Program Quality Assessment in Youth Sport

👁 OVERVIEW

This observational tool can be used to assess eight program setting features that have been identified as critical in positive developmental outcomes in youth sport. This measure can be used for program assessment and improvement, and to better understand the mechanisms that facilitate or hinder youth development in sport.

⛬ SUBSCALES

- **Physical Safety (8 items)**
  - Program space is free of obvious hazards and allows for reasonable safety
- **Psychological Safety (3 items)**
  - Coach(es) foster predominately positive emotional climate, with the absence of negative emotional climate
- **Appropriate Structure (7 items)**
  - Coach(es) are actively involved and engaged in the session
- **Supportive Relationships (5 items)**
  - Coach(es) provide a warm environment
- **Opportunities to Belong (3 items)**
  - Youth appear to positively associate with the program and their teammates
- **Positive Social Norms (3 items)**
  - Coach(es) model positive social norms
- **Support for Efficacy and Mattering (8 items)**
  - Coach(es) focus on youth progressing in a developmentally appropriate manner

- **Opportunities for Skill-building – Sport & Physical Skills (5 items)**
  - Coach(es) appear to understand the fundamental rules and skills of the sport
- **Opportunities for Skill-building – Life Skills (4 items)**
  - Coach(es) discuss importance of developing life skills with youth
- **Integration of family, school, and community efforts (5 items)**

FIND IT HERE

⌁ THEME(S)

- Program Planning and Evaluation
- Social Support
- Physical Health
- Mental Health
- Youth Engagement

◎ TARGET POPULATION

- Coaches, Administrators, Practitioners, and Researchers involved in youth sport

📏 LENGTH & HOW IT IS MEASURED

- 51 items
- Response scale ranges from 1(never) to 5 (very often); option "N/A" is available
- Self-report, paper-pencil version
- Available in: English

〽 PSYCHOMETRICS

RELIABILITY

- internal consistency (α =.84)
- inter-rater reliability (κ= 75; [p <.0005], 95% confidence interval [.74, .76])

VALIDITY

- Content validity
- Face validity
- Convergent validity
- Predictive validity

⊕ Learn more:

- Bean, C., Kramers, S., Camiré, M., Fraser-Thomas, J., & Forneris, T. (2018). Development of an observational measure assessing program quality processes in youth sport. *Cogent Social Sciences*. doi:10.1080/23311886.2018.1467304

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Session Information

Team name: _____

Name of coach(es) observed: _____Observer(s): _____

Date & Time of Program Session: _____Coach to youth ratio:_____

1.1 PHYSICAL SAFETY

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	N/A
1. Program space is free of obvious hazards (e.g., wet floor, poor lighting, open gates) and allows for reasonable safety	1	2	3	4	5	
2. Program is relatively free of distractions and if an unexpected distraction does occur the coach responds appropriately (e.g., curtail loud noises, respectfully removes disruptive parents)[1]	1	2	3	4	5	☐
3. Program space is appropriate for the activities that the program is designed to include (e.g., not crowded, equipment can be moved if necessary, utilize available area)	1	2	3	4	5	
4. Appropriate supervision is provided to youth (e.g., youth are not left unattended)	1	2	3	4	5	
5. First-aid supplies are present or available on site	1	2	3	4	5	
6. If an injury occurs, program staff respond appropriately by attending to youth with first-aid, if necessary (e.g., use first-aid supplies, notify trainer)[2]	1	2	3	4	5	☐
7. Appropriate sporting equipment worn/used (e.g., helmets worn, proper shoes with laces tied, equipment not broken)	1	2	3	4	5	
8. Coach(es) foster positive health practices (e.g., allow time for water breaks, stop activities when injury or physical danger occurs)	1	2	3	4	5	

Comments:

