

Step Up:
Youth Development Program

Sherri McGerty

KIN 857

Professor Gould

December 9, 2011

Abstract

The Step Up program was created in order to keep the high school athletes at Lake Shore High School academically proficient and eligible to continue to participate in high school athletics. First and foremost, athletes are students first in the Lake Shore Public Schools district.

Student-athletes can attend specific tutoring sessions run by staff members in their building for all of the core classes on a weekly basis. Each subject area has a specific tutoring time frame. Students will find success by performing academically, forming better relationships with teachers, being able to participate in athletics, learn responsibility for one's own education, and time management skills.

Purpose

The benefits of participation in youth sports are plenty with the right coaches.

First, sport programs can provide youth with opportunities to be physically active, which in turn can lead to improved physical health. Second, youth sport programs have long been considered important to youth's psychosocial development, providing opportunities to learn important life skills such as cooperation, discipline, leadership, and self-control. Third, youth sport programs are critical for the learning of motor skills. (Côté & Fraser-Thomas, 2007).

Of course we would want our children to have the opportunity to develop these skills and traits! In organized, school athletics, students must perform academically in order to participate in such activities.

The Step Up program was created in order to keep the high school athletes at Lake Shore High School academically proficient and eligible to continue to participate in high school athletics. First and foremost, athletes are students first in the Lake Shore Public Schools district. Student-athletes need a program in place that can help them prepare to exceed the academic requirements and prevent students from getting to probationary status or academically ineligible.

The Michigan High School Athletic Association states each athlete must be "currently passing the equivalent of at least 66 percent of full class-load potential for a full time student." (MHSAA, 2011, pg. 4) Since our school is on a trimester schedule, there are five classes in a student's day. This means the students must be passing four of the five classes in order to be

academically eligible by the Michigan High School Athletic Association standards. School districts are also allowed to increase the academic standards for athletes.

The Lake Shore Board of Education requires that student-athletes maintain a 2.0 grade point average (GPA) for each marking period/trimester in order to participate in competition. Grades will be reviewed for eligibility at the marking period/trimester.”

(Lake Shore Public Schools, 2010, pg. 3).

As a coach, these marking period, and trimester end dates are in the middle of all sports seasons. It is to everyone’s best interest to help these students prepare academically as well as physically.

It is evident that our student-athletes are held to a high academic standard, however, currently, there are no interventions or programs in place to assist these students on a regular basis. “Step Up” refers to everyone involved in a youth’s development—the coach, the parents, the community, and the athlete. Everyone must step up to help in the process.

Description of Program

The need for an academic support system for our student-athletes is also a key way in making high school a place that fosters positive youth development.

Deborah Meier (1996), describing what she was able to accomplish as the principal of Central Park East School in the 1990s, emphasizes the necessity, first, of providing time for teachers to discuss among themselves their objectives, their programs, and their methods; second, of involving students in creating learning objectives and curricula to meet those objectives; and third, of "personalizing" high school education along the lines of typical practice in kindergarten and the early elementary grades—in short, really focusing on the individual student." (Zeigler, 2004, pg. 130).

The third element mentioned, is exactly what providing an individualized tutoring program will do. "In addition to improving academic achievement, such schools are models for the promotion of youth development. They are places where the competence and character of young people are fostered. (Zeigler, 2004, pg. 130). During the school year, there will be tutoring sessions for student-athletes to attend on weekday morning for the core classes that are required for graduation. These are open to any student-athlete throughout the entire school year, but required for some.

In order to prepare student-athletes for their academic work-load, athletes with a grade of less than a C (2.0) are required to attend the tutoring sessions during the week for each course that is below the standard.

During these sessions, teachers will be able to give one on one or small group instruction to the students who are struggling or want a deeper understanding of the

curriculum. This gives them time to build on pre-requisite skills, review current material, or even preview what is coming ahead.

The athletic director already checks athlete grades every Friday. He will then create a spreadsheet of the athletes with grades lower than a C and list which courses onto the building staff computer drive. It is the "O: drive" that all of our staff has access to when logged into a building computer. It is the coaching staff's responsibility to inform the athletes which sessions they are required to attend the following Monday through Thursday. The teaching staff is able to retrieve the same spreadsheet and can plan accordingly for the minimum amount of students they will have. They will also be able to post attendance so that the coaching staff can check on their athletes and their attendance to the study sessions. These sessions are open to any student-athlete, even if they are not required to attend.

What happens if a student does not attend when they are required to? If there is not an extenuating circumstance, the coaches have a variety of options: forfeits playing time at that week's game, student does not dress for game, counts towards absence totals for team, captains might need to attend with student next time, etc.

