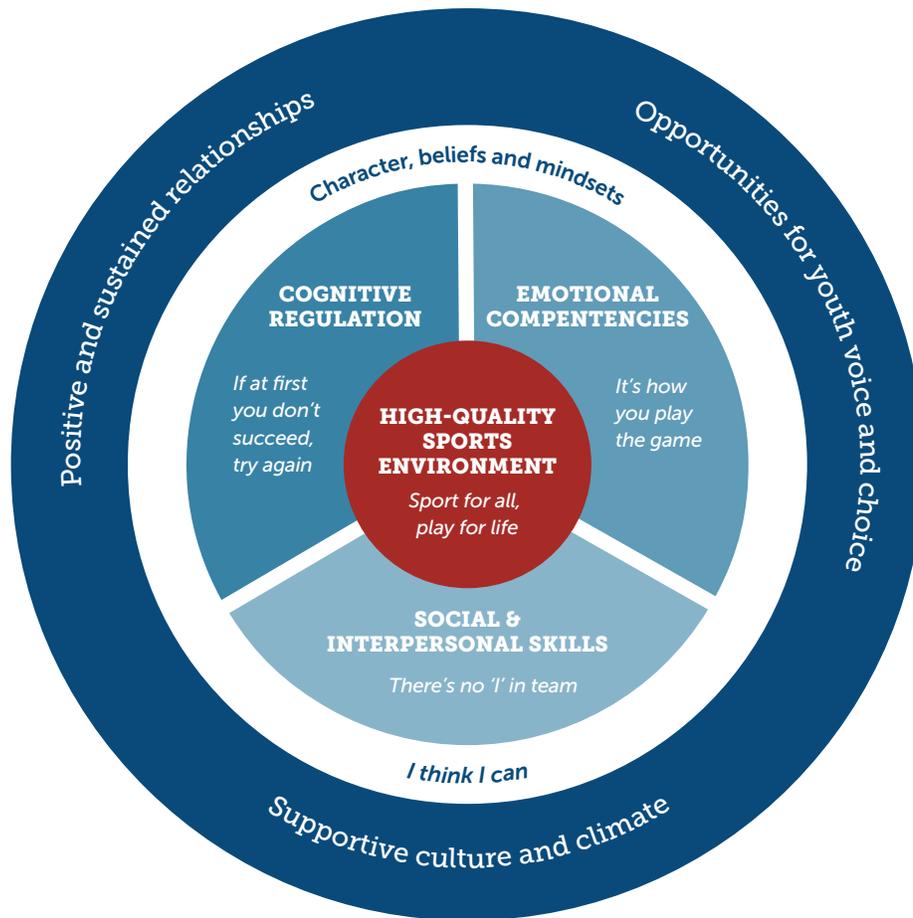
¹ The Aspen Institute Project Play, "State of Play: 2018 Trends and Developments," (Washington: The Aspen Institute Sports & Society Program, 2018).

THE FOUNDATION

Coaching Social and Emotional Skills in Youth Sports explains how a positive youth development approach is critical for physical and emotional well-being. Sports and other physical activities provide ample opportunities to create an environment built on the foundational characteristics of positive youth development. Characteristics of positive youth development include:

- Youth-adult relationships — **positive and sustained relationships** with adults;
- Skill development — the practice of social, emotional and cognitive skills in a **supportive culture and climate**; and
- Opportunities for leadership — the use of these skills to enhance **youth voice and choice**.

Social and emotional skills can be grouped into three interrelated categories: cognitive regulation; emotional competencies; and social and interpersonal skills.²



² J. Kahn, R. Bailey, and S. Jones, "Coaching Social and Emotional Skills in Youth Sports," (Washington: The Aspen Institute, 2019).

Cognitive regulation can be thought of as the basic skills required to direct behavior toward setting and reaching goals. This set of skills includes working memory, attention control and flexible thinking, as well as beliefs and attitudes that guide one’s sense of self and learning style. Children use cognitive regulation skills whenever faced with tasks that require concentration, planning (including carrying out intentional physical movement), problem solving, coordination, decision-making or overriding a strong internal or external desire.

Emotional competencies are a set of skills and understandings that help children recognize, express and regulate their emotions. This set of skills includes sympathy, empathy and perspective-taking. Emotional skills allow children to manage their own emotions and cope with different situations in constructive ways. These skills are fundamental to positive social interactions and critical to building relationships with peers and adults, which exist at the core of individual and team sports.

Social and interpersonal skills help youth accurately interpret the behavior of others. This set of skills includes interacting positively with peers and adults and effectively navigating social situations. Social and interpersonal skills build on emotional competencies. Children must be able to use these skills effectively in order to contribute to a team, resolve disagreements and coexist peacefully with others.

The development of these skills interacts with **character, beliefs and mindsets**. Character represents ways of thinking and habits that support youth working together as friends, family and community. It encompasses understanding and acting upon core ethical values like integrity, honesty and compassion. Young people’s beliefs and mindsets about themselves, others, and their circumstances — such as self-knowledge, motivation and purpose — influence how they interpret and respond to events and interactions throughout their day. Together, these skills, habits and beliefs lead to success in schooling and other community-based activities, the workplace, relationships and citizenship.³ Sports and physical activities provide a promising context for developing these skills.⁴

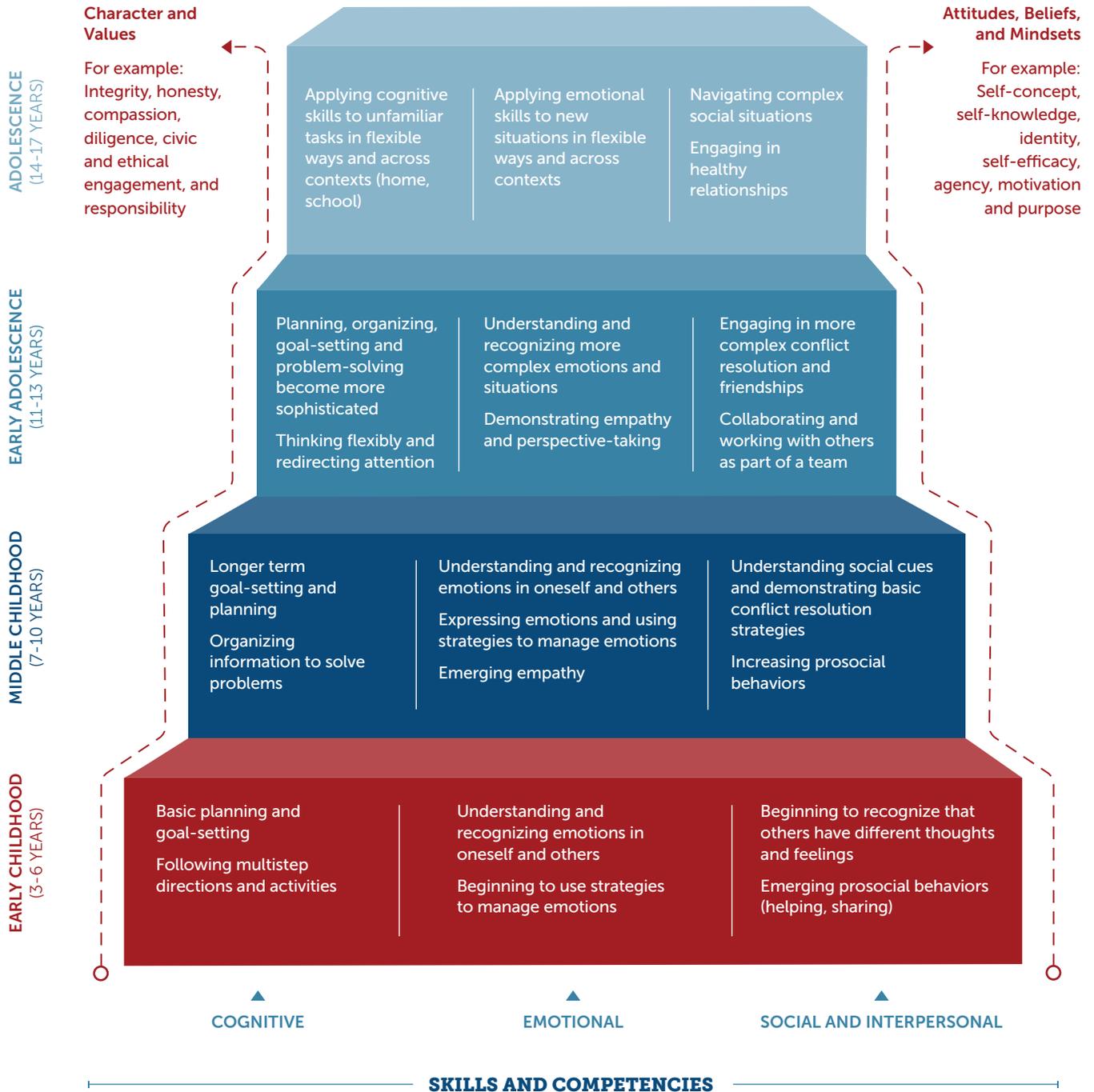
It is important to note that there is a developmental progression in which certain skills and competencies emerge (see next page). As the environment where children learn, grow, and play changes, so do the demands placed on them. In order to be successful, some social, emotional and cognitive skills are more or less important at different phases of development. For example, youth must learn to recognize, express and regulate their emotions before they can be expected to interact with others who are engaged in the same set of processes.⁵

3 The Aspen Institute National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development, “From a Nation at Risk to a Nation at Hope: Recommendations from the National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development,” (Washington: The Aspen Institute National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development, 2019).