1. If no distractions occur, mark as Not Applicable.
2. If no injury occurs, mark as Not Applicable.

1.2 PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	N/A
1. Coach(es) foster predominately positive emotional climate, with the absence of negative emotional climate (e.g., refrain from sarcasm, encourage use of manners, promote inclusion of youth, no foul language)	1	2	3	4	5	
2. Coach(es) ensure youth are respectful with one another and intervene appropriately if necessary (e.g., respectful language, no conflicts, absence of bullying)	1	2	3	4	5	
3. Coach(es) mediate exclusive/conflict behaviour from youth appropriately (e.g., use as a learning experience for youth, acknowledge youth's feelings and explanations, involve youth in deciding appropriate consequences)[3]	1	2	3	4	5	☐

Comments:

3. If no conflict arises during program session, mark as Not applicable.

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2. APPROPRIATE STRUCTURE						
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	N/A
1. Coach(es) start and end the program on time	1	2	3	4	5	
2. Coaches support one another (e.g., are on the same page, provide congruent messages to youth)[4]	1	2	3	4	5	☐
3. Coach(es) are actively involved and engaged in the program session	1	2	3	4	5	
4. Clear *expectations* are established and/or reinforced related to behaviour (e.g., rules, activities)[5]	1	2	3	4	5	
5. Purpose of activities is understood (e.g., coach(es) gives clear *explanations*, little confusion among youth)	1	2	3	4	5	
6. Coach(es) ensure that activities are engaging (e.g., youth do not appear bored, appropriate for all youth despite differences in skill-level or age)	1	2	3	4	5	
7. The program session is organized appropriately (e.g., effective use of space, effective use of time, effective use of assistant coach and/or captains)	1	2	3	4	5	

Comments:

4. If there is only one coach, mark as Not Applicable .
5. If observation is not done early on in the program, observer may miss the establishment of expectations; therefore, focus on the reinforcement of the expectations. This could be something that is followed up within coach interview.

3. SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	N/A
1. Coach(es) provide a warm environment (e.g., greet youth, smiling, approachable, maintaining eye contact, positive attitude)	1	2	3	4	5	
2. Coach(es) interact with youth (e.g., check in, show interest in youth beyond the sport)	1	2	3	4	5	
3. Youth appear to trust coach(es) (e.g., feel comfortable approaching or asking for help)	1	2	3	4	5	
4. Youth appear to have positive relationships with one another (e.g., friendly, get along with one another)	1	2	3	4	5	☐
5. Activities encourage the development of supportive relationships among youth (e.g., structured/non-structured opportunities to work with teammates, sense of openness within team)[6]	1	2	3	4	5	☐

Comments:

6. If the sport being assessed is an individual sport, mark as Not applicable.

4. OPPORTUNITIES TO BELONG

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	N/A
1. Youth appear to positively associate with the program and their teammates (e.g., friendships, social ties)	1	2	3	4	5	
2. Youth are inclusive and cooperate with one another (e.g., communicate during drills and plays, work together when necessary)[7]	1	2	3	4	5	☐
3. Additional activities are provided beyond regular programming that provide opportunities for youth to develop relationships with teammates and coach (es) (e.g., team building activities, dinners, fundraisers)[8,9]	1	2	3	4	5	

Comments:

7. If the sport being observed is individual, mark as Not Applicable .
8. Completion of the Program Demographic Form and pre-interview will help in answering this item. It is also important to follow-up with coach(es) throughout the program as activities and opportunities may change
9. These activities do not have to take place outside of regularly scheduled program time, yet is an activity designed to provide opportunities to develop relationships (e.g., holiday party).

5. POSITIVE SOCIAL NORMS

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	N/A
1. Coach(es) model positive social norms (e.g., use respectful language, shows respect for other team and officials)	1	2	3	4	5	
2. Fair play is practiced (e.g., youth follow the rules of the sport in practice/competition)	1	2	3	4	5	
3. There is evidence of sportspersonship (e.g., youth cheer and congratulate teammates for good effort/success, shake hands with opponents at end of competition)	1	2	3	4	5	

Comments:

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6. SUPPORT FOR EFFICACY AND MATTERING

