School Sports Programs and SEL

Yep! Well run school sports programs are an integral component of student engagement, social emotional learning, and improved academic performance. Consider the following:

- We all know the students who come to school and get good grades so they can play sports. What do you think happens if sports aren’t available? Sports are one important strategy in lowering school dropout rates.
- The second highest predictor of whether a student is bullied or not in school is whether or not they have a supportive social network. Well run sports programs can offer an “instant” network. This is most successful when the coach and supporting adults are supportive and emotionally intelligent.
- Well managed sports programs support the learning of fairness and equity when good sportsmanship is expected on and off the playing platform.
- Learning the social emotional skills of self-regulation (managing personal emotions) and self-management is integral for athletes at all levels.
- The success felt by being part of a team can lead to the “I can” attitude of personal agency, another important social emotional skill.
- Practice, failure, losing, and winning are all part of learning and acting on perseverance. Perseverance is crucial to academic success and is a component of the adaptive capability that reflects resilience.
- Expectations of athletes to not only perform well academically but also embracing their responsibility as positive role models is one more way sports programs contribute to the fiber of school culture and the success of all students.
- Ensuring equal access to sports programs by ALL students regardless of their experience of socio-economic status or disability, race, family immigration status, creed, gender identity is one more way that schools put into practice their support of equity and respect.

These considerations are why coaches and sports staff benefit from professional development offered in schools related to trauma informed practice, resilience, social emotional learning, as well as focuses on equity, diversity, cultural relevance, and cultural responsiveness.

As we begin to bring students back into school environments it will be important to consider how to safely encourage sports participation. It will also be a time that, while we are already exploring and expanding practice and procedure, we can deepen the conversation into the relevancy and relationship of sports programs to resilience, respect, school culture, and the academic and personal success of all students.

There are many resources to engage in these critical and challenging conversations. Look for those resources in places like With Respect LLC.