YOUTH SPORT COACHES IN CENTRAL OHIO

CURRENT TRENDS, BEHAVIORS AND NEEDS

LiFEsports™

at The Ohio State University®

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INTRODUCTION

LiFE*sports* at The Ohio State University (OSU) conducted a coaching study to help explore the quality and quantity of youth sport in the region as part of "The State of Play Central Ohio" led by The Aspen Institute and The Columbus Foundation. The purpose of this study was to explore coaches' background, experiences, philosophies, current practices, and perspectives on youth sport.

This report is organized in multiple sections. First the study methods are described to provide an overview of the study context and sample. The background and experiences of coaches participating in the study are then summarized, followed by their perceived needs for youth sport. Their history of training and current interest in training topics are described, and their perceptions of what defines "Success as a Coach" are reviewed. These coaches' reported behaviors during their most recent coaching season are then reported. Findings are summarized at the end to point to several lessons learned. These lessons learned are useful for improving the context of youth sport for young people in Central Ohio and beyond.

Please note a few key people and organizations were instrumental to the success of this project. We want to acknowledge the efforts of Dan Ross of the Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA), Dan Sharpe of The Columbus Foundation, Matthew Adair of the Neighborhood Design Center, Stephanie Infante of The Lindy Infante Foundation, Tiffanie Roberts of the Community and Youth Collaborative Institute at OSU, and Jennifer Brown Lerner and Ranya Bautista of The Aspen Institute. For more information on the study findings, please contact Dr. Dawn Anderson-Butcher (anderson-butcher.1@osu.edu; 614-537-7707).

METHODS

Study procedures were approved the OSU's Institutional Review Board. An on-line survey was created to ask key questions relevant to the study, ones such as:

- What types of background, history in sport and coaching, philosophies, and practices do coaches bring with them to the youth sport setting?
- To what extent do they use principles of coaching effectiveness in their coaching?
- Do coaches from different backgrounds and/or types of sports prioritize various coaching strategies when working with youth?

To recruit coaches, we initially created a comprehensive list of non-profit and for-profit sport organizations, teams, clubs, associations, other sport entities (i.e., City Parks & Recreation Departments), and individual coaches in Central Ohio. This list included 333 sport organizations, 1,165 individual coaches, and 226 school athletic directors or coaches. The contact information for each entity on the list was tracked down and/or provided by partners.

Each contact was emailed an average of three times and asked to either complete an online survey and/or distribute the survey link to other coaches and peers. Additionally, all sport organizations received one phone call inquiring about their interest in participation. Further, LiFE*sports*, Central Ohio Project Play partners, OHSAA, and other local entities also recruited participants through electronic communications and social media posts across the six-month data collection window. Participants provided consent for participation prior to completing the survey. Additionally, as an incentive, any organization having 25 or more coaches complete the survey was promised a brief report summarizing its own organization's results. A report also will be provided to each of the four OHSAA leagues operating in Central Ohio.

STUDY SAMPLE

A total of 461 coaches completed the online survey. In relation to gender, 71.3% male and 28.4% female. Most of the participants were White Caucasian (86.9%), with 7.2% Black/African American, 1.7% Hispanic/Latino, 0.9% Asian, and 3.3% Other. The majority coached youth who were White Caucasian (80%; 10.4% Black/African American, and 9.6% Other). Most were 30 years of age or older (83.5%) with 115 of these being older than 50 (25%). In relation to geographical region, 17.2% of the participants coached inside the Columbus City Schools (CCS) catchment area, 44.7% inside Franklin County but in a non-CCS catchment area; and 38.1% coached outside of Franklin County. Based on these categories, coaches were classified into the regions of urban, suburban, and rural.

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

We were interested in the educational background of the coaches. Among coaches in this study, 8.5% were high school graduates; 40.5% had an undergraduate degree; 41.2% had a master's degree; and 5.7% had a professional or doctoral degree. Nearly half (49.5%) worked in education, 19.5% worked in the public sector (i.e., youth development, child-care, recreation), and 30.6% worked in other occupations (i.e., business, law, health care, etc.). These were relatively seasoned coaches, with only 3.1% of the coaches they were in their first season of coaching. When reporting on years coached, 19.5% reported having coached 5 years or less; 26.9% coached 6-10 years; 19.1% coached 11-15 years; and 34.5% coached more than 15 years.

SPORTS COACHED

Participants reported on the various sports they had coached in the past. In relation to team sports, 34.2% of the participants had coached baseball; 21.7% softball; 50.5% coached basketball; 26.8% coached tackle football; 34.4% coached soccer; 13.7% volleyball; and 8.4% lacrosse. For individual sports: 22.7% coached track/field; 9.2% wrestling; 6.3% cheer; 9% cross country; and 9.8% golf. Most coaches coached only one (25.2%) or two (24.3%) types of sports throughout their coaching career. Still others coached multiple sports, as 18% coached three different sports across their career, 13.4% coached four, and 8.2% had coached five or more

sports. A total of 50 coaches said they coached more than 5 different sports throughout their careers (10.8%).

EMPLOYMENT STATUS

For these study participants, coaching was a secondary job and/or volunteer opportunity. Specifically, 93.4% reported working outside of coaching. When asked about their incomes from their primary job, 9.7% reported making under $25,000/year; 22.6% between $25,000-49,999; 30.7% between $50,000-$74,999; 19.6% between $75,000-$99,999 and 16.4% reported making more than 100K. When asked about receiving payment for coaching, 18.0% of the sample received no compensation, with the majority (53.7%) making less than $5,000 for coaching. Hours spent coaching is further indicative of the secondary nature of coaching for these participants. When participants were asked to report the number of hours coached in the last year, 33.4% reported less than 250 hours; 26% reported 250-499 hours; 25.2% 500-999 hours; and 16.6% more than 1,000 hours.

COACHING EXPERIENCE

In relation to experience, 90% of the coaches in this study had been a head coach; 84.6% had been assistant coach; 23.4% had been sports administrator; 71.6% had been a volunteer; and 16.9% had been a youth sport board member. The majority currently coached at schools (77.7%).

To explore the coaches' history in sport, we asked a few questions about past involvement in sport. Among these participants, 93.3% had played the sport they coach; 55.5% had coached other sports before becoming a coach of the current sport you coach; and 22.3% had been an instructor of classes related to sport. In addition, these participants had been past athletes. In fact, over 80% of these coaches reported playing recreational and competitive sports before high school; 94.1% played varsity sports in high school; 38% played intramurals or recreational sports in high school; 54.7% played varsity sports in college; and 55.7% played intramural sports in college.

In general, the coaches in this study were relatively satisfied with their coaching experiences, with 96% indicating they were likely to continue coaching in the future.

