Toolkit

Culture Shaping for Leaders

Table of Contents

Positive Coaching Alliance seeks to improve the culture of youth sports so that every child, regardless of social or economic circumstances, has access to a positive youth sports experience led by a caring, trusted coach. Building a positive sports experience where athletes enjoy the many benefits sports can provide takes effort, intention, and collaboration. Culture Shaping for Leaders provides youth sports leaders with tools to evaluate and identify ways to make their program(s) more positive, equitable, and accessible to all athletes.

This toolkit summarizes and supports the learning from *Culture Shaping for Leaders*.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURE SHAPING

Culture is the common set of behaviors and underlying mindsets and beliefs that shape how people work and interact day to day[1]. Simply put, PCA defines culture as "The way we do things here." Culture is a living, breathing ecosystem that evolves over time and is supported by actions. When leaders of sports organizations and athletic departments strive to create a positive sports culture, they set up all involved to experience the benefits that sports can provide. When participating in a positive sports culture…

Athletes

Exhibit increased teamwork, confidence, resiliency, empathy, and are more physically active. They have a better understanding of what is expected of them and feel safe, seen, heard, valued, and that they belong.

Coaches

Feel more prepared to build character on and off the field, and improve upon athlete performance. They serve as supportive adults that build trusting relationships and facilitate peer interaction and connection.

Parents/Caregivers

Develop stronger relationships with their children and feel more connected to the program. They better understand their role and expectations as a positive sports parent/caregiver to provide support and encouragement to the program.

Leaders

Increase opportunities for athletes to participate in a positive sports culture, which allows them to take advantage of the social and emotional benefits sports provide while improving on-field performance. They will also see benefits in athlete/coach retention, engagement and understanding of expectations.

Realizing these benefits requires focus and attention on culture shaping.

1. *McKinsey & Company, 2018;*
    https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/the-organization-blog/culture-4-keys-to-why-it-matters

CULTURE SHAPING TOOLS

A leader's role in ensuring the outcomes of a positive sports culture is to proactively and intentionally tend to, maintain, and assess an organization/athletic department culture to make sure that all stakeholders can benefit from it and feel included.

A positive youth sports culture is effective when athletes, parents/caregivers, and coaches are bought in.

- Engage them early when defining values so they feel ownership.

- Take note of the individuals creating the values and shaping the culture – oftentimes, a dominant culture can cause people to assimilate, or diminish their alternative needs in order to gain access and feel belonging and safety. As a result, the needs of some group members can go unnoticed by those creating and enforcing culture.

- Seek to incorporate outside opinions to ensure the values and culture are reflective of all participants. The goal is that all stakeholders believe in the culture, feel ownership of it, and want to be accountable for their role living up to it.

1.
Identify Core Values
Create Buy-In

2.
Develop a Mission Statement
Communicate Core Values

3.
Reinforce & Model Policy and Behavior
Develop Accountability

Leaders can use the following tools to help shape their organization/athletic department culture:

Identify Core Values
Decide upon the core values of your program and engage all stakeholders in the process to create buy-in and ownership over them. Once identified, continually reinforce them throughout the year.
- Example: We are an organization that values: Learning, Fun, Effort, Support

Develop a Mission Statement
A mission statement helps organizational/athletic department leaders communicate the core values and purpose to all that interact with the program. It also provides guidance for navigating daily responsibilities within and on behalf of the program.
- Sample Mission Statement: Our mission is for any athlete, coach, or parent/caregiver to participate in and support a learning sports environment characterized by fun, effort, and encouraging connection.

Reinforce & Model Policy and Behavior
- Make core values, the mission statement, and policies informed by both readily available to all within the program so clear expectations are set.
- Model the culture you hope to cultivate and provide rewards when you see it in action.
    - o Ex: Present one spectator with the 'Lift Us Up' award each game - for providing the most enthusiastic and positive encouragement to a team.
- Develop accountability measures that bring people back in if they step outside of expectations.

