



# **Educational Framework for Interscholastic Athletic Programs**

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## **BACKGROUND**

On behalf of a number of concerned educators, Dr. Eric Malmberg, an associate professor at SUNY Cortland, raised some interesting issues in a letter to Deputy Commissioner James Kadamus of the New York State Education Department and Chancellor Carl T. Hayden of the New York State Board of Regents. Dr. Malmberg wrote (March 16, 2000):

...I have had a serious concern with the "evolution" of sport and the changing values that seem to be invading our school-based athletic programs. Our greatest concern here is that changing values seem to continually force coaches and administrators into defense modes with a plethora of problems trying to "control" unruly parents, unsportsmanlike behaviors, trash-talking, steroid/drug use, etc. Unlike curricular academic subjects, athletic programs seem to be very vulnerable to forces outside the schools.

If school-based athletic programs are supposed to be about something educational then:

1. What are the common educational objectives?
2. Why couldn't a framework of educational objectives be developed?

Addressing these issues, Chancellor Hayden wrote Bob Goldberg, president of the NYSAAA (March 15, 2000):

Dr. Eric Malmberg has shared with me, both in writing and in the course of a personal visit, his suggestion that it may be possible to develop a set of learning standards for competitive athletics. As I understand it, these standards might represent a curricula framework for athletics.

...I want you to know that I find it provocative and worth pursuing, and I would be interested to hear from you and your colleagues when this proposal has been sharpened and more fully vetted.

I previously made the existence of this proposal known to Jim Kadamus and I think you should continue to keep him in the loop as this work goes forward.

James Kadamus, Deputy Commissioner for Elementary, Middle, Secondary, and Continuing Education, also responded. He wrote (April 27, 2000):

I am writing in response to your letter of March 16, 2000, related to the idea of creating an "Educational Framework for Athletics" in schools throughout New York.

The New York State Education Department supports the concept of pursuing the development and implementation of a curricular framework that would help to enhance quality athletic experiences, in addition to providing completeness to many virtues we aspire to in educating children.

We look forward to working in concert with you and the professional statewide athletic leadership in meeting the challenges associated with this unique initiative. Please keep the Education Department informed of all future progress.

## **MAJOR NEEDS IDENTIFIED**

The committee cited the need for educational guidelines that emphasize character development and, through identification of educational goals, effectively address recently enacted SAVE legislation. The committee also pointed out the necessity for guidelines that are easily and quickly implemented, and that set reasonable expectations for school-based athletics. Local school districts were assigned the responsibility of developing and carrying out specific implementation strategies.

## **GOAL: FOUR GUIDELINE DOCUMENTS**

It was agreed that, if student athletes are expected to represent educational institutions, then those institutions should identify educational expectations of athletes. Addressing the concerns of Deputy Commissioner Kadamus, the committee decided to focus its efforts on producing a set of guidelines for administrators and coaches of athletic programs. These guidelines could serve as a useful framework to help school districts develop, implement, and enhance a quality, educationally oriented interscholastic athletic program.

After many hours of discussion, the committee began the task of creating four documents, which together would comprise the Educational Framework for Interscholastic Athletic Programs (EFA):

- Mission Statement
- Educational Goals of a Quality Interscholastic Athletic Program
- Action Steps of a Quality Interscholastic Athletic Program
- The Four C's of Athletic Excellence: A Programmatic Assessment Tool

## **UNIFYING IDEAS AND PERSPECTIVES**

The following ideas and perspectives informed and guided the creation of the four framework documents:

**Adults are major stakeholders** in the sport experience. As coaches, parents, and officials, they provide structure for sports.

**An ongoing partnership should be maintained** among schools, athletic programs, and parents to ensure the realization of educational goals in sports. Coaches and parents are central to the enterprise and must have the necessary knowledge to convey values and goals to student athletes.

**Consensus is necessary but not always easy to achieve.** If we cannot reach consensus regarding “the right action” on the playing field, our chances of promoting positive behaviors and values are significantly diminished.

**Quality coaching is important.**

- Good coaches can and should be good character educators.
- Coaches can, through their actions and nonactions, have an effect—either positive or negative.
- Coaches who make a difference are those who guide with principle.
- Coaches must be effective and efficient in teaching skills and habits.
- Coaches must evaluate program objectives as well as student athletes’ performances with compassion, justice, and honesty.