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	N/A
1. Coach(es) focus on youth progressing in a developmentally appropriate manner (e.g., progressive activities, modifications based on skill level)	1	2	3	4	5	
2. Coach(es) provide youth with choices and options throughout the program (e.g., jersey colour, drill or skill to practice, activity order)[10]	1	2	3	4	5	
3. Coach(es) acknowledge achievements based on youth's effort (e.g., foster a task-mastery climate)[11]	1	2	3	4	5	
4. Youth have opportunities to mentor other teammates (e.g., help others with equipment or with a skill/activity)[12]	1	2	3	4	5	☐
5. Coach(es) give *positive* feedback to help enhance efficacy (e.g., praise and encouragement)	1	2	3	4	5	
6. Coach(es) give *constructive* feedback to enhance efficacy (e.g., technical instruction when youth struggle, guidance to why error occurred)	1	2	3	4	5	
7. Coach(es) recognize individual contributions (e.g., use youth names, providing individualized feedback)	1	2	3	4	5	
8. Coach(es) listen to youth and respond appropriately (e.g., does not ignore questions or concerns)	1	2	3	4	5	

Comments:

10. Higher levels of choice results in a higher score; use comments section and field notes to document the types and quality of choices (e.g., youth choosing a drill for warm-up would be scored higher than choosing position or jersey colour) .
11. A task-mastery climate is one where coach(es) offers positive reinforcement when youth demonstrate hard work, improvement, and by eliciting an equal contribution from each youth.
12. If the sport being observed is individual, mark as Not Applicable.

7. 1 OPPORTUNITIES FOR SKILL-BUILDING—SPORT AND PHYSICAL SKILLS

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	N/A
1. Coach(es) appear to understand the fundamental rules and skills of the sport	1	2	3	4	5	
2. Coach(es) discuss the importance of learning/developing physical skills (e.g., why and how a skill is useful)	1	2	3	4	5	
3. Coach(es) model the physical skills (e.g., demonstrates skills, use proper technique, break down challenging skills)	1	2	3	4	5	
4. Coach(es) provide opportunities for youth to practice physical skills (e.g., repetition when learning new skills, relates to session focus, self-guided)	1	2	3	4	5	
5. Coach(es) provide opportunities for youth to reflect on their progress of sport/physical skills throughout the session (e.g., verbal or video feedback, ask for youth input on progress/future development)	1	2	3	4	5	

Comments:

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7. 2 OPPORTUNITIES FOR SKILL-BUILDING—LIFE SKILLS[13]						
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	N/A
1. Coach(es) discuss importance of developing life skills with youth (e.g., how communication will enhance flow on the court, how teamwork is important for working towards goals, encourages responsibility of personal and team equipment)	1	2	3	4	5	
2. Coach(es) model the life skills explicitly discussed (e.g., if life skill is communication, displays effective communication; if life skill is emotional regulation, demonstrates breathing activity)	1	2	3	4	5	
3. Coach(es) provide opportunities for youth to improve life skills through practice (e.g., life skill-specific activity integrated, feedback provided)	1	2	3	4	5	
4. Coach(es) debrief how life skills can be applied and transferred outside of specific sport context (e.g., effectively communicating at home, problem-solving at school, coping strategies in other sports)	1	2	3	4	5	

Comments:

13. Examples of life skills include: emotional skills (e.g., focus, emotional regulation, conflict resolution, moral character); intellectual skills (e.g., decision-making, critical reasoning, goal-setting); and social skills (e.g., teamwork, communication, cooperation, connectedness to adults and teammates).

8. INTEGRATION OF FAMILY, SCHOOL, AND COMMUNITY EFFORTS[14]

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	N/A
1. Families are welcome to the program (e.g., doors are open for families to watch, coach (es) greet parents upon arrival, families are aware of program's expectations and rules)[15]	1	2	3	4	5	
2. Communication between coach(es) and parents and/or families is positive (e.g., respect between parent(s) and coach(es) is mutual)	1	2	3	4	5	☐
3. Families have opportunities to be involved in the program (e.g., volunteering, attending events, helping with practice, providing snacks)	1	2	3	4	5	
4. Coach(es) communicate with schools or other community organizations to support youth and provide other opportunities to develop life skills (e.g., decision-making, problem-solving)	1	2	3	4	5	
5. Program provides youth opportunities to work with their community and practice learned skills (e.g., fundraising within community, volunteering, mentoring opportunities)	1	2	3	4	5	

Comments:

14. Completion of the Program Demographics Form will help to answer certain items within this subscale. It is also important to follow-up with the coach throughout the program as activities and opportunities may change.
15. Item should be scored based on if parents are welcome to the program, not if they attend.