COACH TRAINING AND FUTURE NEEDS

We were interested in understanding the type of trainings coaches had received previously and wanted to assess their interests in future trainings. We also wanted to gain insights into other areas where coaches might need professional development and supports. In this section we explore these coaches' history in past trainings, interest in future trainings, confidence in coaching, and perspectives on peer coaching practices. Three different survey sections explored coach training and future needs and are highlighted here.

Table 1 (located on page 5) presents data on the participants' history of past trainings, as well as their interests in attending future trainings. As presented, nearly all coaches reported having CPR/First Aid, Concussion Management, and General Safety/Injury Prevention training. Given nearly 100% had these trainings, coaches did not report a need for future trainings in these areas.

These coaches had participated in several other types of training (in addition to the safety-related ones). As also presented in the Table 1, more than 50% of these coaches reported they had participated in all topics asked about on the survey. A large percent had attended sport-specific trainings (such as ones on Physical Conditioning and Sports Skills/Tactics). They were less likely to report having been trained in positive youth development-related topics (although still over 50% reported having attended training in these areas).

In addition to participation in trainings, coaches also reported on other types of learning experiences. Specifically, 42.4% of the participants reported they had taken a college level coaching education course, and more than half (53.8%) had attended a coaching conference. Seventy percent indicated they would be interested in attending a coaching conference in the future. Please note 52.1% of the coaches in this study reported having some type of coaching certification, with the most common reported one being pupil activity certifications from the State.

Table 1 also presents training interests among these coaches. When asked about their interest in attending future trainings, these coaches were interested in receiving sport-specific trainings such as Sports Skills and Tactics, Effective Motivational Techniques, Sports Psychology Principles, and Strength Training. They were less likely to report interest in trainings related to non-sport specific content (such as Child Abuse and Neglect, Child Development, Cultural Competence, Emotional Intelligence, Mental Health, Developing Life Skills, Emotional Intelligence, and Working with Parents). Please note responses in relation to Child Abuse and Neglect training are interesting, as about a quarter reported no training in this area, and only half were interested in learning more in relationships to this area.

Coaches also reported on informal mechanisms that had influenced their coaching behaviors. There responses are provided here in order of most influential to least:

- 88.3% of the coaches reported being highly influenced by their previous experience as an athlete.
- 71.5% reported being a parent/caregiver informed their coaching behaviors.
- 67.9% indicated how interactions with other peer coaches impacted their coaching.
- 36.5% reported training/workshops had influenced their coaching.
- 32.5% reported looking at websites.
- 24.2% reported they read books to inform their coaching.
- 23.6% reported specific sport curricula had influenced their coaching.
- 13.5% said they had found information on coaching via social media outlets.

These data suggest coaches are most often influenced by their past sport experiences (which most likely were successful given most coaches had participated in high school sports or beyond), their role as a parent, and their interactions with other coaches.

Table 1. Coaching Training Experience and Interest.

Training	Previously Attended	Interested in Future Training
CPR/First Aid	98.5%	43.7%
Concussion Management	97.9%	31.9%
General Safety and Injury Prevention	96.5%	45.6%
Physical Conditioning	79.1%	61.0%
Sports Skills and Tactics	82.1%	72.9%
Effective Motivational Techniques	69.1%	72.6%
Working with Parents	58.9%	58.1%
Child Abuse and Neglect	74.1%	50.6%
Developing Life Skills through Sport	62.8%	60.2%
Strength Training	68.2%	65.8%
Child Development	64.6%	52.2%
Mental Health	61.6%	58.0%
Sport Psychology Principles	60.2%	70.3%
Emotional Intelligence	55.3%	57.7%
Cultural Competence	50.6%	52.7%

CONFIDENCE IN COACHING

Other survey questions provided insights in relation to areas where coaches might benefit from future trainings. Specifically, the participants were asked to report how confident they were in relation to multiple coaching behaviors. Overall, the participants tended to be confident in their coaching practices. For instance, 92.3% felt confident in their ability to handle concussions; 92.9% reported they were confident in teaching technical skills; 88.8% were confident they could detect subtle technique errors in practice; and 98% were confident they could teach sport-specific techniques.

A few areas emerged where coaches reported less confidence. Among participants, 34.6% reported they were not confident in their abilities to adapt their coaching to the special needs of players (mental health, disability, etc.); 29.9% were not confident in preparing athletes for off-season physical conditioning; and 19.9% were not confident in implementing endurance/fitness program for athletes during the off-season.

PERSPECTIVES ON PEER COACHING PRACTICES

Another way to ascertain coaching training needs involved exploring coach perceptions of their peer practices. As such, we asked the coaches specific questions about the degree to which their peer coaches demonstrated certain positive coaching behaviors. Among the coaches in this study:

- 63.1% reported their peers encouraged athletes to demonstrate good sportsmanship at least most of the time.
- 63.1% reported their peers modeled fair play at least most of the time.
- 62.3% reported their peers modeled high levels of character at least most of the time.
- 56.2% reported their peers effectively modeled the sports skills they are teaching at least most of the time.
- 54.3% reported their peers effectively instructed sport skills at least most of the time.
- 52.7% reported their peers motivated athletes at least most of the time.
- 47.5% reported their peers taught life skills at least most of the time.
- 44.1% reported their peers focused on other things besides winning and talent at least most of the time.
- 42.6% reported their peers effectively teach sport strategy at least most of the time.
- 37.5% reported their peers battle with referees half of the time or more.

In general, these coaches had favorable perceptions related to their peers' coaching behaviors, but data point to potential training areas important for improving practices. Coaches ranked their peers favorably in relation to the demonstration of sportsmanship-related behaviors. Only about half agreed that their peers were modeling and instructing sports skills correctly. There were less favorable perceptions related to their peers coaching emphasis on life skills and other things outside of winning and talent development. It was interesting to note that only 42.6% reported their peers effectively teach sport strategy.

PERSPECTIVES ON YOUTH SPORT

We were interested in better understanding these coaches' perceptions of the need for youth sport for certain groups of youth in Central Ohio, as well as exploring if there were perceived differences in need across geographical regions. Table 2 presents data on the degree to which the coaches in this study perceived a need for more sports by certain groups of youth and types of sport.

Overall these coaches perceived the need for more sport for children with disabilities (mentioned by 82.9%), preschool-aged youth (55.6%), elementary-aged youth (37.9%), middle school-aged youth (26.9%), and girls (25.3%). Coaches in urban settings reported greater needs

across all areas than suburban and rural coaches. Coaches from rural settings reported the least need across all geographical areas.