**Successful coaches possess the following core traits:** (Boyce, 1994)

- Purpose—They have a vision of how a quality program can best be achieved.
- Skill—They demonstrate competence in knowledge, teaching ability, communication, prioritizing, goal setting, and orchestrating the overall atmosphere of the program.
- Empathy/Relationship—They genuinely care about, respect, show concern for, and have the ability to motivate their players.
- Character Habits—They have a solid work ethic, exhibiting responsibility, honesty, integrity, and dedication. These habits foster virtue in athletes.

**The quality of sport is improved when competition and collaboration are appropriately balanced.** The members of a winning team in a vigorously contested game should, in an appropriate manner, congratulate their opponents for bringing out the best in them. All players should be aware that it takes two teams to play the game; that is, collaboration and competition go hand in hand. Teammates, opposing team members and staff, athletic directors, parents, and other spectators are important collaborators in achieving a positive athletic experience at all levels of competition.

## TEACHING CHARACTER THROUGH SPORT

Strengthening the connection between interscholastic athletics and character development was a primary goal of the framework committee. To determine how to reach this goal, committee members reviewed a large quantity of material from various sources across the country. After much discussion, study, and rethinking, they reached consensus on a number of principles regarding the teaching of character through interscholastic sport. The following ideas significantly inform the *Educational Framework* document:

**Proper behavior enhances both sport and character development.**

- Character development enhances both sport and ethical behavior.
- Character development is defined as the formation of universally desirable traits such as respect, responsibility, courage, moderation/balance, care, compassion, trustworthiness, generosity, and humility.
- Character in coaching provides the basis for athletic programs founded on respect and focused on achieving success of all kinds and at all levels.
- Most people involved in athletics say that character is a significant component of athletic programs.
- Many heads of school want practical strategies that directly address the issue of character in their programs.
- Sport may not build character but will reveal it.
- Regardless of winning or losing, a person's character traits remain the same.
- The game should foster a healthy interaction among well-intentioned human beings and provide a balance of competition and cooperation.
- If most people agree that participation in sports should be a happy, positive experience, then why are so many adults involved in athletic programs marred by negative behaviors?

**Many people play a role in the development of character.** Parents, teachers, peers, coaches, and other role models help to form and reinforce desirable character traits.

**A person of good character possesses knowledge and attitudes that are consistent with good behavior** and beneficial to that person as well as others. Attitudes reflect a person's character, views, values, and core virtues, which are defined as follows: (Yeager et al, 2001)

Character: The formation of universally desirable traits such as respect and responsibility. A person who has a well-formed character will most likely aspire to act in a consistently just and caring manner. Note: It is important for a coach to share with student athletes his/her goals in regard to character, and in conveying these goals, the coach should use easy-to-understand terminology.

Views:	Beliefs and opinions derived from an individual's intellectual standpoint. Views thrive on controversy and heated debates, and may or may not be moral/ethical. They are not necessarily exhibited in a person's behavior.
Values:	Emotional-laden wants and desires. Values are personal choices related to individual thoughts and feelings. A group of people holding similar values share a common morality. Values may or may not be moral or ethical and may or may not be put into action. A person who has unethical values may choose to play by the rules of the game; or on the other hand, a person who has ethical values may fail to play by the rules of the game. However, having ethical values tends to increase the chances of playing by the rules.
Core Virtues:	Universally desirable habits that all people involved in athletic programs should aspire to attain. Virtues are commonly accepted positive traits that transcend most creeds and cultures. They are habits of mind, heart, and action and are always moral and ethical.

**Developing good character habits requires time and effort.** Becoming a good sport is a learned behavior that is reinforced over time through practice.

**An individual who has developed strong character has formed enduring habits of head, heart, and hand.** Such a person knows what is right and has continually practiced right actions. A person of well-formed character has less difficulty in choosing to behave morally and ethically. Knowing, valuing, and acting on the good helps to prevent the bad from occurring.