4 J. Kahn, R. Bailey, and S. Jones, “Coaching Social and Emotional Skills in Youth Sports,” (Washington: The Aspen Institute, 2019).

5 S. Jones, C. A. Farrington, R. Jagers, and M. Brackett, with J. Kahn, “A Research Agenda for the Next Generation,” (Washington: The Aspen Institute National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development, 2019).

How Social and Emotional Skills Develop Over Time



Note: This graphic originally appeared in *From a Nation at Risk to a Nation at Hope: Recommendations from the National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development*.

CALLS FOR COACHES



We call upon youth sports providers to integrate social, emotional and cognitive skill building into their programs. These Calls represent best practices that coaches can use to develop, model and foster their young athletes' holistic development. They build upon practices that coaches often already do. The Calls highlight strategies that coaches can use to create safe and supportive environments as well as forge high-quality relationships with and among their athletes. In addition, each Call provides coaches with resources to learn more.

PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

The Practice Spotlights are simple techniques to promote the development of these skills. These best practices have been compiled in partnership with our Strategic Advisory Group of researchers, coaches, educators and providers.

RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT

Want to learn more about one of the Calls? The free, online resources featured in the Resource Spotlights have been developed by leading organizations in social and emotional learning, mentorship, sports-based youth development and coaching. Links to all the resources are available in the online version at as.pn/callsforcoaches.



01

KNOW EVERY ATHLETE'S STORY

Build positive adult-youth relationships



Building a trusting relationship is foundational for helping each and every youth athlete develop skills like the ability to persist in the face of challenges and work on a team. Take the time to understand why each youth athlete has made the decision to play sports. This reason reflects a young athlete's personality and goals. Furthermore, coaches should learn and appreciate individual youth experiences, interests, talents and backgrounds. In particular, coaches should understand the impacts that trauma can have on young people, on and off the field. Knowing every athlete's story provides insight about how best to create opportunities for young athletes to feel like they belong, express their opinions and assume leadership.

PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT:

- Ask every player which name they prefer and call them by that name
- Ask questions to get to know every youth, their families and their motivations
- Talk to every youth at every practice and during every game
- Talk with youth athletes about how to seek out and connect with other adults they trust
- Organize formal meetings with your players throughout the season in order to help them express their feelings, wants and needs

RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT:

- **Search Institute:** Ideas for Building Developmental Relationships
- **MENTOR:** Success Mentors Trauma-Informed Mentoring Training Curriculum

Take the time to understand why each youth athlete has made the decision to play sports

02

ESTABLISH A SUPPORTIVE TEAM CULTURE

Create a safe space that supports social and emotional skill development



Coaches are responsible for establishing a positive team culture characterized by support, safety, belonging and respect where young people are valued as decisionmakers. Supportive team culture in youth sport is built by displaying and encouraging positive attitudes and language, caring behaviors and effective emotion management. To ensure that team activities are inclusive of youth athletes with different learning styles, abilities and backgrounds, develop the unique strengths of each youth. Then, coaches should provide opportunities for each young person to shine and show leadership, including teaching and mentoring one another.

PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT:

Safety, Security & Support

- Set high expectations and clear limits on behavior
- Ensure the physical environment is free of safety concerns
- Get trained in the basics of coaching techniques, including the prevention of physical, emotional and sexual abuse
- Start and end practices on time
- Adjust the structure of practice, e.g. individual versus team activities, to accommodate players' emotions
- Establish a code of conduct that prohibits bullying and creates meaningful consequences
- Encourage high-fives or handshakes for greetings
- Incorporate team-building activities throughout the season to create dedicated opportunities for building relationships among coaches and teammates

Display and encourage positive attitude and language

DC GIRLS BASEBALL

DC Girls Baseball (DCGB) coaches give a team values sheet to their parents, players and fans at the start of the tournament season. The team values sheet outlines team philosophy and goals, specific expectations of coaches, parents, players and fans, and team needs. By sharing with everyone connected to the team, the team values sheet ensures the whole group is on the same page, making clear that DCGB focuses on effort, encouragement, sportsmanship and positivity, rather than scoreboards or statistics. Once the tournament season ends, DCGB coaches send each player an individualized feedback sheet. These sheets focus on praise on specific areas within the athlete's control, such as effort, reaction to adversity, leadership, teamwork and specific physical skills the player has been working on. They also identify areas for improvement, growth and development that consider the player's emotional, social and physical skill needs.



Youth Voice & Choice

- Create specific responsibilities to provide leadership opportunities for players, e.g. Stretch Captain, Equipment Captain or Cheer Captain, and rotate these youth leadership opportunities
 - Allow youth athletes to make and correct missteps as leaders
 - Create community by adopting practices such as composing a team cheer, selecting a team name, logo or slogan, or incorporating team-building activities into games and practices
 - Give youth athletes the opportunity to clearly define their goals and objectives
- Engage all youth athletes in co-creating and setting positive norms, rules and routines for practices and games and work with them to consistently reinforce the structure
 - Ensure all youth are included, with equitable access to activities in practices and playing time in games, being sensitive to different learning styles
 - Recognize not only extroverted leadership, but also those who lead by example

RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT:

- **Futures Without Violence:** Coaching with Courage Training Module (available Spring 2019)
- **Alliance for a Healthier Generation:** Training Center
- **National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments:** Creating a Safe and Respectful Environment in Our Nation's Classrooms
- **StopBullying.Gov:** Bullying Prevention Training Course
- **GLSEN:** The Safe Space Kit: Guide to Being an Ally to LGBT Students
- **U.S. Center for SafeSport:** Online Training
- **Coaching Corps:** Coaching for Youth Development Playbook

03

CELEBRATE EFFORT

Embody effective leadership strategies that emphasize effort, autonomy and learning

Coaches should not limit celebration to only wins, but also celebrate effort and acknowledge that mistakes are a part of learning. Youth sport teams should value and reward individual growth as well as the overall improvement of the team. Although coaches should challenge each player to do their personal best, they should also set up their athletes to experience success. Give sincere, earned praise, and use words that refer to specific actions. Conversely, avoid using criticism or rewards to shape youth athlete behavior.



PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT:

- Give shoutouts for achievement, effort and improvement at the end of the practice: players to players, coach to players and players to coach
- Encourage players to cheer for each other
- Establish a ritual for letting go of mistakes, e.g. a brushing motion across a shoulder
- Create a season-ending event to celebrate skill attainment, achievement and growth

RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT:

- **Playworks:** RecessLab Lightning Lingo
- **Positive Coaching Alliance:** Positive Charting
- **Mindset Kit:** Growth Mindset Toolkit
- **InSideOut Initiative:** Overview

GIRLS ON THE RUN

Girls on the Run (GOTR) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering young women through creatively integrating running into dynamic, interactive lessons. In the GOTR 3rd-5th Grade Program, girls and their running buddies celebrate the end of each season with a non-competitive 5k event to culminate their 10-week curriculum focused on building social and emotional skills.

04

FOCUS ON THE SKILLS THAT MATTER

Prioritize and provide opportunities for direct skill building and practice

Coaches should identify and communicate the comprehensive set of skills (physical, social, emotional and cognitive) they hope to develop in their youth athletes. Reinforcing all types of skills in team rituals and routines benefits everyone and builds sports environments that are higher in quality and, ultimately, more satisfying and valuable for coaches and athletes. Reflection with athletes on experiences and skills developed in games or practices creates an opportunity to discuss how to apply that learning at home, in school and in the community.

PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT:

- Identify and share the particular skills you are aiming to build in your athletes — whether that's working as a team, staying motivated, empathizing with teammates or other key skills
- Encourage parents and caregivers to reinforce these skills by talking about what they are, what they mean and what these behaviors can look like at home
- Have players set goals and intentions regarding their physical, social, emotional and cognitive skill development
- Establish a circle-up ritual at the start of every practice and game and a reflection ritual at the end of every practice and game that includes discussion of the skills being prioritized
- Have conversations about how to use experiences and skills from games or practices in other settings, e.g. discuss how mistakes are a part of learning and improving



Have players set goals and intentions regarding their physical, social, emotional and cognitive skill development

RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT:

- **Playworks:** SEL Game Guide
- **Playworks:** Game Library
- **Coaching Corps:** Character Building Attributes
- **The First Tee:** 9 Core Values
- **Character.org:** 11 Principles Sourcebook
- **Preparing Youth to Thrive:** SEL Resources

AMERICA SCORES

America SCORES combines team-based soccer leagues, poetry and writing, and youth-led service projects. America SCORES' holistic program has two central tenets. First, it utilizes the sport of soccer to teach sportsmanship, discipline, problem-solving and teamwork as well as to encourage physical activity. Second, the program incorporates studying, writing and performing poetry for the development of creative thinking, literacy and speaking skills. The bonds of trust that youth build by sharing their vulnerabilities with each other through poetry makes them better soccer teammates. The confidence they build by positively affecting their communities through service projects makes them better leaders on and off the field. These shared experiences deepen their commitment not just to their beloved sport, but to each other and to their team — resulting in kids who are both physically and emotionally healthier.



05

BE A ROLE MODEL

Model good character and decision-making

As leaders in youth sport, coaches should model positive behavior in their interactions with other adults and youth athletes, with opponents and referees, and particularly when mediating conflicts. Coaches should demonstrate and discuss the difference between constructive and destructive conduct. During frustrating situations, coaches should remain calm and display appropriate behavior. If you make a mistake, model accountability by taking responsibility for your actions and owning up. It is important that youth athletes see that coaches are learning alongside them while remaining exemplars.

PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT:

- Participate in drills with players
- Practice the positive interactions that are encouraged of players
- Practice self-care and engage in reflection around your own social and emotional well-being
- Be cognizant of your own and others' perspectives
- Manage conflicts with calmness and clarity, acknowledging player feelings and emotions

RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT:

- **MENTOR:** Mentoring resources and webinars
- **National Mentoring Resource Center:** Resources, guides and handouts
- **Preparing Youth to Thrive:** Self-Assessment
- **The Rhodes Lab:** Natural Mentoring
- **Futures Without Violence:** Coaching Boys Into Men

During frustrating situations, coaches should remain calm and display appropriate behavior

06

BE COACHABLE

Seek opportunities for support, training and professional development

A key component of teaching social and emotional skills is the ability to assess and manage one's own social and emotional state. Coaches should have the mindset that there is always more to learn, and that there is always room for improvement. To commit to their own continued improvement, coaches should understand the foundational skills for how we learn and be open to adapting coaching strategies and style. Free, online resources, included throughout this brief, are great options for continued learning that can be accessed anywhere. Additionally, coaches should seek to learn from their own athletes. By collecting feedback from athletes and incorporating it into practices, coaches are empowering children to use their voices while improving their coaching competencies.

PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT:

- Participate in learning opportunities with other coaches in the league or in the community such as observing other coaches' practices or practicing in league-wide professional development
- Actively seek out and participate in professional development to grow your coaching skills
- Get knowledgeable about coaching techniques that identify and prevent physical, emotional and sexual abuse
- Collect athlete feedback and incorporate into practices

RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT:

- **Team USA:** USOC Quality Coaching Framework
- **Positive Coaching Alliance:** Development Zone Resource Center
- **SHAPE America:** National Standards for Sport Coaches



HOW TO COACH KIDS.ORG

The How to Coach Kids website aggregates resources to train coaches by sport and topic in a new, free 30-minute course on the general principles of coaching children through age 12. Co-developed by Nike and the U.S. Olympic Committee with the help of the Aspen Institute, this course helps new and novice coaches plan a great practice, keep kids safe, use teaching strategies to help kids learn and work with families.

07

JOIN FORCES

Engage with families, schools and other community organizations

Coaches should think about their role in a child's web of support and join forces with other adults in their lives, especially for reflection and debrief. As part of knowing every athlete's story, seek to partner with the other important adults in your athletes' lives to better provide the support they need. Coaches should regularly communicate with families — including sharing team expectations and values — and remain open to conversations with parents and guardians. As an active member of the community, coaches should strive to increase opportunities and access for high-quality sports experiences for all young people.

PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT:

- Host a preseason meeting with families to discuss your program philosophy, goals and intentions
- Design a practice or family hour for parents/caregivers and siblings
- Learn about the language and strategies used in schools or at home and, when possible, reinforce these lessons in practices and games
- Collaborate with other coaches to design effective practices
- Talk with parents/caregivers about issues arising with their children
- Find regular opportunities to assess and share progress with families
- Start a conversation around what quality coaching looks like to provide a healthy and positive sports experience for youth across your community

RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT:

- **National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development:** Building Partnerships
- **Project Play:** Teamwork Toolkit (available Fall 2019)
- **Project Play:** Healthy Sport Index
- **Up2Us Sports:** Case Studies
- **Center for Promise:** Defining Webs of Support: A New Framework to Advance Understanding of Relationships and Youth Development



FLAG STAR FOOTBALL

Flag Star Football, a youth flag football league, provides four guiding principles for the parents of participating youth athletes. The four principles include the following: Arrive With a Purpose, Set the Tone; Don't Be a Jerk; Make (and Encourage) Mistakes; and Do Better. The guidelines emphasize the parent as the ultimate role model for youth athletes by stating that "YOU [the parent] are in charge of the environment." The guidelines further detail expectations for parents and provide the rationale for each.



COOLDOWN AND REFLECTION

As this brief demonstrates, sports presents an incredible and unique opportunity to help all youth athletes build and practice social, emotional and cognitive skills. Although difficult, measuring the progression of social, emotional and cognitive skills would be valuable to coaches and youth athletes. There are not yet research-supported measurement tools that have been utilized in the context of youth sports; this represents an area for exploration. As these tools are created, the focus should be on helping coaches and athletes identify strengths and room for growth, recognizing that everyone develops at their own pace.

This opportunity cannot be realized without the backing and understanding of coaches. Coaches lead the way in building these competencies in their athletes. You, as coaches and important role models in young people's lives, have the critical role to elevate the importance of these skills and begin implementing these calls to strengthen your teams and programs. By intentionally developing social, emotional and cognitive skills in your players, you are creating a higher-quality sports environment, cultivating a love of sports and preparing your young athletes to excel in the world of sports and beyond.

TEAM ROSTER

The Aspen Institute

The Aspen Institute is a nonpartisan forum for values-based leadership and the exchange of ideas.

[AspenInstitute.org](https://www.aspeninstitute.org)

Aspen Institute Sports & Society Program

The mission of the Sports & Society Program is to convene leaders, facilitate dialogue and inspire solutions that help sports serve the public interest. An initiative of the program, Project Play develops, applies and shares knowledge that helps stakeholders build healthy communities through sports.

[ProjectPlay.us](https://www.projectplay.us) | [SportsAndSociety.org](https://www.sportsandsociety.org)

Aspen Institute National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development

The Aspen Institute National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development was created to engage and energize communities in re-envisioning learning to support the whole child. The Commission's culminating report, *From a Nation at Risk to a Nation at Hope*, was released in January 2019.

[NationAtHope.org](https://www.nationathope.org)

Susan Crown Exchange

Susan Crown Exchange (SCE) is a Chicago-based foundation invested in shaping an ecosystem of anytime, anywhere learning to prepare youth to adapt and thrive in a rapidly changing and highly connected world. Through grantmaking programs in digital learning and social and emotional learning, SCE helps identify, codify and promote high-quality opportunities for young people to learn and grow in out-of-school time.