Table 1 shows the core academic classes that are required for graduation and their scheduled day for tutoring sessions. Monday is for math classes, Tuesday is for English, Wednesday is for Science, and Thursday is for Social Studies. The mornings work best because students will not have to miss practice time afterschool, and it also helps students get in the habit of coming in early to ask for help. Perhaps this will become a positive learned behavior.

Teachers will sign up to fill the required dates per term. Each term schedule will be posted on the athletic website and on the athletic office bulletin board for reference. It will be published on the school newsletter as well.

As it is also noted on Figure 1, there are a variety of electives that seniors can take to fulfill their senior year math course, and have the option of taking senior level science or social studies classes. Students who are struggling with other courses that are not listed on Figure 1 must schedule some tutoring time with their respective teacher on their own.

It is clear that the demands on student-athletes are much greater now than they have ever been. Graduation requirements are tougher and more rigorous. The Institute for the Study of Youth Sports (ISYS) has been studying the areas of concern in educational athletics, and this is one of them!

“Those interviewed frequently talked about the pressure placed on student athletes today; pressure not only to perform well and win, but also to produce academically. Some of the respondents felt that the pressure on students is much greater today than in previous generations. Other sentiments identified within this overall category included academic expectations comprised of such issues as pressure to maintain a high GPA and score well on achievement tests...” (Gould, 2007, pg. 6)

This is just another reason why our students need to have additional support. It used to be the case where society looked at athletes as the kids who could not cut it in the classroom. These days, it is quite the contrary. The pressure to perform is in the classroom too. Athletic scholarships and the NCAA has eligibility requirements too. College athletes often have to perform to a specific level on national standardized tests in order to play college sports. It is

time for everyone in students' lives to take part in their development. Let's prepare them to be responsible for their learning, see the many resources that are available to them, and reward them for improvement.

Finances

Every program has a cost. In creating a program for my high school, it was extremely important to come up with something that would have a minimal cost in order to be realistically implemented. "Michigan has 760 high schools; 558 returned a survey last year and 126 of those said they charged user fees, more than double from a decade ago." (Brady & Glier, 2004). We are one of those districts charging pay-to-participate fees. Needless to say, times are tough economically, which immediately effects our school funding. A program will need to be nearly cost free!

The staff members at Lake Shore High School have to contractually participate in two school functions outside of the typical school day. (Lake Shore Federation of Teachers & Lake Shore School Board, 2010). The new teacher evaluation system also has a category in which outside activities above and beyond the contractual obligation can really help a teacher move on the continuum of rating scales from ineffective all the way to highly effective in certain categories.

Twenty-nine weeks during the school year would be considered tutoring weeks as illustrated in Table 2. Holiday weeks and the first two weeks in a trimester would not have tutoring available. Twenty-nine weeks at thirteen courses during the week would mean three hundred seventy seven tutoring sessions that would need to be scheduled for the school year. This would mean that between the eighty teachers, contractually one hundred sixty of the courses could be covered at no cost. The additional two hundred seventeen sessions would be filled if most teachers did an additional three sessions to exceed their contractual obligation and help them receive a high rating in school improvement activities. Again, this would not

cost the district. There are also student-teachers, counselors, Para-professionals, building substitute teachers, administration, and other certified staff that were not counted in the eighty teachers that could also volunteer to take on such assignments.

Evaluation

In order to track the effectiveness of the youth development program, there will be lots of data that can be collected as listed in Figure 3. First, a comparative number of students each season who were on probation and deemed ineligible in past years, to the years with Step Up implementation. Were there fewer students in trouble? Second, compare the average athlete grade point averages to years past. Calculate the percentage of students achieving an “all-academic” award and compare it to years past. Was there an increase in student-athlete achievement on the high end as well?

Next, it would also be important to track the attendance rates of the different courses. Did the attendance correlate with improvement in grades? That would have to be looked at on a more individual basis. The attendance rates might also help decide the need to combine sections or cancel sections that do not have students attending. This would lessen the need for staff.

Finally, the most important aspect would be the student survey (table 4). It is important to see what their opinion is of the program. What courses did they attend tutoring session for? This will help evaluate the needs of sessions. Did they feel that the tutoring sessions helped them better understand the material in the course? Were they required to attend? It is important to see if the opinions differ from those that chose to attend versus those that were required to attend. Did the students attend on a regular basis? This might be a way to adjust the program. If students are not getting results from sporadic attendance, maybe certain students might have to attend on a weekly basis. Did they feel it helped improve their grades in the courses? Sometimes they feel they know the material better, but this still may not

contribute to their grade if there are missing assignments, poor test scores, etc. Attending does not mean there will be an improvement.