# **Appendices**

- Mission Statement
- Educational Goals of a Quality Interscholastic Athletic Program
- Action Steps of a Quality Interscholastic Athletic Program
- The Four C's of Athletic Excellence: A Programmatic Assessment Tool

These four appendices were developed by educators and coaches who represent a variety of school-based athletic organizations in New York State. They provide useful guidelines to help improve the overall effectiveness and educational nature of school athletic programs. These documents will help school districts craft effective mission statements; identify educational goals in athletic programs; identify action steps to develop a quality interscholastic athletic program; and assess specific sports teams in regard to competence, character, civility, and citizenship.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of New York State interscholastic athletic programs is to foster the quest for excellence by creating an educational and competitive experience within an atmosphere of sportsmanship. Successful programs develop individual and team potential by promoting high standards of competence, character, civility, and citizenship.

## **EDUCATIONAL GOALS OF A QUALITY INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETIC PROGRAM**

### **Competence**

A student athlete in a quality program is competent in terms of:

- Skill Development
- Knowledge of the game/Strategies
- Fitness/Conditioning/Healthy behavior

### **Character**

A student athlete in a quality program demonstrates:

- Responsibility
- Accountability
- Dedication
- Trustworthiness/Fair play
- Self Control

### **Civility**

A student athlete in a quality program demonstrates civility toward others, showing:

- Respect
- Fairness
- Caring

### **Citizenship**

A student athlete in a quality program demonstrates citizenship through actions showing evidence of:

- Loyalty/Commitment
- Teamwork
- Role Modeling

## **ACTION STEPS OF A QUALITY INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETIC PROGRAM**

Consider the following steps when developing an interscholastic athletic program.

### **Develop Mission Statements.**

- Involve coaches, students, parents, and school officials in the creation of mission statements.
- Create mission statements that focus on the development of competence, character, civility, and citizenship.

### **Define Program Values.**

- Explain program values by citing examples of specific student behaviors that reflect these values.

### **Communicate Values Thoroughly.**

- Clearly communicate program values, rules, policies, and expectations to all.
- Establish clear lines of communication among school officials, coaches, students, and parents.

### **Ensure Equality.**

- Provide equal opportunity for male and female student athletes.
- Provide a variety of sport offerings (include individual, team, closed-skill, and open-skill sports).

### **Increase Participation Opportunities for All.**

- Set goals that embrace a *sport-for-all* philosophy.

### **Compete at Equitable Levels.**

- Compete in leagues or associations that are equitable in number of participants, size of school, availability of community resources, etc.

### **Identify, Teach, and Assess Ways Sport Fulfills Mission Statement.**

- Sport should enhance development of competence, character, civility, and citizenship.

### **Create Positive Learning Environments.**

### **Nurture Coaches Through Sustained Staff Development.**

### **Evaluate Program Effectiveness via Mission Statement Criteria.**



## **THE FOUR C'S OF ATHLETIC EXCELLENCE: A PROGRAMMATIC ASSESSMENT TOOL**

**Assumptions:**

- This assessment tool frames athletic excellence around four educational aims or characteristics (the 4 C's): competence, character, civility, and citizenship.
- This instrument is designed to be used by athletic directors, administrators, or coaches to assess the performance of a specific sports team. It could also be used in a peer or self-assessment context.

Note: The New York State SAVE legislation mandates instruction in competence, character, civility, and citizenship.

**Usage:**

- A separate score is computed for each of the four components. The overall excellence score is the average of the scores on the four components.
- For all items, ratings should be based on observed behavior.

**Modifications:**

- This tool could be modified to assess an individual's athletic performance or an entire athletic program. It could also be modified for use as a self-assessment by athletes.

Team \_\_\_\_\_

Coach \_\_\_\_\_

Observation Date \_\_\_\_\_

Observer \_\_\_\_\_

**Overall Athletic Excellence Score**

Competence average \_\_\_\_\_

Character average \_\_\_\_\_

Civility average \_\_\_\_\_

Citizenship average \_\_\_\_\_

Totals \_\_\_\_\_ Average \_\_\_\_\_

**COMPETENCE**

(skill development, knowledge of the game/strategies, and fitness/conditioning/healthy behavior)

Does this team demonstrate...?

