

Kevin Leonoff  
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Youth Experiences Scale 2.0

To fulfill this exercise, I completed the Youth Experiences Scale 2.0 (YES) and also gave the YES to 20 high school athletes. The athletes range in grade level from freshmen to seniors. There were 19 males and 1 female who took part. The most common primary sport was football with others including basketball, baseball, and track & field. The athletes were introduced to the YES and were asked to complete it honestly. The results of the students and my own YES will be discussed.

After completing the YES individually and also summarizing the results of the 20 current high school athletes who completed the YES, I believe the scale is a very accurate measurement of the ideals and values that are derived through sport. The scale was broken down into 67 components that measured a number of experiences from identity, skills, relationships, and other negative consequences. The scale was easy to understand and reached across multiple aspects to accurately survey a high school athlete. I especially like how the results are broken down into categories based on each specific question. This allowed me to see the areas that I was strongest while participating in my primary sport. As a coach, the results will allow me to see the strengths of my athletes and athletic program as well as areas that need to be improved. This will also allow me to see where I can improve as a coach who is determined to provide positive youth development.

The biggest gain that I am taking from this exercise is simply to give this survey to my athletes. The YES can be used as a tool to help me become a better coach. Using the results, I can see the strengths and weaknesses of the environment around the sport I coach. It is my goal to provide an experience where my athletes learn about themselves and society through sport. The YES may even provide an introduction to my athletes and their prior experiences in a sport if I were to give the scale at the beginning of the season. Completing the YES also helped me understand all of the different aspects that should be experienced through sport other than skills and strategy. Providing a positive environment that allows the athletes to grow is just one example that is evident throughout the scale. For example, the last 18 questions describe negative experiences that coaches often control. A higher mean for this section of results indicates that the athletes are experiencing many negative aspects and that something should be improved.

Individually, the YES helped me understand that my primary sport created a very positive environment. I scored the highest in initiative experiences, physical skills, and positive relationships. The identity reflection, effort, time management, and leadership and responsibility subsections all averaged a score of four. This tells me that my coaches structured the sport to provide us athletes the opportunity to develop leadership skills, taught us the proper physical skills of the game, and allowed for relationships to be built among teammates and coaches. I want to give credit to the coaches for promoting a great environment and also

having the best interest of the players in mind. I had a very positive relationship with all of the coaches. I believe that most of my teammates also had a good relationship with each coach. The head coach had a lot of coaching experience and seemed to understand the important aspects of development. He was a very positive person that translated well to the team environment. These qualities undoubtedly helped create a positive atmosphere.

The only difficulty I noted with the scale was some of the terminology. Some students did not completely understand what each question was asking. For example, I encountered many questions regarding the cliques in the sport question. After reviewing the results, it seemed as if some of the students misinterpreted different questions. This could have been because they may have been rushing to complete the YES. I understood the terminology, but I also have more experience with what these questions are asking and the meaning behind each question.

My results were very similar to the results of the high school athletes that completed the YES. Stress was a very high scoring item among the high school athletes which was low on my own YES. The athletes' adult networks and social capital and cognitive skills were rated very high. Both were higher than the same two sections on my YES. This may indicate that the athletes are provided more opportunities to work with members of the community and social network. It may also mean that the athletes are being taught important aspects of creativity in sport and communication. The leadership and responsibility subsection was not rated as highly as I anticipated among the high school athletes. Most scales averaged around two or three. This indicates that leadership needs to be worked on within the program. Most other categories were rated similarly. I used football as my primary sport, and this was also the case for the majority of athletes. The YES results may have been similar because I also played football for the same coach that many of the athletes have.

The high school athletes enjoyed participating in this exercise. They were able to think critically about their primary sport and also offer input. They expressed confusion over some of the questions, but were able to understand with a little help. I think this allowed the athletes an opportunity to understand that sports are not just about playing, but that they should be developing in all of the ways listed on the YES. I specifically asked a few of the athletes who I have developed a relationship if this was an accurate measure from their point of view. Each athlete agreed that it was accurate and age appropriate. They also said that the YES could be used as a way to help improve their experiences in sport.

This assignment has opened my eyes about the major focus of youth sport. Youth sport should not always be only about skills and strategy, but also about the development of children and adolescents. In order to provide positive youth development, all of the categories associated with the YES should be taught and developed within a sport program. I think the YES could be used as a tool to provide positive youth development. The scale could help evaluate a specific sport program and help provide improvement strategies.