[SCEfdn.org](https://www.scefdn.org)

Strategic Advisory Group

Our deepest thanks to the members of our Strategic Advisory Group of researchers, coaches, practitioners, educators and providers. The Strategic Advisory Group convened in September 2018 in Washington D.C., and provided regular support and feedback during the development of this brief. Members include:

Dr. Jennifer Agans, Assistant Professor, Pennsylvania State University, College of Health and Human Development; **Paul Caccamo**, Founder & CEO, Up2Us Sports; **Dr. James P. Comer**, Maurice Falk Professor of Child Psychiatry, Yale Child Study Center; **Elizabeth Cushing**, President, Playworks; **Carl Ehrlich**, Founder & CEO, Flag Star Football; **Joe Ehrmann**, Co-Founder, InSideOut Initiative; **Dr. Wade Gilbert**, Professor, Fresno State University, College of Health and Human Services; **Yesenia Gorbea**, Senior Program Specialist, Futures Without Violence; **Dr. Dan Gould**, Director, Institute for the Study of Youth Sports, Michigan State University, College of Education; **Bethany Rubin Henderson**, Network President, America SCORES; **Bonnie Hoffman**, Coach, DC Girls Baseball; **Dr. Noelle Hurd**, Scully Family Discovery Associate Professor, University of Virginia, Department of Psychology; **Dr. Stephanie Jones**, Director, EASEL Lab, Harvard Graduate School of Education; **Jennifer Kahn**, Research Manager, EASEL Lab, Harvard Graduate School of Education; **Doug Karr**, President & CEO, Character.org; **Dr. John McCarthy**, Director, Institute for Athletic Coach Education, Boston University, Wheelock College of Education; **Michael McFarlane**, Coach, Flag Star Football; **Wayne Moss**, Executive Director, National Council of Youth Sports; **Lauren Puzen**, Senior Partnership Manager, Alliance for a Healthier Generation; **Jody Redman**, Co-Founder, InSideOut Initiative; **Dr. Allison Riley**, Senior Vice President, Programming and Evaluation, Girls on the Run; **Suzanne Sillett**, Director of Education and Quality, Coaching Corps; **Dr. Ashlyn Smith**, Senior Manager, Research and Evaluation, Special Olympics; **Richard Tagle**, Executive Director, Andy Roddick Foundation; **Jim Thompson**, Founder & CEO, Positive Coaching Alliance; and **Jeff York**, Vice President, Consumer Research, The First Tee.

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Chris Borland, former NFL player; **Kate Carpenter**, America SCORES Milwaukee; **Janet Carter**, Coaching Corps; **Diana Cutaia**, Coaching Peace; **Delia Hagan**, MENTOR; **Alex Hooker**, Bechtel Foundation; **Dr. Richard Lerner**, Tufts University; **Lynne Lee**, Coaching Corps; **Dr. Will Mayer**, Sacred Heart University; **Jamison Merrill**, Up2Us Sports; **Lisa Perry**, Alliance for a Healthier Generation; **Dudney Sylla**, MENTOR; **Dr. Maureen Weiss**, University of Minnesota; and **Luella Williams**, Up2Us Sports.

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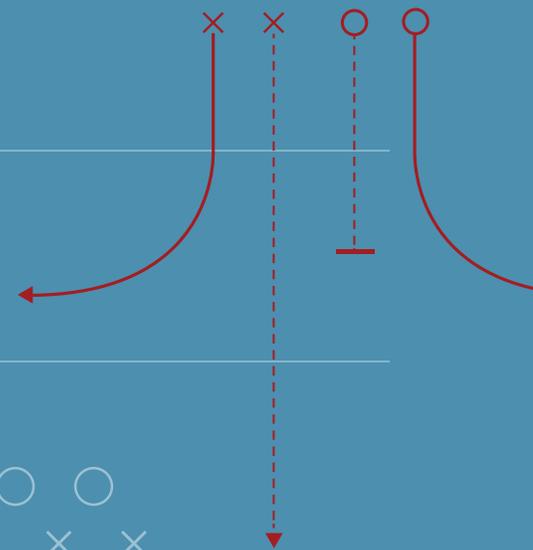
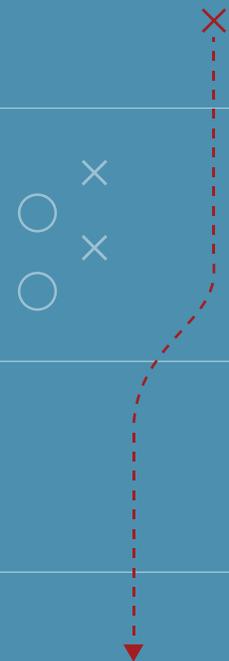
BE COACHABLE

Seek opportunities for support, training and professional development

07

JOIN FORCES

Engage with families, schools and other community organizations



CHECKLIST

First Practice

- Host a preseason meeting with parents to discuss your program philosophy, goals and intentions
- Ask every player which name they prefer and call them by that name
- Talk with youth athletes about how to seek out and connect with other adults they trust
- Co-create and set positive norms, rules and routines for practices and games

Planning Practice / Pregame

- Collaborate with other coaches to design effective practices
- Ensure the physical environment is free of safety concerns
- Set high expectations and clear limits on behavior
- Have players set goals and intentions regarding their physical, social, emotional and cognitive skill development
- Allow athletes to serve in leadership roles and maintain a rotation schedule so all players have the opportunity to lead

During Practice / Day of Game

- Start and end practices on time
- Participate in drills with players
- Practice positive interactions that are encouraged of players
- Adjust the structure of practice and activities to accommodate players' emotions
- Create community by adopting practices such as composing a team cheer, selecting a team name, logo or slogan, or incorporating team-building activities into games and practices
- Encourage high-fives or handshakes for greetings

After Practice / Postgame

- Give shoutouts for achievement, effort and improvement at the end of the practice: players to players, coach to players and players to coach
- Collect athlete feedback and incorporate into practices
- Talk with parents/caregivers about issues arising with their children
- Encourage parents and caregivers to reinforce these skills by talking about what they are, what they mean and what these behaviors can look like at home

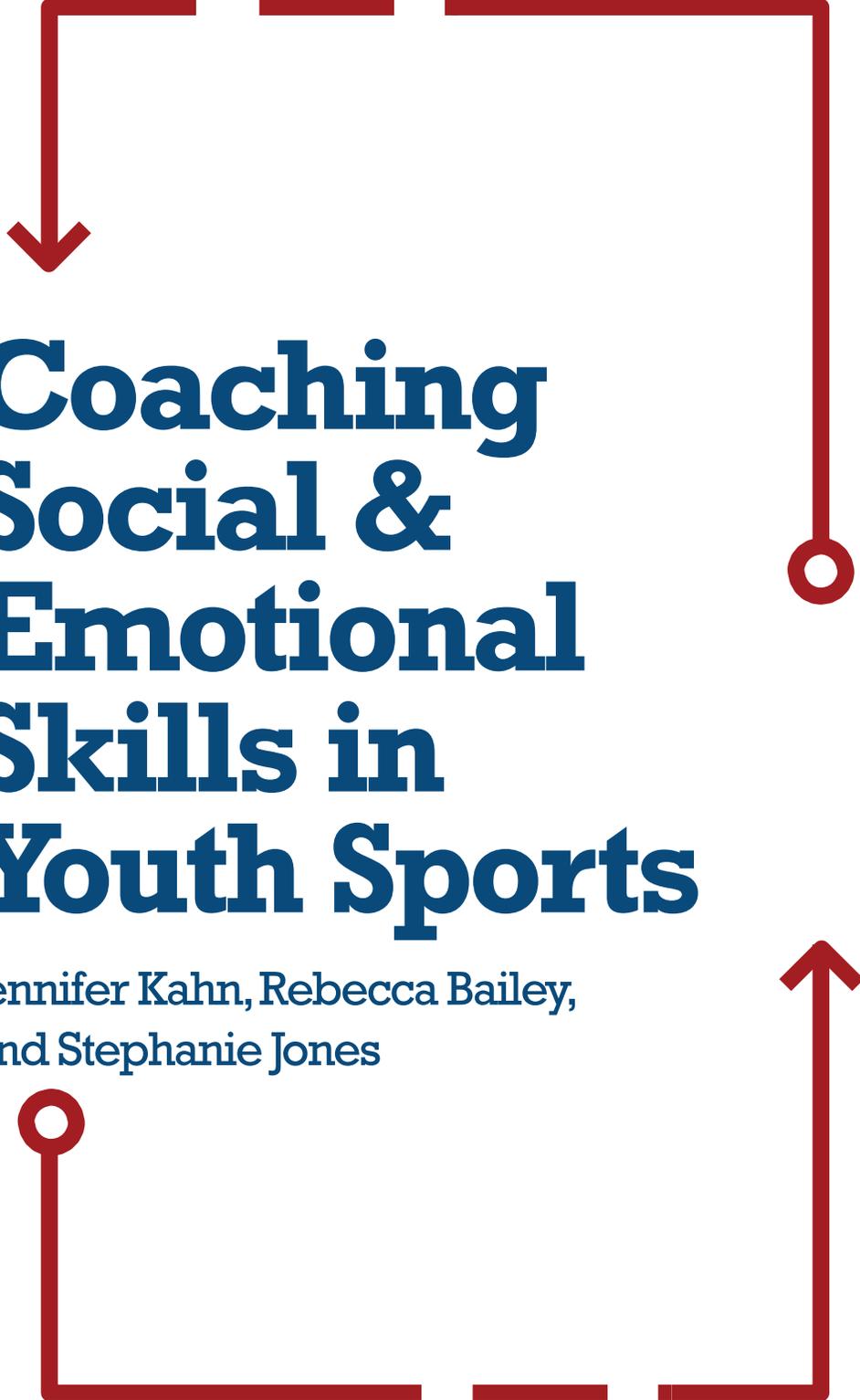
Ongoing: Every Practice, Every Game

- Reinforce the norms, rules and routines
- Ensure all youth are included, with equitable access to activities, being sensitive to different learning styles
- Establish a code of conduct that prohibits bullying and establishes consequences
- Ask questions to get to know every youth, their families and their motivations
- Organize formal meetings with your players throughout the season in order to help them express their feelings, wants and needs
- Be cognizant of your own and others' perspectives
- Practice self-care, engage in reflection around your own social and emotional well-being
- Talk to every youth at every practice and during every game

