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Shawn Ladda

News stories continue to report violence in our society. These occurrences that happen in schools are sometimes connected to bullying behavior. There have been numerous cases involving police violence connected to racism. Fear surrounding terrorist acts have led to a backlash against Syrian refugees. So far this year, a record high of 15 transgender individuals have been murdered (Steinmetz, 2015). All of these events fuel the fire for action and for educators to use intentional efforts to change this culture. More than ever, there is urgency for educators to provide an inclusive and respectful environment for all. Efforts to teach students bystander skills, as well as problem solving, cooperation and conflict resolution is critical. All people deserve a safe and respectful environment.

Embedded in these examples is the need for teachers and coaches to effect learning for all students and athletes by creating respectful and inclusive classrooms and teams. By having the ability, knowledge and skills to develop such a classroom or team, the result will be success. In addition, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN, 2013) reported that many lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students perceive locker rooms, restrooms, gymnasiums and athletic fields as unsafe places where they are more susceptible to bullying. These are all spaces that are more difficult for teachers and coaches to supervise. By teachers and coaches being more aware and educated about this problem, efforts can be made to make these places safer. Empowering students and athletes to contribute to healthier environments is a win-win for all.

The physical education classroom offers a unique environment that is more

conducive to teaching problem solving, cooperation and conflict resolution skills. Teachers can make intentional efforts to teach these skills, such as through the teaching of units in cooperative games and adventure programming. In addition, the use of different teaching methods such as a tactical games approach and the sport education model empowers students and assists in leadership development. Using Hellison's (2011) teaching personal and social responsibility (TPSR) model helps frame these skills and allows teachers and students to assess areas of strength and areas needing improvement.

Coaches also have a unique opportunity to teach students skills that contribute to an inclusive and respectful environment. Typically, teams that perform well are the ones that focus on the contributions that all players make to the good of the team. A great example of creating this culture on a team is the United States Women's National Soccer Team and their success winning the recent World Cup in Canada. A coach can have all the individual talent, but if the players do not work as a team and allow each player to be all they can be, then the result will not be success.

This women's national team had a diverse pool of players on the roster that included differences in socioeconomic status, ethnic background, religious beliefs and sexual orientation. Yet the team focused on soccer and on each player's contribution. As one touch point of LGBT diversity, much of the media focused on the players and coaches who have identified as LGBT. For example, attention was given to Abby Wambach greeting her wife as they celebrated after winning the World Cup. It was also reported that the U.S. team had

plans for a unique celebration connecting to the Supreme Court decision supporting gay marriage if one more goal had been scored in the quarterfinal game versus China. Obviously, the team developed a culture of celebration of all team members, and each was valued and included — thus an excellent example of a coach creating a culture of respect and inclusion that sets a foundation for success!

When players and students can be all they can be and are respected for who they are, teams are more successful and more learning takes place in the classroom. At the end of the game, does it really matter who scores the winning goal on your team? How can coaches create teams and teachers create classrooms that are respectful and inclusive? The following will provide a general model with some examples to establish this type of classroom or team culture.

It starts with the teacher or coach. The teacher or coach needs to be a leader to translate intention and belief into words and action, and the results are a team climate of respect and inclusion. A good model (Griffin & Hudson, 2010; GLSEN, 2015) includes the following six steps: knowing, showing, setting the tone, stepping up and stepping in, following up, and building a legacy.

Step 1 — Knowing. Teachers and coaches need to educate themselves on how to create inclusive and respectful classrooms and teams, including laws that protect students. To start, you can:

- Identify anti-discrimination laws and anti-bullying laws for your state on the Internet.
- Attend conferences and select sessions on team building.
- Acquire resources (books, videos, etc.) about problem-solving activities.

Step 2 — Showing. Teachers and coaches need to show by example ways of being respectful and inclusive:

- Use signage in the locker room that reinforces the importance of inclusive and respectful teams and the language of LGBT, race, religion, culture, etc.
- Use language with players that is inclusive and respectful. Provide a no racist, sexist and homophobic language policy.
- Post a safe-space sticker in your office (GLSEN, 2014).

Step 3 — Setting the Tone. Teachers and coaches need to set the tone with their players in developing a team culture of inclusion and respect. Using student leaders is helpful to establish this culture:

- Provide a team activity to define respect and inclusive culture.
- Use Hellison's (2011) scale of TPSR (from egocentric to being a role model) through physical activity.
- Have teams develop rules that will aid in positive team culture.

Step 4 — Stepping Up and Stepping In. When students or players act in ways that undermine this culture, teachers and coaches need to step up and step in:

- If a player makes a racist, sexist or homophobic remark, you address it. Perhaps a response such as “You can do better than that” or “Our team is better than that.”
- Enlist your team captains to be leaders in building this team culture.
- Bring in a speaker who has expertise in inclusion and anti-bullying.

Step 5 — Following Up. Teachers and coaches need to follow up on this behavior and plan to maintain a positive team culture:

- Plan a team outing to an adventure programming facility or other team-problem-solving activities (see Project Adventure, at www.project-adventure.org, for resources).
- Reinforce an inclusive and respectful culture through team-building

activities (position-appreciation practice day, peer-coaching, silent practice).

- Encourage players on your team to attend programming on LGBT inclusion or other inclusion issues.

Step 6 — Building a Legacy. Finally, with teachers and coaches reinforcing proper team culture and leading by example, a coach builds a legacy to be proud of. Players will value the team experience and learn the importance of a respectful and inclusive environment. How do you want your players to describe you as a coach and their team experience?

- Invite former players to speak to the team, and use examples related to the importance of team culture.
- Keep a resource for yourself with team-building activities. Ask players to add to this resource.
- Enlist current and former players to make a “You Can Play” video (see You Can Play Project, at youcanplayproject.org).

Creating an inclusive and respectful classroom and team culture takes intentional effort. But this effort will be well worth it, as it leads to team success and players who develop as whole people in spirit, mind and body. It also makes a better world!

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The LGBT Sports Coalition is an association of 18 organizations, including SHAPE America – Society of Health and Physical Educators and the NCAA Office of Inclusion, and 14 individuals committed to ending anti-LGBT bias in sports by 2016. The coalition was formalized in 2013 at the LGBT Sports Summit in Portland, OR. The Nike Corporation was the host and has committed over \$200,000 to support the coalition's work. See the following promotion piece about the coalition at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gDL-D7315VU>. During the SHAPE America 2014 convention in Seattle, a two-hour workshop was conducted on “Creating Inclusive Sports Teams: What’s Your Game Plan?” The PowerPoint presentation can be accessed at <http://www.shapeamerica.org/publications/resources/teachingtools/coachtoolbox/professional-development.cfm>. Another workshop is planned for the SHAPE America convention in Minneapolis, MN, in April 2016.

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