



OSAA Equity and Diversity Newsletter

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S.T.A.R. School Application Now Available

[S.T.A.R. School Application](#)

In order to be recognized as an official S.T.A.R. school by the OSAA, a school must implement event management strategies with the intention of providing the safest and most welcoming environment to all who attend OSAA sanctioned events. If there is a discriminatory or bias incident that occurs, the school must also have a plan prepared for how to both interrupt the behaviors that occur, as well as follow through with all who are involved. The goal of the S.T.A.R. program is to eradicate discriminatory acts occurring at high school events, and to achieve this schools, communities, and supporting stakeholders must work to educate and communicate what is expected.



OSAA Foundation Equity and Diversity Fund

[Grant Application](#)

The OSAA Foundation Board has established an Equity and Diversity Fund that schools can apply for to support their efforts. From literature, to guest speakers, to additional training beyond what's provided by the OSAA - the OSAA Foundation is looking for innovative ideas from schools about the engagement of Equity and Diversity training with their students, their staff and their communities.

2021-22 Grant Recipients: Phoenix High School, \$2,000. Used for a sportsmanship and equity summit for Skyline Conference schools.



Why Empathy is Your Coaching Superpower

The ability to empathize with a player might be the most important skill you can have as a coach

By Laura Lambert March 26, 2021

[Behavior tells a story](#). Anyone who's worked with kids long enough — in particular, vulnerable kids — knows what this means. A child with a quick temper on the field is not a troublemaker. One who shuts down in the middle of practice isn't necessarily checked out — or ignoring you. Most likely, their behavior is tied to a set of experiences — of stresses, traumas and triggers — that you, as a coach, may know nothing about.

But it's your job to try to understand it, nonetheless.

"When someone commits a foul, there are going to be kids who get aggressive really quick," says [Laura Marquez](#), a long-time volunteer coach with [Coaching Corps](#), a national nonprofit that trains coaches to work with kids in under-resourced communities. Marquez has learned to shift her focus from, say, the aggressive behavior itself to what might be going on underneath it all. "If they're getting aggressive, it's *What's going on at home? At school? Personally?*" she says.

Marquez has gained such perspective as she's progressed through several of Coaching Corps' trainings — including one of the latest, on coaching with empathy. "I love how you're able to apply it," says Marquez. And it's not just helping kids manage the biggest, loudest emotions. As a soccer coach in East Los Angeles, Marquez recalls [a shy child](#) who was having a hard time finding his place on a team with three superstars, friends who had played soccer their entire lives. She helped her players tune in to the situation, so they could partner up and make him part of the team. "It's the little situations where you can say, *I see you. I am going to bring you in,*" she says.

Why empathy?

[Social and emotional learning \(SEL\)](#) is a cornerstone of Coaching Corps' approach to coach training. Of the four key SEL skills they emphasize — persistence, optimism, self-regulation and empathy (a.k.a. POSE) — empathy initially proved to be a struggle for many coaches. The existing SEL training wasn't enough, says Suzanne Sillett, the director of education and quality for Coaching Corps. "They needed more skills and strategies to implement it"

There's a small irony here. The easiest way to teach empathy is to model it, explains Sillett. But being intentional about empathy is harder than you might think. For some people, it's a natural skill — it's *how* they relate. But for many others, empathy is a skill that needs to be developed.

"Empathy is borne out of the idea that kids show up with their own individual unique experiences that you likely don't know about," explains Sillett. Those experiences can be intense and profound — the collective trauma of racism and discrimination, or the individual trauma of violence or neglect. Sillett emphasizes that the role of the coach is not to solve those problems — which are not necessarily solvable. It's to use empathy as a tool to create a safe environment, so that a group of 10 or 12 kids know that every Thursday from 5 to 6 p.m., for example, you listen to understand their experience without your own experience or judgment clouding it.

What empathy looks like in action

The [Coaching Corps approach to teaching empathy](#) is built around another handy acronym: PACT.

- **P is for perspective.** Try to see the world through that other person's eyes.
- **A is for align.** Believe the other person's experience to be their truth.
- **C is for connect.** Confirm what they're feeling and show them you care.
- **T is for think.** Take time to think about and reflect on your interaction, to see if you can improve next time.

The actual training breaks the concepts down into even more concrete steps and actions — encouraging a coach to stop and take a breath, first, as they try to align what's going on with a child.

What's more, a coach can bring the concepts behind PACT to the team itself — to help the players themselves grow their own empathy as they interact with each other over the course of a season. Or at school. Or at home.