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Sample Interview Guide Questions for Pre-Observation Interview

(A)   Introduction, review purpose of interview

(B)   Demographics—Age, gender, years of involvement (if not already completed)

(C)   Interview Questions

(1) Tell me a little about how you became a coach and why you choose to coach?

(2) How did you become involved in [name of program]?

(3) How would you describe your overall approach to coaching youth (e.g., coaching philosophy)?

(4) What are your main goals and objectives for this program/team?

    (a) What strategies or activities do you incorporate into your coaching practice to achieve these goals and objectives?

    (b) Do you believe those strategies are having a positive influence?

    (c) What about challenges associated with coaching this program/team?

(5) Will/Have you communicated your expectations to youth at the beginning of the season? What were they? Explain.

    (a) How were these expectations developed?

    (b) How will you try to reinforce them? In what ways/examples?

(6) What roles, if any, do parents play in the program? Are they welcome to attend the practices/games?

(7) As part of your program, are there activities that extend beyond regular practices and competitions, such as team bonding, fundraising, or volunteering? If so, what are they? How often do they occur? Explain.

(8) Overall, what has your experience been like coaching so far this season?

(9) Is there anything else you would like to share with me that will help in gaining a sense of your program/team or your work with them?

Sample Interview Guide Questions for Post-Observation Interview

There are number of questions below. You may not need to ask all of these questions but can choose the ones you feel would be most helpful to follow-up on based on the scoring of the PQAYS. In addition, you may want to add some of your own questions.

(A)   Introduction, review purpose of interview

(B)   Demographics—Age, gender, years of involvement (if not already completed)

(C)   Interview Questions

(1) Since we last talked, tell me about your program experiences (e.g., changes/successes/challenges).

(2) What do you feel you have learned about your coaching this season?

(3) Have there been any new activities or strategies you have used? Why?

    (a) Have these been successful? Explain.

(4) Has anything changed related to your overall approach to coaching youth? If so, what and why?

(5) Do you have strategies to ensure a psychologically safe environment for youth (e.g., helping youth feel welcome and included)? Explain.

(6) How would you describe your relationship with youth this season?

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(7) Do you consider yourself to be a model for youth in the program?

   (a) What do you do specifically to act as a model within the program?

(8) How would you describe the relationships youth have with each other?

   (a) Are there strategies you use to foster/create positive relationships among youth? Examples.

(9) As a result of participating in this program, do you believe youth are developing life skills (e.g., emotional regulation, focus, goal setting, respect, teamwork)? How? Examples.

(10) Would you say that you intentionally taught these life skills?

(11) Do you feel that youth in the program have a voice (e.g., are able to help make decisions, opportunity to share their thoughts)?

   (a) Choice in the activities/drills included in your program?

   (b) Strategies you have found effective? For what reasons?

(12) By participating in this program, do you believe youth are developing their sense of competence (a belief in themselves)?

   (a) How have you tried to foster this competence? Specific strategies?

(13) How do you provide feedback to youth? Examples.

(14) Do you think it is important for youth to have a say or choice in the activities/drills included in your program?

   (a) What strategies you have found effective? For what reasons?

(15) Do you feel it is important to encourage youth to help/learn from one another?

   (a) Did you see any occurrences of youth mentoring other youth during the program?

   (b) How do you try to do this in your program? Examples.

(16) What strategies do you use to keep youth engaged? Which strategies do you find are the most effective? Least effective?

(17) Based on what we have talked about today, is there anything else you would like to discuss?