Learn more at [as.pn/callsforcoaches](https://aspeninstitute.org/callsforcoaches)



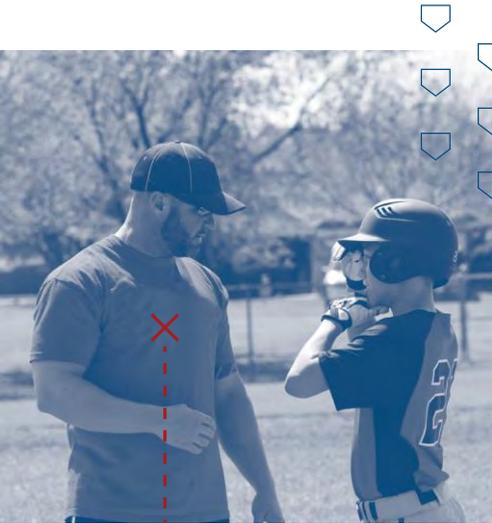
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Coaching Social & Emotional Skills in Youth Sports

Jennifer Kahn, Rebecca Bailey,
and Stephanie Jones

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INTRODUCTION

Research demonstrates a wide range of positive outcomes for children who are physically active, including higher academic achievement, higher likelihood to attend college, increased success in the workplace, lower health care costs, and decreased risk for obesity and other health problems (Aspen Institute Sport for All Play for Life; Menestrel & Perkins, 2007; Barber et al., 2001; Eccles et al., 2003; Eccles & Barber, 1999). Participation in sports has also been associated with a variety of social and emotional competencies and related skills that we know from extensive research are essential to success and well-being in school, work, and relationships. For example, children with strong social and emotional skills are more likely to have positive work and family relationships, enter and graduate college, succeed in their careers, and have better mental and physical health outcomes (Greenberg et al., 2017; Jones & Kahn, 2017; Jones & Kahn, 2018; Moffit et al., 2011; Weissberg et al., 2015). Focusing on social and emotional development also has important implications for long-term social and economic outcomes. Evidence indicates that stronger social and emotional competencies are associated with higher labor market earnings and productivity as well as reduced criminal behavior and substance dependence (Jones & Kahn, 2017; Moffit et al., 2011; Greenberg et al., 2017; Weissberg et al., 2015; Brunello & Schlotter, 2011). While all children, regardless of background benefit from explicit instruction of these competencies, benefits may be particularly strong for low-income or at-risk students (Jones & Kahn, 2017; Jones, Brown & Aber, 2011; Aber et al., 2003; Capella et al., 2016). Social and emotional outcomes are particularly sensitive to the negative effects of stress and trauma, making this work especially relevant for children who are exposed to chronic stress often associated with poverty, violence, and substance abuse (Center on the Developing Child, 2007; Evans & Kim, 2013; Noble, Norman, & Farah, 2005; Thompson, 2014). As such, focusing on social and emotional skill development provides an important avenue to a more equitable society in which all children can thrive and succeed (Jones & Kahn, 2017). Taken together, it is clear that supporting social and emotional skill development is essential not only to the success of individuals, but to society as a whole.

In this paper, we define what it means to build social, emotional, and cognitive skills, particularly in the context of youth sports, and how coaches can integrate these practices in their work with youth. It is important to note that psychosocial health (e.g., social and emotional well-being, positive youth development, etc.) and physical health are interconnected (see box on next page), however, this paper focuses primarily on the development of social, emotional, and cognitive competencies and how these skills and competencies can be acquired and applied in sports settings.

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL SKILLS AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



A growing body of research suggests an underlying reciprocal relationship between physical activity and social and emotional development. Physical activity requires core social, emotional, and cognitive competencies, and in turn, physical activity serves as an important context in which to build and promote social and emotional skills.

For example, physical activity requires the use of executive functions such as working memory, attention control inhibition, and planning (McClelland & Cameron, 2018; Daly, McMinn, & Allan, 2015). Research demonstrates that these important executive function skills are associated with long-term maintenance of physical activity participation (Mullen & Hall, 2015). Moreover, there is evidence that higher physical fitness is

associated with improved performance and problem solving (Mullen & Hall, 2015; Lubans et al., 2016). Physical activity also provides youth with opportunities to build self-efficacy and perceived competence, which in turn are associated with initiating and sustaining physical activity (Kipp & Weiss, 2013). Participation in physical activity provides opportunities for participants to learn and use important social, emotional, and cognitive skills that ultimately improve performance and well-being in sports, school, and life.

While it is clear that physical activity and social and emotional skill development are deeply connected, there is still much to be learned about the underlying mechanisms that link the two.

WHAT ARE SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL SKILLS?



In recent decades, increasing attention has focused on the importance of social and emotional competencies, due in large part to the substantial and growing body of evidence demonstrating their positive effects on academic, interpersonal, and mental health outcomes. However, this set of skills has been defined and organized in a variety of ways across a large number of fields and disciplines that go by many names, including character education, social and emotional learning, personality, positive youth development, 21st century skills, conflict resolution, and bullying prevention, and encompass a variety of skills, attitudes, and values that support learning and development. These skills typically fall into three broad categories: (1) skills and competencies; (2) attitudes, beliefs, and mindsets; and (3) character and values (Jones, Farrington, Yagers, & Brackett, 2019). It is important to highlight that these skills and competencies are influenced and developed in interaction with attitudes, beliefs, and mindsets as well as character and values. Attitudes, beliefs, and mindsets includes children's and youth's attitudes and beliefs about themselves, others, and include their own circumstances. Examples include self-concept and self-efficacy, and motivation and purpose. These types of attitudes and beliefs are a powerful influence on how children and youth interpret and respond to events and interactions throughout their day. Character and values represents ways of thinking and habits that support children and youth to work together as friends, family, and community and encompasses understanding, caring about, and acting on core character traits such as integrity, honesty, compassion, diligence, civic and ethical engagement, and responsibility (Jones et al., 2019).



Research indicates that all of these dimensions of learning are inextricably linked and often processed in the same parts of the brain (Jones et al., 2019; Jones & Zigler, 2002; Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007; Immordino-Yang, 2011; Adolphs, 2003). As such, children who possess this overall body of skills, competencies, attitudes, and beliefs are better equipped to learn and engage in meaningful and productive ways (Jones et al., 2019; Farrington, Roderick, Allensworth, Nagaoka, Keyes, Johnson, & Beechum, 2012; Nagaoka, Farrington, Ehrlich, & Heath, 2015; Osher, Cantor, Berg, Steyer, & Rose, 2018; Jones & Doolittle, 2017). Given the large and