For the students that were required to attend the sessions, were they glad they were required to go? Would they have otherwise skipped it altogether? Did being required to attend tutoring make the athlete consider quitting sports so that they would not have to go? This is an essential question. Of course this program has the best of intentions in mind, but that does not mean it will play out that way. A youth development program has to positively influence the youth involved. This program is designed to help keep the athletes involved. It is critical to know if it is producing the opposite effects.

Appendix

Table 1

Student level:	MATH (Mondays 7:00-7:50 a.m.)	ENGLISH (Tuesdays 7:00-7:50 a.m.)	SCIENCE (Wednesdays 7:00-7:50 a.m.)	SOCIAL STUDIES (Thursdays 7:00-7:50 a.m.)
9 th Grade	Algebra IA (T1) Algebra IB (T2) Algebra IC (T3)	English 9A (T1) English 9B (T2) English 9C (T3)	Earth Science A (T1/T2) Earth Science B (T2/T3)	World History A (T1/T2) World History B (T2/T3)
10 th Grade	Geometry A (T1) Geometry B (T2) Geometry C (T3)	English 10A (T1) English 10B (T2) English 10C (T3)	Biology A (T1/T2) Biology B (T2/T3)	American History A (T1/T2) American History B (T2/T3)
11 th Grade	Algebra IIA (T1) Algebra IIB (T2) Algebra IIC (T3)	English 11A (T1/T2) English 11B (T2/T3)	Chemistry A (T1/T2) Chemistry B (T2/T3)	Government A (T1/T2) Government B (T2/T3)
12 th Grade	Variety of electives	English 12A (T1/T2) English 12B (T2/T3)	Variety of electives (not graduation requirement)	Variety of electives (not graduation requirement)

Table 2

September 11						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

October 11						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

November 11						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

December 11						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

January 12						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

February 12						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29			

March 12						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

April 12						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

May 12						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

June 12						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

July 12						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

August 12						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

Table 3

	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012
Number of athletes put on probation for grades				
Number of athletes that were deemed ineligible for grades				
Average athlete grade point average				
Number of students achieving all-academic				

Table 4: Student Survey

Name: _____

Sport: _____ Level: _____

I attended tutoring sessions for the following courses: (Circle all that apply)

Algebra I Geometry Algebra II

English 9 English 10 English 11 English 12

Earth Science Biology Chemistry

World History American History Government

Other (please list): _____

Please rate the following:

1-Strongly Disagree 2- Disagree 3-Neither 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

I felt that attending these sessions helped me understand the material better than I would have without them.

1 2 3 4 5

I attended the sessions on a regular basis.

1 2 3 4 5

1-Strongly Disagree 2- Disagree 3-Neither 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

I attended the sessions because I was required to (under a 2.0 in the class).

1 2 3 4 5

I feel that the Step Up program helped me improve my grades.

1 2 3 4 5

I think being required to attend the tutoring sessions helped me.

1 2 3 4 5

Being required to attend the tutoring sessions made me consider quitting sports.

1 2 3 4 5

Being part of the Step Up program improved my relationship with my teachers.

1 2 3 4 5

Being part of the Step Up program taught me about time management skills.

1 2 3 4 5

Positive things about the tutoring program: _____

Negative things about the tutoring program: _____

Comments about the Step Up program: _____

References

- Brady, E. & Glier, R. (2004). To Play Sports, Many Students Must Pay. USA Today Online. Retrieved on December 4, 2011 from http://www.usatoday.com/sports/preps/2004-07-29-pay-to-play_x.htm
- Côté, J, & Fraser-Thomas, J. (2007). Youth involvement in sport. In P.R.E. Crocker (Ed.), *Introduction to sport psychology: A Canadian perspective*. Toronto: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Gould, D. (2007). Threats to educational Athletics. *Mentor*, 3 (3), 6-7.
- Lake Shore Federation of Teachers & Lake Shore Board of Education. (2010). Collective Bargaining Agreement. Retrieved December 2, 2011 from http://lakeshoreschools.org/docs/LSFT_Contract_09-11.pdf
- Lake Shore Public Schools. (2010). Lake Shore High School Athletic Handbook. Retrieved December 1, 2011 from http://lakeshoreschools.org/docs/Athletic_Handbook_Revision_10-11.pdf
- Michigan High School Athletic Association. (2011). Your High School Eligibility: A Guide for Student-Athletes. Retrieved December 1, 2011, from <http://www.mhsaa.com/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=D1x2P5VoKJI%3d&tabid=562>
- Ziegler, J. M. (2004). Can high schools foster youth development? In Hamilton, S.F. & Hamilton, M. A. (Eds.). *The youth development handbook: Coming of age in American communities*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.