**SKILL DEVELOPMENT**

- C-1.1 Has developed the skills necessary to participate competently in the game

1	2	3	4	5
Not Evident				Strongly Evident

**KNOWLEDGE OF THE GAME/STRATEGIES**

- C-1.2 Demonstrates knowledge of the rules and conventions of the game

1	2	3	4	5
Not Evident				Strongly Evident

- C-1.3 Demonstrates knowledge of the strategies of the game

1	2	3	4	5
Not Evident				Strongly Evident

**FITNESS/CONDITIONING/HEALTHY BEHAVIOR**

- C-1.4 Demonstrates a level of physical conditioning and fitness sufficient to participate competently in the game

1	2	3	4	5
Not Evident				Strongly Evident

- C-1.5 Demonstrates knowledge of healthy behaviors, including nutritional issues

1	2	3	4	5
Not Evident				Strongly Evident

Competence score (average of ratings of items 1.1-1.5): \_\_\_\_\_

**CHARACTER**

(responsibility, accountability, dedication, trustworthiness/fair play, and self control)

**RESPONSIBILITY**

- C-2.1 Dependable in fulfilling obligations and commitments

1	2	3	4	5
Not Evident				Strongly Evident

**ACCOUNTABILITY**

- C-2.2 Accepts responsibility for consequences of actions; doesn't make excuses or blame others

1	2	3	4	5
Not Evident				Strongly Evident

**DEDICATION**

- C-2.3 Strives to excel

1	2	3	4	5
Not Evident				Strongly Evident

- C-2.4 Is committed

1	2	3	4	5
Not Evident				Strongly Evident

- C-2.5 Perseveres (gives 100% effort; doesn't give up in the face of setbacks)

1	2	3	4	5
Not Evident				Strongly Evident

**TRUSTWORTHINESS/FAIR PLAY**

C-2.6 Demonstrates truthfulness

1	2	3	4	5
Not Evident			Strongly Evident	

C-2.7 Plays by the rules of the game; doesn't cheat

1	2	3	4	5
Not Evident			Strongly Evident	

**SELF CONTROL**

C-2.8 Controls anger and frustration; refrains from displays of temper and bad language

1	2	3	4	5
Not Evident			Strongly Evident	

C-2.9 Accepts losing/winning gracefully (congratulates opponents; doesn't sulk or display other negative behavior)

1	2	3	4	5
Not Evident			Strongly Evident	

Character score (average of ratings of items 2.1-2.9): \_\_\_\_\_

**CIVILITY**  
(respect, fairness, and caring)**RESPECT**

C-3.1 Practices good manners on and off field; refrains from trash talk and other put-downs of opponents or teammates

1	2	3	4	5
Not Evident			Strongly Evident	

C-3.2 Treats all persons respectfully, regardless of individual differences

1	2	3	4	5
Not Evident			Strongly Evident	

C-3.3 Shows respect for legitimate authority (e.g., officials, coaches, and captains)

1	2	3	4	5
Not Evident			Strongly Evident	

**FAIRNESS**

C-3.4 Is fair; treats others as one wishes to be treated

1	2	3	4	5
Not Evident			Strongly Evident	

**CARING**

C-3.5 Listens to and tries to understand others; is sensitive and compassionate

1	2	3	4	5
Not Evident			Strongly Evident	

C-3.6 Actively supports teammates and others

1	2	3	4	5
Not Evident			Strongly Evident	

Civility score (average of ratings of items 3.1-3.6): \_\_\_\_\_

**CITIZENSHIP**  
**(loyalty/commitment, teamwork, and role modeling)**

**LOYALTY/COMMITMENT**

- C-4.1 Is faithful to the ideals of the game, including sportsmanship

	1	2	3	4	5
Not Evident	Strongly Evident				

- C-4.2 Keeps commitments to team (e.g., is diligent about practice and following training rules)

	1	2	3	4	5
Not Evident	Strongly Evident				

- C-4.3 Shows team spirit (encourages others, contributes to good morale)

	1	2	3	4	5
Not Evident	Strongly Evident				

**TEAMWORK**

- C-4.4 Puts the good of the team ahead of personal gain

	1	2	3	4	5
Not Evident	Strongly Evident				

- C-4.5 Works well with teammates to achieve team goals

	1	2	3	4	5
Not Evident	Strongly Evident				

**ROLE MODELING**

- C-4.6 Accepts responsibility to set a good example for team-mates, younger players, fans, and school community

	1	2	3	4	5
Not Evident	Strongly Evident				

Citizenship score (average of ratings of items 4.1-4.6): \_\_\_\_\_

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