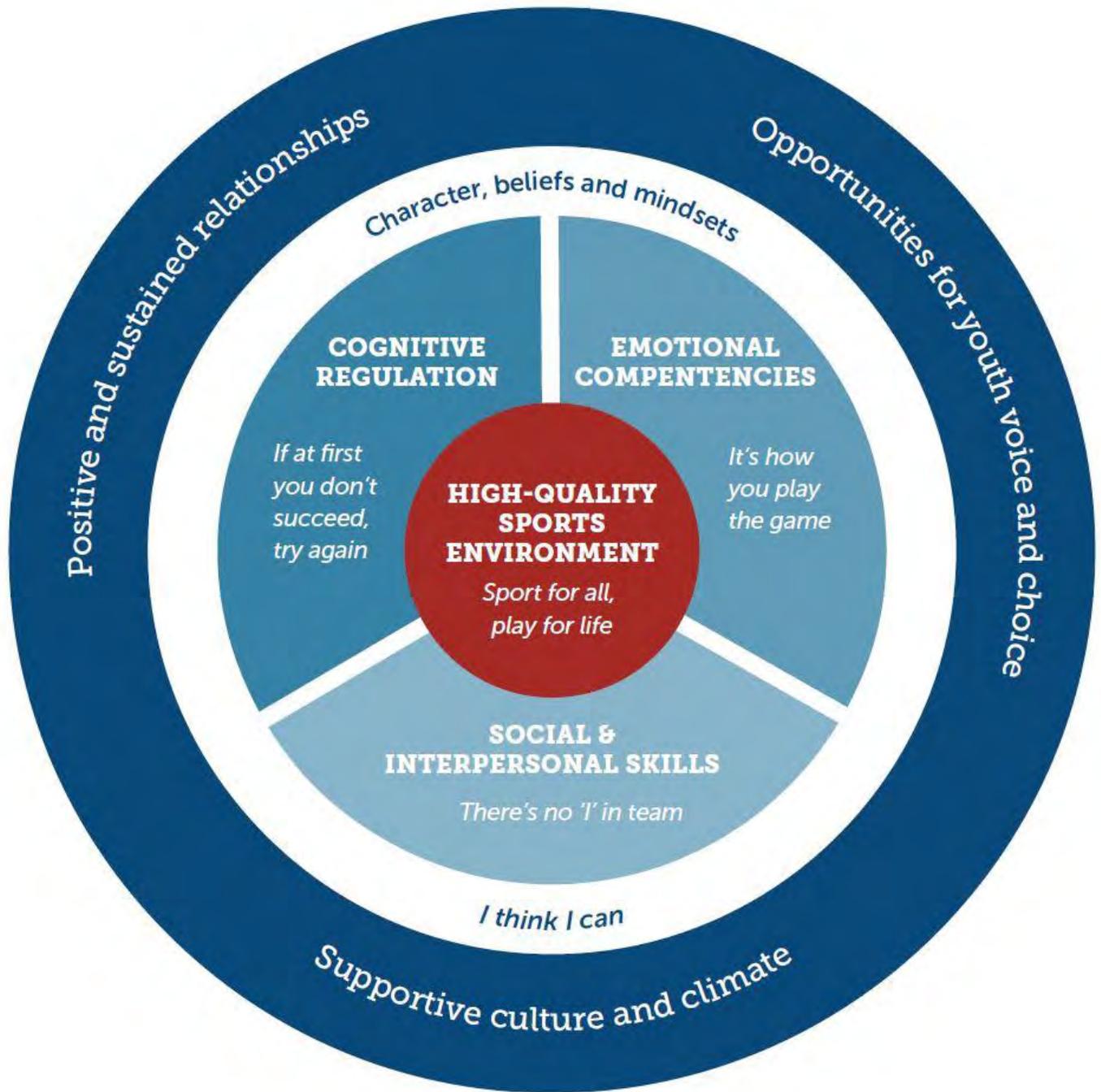
rigorously evaluated evidence base, we focus primarily on those skills and competencies typically referred to as social and emotional skills. For example, social and emotional programming in the early school years has been shown to improve the culture and climate of schools and other learning settings, as well as children's social, emotional, behavioral, and academic outcomes (Jones et al., 2017).

Broadly speaking, social and emotional learning refers to the process through which individuals learn and apply a set of social, emotional, behavioral, and character skills required to succeed in schooling, the workplace, relationships, and citizenship (Jones et al., 2017). Looking across a variety of disciplines, organizing systems, and correlational and evaluation research, there are at least a dozen specific social, emotional, and cognitive skills that are relevant for both students and the adults who teach and care for them (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). These skills can be grouped into three interconnected domains (Jones et al., 2017):



- I. Cognitive regulation can be thought of as the basic skills required to direct behavior toward the attainment of a goal. This set of skills includes executive functions such as working memory, attention control and flexibility, inhibition, and planning, as well as beliefs and attitudes that guide one's sense of self and approaches to learning and growth. Children use cognitive regulation skills whenever faced with tasks that require concentration, planning (including carrying out intentional physical movement), problem solving, coordination, conscious choices among alternatives, or overriding a strong internal or external desire (e.g., Diamond & Lee, 2011);
- II. Emotional competencies are a set of skills and understandings that help children recognize, express, and regulate their emotions, as well as engage in empathy and perspective-taking around the emotions of others. Emotional skills allow children to recognize how different situations make them feel and to address those feelings in prosocial ways. Consequently, they are often fundamental to positive social interactions and critical to building relationships with peers and adults;
- III. Social and interpersonal skills support children and youth to accurately interpret other people's behavior, effectively navigate social situations, and interact positively with peers and adults. Social and interpersonal skills build on emotional knowledge and processes; children must learn to recognize, express, and regulate their emotions before they can be expected to interact with others who are engaged in the same set of processes. Children must be able to use these social/interpersonal processes effectively in order to work collaboratively, solve social problems, and coexist peacefully with others.





SPORTS AS AN IDEAL CONTEXT FOR DEVELOPING SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL SKILLS

There are many reasons to suggest that participation in sports and physical activities provides a promising context in which to build these skills. Many children already participate in sports and physical activities, be it individual or team-based, structured or unstructured, and these contexts are filled with opportunities to build important skills such as teamwork and cooperation, empathy and prosocial behavior, planning and problem solving. The Sports & Fitness Industry Association, which tracks participation across 120 sports, recreation, and fitness activities in the United States, recently released a report indicating that more than 70% of children ages 6 through 12 participate in team or individual sports at least one day a year (Sports & Fitness Industry Association, 2016). In addition, unlike school settings that typically face curricular demands, out-of-school time settings like sports and recreational contexts tend to enjoy greater flexibility in terms of goals and programming (Jones, Bailey, Brush, & Kahn, 2017). Like other out-of-school time settings, sports settings also tend to be less formal and structured than those that take place in classrooms or other school settings, providing increased opportunities to develop relationships and build social and emotional skills (Hurd & Deutsch, 2017). Sports and other physical based activities also provide ample opportunities to build what have been coined in positive youth development frameworks as the “Big Three” described below (Lerner, 2004; Agans et al., 2015):

- Youth-Adult Relationships — positive sustained relationships with adults
- Skill Development — opportunities to develop and practice life skills
- Opportunities for Leadership — opportunities to use life skills as leaders in valued activities

Given the considerable amount of time children spend participating in sports and other organized physical activities, and that these settings are particularly conducive to social and emotional skill development, sports settings represent an important context in which to intentionally build these skills.

While many sports programs develop physical, social, emotional, and cognitive skills in youth participants, few state they explicitly target social and emotional competencies. There is some evidence indicating the effectiveness of sports and physical based programming for building this set of skills. For example, Playworks is a recess-based program that aims to build social and emotional skills through safe, healthy, and inclusive play and physical activity. Playworks has been evaluated in





four randomized control trials, demonstrating gains in positive language, physical activity, positive recess behavior, and readiness for class, as well as reductions in bullying (Beyler et al., 2013; Beyler, Bleeker, James-Burdumy, Fortson, & Benjamin, 2014; Bleeker, Beyler, James-Burdumy, & Fortson, 2015; Fortson et al., 2013.). Other programs, such as Girls on the Run and The First Tee leverage specific sports or physical activities to build social and emotional skills in afterschool settings. Girls on the Run, for example, is a physical activity-based positive youth development program designed to enhance girls' social, emotional, and physical development using running as a vehicle. Trained coaches lead small teams through a research-based curriculum which includes dynamic discussions, activities, and running games. Girls on the Run has been evaluated in multiple quasi-experimental and non-experimental studies. These studies have demonstrated gains in character, caring, self-esteem, self-confidence, positive connections with others, body size satisfaction, physical self-concept, running self-concept, commitment to physical activity, physical activity levels, frequency of physical activity, and positive attitude toward physical activity, as well as reductions in sedentary behaviors (DeBate, Gabriel, Zwald, Huberty & Zhang, 2009; DeBate, Zhang & Thompson, 2007; Gabriel, DeBate, High, & Racine, 2011; Martin, Waldron, McCabe & Choi, 2009; Riley & Weiss, 2015). Another program, The First Tee, uses golf as a context for teaching life skills and enhancing core values such as honesty, integrity, sportsmanship, respect, and responsibility. Studies of The First Tee program have demonstrated higher levels of confidence, integrity, responsibility, honesty, judgment, perseverance, behavioral regulation, and cooperation (Weiss, Bolter, & Kipp, 2016; Weiss, Stuntz, Bhalla, Bolter, & Price, 2013). It is important to note that this is not meant to provide a comprehensive overview of programs that focus on youth sports and physical activity, but rather to provide a brief look at evidence-based programs that explicitly target development of these competencies.