In relation to type of sports, coaches in urban settings again reported the greatest needs in relation to needs for competitive and school sport, however, reported the least need for recreational sport opportunities. Coaches in rural settings reported the most need for recreational sport and less need for competitive sports than the others.

Table 2. Percent of Coaches Reporting Need Overall and By Region.

There is a need for sport for…	Urban	Suburban	Rural	Total
Certain Groups:				
Boys	13.6%	12.4%	9.6%	11.4%
Girls	33.8%	27.8%	18.6%	25.3%
Children with Disabilities	87.9%	82.5%	81.2%	82.9%
Preschool age Youth	68.5%	56.0%	49.4%	55.6%
Elementary-Aged Youth	55.4%	36.2%	31.9%	37.9%
Middle School-Aged Youth	36.5%	25.8%	24.0%	26.9%
High School-Aged Youth	24.4%	19.7%	13.2%	17.9%
Types of Sports:				
Competitive Sport	34.3%	20.7%	18.6%	22.2%
Recreational Sport	21.7%	25.8%	39.8%	39.1%
School Sport	37.9%	36.8%	32.4%	35.3%

Participants also identified from a list of possibilities the top reasons they believed youth did not participate in sports. Table 3 presents the most common barriers reported by the coaches, with the most significant ones being "Not Interested in Sports," "Friends Don't Play," and sports are "Too Expensive." There were a few subtle differences in relation to the coaches' perceptions of barriers by region. Coaches from urban settings were more likely to report "Friends Don't Play," yet less likely to report youth were "Not Interested in Sports" and that sports were "Too Serious."

Coaches from suburban settings were more likely to report sports were "Too Expensive" and "Too Serious," yet less likely than the other groups to report barriers because "Friends Don't Play." Coaches from rural settings reported the most significant barrier to participation was that youth were "Not Interested in Sports." These rural coaches also were less likely than the others to report sports were "Too Expensive." Please note coaches from both the urban and rural settings were more likely than those coaching in the suburbs to report challenges with transportation.

Table 3. Percent of Coaches Reporting Barriers to Participation Overall and by Region.

Reasons Youth Do Not Participate	Urban	Suburban	Rural	Total
Not Interested in Sports	34.6%	46.3%	49.7%	45.3%
Friends Don't Play	47.4%	41.9%	46.2%	44.0%
Too Expensive	43.6%	48.3%	39.3%	43.6%
Not Good Enough	28.2%	29.0%	28.9%	28.6%
Sports are Too Serious	15.4%	27.1%	22.0%	23.0%
Don't Have Way to Get to Games/Practices	35.9%	21.7%	35.3%	29.5%

COACHING PHILOSOPHY AND VALUES

Participants were provided with a list of several important coaching values and were asked to pick their top three most and least important coaching beliefs. Table 4 presents the overall most and least important philosophies across the entire sample. Follow-up analyses were done to examine differences in values across different groups, including gender of the coach, gender of the athletes being coached, and level of competitiveness of the sport.

Table 4. Coach Perceptions of Most and Least Important Philosophies Driving Coaching Behaviors.

Most Important Philosophies	Least Important Philosophies
Having fun (mentioned 160 times)	Winning (mentioned 317 times)
Learning life skills (146)	Encouraging youth to play multiple positions (180)
Teaching youth to set their own goals and work towards them (137)	Making sure everyone plays (134)
Making sure everyone has a role on the team (96 times)	Competing (96)
Supporting youth to be healthy and fit (87)	Avoiding injury (87)

Note. Number of times are indicative of number coaches who listed the value as a one of their top 3 priorities.

DIFFERENCES BY COACH GENDER

There were some interesting differences in perspectives based on the gender of the coach. When specifically examining trends in the most commonly reported values presented in Table 4,

male coaches were more likely to value having fun more so than female coaches (38.7% reported versus 25.4%); the learning of new life skills (34.7% versus 24.6%); and competing (23.6% versus 5.4%). Female coaches were more likely to prioritize supporting youth to be healthy and fit (24.6% versus 16.3%)

When examining the least important priorities in Table 4, the following were less likely to be chosen as a least important priority by male coaches than females: winning (66.3% of males versus 77.7% of females) and competing (19.3% of males versus 25.3% of females). However, male coaches did not perceive making sure everyone plays as an important priority (17.8% of males reported this as a least important value versus 7.7% of females).

Table 5 outlines the most and least important values chosen by female and male coaches overall. Priorities related to having fun, developing life skills, and belonging were evident on the female and male coaches lists. The male coaches more commonly reported setting goals and competing as important priorities. The female coaches more often reported supporting athletes to be healthy and fit and ensuring everyone has a role as important. Least important priorities were consistent across the two genders. However male coaches valued avoiding injury whereas the female coaches prioritized teaching the love of the sport. Please note how competing showed up on the male coaches most and least important lists, pointing to differences across male coaches in relation to their prioritization of this value.

Table 5. Most and Least Important Values by Coach Gender (in order of most common to least).

Most Important for Male Coaches	Most Important for Female Coaches
Having fun	Creating a sense of belonging
Learning life skills	Having fun
Setting goals	Learning life skills
Competing	Supporting athletes to be healthy and fit
Creating a sense of belonging	Making sure everyone has a role
Least Important for Male Coaches	**Least Important for Female Coaches**
Winning	Winning
Making sure everyone plays multiple positions	Making sure everyone plays multiple positions
Making sure everyone plays	Competing
Avoiding injury	Making sure everyone plays
Competing	Teaching the love of sport

Note: Both life skills and supporting athletes to be healthy/fit were identified the same number of times. Also note competing was identified as one of the most important values and least important values for male coaches based on number of responses (hence why it's on both lists).

DIFFERENCES BY ATHLETE GENDER

We also explored trends in responses based on the gender of the athletes coached. A few differences were noted when looking further into most and least priorities by the gender of the athletes coached. Coaches of males were more likely to indicate the following were one of their most important values: Having fun (48.9% versus 27.7% coaching females and 35.5% coaching co-ed), learning new life skills (39.2% versus 33.1% and 32.3%), and competing (26.1% versus 15.7% and 17.7%). Coaches of females were more likely to prioritize teaching goal setting (41.0% versus 23.9% of those coaching males versus 40.3% co-ed). Those who coached multiple genders indicated "supporting youth to be healthy and fit" was more of a priority than the others (29.0% versus 15.3% of those coaching males versus 20.5% of those coaching females).

In relation to values that were least important, coaches of females were more likely to report the following were not as important than the others: Winning (82.5% of females versus 71.0% of males and 75.8% of co-ed) and competing (25.3% versus 19.3% of males and 30.6% of co-ed). Those coaching multiple genders were less likely to include making sure everyone plays on their least important list (27.4% versus 31.3% of males and 34.9% of females.

