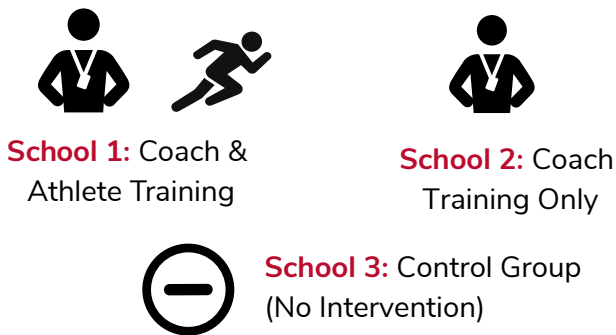


PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

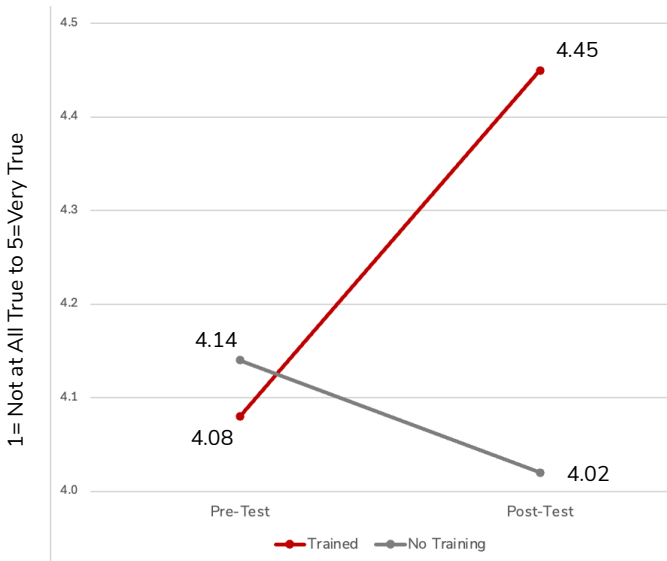
RANDOMIZED STUDY OF COACH BEYOND

In fall 2025, researchers at LiFEsports at The Ohio State University conducted a randomized study to examine the impact of Coach Beyond coach training and the Life & Leadership Through Sport student-athlete curriculum on coach behaviors and student-athlete outcomes. Participating schools were assigned to one of three conditions:



Coaches participated in 4 Coach Beyond trainings (see Figure), and student-athletes completed the full 6-session Life and Leadership Through Sport Series. Pre- and post-season surveys were collected from coaches and athletes and included validated measures of coaching behaviors, team climate, life skill development, well-being, and end-of-season indicators (e.g., fun, belonging, satisfaction, and win percentages). **The final analytic sample included 34 coaches and 112 athletes who completed both pre- and post-season surveys.**

KEY FINDINGS: Coaches



*Note. The Coach Beyond Behaviors Scale consists of 7 items assessing behaviors tied to the four trainings. Trained Coaches n=10; Untrained Coaches n=24.

From pre- to post-season, coaches who participated in Coach Beyond trainings demonstrated significant improvements in behaviors aligned with supporting student-athlete mental health, using mental performance strategies, and intentionally teaching life skills compared to the control group. Trained coaches reported increased confidence in linking and referring athletes to school mental health resources, as well as greater awareness of mental strategies to support athletic performance. In contrast, untrained coaches showed declines or no meaningful change across these areas over the season. **These results indicate that training not only increased coaches' efficacy and confidence but also may translate into observable shifts in their day-to-day behaviors.**



KEY FINDINGS: Athletes Experiences with Trained Coaches

Athletes with trained coaches reported more autonomy-supportive team climates (e.g., voice, choice, and encouragement), perceived fewer relatedness-thwarting behaviors (e.g., exclusion, favoritism), and observed coaches placing greater emphasis on discussing life skills than athletes with untrained coaches. They also reported higher levels of fun, satisfaction, and belonging, as well as more frequent wellness check-ins and structured opportunities to reflect on life skills observed by their coaches.

Athletes on teams with trained coaches reported higher season win percentages. While these are self-reported outcomes, they may tell a compelling story: coaches who prioritize positive environments, care and connection, and development beyond winning may also experience stronger performance. In other words, focusing on life skills and athlete well-being does not detract from competitive success—it may help support it.

Athlete Report: End of Season Measure	N	Untrained Coach Mean	N	Trained Coach Mean
Fun playing sport	56	4.09	61	4.15
Satisfaction with the season	56	3.98	61	4.13
Perceived belonging in sport	56	2.57	62	2.70
Coach uses wellness check-ins	56	3.13	63	3.48
Coach provides life skills reflection opportunities	57	4.56	62	4.90

Note. Items assessing fun, satisfaction, and check-ins were measured on a 1–5 scale; belonging was measured on a 1–3 scale; and life skills reflection was measured on a 1–6 scale. Higher scores indicate more positive outcomes.



KEY FINDINGS: Athlete Training through Life & Leadership Series

Athletes who participated in the Life & Leadership Through Sport sessions (n = 18) demonstrated improved emotional well-being and greater confidence in promoting positive team culture, along with lower reported stress at the end of the season, after controlling for pre-test scores. The strongest sense of belonging was observed among athletes who experienced both a trained coach and the athlete curriculum, highlighting the additive value of aligning adult practices with youth skill-building.



IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

These findings provide evidence that coach education can improve both adult behaviors and youth sport experiences. Training coaches in mental health support, life skills integration, and autonomy-supportive practices contributes to more positive team climates and positive athlete outcomes. Pairing coach training with the Life and Leadership Through Sport sessions appears to produce the most robust gains in belonging and well-being.

To cite this report: Bates, S., Anderson-Butcher, D., Ault-Baker, K. (2026). Preliminary findings: Randomized study of Coach Beyond. LiFESports at The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH.

*This work was funded by the Ohio Department of Behavioral Health Innovation Grant. For more information, visit coachbeyond@osu.edu