KEY FACTORS THAT SUPPORT HEALTHY SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT



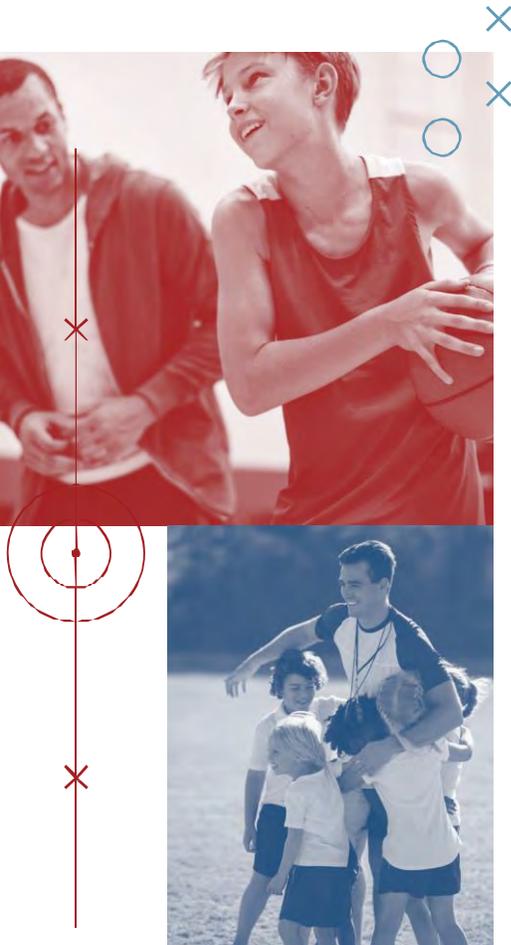
1. Relationships are an important context in which to build social and emotional skills

Drawing upon evidence across disciplines, including positive youth development frameworks, mentoring, social and emotional learning, and sports psychology, it is clear that high-quality relationships are foundational and provide important opportunities to strengthen the development of social and emotional competencies. Skill development takes place across contexts, including through interactions at home, school, in the community, and during after school or recreational settings (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Jones & Bouffard, 2012). The development of these skills is also influenced by several environmental factors, including culture and climate. As such, the adults with whom young people interact in these settings play a vital role in the development of social, emotional, and cognitive skills.

While parent-child relationships are the first and perhaps the most important context in which children develop these skills, relationships — with both adults and peers — are also important contexts for shaping social and emotional development (Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Jones et al., 2017). There are many opportunities for youth to benefit from the relationships that occur through their daily interactions with non-parental adults (e.g., coaches, teachers, community members), particularly when these relationships are characterized by warmth, acceptance, and closeness (Bowers et al., 2015; Jones et al., 2017). Positive relationships with nonparental adults are beneficial for all young people. Research demonstrates that these relationships can be compensatory, buffering or lessening the effects of poor relationships, or challenges in other areas of their lives (Bowers et al., 2015; Jones et al., 2017). Given the potential impact, it is clear that adults across settings have a unique opportunity to support the development of healthy relationships that facilitate the acquisition and expression of social and emotional skills (Jones et al., 2017).

2. Development of social and emotional skills occurs over time, and some skills may be particularly relevant or salient at a particular developmental stage

Similar to how physical literacy is outlined by the USA Hockey American Developmental Model (see figure below), social, emotional, and cognitive skills also develop and change over time. A growing body of research also suggests there is much to be gained from understanding the ways in which social and emotional skills develop across the first decade of life. Research suggests that some skills act as building blocks, laying a foundation for more complex skills that emerge later in life (Jones et al., 2017). This suggests that children must develop certain basic social, emotional, and cognitive competencies before they can master others. For example, basic cognitive regulation skills such as attention control and impulse control begin to emerge when children are 3-4 years old and go through dramatic transformation during early childhood and early school years (ages 4-6), coinciding with the expansion of the pre-frontal cortex of the brain (Jones et al., 2017). These skills (often called “executive functions”) lay a foundation for more complex skills later in life such as long-term planning, decision-making, and coping skills, among others, and are therefore important skills to emphasize during early childhood and the transition to kindergarten. As children move through the elementary grades, there is an increased need for a focus on planning, organizing, and goal-setting, as well as attention to the development of empathy, social awareness, and perspective-taking as children develop an increased capacity for understanding the needs and feelings of others (Jones et al., 2017). In late elementary and middle school, many children are able to shift toward an emphasis on more specific interpersonal skills, such as the capacity to develop sophisticated friendships, engage in prosocial and ethical behavior, and solve conflicts (Osher et al., 2018; Jones & Bailey, 2015).




ACTIVE START

PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES TO BE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE EVERY DAY IN A SAFE, FUN ENVIRONMENT

AGES 0-6



FUNDAMENTALS

REFINE FUNDAMENTAL MOVEMENT SKILLS WITH FOCUS ON FUN, AND BEGIN TO ACQUIRE BASIC SPORT SKILLS

AGES 6-8 FEMALES, 6-9 MALES



LEARN TO TRAIN

REFINE OVERALL SPORT SKILLS, AND DEVELOP SPORT-SPECIFIC SKILLS

AGES 8-11 FEMALES, 9-12 MALES

This graphic represents the first three stages of the USA Hockey American Development Model.

3. Effective implementation is necessary to achieve positive outcomes

A growing body of evidence indicates the importance of effective implementation in delivering positive outcomes. In their review of more than 200 school-based, social and emotional learning programs, Durlak and colleagues (2011) found that the most effective programs were those that incorporated four elements represented by the acronym SAFE, that is they (1) sequenced activities that are led in a coordinated and connected way to skills, (2) active forms of learning, (3) a focus on developing one or more social and emotional skills, and (4) explicit targeting of specific skills. Building upon these recommendations, Jones and colleagues (2017) add that social and emotional skill development efforts are most successful when they:

- **Occur within supportive contexts.** School and classroom contexts that are supportive of children’s social and emotional development include (a) practices and activities that build and establish prosocial norms; and (b) a climate that actively promotes healthy relationships, positive behavior, and support.
- **Build adult competencies.** This includes promoting teachers’ own social and emotional competence and the ongoing integration of these competencies with pedagogical skills.
- **Acknowledge features of the broader community context.** This includes taking into consideration the environments in which children are learning, living, and growing by building family-school-community partnerships that can support children at home and in other out-of-school settings.
- **Target a key set of skills across multiple domains of development.** This includes targeting, skills across multiple domains of development — social, emotional, and cognitive — in ways that are developmentally and culturally appropriate.
- **Set reasonable goals.** This includes articulating short- and long-term outcomes that are reasonable goals or expectations for the specific effort.



Figure 1. Key Features of Effective Programs that Develop Social and Emotional Skills (Jones et al., 2017)

4. Adults need adequate training and support to effectively influence the social and emotional development of the children with whom they interact



Perhaps equally important to the success of strategies developed to build social and emotional skills is training and support for adults. Research from school settings has shown that teachers who do not have adequate training report limited confidence in their ability to respond to students' needs, and in turn, to support social and emotional skill development (Reinke, Stormont, Herman, Puri, & Goel, 2011; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015; Jones & Kahn, 2017). When teachers received training, they feel better equipped to implement positive, active classroom management strategies that deter aggressive behavior and promote positive classroom climate (Alvarez, 2007; Jones & Kahn, 2017). Research in sports settings has also highlighted the importance of training and professional development. In a series of studies examining coach effectiveness, coaches who received training were better liked and their participants reported higher levels of self-esteem and enjoyment than participants with coaches who did not receive training (Smith, Smoll, Barnett, 1995; Smith, Smoll, & Curtis, 1979; Smoll, Smith, Barnett, & Everett, 1993; Gould & Wright, 2012). Across settings, adults also need training and support dedicated to building their own social, emotional, and cognitive skills. It is difficult for them to help children and youth build these skills, if they themselves do not possess them. Research shows that adults with stronger social and emotional skills have more positive relationships with students, engage in more effective classroom management, and implement social and emotional programming more effectively (McClelland et al., 2017; Jones & Bouffard, 2013; Jones & Kahn, 2017).



GUIDELINES FOR COACHES AND OTHER ADULTS: SETTING THE STAGE FOR POSITIVE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Taking into account the considerations above and drawing upon research from in-school and out-of-school settings, including findings from sports settings, the following sections provide guidance for how coaches and other adults can foster positive outcomes for participants, particularly through the development of social, emotional, and cognitive competencies.

