



OSAA Equity and Diversity Newsletter

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OSAA Partners with Rise to Win

RISE hosted an engaging workshop on February 10 focused on Understanding Perspectives. There is one more workshop ahead for Oregon administrators. Please remember to register ahead of time:

- Sports and activities as a Vehicle for Change: Wednesday, April 7, 2021 2-3:30pm » [Registration form](#)

RISE also has a digital learning series with excellent topics and courses to engage your coaches, students and community. [Find more information here.](#)



Take ACTION against bias...

Ask individuals engaging in any discriminatory behavior to stop immediately, or leave the event.

Clarify event expectations to all participants and spectators through public addresses and signage.

Teach students that discriminatory acts cause harm and are not allowed during any school activity.

Inform participants and spectators what action will be taken and that the details of the event and its impact will be reported to school administrators.

Observe the impact of a discriminatory act on students and yourself. Make time to discuss how those involved may be affected. Ensure that emotional and physical safety is prioritized.

Notify the school's administrator of any discriminatory acts immediately. *Document your experience right away.*

Diversity & Inclusion: leveraging the Differences that Make a Difference

By: Katie Pagel from University of Denver Sports Psychology

"Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope where once there was only despair. It is more powerful than government in breaking down racial barriers."

– Nelson Mandela

As coaches, parents, and athletes, we have witnessed firsthand the power of sport as a vehicle for the development of individual character, resilience, work ethic, etc. What we hear about less, though, is the power of sport in bringing people together. Even in times of hardship, sport allows for a shared experience; it promotes camaraderie and connection. It holds a precious position in the world as a widespread means by which we can foster a greater appreciation for, and understanding of, those different from us. In the paragraphs below, you will find my take on the what, why, and how of diversity and inclusion (D & I). It is only by promoting and valuing diversity, and intentionally building inclusive environments, that we can fully harness the power of sport to, as Mandela said, change the world.

Diversity:

Put simply, diversity is any significant or meaningful way that a person can differ from another person; diversity is the differences that make a difference. What such differences come to mind when **you** think about diversity? Most frequently, answers to that question are things we can see (skin color/race, gender, age, etc.). In considering diversity, it is important to bear in mind that there are both *visible* and *invisible* sources of diversity. Think of it like an iceberg: only 10% of an iceberg is visible above the water, while 90% is hiding beneath the surface. In that way, only 10% of diversity is visible to the eye while as much as 90% is not observable (ethnicity, national origin, indigenous heritage, sexual orientation, religion, disability status, socioeconomic status, education, etc.). I make this distinction because it is incredibly important to remember that just because someone *looks* like you (or different from you) does not mean you should automatically assume they are the same as you (or different from you). A final note about this definition of diversity: diversity is not a characteristic of an individual. By that I mean, despite what many of us have come to believe, I would argue that there is no such thing as a “diverse person.” Instead, I would challenge you to consider diversity as a relational concept; diversity occurs when two people with differences that make a difference interact with one another. Thus, every single one of us is an integral contributor to diversifying discussion in the workplace, classroom, or on the field.

Inclusion:

Though crucial, diversity alone is not enough. If diversity is the first step, inclusion is the clincher. An inclusive environment is one in which all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully, have equal access to opportunities and resources, and can contribute fully toward the organization/team success. After consciously and intentionally building diversity into your team or organization, deliberate action must be taken to celebrate and embrace the differences that diversity brings (even if not everyone fully understands said differences). In this way, while diversity is the differences that make a difference, inclusion is the ability to *leverage* the difference for the betterment of both the team/organization as a whole and its individual members.

Why is D & I Important?

Now that we've ironed out the *what* of diversity and inclusion, we'll move on to the *why*. As I mentioned, these terms and practices associated with promoting them have recently taken center stage in America. The number of initiatives in place to foster diversity and inclusion begs the question: why is it important?

Research has shown time and again how diverse and inclusive workplaces (and teams):

- Regularly outperform groups with more homogenous demographics
- Make better business decisions, and reach those decisions faster
- Foster harder working, more thought-provoking teams
- Facilitate greater trust and openness in workgroup communication
- Positively impact job satisfaction, sense of inclusion, workgroup identification, and knowledge sharing
- Display enhanced levels of creativity and innovation

How Do We Build and Inclusive Environment?

Once we come to understand the value of diversity and inclusion within groups, the question becomes how to cultivate that type of environment in your organization or team. Though this task is not a small one, it is entirely realistic and attainable – just take things one-step at a time. *Source: APA, 2017

Step 1: Start

- Building a perfect, inclusive environment isn't realistic. That said, you will not get anywhere if you don't start (from wherever you're at).
- Focus on creating an environment that fosters inclusion from the very beginning.
- Encourage conversations between coaches and players about each other's cultural backgrounds, lives, and interests *outside* of athletics.
- Model curiosity and inclusive behaviors in your personal interactions with athletes, coaches, parents, etc.

Step 2: Encourage Open Communication

- Open, effective communication optimizes the opportunity for discussion of issues related to inclusion and discrimination
- Ensure all athletes have the opportunity to take part in decision-making and planning for diverse social activities
- Model inclusive language and communication between athletes, coaches, parents, etc.

Step 3: Develop/Implement Effective Strategies

- In order to promote and maintain a positive, welcoming, and safe environment, strategies to deal with prejudicial or discriminatory language/behavior and effective procedures for managing conflict must be implemented – **have a plan!**

Step 4: Educate and Train Yourself and Your Staff/Team

- Addressing diversity can be uncomfortable, and even frightening, for some; an educational approach is recommended to help assuage said discomfort
- Prioritize educational sessions about diversity issues and cultural awareness
- Recognize, acknowledge, and educate yourself and your staff/team about days/events significant to a wide range of cultures (religious holidays, history months, Pride celebrations, etc.)

In following these steps, we begin building the bridge of connection between our athletes, coworkers, or employees. While this path isn't always easy (and missteps will occur), I hope that this blog has shown you why the endeavor is not only worthwhile, but also necessary.

Things to Remember:

Like I mentioned, in doing the work to build a diverse and inclusive environment, you will mess up. You will use non-inclusive language, or unintentionally and absentmindedly commit a microaggression. It will happen (I'm sure it happened within this blog!). With that, here are my top four tips for being a multiculturally aware individual:

- Avoid making assumptions.
- Err on the side of curiosity: if you are unsure about something, ask (respectful) questions!
- Commit to continuous learning. Spend time figuring out what you don't know in regards to diversity and inclusion, and self-educate.
- When you make a mistake, take ownership and apologize (and forgive).

Building an inclusive environment is an ongoing process. It is not something that is "achieved" and then cast aside; rather, it must be actively and continually developed throughout the lifespan of an organization or team. Though that prospect may seem daunting, remember that the first step in promoting diversity and fostering inclusion is easy. Now that you are armed with some knowledge and tools, all you have to do is get out there and *start*; know that I'm cheering you on from the sidelines, pom-poms, air horn and all!

Full Article [here](#)