POSITIVE COACHING ALLIANCE

CULTURE SHAPING TOOLS (CONTINUED)

4.
Message Bombardment
Craft Messages

5.
Coach Development Program
Establish Consistency

6.
Workshops and Roundtables
Host Sessions

7.
Parent/Caregiver Expectation Tactics
Set Expectations

Message Bombardment
Craft messages that reinforce your culture and display it for participants.

- Create signs and/or t-shirts that highlight your program's purpose and norms.
- Draft handouts that reinforce expectations and expand upon why certain policies are in place.
- Use every opportunity to reinforce your program culture - through both spoken word (i.e. during a pep rally, at a mid-season meeting) and written word (i.e. newsletters, email communications).
- These messages alone don't create culture - actions do - but they can serve as a visual reminder.

Coach Development Program
Your program's coaches have the opportunity to deliver the positive sports experience created by a positive sports culture. A Coach Development Program can help establish the consistency and expectations to make this happen. There are four key steps to this program!

- **Develop a positive coach job description** that is very clear about what you expect from coaches and provides them the tools to create a positive team environment.
- **Provide coach training** & access to educational resources so coaches are equipped with the knowledge and experience to deliver a positive sports experience.
- **Evaluate coach performance** using metrics based on coach training and the job description. Seek out feedback from athletes, parents/caregivers and coaches themselves as well.
- **Recognize and award coaches** who regularly promote a positive sports culture.

Workshops and Roundtables
- Seek out **workshops that reinforce a positive sports culture** and offer them not only to coaches, but parents/caregivers and athletes as well. These opportunities allow stakeholders to connect with each other and learn about a positive sports culture and help to reinforce it within the program.
- Host sessions to gather feedback, thoughts, and suggestions to improve the culture and allow everyone involved feel included in culture shaping, while creating a mechanism for your culture to become responsive to the needs of those in the program.

Parent/Caregiver Expectation Tactics
- Encourage coaches to conduct a **pre-season meeting** with parents/caregivers and athletes to share program culture and expectations.
- Distribute parent/caregiver letters & pledges so they have expectations in writing and can commit to them.
- **Appoint sideline 'culture keepers'** to connect with spectators and model, reinforce, and reward actions that bring your positive sports culture to life. Provide them positive tools to intervene when expectations are not met.

POSITIVE COACHING ALLIANCE

THE POSITIVE YOUTH SPORTS CULTURE INDEX

Culture must be proactively tended to and maintained. It should evolve based on the needs and experiences of program participants. To help organization and athletic department leaders assess culture, PCA created the Positive Youth Sports Culture Index (PYSCI). The PSYCI supports sports organization and athletic department leaders in identifying strengths and areas for developing their program culture. Following your Culture Shaping for Leaders workshop, a PCA Program Manager should be in touch to send you your organization's unique Positive Sports Culture Index survey link.

The Positive Youth Sports Culture Index:
- Describes the characteristics of a Positive Youth Sports Culture
- Is a tool to assess, set goals, take action, and measure progress in your organization/athletic department
- Ensures your programs have the desired impact!

The Positive Youth Sports Culture Index comprises three categories that can contribute to a positive youth sports culture:

1. Youth-Adult Relationships
2. Coaching Behaviors and Practices
3. Organization Policies and Behaviors

Each category is divided into subcategories and provides indicators of what a positive youth sports culture would look like according to that subcategory. Using a scoring scale from 1-4, leaders can use this tool to assess where their program currently stands in each of the categories.

Once the Positive Youth Sports Culture Index is completed...

Results are sent to both the organization/school leader and the PCA Program Manager

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The PCA Program manager schedules meeting and offers resources and workshops that would support areas in need of improvement

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PCA and leader re-evaluate after (TBD by leader) amount of time to log progress & identify additional areas for improvement

POSITIVE COACHING ALLIANCE