Why empathy matters so much right now

It's no accident that Coaching Corps' empathy training launched in January 2021. "We built the training for empathy before COVID, before George Floyd," explains Sillett. "It was important before but I think it has a new resonance now."

After a year where the pandemic hit communities unevenly, with disease, death and financial instability striking some families all at once, many children and families are still contending with unprecedented hardship and trauma. And yet one of the most powerful tools we have to combat trauma is the same: empathy. Says Sillett, "If you just show up every day, if you listen to the young people, if you try to understand their experience, show care for them and reflect on your own actions, you are helping kids heal."

Allyship for Athletic Administrators

By: Jen Fry June 28, 2018

Allyship is tough. Athletic Administration is literally a balancing act. You are the face of the department, your supervisor potentially is the president, chancellor, or provost of the institution you work in. You might supervise a few sports, some big, some small, and you might be in a situation where the coach has more power and gets paid more than you, the governor, and the mayor. You set the tone for every aspect of the athletic teams, fans, student-athletes, and staff. Man, do I empathize with you, because every time you speak, write an email, or meet with someone you have to pick everything said very intently. It seems that people are waiting to take down someone within the athletic administration. They want to film or record something being said that can lead for the handing in of your resignation. I am getting an ulcer just thinking about it.

What I am here to talk to you about is how your handling of race related matters before they become big stories can save you at least a few Tums. All administrators want to believe that their administration, staff, coaches, or student-athletes would not say, racist, prejudice, or bigoted things. They all have experience working with diverse groups, they all play for each other and think of each other as family. While that all might be true, it doesn't change how they may truly feel about people of color or other marginalized identities.

You do not want people to think you are playing favorites, and you especially don't want people to think you are giving special treatment because of their marginalized identity. It is a tightrope walk while juggling bowling balls. One wrong move and the effects could almost destroy your program. However, we are seeing more and more cases involving white student-athletes saying derogatory racial comments. Within the last few months, we have heard the Appalachian State tennis player saying racial comments towards an opponent and the VA Tech lacrosse team screaming the "n" word in a song. These things are occurring and just as we tell our student-athletes to be proactive in their life, shouldn't we do the same with educating them?

You want to treat all your players the same because on the court you see them as a player, not a race. Unfortunately, though, within this society, everyone isn't treated the same. There is too much statistical data that shows the inequality within education, health, schooling, prison sentencing, and so on. Everyone is not treated the same, and if your student-athletes of color feel you do not even believe in the inequalities they will have a tough time believing their coaches are allies. If they do not believe the staff are allies they will not feel comfortable going to you when there are racial issues on the team, within the college/university, or where they are living. If they do not go to you then who will they go to? Their parents, social media. friends, or worse, they won't tell anyone. They will keep it inside and you will wonder why they are transferring when they seemed to love the team and the school and was doing well on the court. Some incidents are so slight and continuous they won't even be noticeable by you.

The incidents won't be as overt as someone saying the "n" word, leaving nooses, or making racially charged comments. They might be as covert as microaggressions, the assumptions the student-athletes of color aren't smart enough to get into that school on their own accord, sly remarks about being from the "hood" or being "ghetto", comments of being an Oreo, the assumption student-athletes of color are always causing trouble, having to hear the "I was just joking" racially charged jokes that others will take as being funny, or the "quit being so sensitive" comment. It can be an racial incident in a classroom ignored by the teacher or the cumulation of teammates saying racial or ignorant comments on a consistent basis. Put together the above mentioned comments over days and weeks, and this will break a student-athlete down.

As an ally to your student-athletes, you will need to pay attention to bigger pictures and smaller details. What does that mean you ask? First, it means you will need to take stock of what the racial make-up is of your coaching staff, athletic administration, and team. This is important you will want to consider how many touches your student-athletes of color get from faculty/staff/administrators/coaches of color. How long can a student-athlete of color potentially go without contact from a faculty member/staff member/administrator/coach of color? Are they getting contact daily, monthly, sparingly or not at all? Can they go through a day with no contact from an athletic trainer, advisor, strength coach, or coach of color? If so, that needs to be rectified in the hiring process of all positions within athletics as well as your coaching staff. Yes, we know you can't make people hire employees for color, but you can use your voice on the importance of hiring more diversity, as it doesn't just help the student-athletes of color, it helps all student-athletes.

Coaches should be helping look for mentors or people of color that your student-athletes of color can talk to if they would like. I completely understand that mentors do not have to be people of color and some of the best mentors for people of color can be white, but it is better to leave it to the student-athlete of color to make the decision.