Table 6 simply reports the most and least important values for coaches of male athletes, female athletes, and those who coach both (i.e., co-ed). All lists include the following priorities: having fun, teaching life skills, and setting goals. Competing was one of the most important values only for those who coached male athletes. Belonging was chosen often as a top priority for coaches of males and females yet did not show up on the list for those coaching both genders. Coaches of female athletes also prioritized everyone having a role; whereas coaches of both genders valued supporting athletes to be healthy and fit and ensuring everyone plays.

Table 6. Most and Least Important Values by Athlete Gender (in order to most to least).

MOST IMPORTANT FOR COACHES OF:		
MALES	**FEMALES**	**CO-ED**
Having fun	Setting goals	Setting goals
Learning life skills	Learning life skills	Having fun
Creating a sense of belonging	Creating a sense of belonging	Learning life skills
Competing	Having fun	Supporting athletes to be healthy and fit
Setting goals	Making sure everyone has a role	Making sure everyone plays

LEAST IMPORTANT FOR COACHES OF:		
MALES	**FEMALES**	**CO-ED**
Winning	Winning	Winning
Making sure everyone plays multiple positions	Making sure everyone plays multiple positions	Making sure everyone plays multiple positions
Making sure everyone plays	Making sure everyone plays	Competing
Avoiding injury	Competing	Making sure everyone plays
Making new friends/competing	Avoiding injury	Avoiding injury

Note: Both making new friends and competing were identified the same number of times as a least important priority coaches of male athletes.

DIFFERENCES BY LEVEL OF COMPETITION OF THE SPORT

Additionally, differences in most and least important values were examined by the degree of competitiveness of the sport coached. Table 7 presents the list of the most and least commonly reported values by coaches at developmental/recreational versus competitive levels.

The priorities of developmental/recreational coaches versus those of competitive levels were fairly similar overall. Four of the chosen "Top 3's" were similar on both the most and least important lists. In fact, having fun was the most reported value identified by both coaches of developmental/ recreational and competitive. Winning showed up as a commonly reported least important priority for both groups. Coaches across these two levels, however, were different in relation to their value of these two priorities: ensuring everyone plays or everyone has a role.

Specifically, ensuring everyone plays was commonly placed on the "Top 3" list for coaches at the developmental/recreational level (as indicated by its presence on the most important list). This same value, ensuring everyone plays, was commonly chosen as a least important value by coaches at competitive levels. Vice versa, everyone has a role was commonly chosen by coaches at the competitive level as one of their most important values yet chosen by coaches at the developmental/recreational as one of their least important priorities. The differences in these values are interesting to note.

Table 7. Most and Least Important Priorities by Level of Competitiveness of the Sport.

Most Important for Developmental/Recreational Level Coaches	Most Important for Competitive Coaches
Having fun	Having fun
Setting goals	Learning life skills
Making sure everyone plays	Setting goals
Creating a sense of belonging	Creating a sense of belonging
Learning life skills	Making sure everyone has a role
Least Important for Developmental/Recreational Level Coaches	**Least Important for Competitive Coaches**
Winning	Winning
Making sure everyone plays multiple positions	Making sure everyone plays multiple positions
Competing	Making sure everyone plays
Avoiding injury	Competing
Making sure everyone has a role	Avoiding injury

PERSPECTIVES ON "SUCCESS AS A COACH"

To better understand coaches' perspectives of what they perceived as quality coaching, participants were asked to rate the degree to which certain coaching behaviors were important to the "success of a coach." The most important factors mentioned were (in order of importance): Developing life skills, building relationships with youth, teaching the game, and having fun. The least important factors prioritized by the coaches in this study were winning championships, having a strong win-loss record, and having athletes secure college scholarships. Table 8 provides the means and standard deviations related to the coaches' perspectives overall and by various groups. Some trends are noteworthy when looking at subgroups of the sample:

- Females coaches rated all success indicators as more important than the male coaches.
- Coaches of male athletes had the lowest ratings for all success indicators. Coaches of female athletes and of both genders were very similar in their responses overall. When exploring differences between these two groups, however, coaches of athletes of both genders tended to rate the success indicators related to developing life skills, instilling the value of being physically activity, and teaching fundamentals as more important than coaches of females.

- Coaches at the competitive level rated all success indicators as more important than coaches at the developmental/recreational level.
- Coaches of individual versus team sports were very similar in their importance ratings. However, coaches of individual sports tended to report winning championships, developing sports skills, and teaching fundamental motor skills as more important.
- Predictably school-based coaches indicated having a strong win-loss record, winning championships, and having athletes secure college scholarships as more important than community-based coaches.
- In terms of geographical location, most of the "Success of a Coach" ratings of importance were similar across urban, suburban, and rural coaches. However, coaches in rural settings placed a significantly higher level of importance on having a strong win-loss record, winning championships, and having athletes secure college scholarships. These rural coaches placed less emphasis on having fun.

COACHING BEHAVIORS

We were interested in better understanding the current coaching behaviors of these coaches. For the following findings, participants were asked to reflect on the LAST SEASON they coached. A total of 404 coaches completed this section. The coaches were mostly head coaches of these teams (73.6%), and had received some form of compensation for their coaching (77.1%). In relation to the teams reflected upon in this section, 74.2% were team sports and 25.8% individual sports. Teams mostly competed at competitive levels (87.3%) and were school-based sports (74.8%).

A few interesting contextual factors are important to note when interpreting results related to interpreting the findings related to reported coaching behaviors during the last season. In this sample:

- When asked about race/ethnicity of kids, 75.5% coached youth who were primarily white Caucasian; 9.8% coached youth primarily Black or African American; 2% coached youth who were primarily Asian; and 12.7% reported other.
- In relation to the ages of the youth coached, 35.4% coached kids under 14 years of age and 64.6% coached youth 14 or older.
- About 29.5% of the coaches reported players paid no fee to participate on the teams they coached last season. However, 20% of coaches reported the youth paid more than 250$ to play for the team.
- 61.7% reported that youth had tried out to be on the team they are reflecting upon during this section.

When asked about the skill level of the youth, 41% reported players were very skilled at fundamentals; 33.2% reported the players were skilled at tactics/strategy, 31.6% at mental toughness, and in relation to 52% fitness.

We wanted to better understand the types of challenges coaches faced during the last season they coached. First, we asked these coaches if there was a youth on the team coached last season who had any special needs.