1. Build positive adult-youth relationships

Research across disciplines consistently highlights the importance of sustained, high-quality relationships for promoting positive youth outcomes and decreased levels of risk behaviors. Features of adult-youth relationships that may foster social and emotional learning include the following:

- Communicate with youth in ways that demonstrate respect and is developmentally and culturally appropriate (Hurd & Deutsch, 2017).
- Build emotional connections with youth in ways that are positive, natural, and contextually appropriate (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Li & Julian, 2012).
- Develop reciprocal relationships characterized by sustained and frequent joint activities in which the adult provides support and guidance that is adjusted to meet the developmental and contextual needs of the youth (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Li & Julian, 2012; Bowers et al., 2015). This means that adults and youth interact with one another — practicing and playing together.
- Engage with youth in progressively more complex ways over time, such as discussing more challenging or personal situations and emotions (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Li & Julian, 2012; Bowers et al., 2015). For example, coaches should initiate discussion about things that are hard, frustrating, or require perseverance.
- As the relationship progresses, allow for shifts in the balance of power. Provide youth with the opportunity to drive the relationship and assert more independence (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Li & Julian, 2012; Bowers et al., 2015). For example, have participants lead practice or act as team captains.

2. Create a safe space that supports social and emotional skill development

As described above, contextual features, such as culture and climate can facilitate or challenge the development of social and emotional competencies. Fortunately, there is a growing body of evidence highlighting key features of environments that are conducive to building these skills.



- A safe and caring climate, characterized by support, safety, belongingness, respect, positive attitudes, caring behaviors, effective emotion management, empathy and positive behavior, and by adults who are caring, competent, and compassionate (Weiss, Bolter, & Kipp, 2016; Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003; Fry & Gano-Overway, 2010; Wiess, Kipp, & Bolter, 2012; Weiss & Wiese-Bjornstal, 2009; Eccles & Gootman, 2002). This also includes communicating with youth in ways that are culturally appropriate and ensure that all participants, regardless of background or social identity feel respected and connected to others (Hurd & Deutsch, 2017).
- Appropriate structure and norms, characterized by setting clear rules and expectations and positive social norms (Weiss, Kipp, & Bolter, 2012; Vandell et al., 2015; Hurd & Deutsch; Eccles & Gootman, 2002). Norms should seek to facilitate an environment that is conducive to creating a safe, caring climate. This may include establishing expectations for behavior and communication that are respectful, inclusive, and positive. Norms that emphasize inclusion, respect, and equality, as well as openness and flexibility can also help to promote environments that are culturally responsive and more conducive to positive interactions among a diverse group of participants (Simpkins, Riggs, Ngo, Ettekal, & Okamoto, 2017). When appropriate, youth may also benefit from working together to set group norms and expectations (Hurd & Deutsch, 2017).



3. Embody effective leadership strategies that emphasize effort, autonomy, and learning

Significant research has focused on understanding and identifying the coaching styles and qualities that best support the motivation and satisfaction of participants. Studies have consistently found the following key take-aways to be most effective:

- Mastery-oriented coaching that emphasizes and reinforces effort, improvement, and cooperative learning (Weiss, Kipp, & Bolter, 2012; Weiss & Wiese-Bjornstal, 2009). This includes emphasizing a communal sense of learning and valuing and rewarding effort, improvement, and learning as opposed to focusing on performance, winning, and comparisons to others (Roberts, 2012; Agans et al., 2015; Chelladurai, 2012). Coaches should also strive to treat all participants equally and include all participants in activities (Chelladurai, 2012).

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- Positive and informational feedback, characterized by encouragement and praise that is appropriate to performance. Specifically, research suggests that high frequencies of positive, supportive, information-based feedback, especially in response to specific behavior or performance appear to be most effective (Horn, 2008). This style of coaching can help to facilitate the development of healthy self-esteem, perceived competence, positive social relationships with peers, enjoyment, and continued participation (Horn, 2008; Weiss, Kipp, & Bolter, 2012; Smoll & Smith, 1989, 2002).
 - Leadership style characterized by autonomy supportive behaviors, that is providing participants with choice within specific boundaries, providing a rationale for activities and rules, recognizing participants perspectives and feelings, providing opportunities to take initiative, and avoiding the use of criticism or rewards to shape behavior (Weiss, Kipp, & Bolter, 2012; Vandell et al., 2015; Hurd & Deutsch, 2017; Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Amorose & Anderson-Butcher, 2007; Amorose & Horn, 2000, 2001; Mageau & Vallerand, 2003; Vallerand, 2007). This style of leadership is consistently associated with greater perceived competence, enjoyment, self-determined motivation, and well-being.



4. Prioritize and provide opportunities for direct skill building and practice

The development of social, emotional, and cognitive competencies should be intentional. Coaches and other adults can create environments that are conducive to developing these skills by prioritizing and integrating skill-building activities into daily routines and providing opportunities for youth to practice and apply these skills across settings. For example, studies reveal that when coaches prioritize and facilitate skills such as initiative, respect, relationship building, goal setting, time management, and decision making, participants were more likely to report positive outcomes (Gould & Carson, 2010; Holt, Tink, Mandigo, and Fox, 2008). The following provide key principles for prioritizing and integrating social and emotional learning:

- Provide opportunities for direct and indirect skill building, adapting strategies to the specific context when appropriate (Collins et al., 2009; Gould et al., 2007; Gould & Wright, 2012).
- Integrate skill building instructions, practice, and application into daily routines.
- Encourage participants to plan, practice, and perform specific skills and apply skills in other settings (Hurd & Deutsch, 2017). For example, this might include providing participants with opportunities to reflect on their experiences and consider other situations in which they might use these skills.
- Model and scaffold skills for youth.

5. Model good character and decision making

Coaches and other adults who spend time with youth can act as important role models who can foster the development of social and emotional skills, citizenship, moral behavior, and other desirable outcomes. Coaches can also be an important source of feedback, instruction, and support for youth participants (Bolter & Weiss, 2013). Consider the following guidelines when working with youth:

- Model positive behavior and show youth what it looks like to use social, emotional, and cognitive skills through your interactions and behaviors with other adults and with youth. For example, demonstrate respect and listening skills when talking to team members or other adults, model steps to conflict resolution.
- Demonstrate the difference between right and wrong, showing integrity, displaying empathy, and helping others (Weiss, Kipp, & Bolter, 2012; Lerner et al., 2005; Shields & Bredemeier, 2007).
- Take advantage of opportunities to discuss conflicts or dilemmas that arise, brainstorming solutions that benefit all parties involved.

6. Seek opportunities for support, training, and professional development

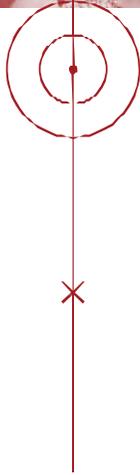
As noted above, training and support for staff are essential to social and emotional skill development. While community and organizational policies and practices play a significant role in the opportunities available to adults, there are many ways in which coaches can utilize strategies and opportunities for professional development:

- Collaborate with other staff and/or coaches to plan activities and debrief afterwards. Set aside time to discuss and reflect on progress, conflicts, staff and youth responses, and ways in which you might adjust future activities or processes (Hurd & Deutsch, 2017; Smith et al., 2016).
- Build foundational knowledge about physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development, including developing awareness and knowledge about how development evolves over time and specific cultural or ethnic considerations.
- Reflect on your learning and interactions through journaling, video analysis, and group discussion (Gilbert, 2006).
- Seek professional development opportunities and develop your own social and emotional competencies. This may include formal learning situations such as coach education courses or informal opportunities such as conferences, webinars, books, etc.

7. Engage with families, schools, and other community organizations

Effective youth development programs also engage parents and families (Bowers et al.; 2015; Deschenes & Malone, 2011). It is easier for youth to develop patterns of positive behavior when there is consistency across contexts. Coaches and staff can share information about social and emotional development with families, schools, and other community organizations so that other adults can reinforce and help young people practice these skills. In addition, coaches and organizations should aim to increase opportunities for participation in sports and physical activities for all children and youth. Factors such as culture, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status may play a role in how children and youth experience participation in sports as well as the opportunities they have to engage in sports and physical activity. For example, findings indicate that sports participation rates among youth living in households with the lowest incomes (\$25,000 or less) are about half that of youth from wealthier homes (\$100,000+) (Aspen Institute Sport for All Play for Life). Coaches and organizations can work with schools and community organizations to ensure access to physical activity for all children and to cultivate sports experiences that are relevant, appropriate, and engaging for all participants.





CONCLUSION

Supporting social and emotional skill development in young people is essential for the success and well-being of individuals, as well as society at large. While these skills are developed across settings, sports environments provide an ideal setting in which to build this critical set of skills. Considering the amount of time children spend participating in sports and physical activity, there is a unique opportunity for coaches to model and teach social, emotional, and cognitive skills. Fostering this important set of skills benefits all children and builds sports environments that are higher in quality and ultimately, more satisfying and valuable for coaches and athletes.

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