Next, you need to look at yourself and the privileges that you have. What privileges do you have that your student-athletes of color do not have, and are you using those privileges to help your student-athletes have better experiences? Are you able to use your privilege to assist them in advocating for themselves, NOT speaking for them?

Lastly, are you taking a hard look at your policies to make sure they aren't in some way disproportionately affecting your student-athletes of color? Do you only have a policy against student-athletes using the "n" word but nothing for other derogatory words? Do you have a policy on certain types of hair that disproportionately affecting your student-athletes of color like dreads, braids, cornrows, and etc.?

Why are these questions critical to ask yourself and your staff? Because the data shows us that within the NCAA realm, a majority of the coaches are white. The data from the NCAA for 2016–2017 head coaches shows that in the men’s sports at least 75% of the head coaches are white, with one sport having zero racial diversity. On the women’s side, the same thing occurs with 77% of head coaches being white, with one sport having zero racial diversity at the head coach level with all the head coaches in their specific sport are white. The diversity data on assistant coaches throughout the NCAA levels is better, but not by much. On the women’s side at least 60% of the assistant coaches are white, and on the men’s side, at least 62% of the assistants are white. This is troubling in sports like basketball where only 40.3% of the men’s players are white and 52% of the women’s players are white. In football, the numbers tell the same story as basketball where over 52% of the student-athletes are athletes of color, yet 68% of assistants and 85% of head coaches are white. This data is across all divisions within the NCAA.

Allyship for athletic administrators looks very different than allyship for athletes. Athletic administrators are in positions of power and privilege that can assist their athletes both white those from marginalized communities to have a voice within the schools, community, and on the national level on issues of race and LGBT rights. Many administrations are worried about how they will be perceived, but in reality making big diversity moves will change how the athletes feel about you and that should in some ways be more important. Right now marginalized groups are at risk in many ways, whether it be the rights your women student-athletes have to their bodies, the rights of your LGBT student-athletes, the rights and stresses of your undocumented student-athletes, and more. As the captain of your athletic department ship you need to worry more about those with marginalized identities, because if those with marginalized identities are looked after carefully then all your student-athletes will be looked after carefully. Starting with the most privileged and working your way down will never work because those with privileges will make it seem as if everything is going smoothly.

Now time for your homework- which I expect to be completed! Please do the following:

1. Read up on your institution’s diversity strategic plan, you should know it well because you are a part of it.
2. Find out what identity committees your campus has and PLACE A COACH ON EVERY SINGLE COMMITTEE. Yes, you heard right. You need to PLACE AN ASSISTANT OR HEAD COACH ON EVERY SINGLE COMMITTEE. There needs to be representation for student-athletes, coaches, and athletic staff of marginalized identities. If people aren’t on committees speaking up for them who is? Make this an expected part of their job. They also need to report back at the all staff meetings what was discussed in the committees.
3. Make connections with the staff at your cultural centers, start having conversations about what your athletic department’s needs are in regards to diversity and inclusion work.
4. If your coaching staff and administration aren’t diverse contact HR to see what you can do to get more diverse application pools and what kind of questions you can ask within the interview on diversity, i.e please tell me about your experiences in recruiting and hiring people from diverse backgrounds. Tell me about how you would make sure you have a diverse applicant pool for any position you posted.
5. Take a look at the RESOURCES page to help start your journey.
6. Learn about the anti-bias process at your institution. Is there a webpage people go to to fill out the form? Is there a form they have to print out? You and your administrators should not only know about it but be able to teach it to someone else.
7. Start having conversations with your student-athletes, coaches, and staff. Real conversations on race, diversity, and identity. Ask them about their experiences as a (blank) person at the school. How has the faculty treated them? How has their experience in athletics been as a (blank) person. What do they think would make someone with (blank) identity have a better experience at the institution? What has been the hardest thing to adjust to at the school?
8. In your exit interviews ask questions pertaining to race, diversity, and identity. This is information you need to know. Period.
9. Have a plan of how your administration and coaches will handle a Pulse type of shooting or another unarmed black person being shot by the police and the potential unrest that comes with that. Talk about the kneeling student-athlete and your plans to have team wide and department wide conversations about the topic.
10. Lastly, don’t be afraid to say what you don’t know. Be vulnerable. You don’t have to know everything about this complex subject, but if you attempt to come off as knowing everything then all the conversations in the world won’t matter.

Thank you for reading this article. Check out my website www.jenfrytalks.com to see what other articles I have written. Interested in having me come out and chat with your staff, company, school, and/or athletic department about race and diversity issues? Please email me at jenfrytalks@gmail.com.

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