Table 8. Indicators of "Success of a Coach" by Different Subgroups

Demographic Characteristic	Having a strong Win-Loss Record	Winning Championships	Having athletes secure college scholarships	Developing sports skills	Developing life skills	Having fun	Building relationships with youth	Instilling value of being physical active	Teaching fundamental motor skills	Teaching the game
Gender of Coach										
Male (n=326)	51.1(26.6.)	47.3(26.9)	41.6(29.5)	81.8(16.7)	90.8(12.6)	86.8(15.4)	86.8(17.2)	81.7(18.7)	77.4(21.4)	88.0(14.0)
Female (n-130)	55.0 (24.9)	50.2(25.5)	45.23(25.7)	86.5(14.5)	92.1(10.8)	89.4(12.3)	91.6(10.8)	86.8(15.7)	83.0(15.8)	88.4(13.4)
Gender of Athletes										
Male (n=176)	50.7(25.6)	46.7(26.4)	41.5(30.7)	80.3(17.2)	89.6(13.9)	85.9(15.4)	86.2(17.2)	80.8(18.1)	75.0(21.1)	87.9(13.8)
Female (n=166)	54.7(23.9)	48.6(25.1)	43.1(25.9)	85.0(14.7)	91.4(10.7)	88.1(13.3)	89.6(14.6)	84.2(17.8)	81.0(18.8)	88.3(13.0)
Co-ed (n=62)	47.7(32.3)	49.3(31.0)	42.3(29.5)	86.6(14.5)	94.4(9.1)	90.4(15.4)	89.6(14.7)	87.4(16.1)	84.9(17.1)	88.6(14.8)
Competition Level										
Developmental/Recreational (n=50)	41.4(28.4)	38.4(29.0)	34.2(27.8)	80.5(19.9)	86.8(14.5)	88.7(14.0)	82.0(21.0)	82.1(16.1)	77.2(20.2)	83.4(18.9)
Competitive (n=343)	53.3(25.4)	48.9(26.0)	42.9(28.3)	83.5(15.3)	92.0(11.0)	87.5(14.5)	89.0(14.6)	83.4(17.7)	79.5(19.4)	88.9(12.4)
Type of Sport										
Team Sport (n=293)	51.5(25.5)	46.0(26.2)	42.3(28.0)	81.8(16.7)	90.2(12.1)	87.5(14.4)	88.3(16.2)	82.5(18.1)	77.7(20.2)	87.6(14.0)
Individual Sport (n=102)	52.4(28.2)	53.3(26.8)	43.7(29.7)	87.8(12.8)	93.2(11.9)	87.7(15.1)	88.6(14.1)	85.3(17.0)	82.3(18.6)	90.3(11.6)

Demographic Characteristic	Having a strong Win-Loss Record	Winning Championships	Having athletes secure college scholarships	Developing sports skills	Developing life skills	Having fun	Building relationships with youth	Instilling value of being physical active	Teaching fundamental motor skills	Teaching the game
Location										
School-Based (n=294)	55.8(24.5)	51.7(24.9)	44.2(28.3)	82.8(16.2)	91.8(11.7)	86.9(14.9)	89.3(14.3)	83.0(17.8)	79.0(19.1)	88.3(13.3)
Community-Based (n=99)	39.1(28.1)	35.5(28.6)	36.8(29.0)	84.4(16.6)	88.7(13.5)	89.8(13.6)	84.1(19.9)	83.9(19.0)	78.8(23.4)	87.2(15.7)
Region										
Urban (n=78)	55.0(26.0)	50.2(27.1)	43.1(28.5)	83.6(16.5)	90.4(11.2)	87.9(16.4)	87.8(17.2)	83.9(16.6)	77.3(21.9	87.1(15.0)
Suburban (n=203)	46.2(26.6)	42.4(26.8)	40.1(29.1)	82.6(17.3)	90.5(13.0)	89.8(13.5)	87.8(17.5)	82.8(19.5)	78.0(20.9)	87.7(14.8)
Rural (n=173)	58.1(24.6)	54.1(24.8)	45.5(27.8)	83.5(14.9)	92.1(11.5)	84.9(14.9)	88.8(13.0)	83.0(17.1)	80.7(18.3)	89.0(12.0)
Total	*n* = 407 52.1 (26.2)	*n* = 395 48.2(26.6)	*n* = 393 42.6 (28.5)	*n* = 416 83.1(16.3)	*n* = 416 91.1(12.2)	*n* = 416 87.6(14.6)	*n* = 416 88.2(15.8)	*n* = 415 83.2(18.1)	*n* = 415 79.0(20.1)	*n* = 416 88.1(13.8)

Note: Responses were coded on a 0-100 scale ranging from "Not at all Important" to "Very Important." Urban reflects coaches in the Columbus City Schools catchment area, suburban reflects those coaches in Franklin County but not in CCS, and rural indicates outside of Franklin County.

For this sample,

- 40.8% reported a youth on team had ADD/ADHD.
- 19.5% reported had youth on team with behavioral mental health need.
- 12.8% reported had a youth on team with chronic illness.
- 3.5% had youth on team with physical disability.

Other questions asked the coaches if they had experienced any challenges during the last season, especially in relation to resources and equipment. Findings are presented in Table 9. Top needs were identified in relation to funding (reported by 24.1%) and the lack of facilities (21.1%). There were differences noted in challenges by regions. Not surprisingly, coaches in urban settings reported significantly higher needs across all areas, whereas coaches from suburban settings reported the least degree of challenges.

Table 9. Percent of Coaches Reporting Lack of Resources Overall and by Region

Resource	Urban	Suburban	Rural	Total
Equipment	20.0%	8.8%	12.3%	11.8%
Facility Space	29.6%	17.0%	23.0%	21.1%
Transportation for youth to practice	29.2%	6.6%	13.7%	12.7%
Transportation for youth to games	20.9%	4.2%	6.1%	7.4%
Funding team needs	36.9%	21.3%	21.8%	24.1%
Uniforms	7.6%	5.8%	6.6%	6.3%

We also were interested in how many hours per week the participants spent doing tasks related to coaching. Coaches spent an average of 35.4 (*SD* = 17.2) hours per week doing some type of activity with their team during the last season. Most coaches spent over 30 hours per week doing a combination of coaching behaviors (54.9%). Time was mostly spent in practice, planning practice, and in games. Only 20.4% of coaches reported spending 20 hours or less doing these behaviors. We also were interested in the ratio of time spent in practice versus games, which was about 3:2 (3:1 is the typical recommendation). Table 10 provides an overview of average hours per week coaches spend in specific activities.

The coaches also reported on their prioritization of certain coaching behaviors. Specifically, they ranked the degree to which they did certain coaching behaviors while coaching their team during the last season. Table 9 presents the percent of coaches overall and by subgroups reporting they often or always did these behaviors.

Across all coaches, the most common reported behaviors focused on creating a positive, fun, mastery-oriented environment. For instance, 98.1% reported they focused on athletes improving their skills over time. Additionally, 96.0% reported they focused on fostering positive relationships

among peers and teammates, 93.9% focused on creating a sense of belonging among the team, and 93.3% provided reinforcement when athletes demonstrated positive social skills.

Coaches also mentioned they emphasized serving as a role model to youth on the team (96.0%). The coaches were less likely to focus on intentionally teaching social and/or life skills (mentioned by 79.0%), the use of social and/or life skills outside of sport (80.8%), using goal setting (75.9%), or offering consistent, regular contacts with the youth over-time (76.0%). However, these coaches reported emphasizing for the most the use of social and life skills in sport (85.8%). Areas of limited use by these coaches were linking athletes to other programs and opportunities (only said by 41%); linking youth and families to other needed resources (40%), designing activities to engage youth of diverse backgrounds (51%), and engaging youth in volunteerism (36%).

Table 10. Average Hours Spent in Coaching Activities Per Week

How do coaches spend their time?	
Average Hours/Week	Activity/Task
9.38	Practice
6.92	Games
4.28	Planning Practice
3.06	Mental Preparation for Games/Practices
2.85	Meeting with co-coaches
2.46	Developing game plan
2.41	Completing administrative tasks (e.g., paperwork, scheduling)
2.36	Reading about sport and coaching
2.06	Watching video
1.66	Meeting individually with players
1.62	Scouting
1.48	Recording/Calculating statistics
1.43	Talking to parents/caregivers
0.63	Other related activities

When exploring trends in data across subgroups, a few areas where responses seemed interesting include:

- Female coaches were more likely to use goal setting and emphasize strong caring relationships with the youth than male coaches. Female coaches were less likely to engage youth in volunteer opportunities, design activities to engage youth of diverse backgrounds, and provide feedback when youth made poor decisions than the male coaches.
- Coaches of female athletes reported using the following coaching behaviors with their last team more often than male coaches and those of both genders: develop positive relationships among peers and teammates, provide reinforcement when athletes demonstrate positive social skills, use goals setting, make sure all athletes have a role, help athletes with barriers, and engage youth in volunteerism. Interestingly, coaches of female athletes reported less emphasis on engaging youth who are hard to serve than the others.
- Coaches at competitive levels reported the use of the various positive coaching behaviors more often than those at the developmental/recreational levels. Some of these differences were quite large (such as in relation to offering consistent, regular ongoing contacts with youth, developing strong caring relationships, allowing youth to take on leadership roles, and using goal setting). The only areas where developmental/recreational coaches reported more favorable practices was in relation to ensuring the youth have fun and providing reinforcement for the demonstration of social skills.
- Responses were similar across coaches of team versus individual sports for the most part. A few differences emerged. Coaches of individual sports reported more usage of goal setting, the provision of consistent regular contacts, and strategies to engage youth from diverse backgrounds. Team sport coaches offered more opportunities for volunteerism, involved youth in leadership roles, and made sure all athletes had a role to play.
- Interestingly, coaches from suburban settings reported less positive coaching practices overall, except for in a few areas (such as ensuring youth have fun and making sure all youth have a role to play). For the most part, coaches from rural settings reported the most positive coaching practices in relation to youth development principles (i.e., developing strong, caring relationships, creating belonging, providing feedback). As expected, coaches from urban settings were more likely to design activities for diverse youth, link athletes to other programs, and help address barriers, work to engage youth hardest to serve (areas least likely to be used by suburban coaches).

REVIEW OF KEY FINDINGS

Across the study, insights can be drawn in relation to the need for youth sport (overall and for certain groups of youth), potential barriers that may need to be addressed to foster improvements in quality and experiences, potential areas where coaching training may be needed, and specific nuances in coach perspectives when may be important to consider when improving youth sport experiences by focusing on coaches. When synthesizing results across the study, key findings include:

The Need for More Youth Sport. The coaches identified a need for more youth sports for children with disabilities, youth under aged 14 (preschool, elementary, and middle school), and for girls. Youth sport in urban areas emerged as a top priority, especially in relation to school-based and competitive sport offerings. In suburban and rural contexts, recreational sport was identified as a need more so than competitive or school-based. When asked about their last season of coaching, funding was identified as a top need. There is a need for more youth sports, as well as the funding to support them.

Barriers to Sports Participation in Urban Settings Must be Addressed. In addition to the need for more sport in urban settings, coaches from urban areas overwhelmingly identified challenges to youth participation when reporting on their last season coached. In particular the coaches expressed challenges in relation to funding, facility space, and transportation. Additionally, top barriers to youth participation among urban coaches were expense and transportation. Not surprisingly, coaches from urban settings reported the use of more coaching strategies focused on serving diverse youth, addressing barriers, and engaging the hardest-to-serve when reporting on their last season of coaching. Coaches in urban settings do more than coach but may need more resources to do so.

Coaches Want More Training in Sport-Specific Practices. These coaches had participated in multiple trainings in the past, and nearly all were trained in safety-related areas (i.e., concussions, CPR/First Aid, etc.). When asked about interests in future trainings, the majority of coaches expressed their willingness to participate in training areas mentioned on the survey. Some areas of piqued interest were topics such as sport psychology, motivation, sport skill tactics and techniques, and strength training. Coaches might be interested in learning more about how to train athletes in the off-season, as they report limited confidence in their abilities in this area.

Coaching Practices on Tactics and Techniques May Not Be as Positive as We Think. The coaches in this study were highly confident in their own coaching practices, as over 90% reported confidence in teaching sport skills and providing technical instruction. When rating their coaching peers, however, the quality of coaching practices was rated as less favorable (as 57.4%% report their peers do not necessarily teach sport strategy most of the time and 45.7% say they do not instruct sport skills well). Most of coach time is spent in practice and games, and the ratio of practice-to-games is too low (i.e., there should be more practicing). Coaches reported spending little time meeting individually with players (less than 2 hours/week), and consistent, regular, ongoing contact with athletes over time is limited. In summary, these coaches report they are effective in their own traditional sport practices, but perhaps their peers are not. Finding ways to motivate coaches to improve their practices may be challenging.

If We Want a Focus on Youth Development, We Are Going to Have to Be Creative. When asked about training interests, the coaches in this study were less interested in attending sessions on topics related to positive youth development, cultural competence, child development, mental health, and child abuse/neglect. However, when rating their peers on their coaching practices, the coaches identified needs related to positive youth development practices. For instance,

Table 11. Coaching Behaviors (Continued in Table 12)

Demographic Characteristic	Intentionally teach social and/or life skills through direct instruction	Ensure youth are having fun	Develop strong caring relationships with youth	Foster positive relationships among peers and teammates	Create a sense of belonging among team	Provide reinforcement when athletes demonstrate positive social skills	Provide feedback when you see athletes make poor decisions or act in appropriately	Challenge athletes to apply social and or life skills in sport	Challenge athletes to apply social and/or life skill outside of sport	Allow youth to take on leadership roles	Focus on athletes improving their skills over time
Gender of Coach											
Males (n=326)	78.9%	86.6%	90.5%	94.9%	93.4%	92.3%	95.3%	85.4%	81.5%	86.5%	98.5%
Females (n=130)	79.4%	90.7%	100%	98.9%	95.9%	95.9%	89.7%	86.6%	78.4%	81.5%	96.9%
Gender of Youth											
Males (n=176)	78.9%	85.7%	88.8%	95.1%	93.2%	91.9%	96.9%	84.4%	79.5%	85.7%	98.8%
Females (n=166)	79.9%	89.9%	97.4%	98.7%	95.0%	95.6%	91.2%	86.2%	82.4%	85.5%	97.5%
Co-ed (n=62)	76.8%	85.8%	91.0%	91.1%	92.8%	90.9%	92.9%	89.2%	80.4%	84.0%	98.2%
Competition Level											
Developmental/Recreational (n=50)	71.7%	95.6%	78.2%	89.2%	93.4%	100%	84.8%	82.6%	71.7%	69.9%	95.6%
Competitive (n=343)	80.5%	86.6%	95.2%	97.2%	94.2%	92.4%	95.4%	86.5%	82.3%	87.8%	98.5%
Type of Sport											
Team Sport (n=293)	79.2%	88.2%	92.0%	96.3%	93.5%	93.8%	94.2%	84.6%	81.3%	86.8%	98.1%
Individual Sport (n=102)	77.4%	86.0%	95.7%	95.7%	95.7%	91.4%	93.5%	89.3%	78.5%	82.8%	97.9%

Location										
School-Based (n=294)	78.7%	85.9%	95.1%	95.9%	93.8%	92.4%	94.5%	88.3%	83.9%	87.3%	98.7%
Community-Based (n=99)	80.0%	92.8%	84.7%	96.5%	94.1%	95.7%	91.8%	77.4%	70.6%	78.6%	96.5%
Region										
Urban (n=78)	81.9%	83.3%	86.8%	95.0%	95.1%	94.9%	90.2%	88.4%	75.4%	85.0%	96.6%
Suburban (n=203)	77.9%	89.2%	91.6%	94.6%	90.4%	93.4%	93.4%	83.2%	79.6%	82.6%	97.6%
Rural (n=173)	78.6%	86.9%	96.5%	97.9%	97.2%	92.6%	95.9%	87.6%	84.1%	88.3%	99.3%
Total	*n = 376* 79.0%	*n = 375* 87.5%	*n = 376* 92.9%	*n = 375* 96.0%	*n = 376* 93.9%	*n = 374* 93.3%	*n = 376* 93.9%	*n = 375* 85.8%	*n = 376* 80.8%	*n = 375* 85.4%	*n = 374* 98.1%

Table 12. Coaching Behaviors (continued)

Demographic	Use goal setting processes to monitor progress	Foster community pride and cohesion	Make sure all athletes have a role to play and are involved	Link youth and families to other needed resources and supports	Offer consistent, regular ongoing contacts with youth over extended time	Work to engage youth who are hardest to serve	Serve as a role model to the youth on your team	Help athletes with barriers such as transportation, costs, safety issues	Engage youth in volunteer opportunities.	Link athletes to other programs and opportunities	Design activities to engage youth of diverse backgrounds
Gender of Coach											
Males (n=326)	73.7%	81.8%	89.1%	41.0%	77.4%	56.4%	96.0%	61.2%	37.2%	42.1%	52.2%
Females (n=130)	81.4%	78.3%	92.7%	37.1%	72.1%	59.8%	95.8%	59.4%	31.9%	38.2%	46.9%
Gender of Youth											
Males (n=176)	68.2%	81.4%	85.7%	42.5%	75.1%	56.9%	96.9%	60.5%	33.3%	34.8%	51.6%
Females (n=166)	82.4%	78.6%	94.9%	38.3%	76.8%	55.3%	94.3%	63.3%	40.9%	45.9%	47.4%
Co-ed (n=62)	80.0%	83.6%	89.1%	38.2%	76.3%	63.6%	98.2%	56.3%	29.1%	47.3%	60.0%
Competition Level											
Developmental/Recreational (n=50)	56.5%	82.6%	87.0%	30.4%	43.5%	62.3%	93.3%	55.3%	24.4%	35.5%	42.2%
Competitive (n=343)	78.9%	80.2%	87.8%	41.3%	80.5%	56.4%	96.3%	61.8%	42.1%	42.1%	52.1%
Type of Sport											
Team Sport (n=293)	72.9%	81.0%	91.3%	41.0%	75.2%	57.5%	95.6%	63.2%	38.9%	40.9%	49.5%
Individual Sport (n=102)	86.0%	79.6%	87.1%	39.8%	81.8%	58.1%	96.8%	58.1%	27.9%	43.0%	57.2%

Location										
School-Based (n=294)	76.8%	80.7%	89.3%	40.6%	79.0%	57.8%	97.2%	61.7%	36.0%	42.7%	51.2%
Community-Based (n=99)	72.7%	80.0%	92.9%	38.1%	65.9%	55.3%	91.8%	59.0%	35.7%	36.9%	50.6%
Region										
Urban (n=78)	74.6%	80.0%	90.0%	45.0%	78.3%	70.0%	98.4%	71.6%	43.4%	53.3%	66.7%
Suburban (n=203)	70.6%	79.0%	91.6%	36.1%	71.2%	49.7%	93.4%	50.0%	30.6%	33.5%	46.1%
Rural (n=173)	82.1%	82.1%	88.2%	42.0%	80.6%	60.4%	97.9%	68.8%	38.5%	45.1%	50.0%
Total	*n = 374* 75.9%	*n = 375* 80.5%	*n = 375* 90.2%	*n = 374* 40.1%	*n = 375* 76.0%	*n = 374* 57.2%	*n = 373* 96.0%	*n = 370* 61.1%	*n = 373* 35.9%	*n = 372* 41.4%	*n = 370* 51.5%

only 47.5% reported their peers teach life skills most of the time and 44.1% report their peers focus on things other than winning. When asked about their last season of coaching, participants reported limited focus on intentionally teaching social and/or life skills. Getting coaches to value life skill development and other youth development principles in their practices may be tricky.

Coaches were Athletes, So Play to That. Coaches in this study perhaps were drawn to coaching because of their past successful experiences as athletes. Almost all coaches in this study played the sport they currently coached, over 50% coached more than 2 sports; and 94% played a sport in high school (55% in college). They also reported parenting informed their coaching, as did interactions with their coaching peers. Future trainings should be designed to build from these strengths and experiences. A few strategies come to mind: training geared to the sports adults used to play, allow coaches to reminisce about past successes as athletes, allow for interactions with other coaches (i.e., peer-to-peer learning), honor their "perceived excellence" in coaching, talk about how coaching practices might differ across sports, etc. Please note however, there were few participants in this study who were not past athletes. There may be a need to better understand the needs of this group of coaches (if there are any).

Values Placed on Winning Are Central to Some Coaches' Values. Coaches of individual sports rated winning championships as a key priority more so than those of team-based sports. School-based coaches emphasized win-loss records, winning championships, and having athletes secure college scholarships as more important than community-based coaches. Coaches in rural settings placed a significant greater emphasis on win-loss records, winning championships, and having athletes secure college scholarships than those in urban and suburban settings. When reporting on the last season coached, however, coaches from rural settings reported the use of more positive youth development coaching practices (i.e., developing caring relationships, creating belonging, etc.) than those in urban and suburban settings. There is research suggesting too much focus on performance-based outcomes may lead to amotivation and sport dropout. Priorities in coaching training may need to focus more on de-emphasizing these win-at-all-costs perspectives (or coupling these priorities with mastery-oriented climates).

Male and Female Coaches are Similar Yet Different. Both male and female coaches reported having fun, developing life skills, and creating belonging were most important coaching priorities. Female coaches valued supporting athletes to be healthy/fit and ensuring everyone on the team has a role as top priorities. Male coaches rated setting goals as a most important priority. Interestingly, male coaches differed in relation to their values placed on competing (as some male coaches ranked competing as a most important priority whereas other male coaches ranked it as a least important one). When asked about their last season of coaching, female coaches were more likely than male coaches to use goal setting and emphasize caring relationships with athletes. Male coaches were more likely to engage youth in volunteerism, provide feedback, and engage youth of diverse backgrounds. Future trainings may need to need to be individualized based on coach gender and these needs.

Coaches Value Positive Coaching Practices but Differ in Perspectives Based on the Gender of the Athletes Coached. Coaches of males, females and both genders prioritized having fun, developing life skills, and setting goals. The three also de-emphasized winning, playing multiple positions, ensuring everyone plays, and avoiding injury. When reporting on their last season of

coaching, coaches of females reported using more positive coaching behaviors than those of males and both genders. Coaches of female athletes also valued all positive coaching practices indicative of "Success as a Coach" more so than coaches of males and both genders. Interestingly, coaches of male athletes reported valuing the positive coaching practices the least across groups. Additionally, coaches of males differed in relation to their values placed on competing (as this priority also showed up on their most and important priority lists). These findings may suggest a need for training on positive coaching practices for coaches of male athletes.

Competition Level is Tricky. Competitive- versus developmental/recreational-level coaches were mostly similar in their coaching priorities, both prioritizing having fun, setting goals, developing life skills, and creating belonging. They both de-emphasized winning, ensuring athletes play multiple positions, competing, and avoiding injury. Some differences emerged, however. Developmental/recreational-level coaches valued ensuring everyone plays and de-emphasized ensuring everyone on the team has a role. Whereas competitive-level coaches prioritized ensuring everyone on the team has a role and not ensuring everyone plays. Future work should look into coaches' perspectives on values related to making sure everyone plays and ensuring players have a role. When reporting on their last season of coaching, competitive-level coaches reported using significantly more positive coaching behaviors than developmental/recreational-level coaches. These findings related to last season coached may suggest coaches at the developmental/recreational level may need more training related to positive coaching practices than their counterparts.

Some Kids are Challenging to Coach and Coaches Aren't Prepared. Coaches may need training in relation to coaching youth with diverse needs. Among these coaches, 40.8% reported they had a youth with ADD/ADHD on their team, and 19.5% reported having a youth with a behavioral mental health need. Yet only 34.6% of the coaches reported they were confident in their ability to coach youth with special needs. There may be challenges in recruiting coaches to attend these types of trainings. We found it interesting that 26% of coaches indicated they had not training in child abuse/neglect, and only 50% were interested in this type of offering. Strategies to support coaches with youth on their teams with challenging behaviors are needed, especially if we want to keep this hard-to-serve group of youth engaged in sport.

Who Knows What's Going on in the Suburbs? Findings point to the interesting dynamics of youth sport in the suburbs. Coaches from suburban settings saw a need for more sports overall, especially in relation to sports for children with disabilities, preschoolers, elementary-aged, and school-based. When compared to coaches in urban and rural settings, coaches in the suburbs were most likely to report sports were "too expensive" and "too serious" (yet also mentioned a lesser degree of barriers to participation). When reporting on their last season coached, coaches from the suburbs reported the use of less positive coaching practices overall as compared to coaches from urban and rural settings (except in relation to their comparable use of strategies to ensure youth have fun and make sure all youth have a role to play). These data may point to differing needs for youth sport redesign in these communities and are certainly worthy of future exploration.

SUMMARY

Findings from this study should be interpreted with caution, especially given these sample characteristics. This cross-sectional study only included a small sample of coaches in Central Ohio. There was little diversity among the coaches in the study, with the majority of participants being male and White Caucasian. Most of the coaches also coached youth also who were White Caucasian. Additionally, the coaches in this study were fairly experienced. Most coached at competitive levels and had coached for many years. Measurement issues existed, as well. Scales used in this research were created for use in this localized context (as such their validity and reliability may be limited). The study also was descriptive in nature, and only looked at basic trends when exploring differences among groups of coaches. Due to the small sample size, there also were limitations due to unequal cell sizes across groups. These and other factors should be taken into consideration when exploring lessons learned and making recommendations.

Nonetheless, this study can be helpful in guiding next steps in improving youth sport experiences and coaching preparation. Findings related to coaches' backgrounds, experiences, philosophies, practices, and perspectives can be used to guide future efforts in Central Ohio and elsewhere to improve youth sport. Important priorities are identified such as the need for more sports (especially in urban areas), as well as for those for certain groups (i.e., children with disabilities). Funding and other barriers to youth participation exist (especially in urban settings). Findings overall point to several implications for future coaching training. Training for coaches at developmental/recreational-levels may be important, as well as further training designed to promote positive youth development. One evident need involves supporting coaches who have youth on their teams with challenging behaviors (and many of these coaches in this study had teams where this was the case). In the end, these findings can help inform future directions in Central Ohio to improve youth sport experiences.

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