

## ***What's it all about?***

When you actually think about the purpose of activities for youth it is important to be reminded that the purpose goes far beyond winning, championships, season records and the scoreboard. To imagine the opportunity that is created for more than a half million high school student athletes in New York State alone is of such societal value. From a prevention standpoint, there are some critical areas of purpose in athletics that should not be overlooked, basics that have the potential to build strengths and reduce risk in all.

**Pro Social Bonding:** The opportunity to take membership in a positive group activity that calls for positive health behaviors, negative attitude toward negative societal issues, positive relationships with adults, positive bonding to social institutions and commitment to pro-social values. We are attempting to establish a social order with a basis of achievement, common interest and excellence.

**Clear and Consistent Boundaries:** Standards for youth behavior set by adults, for youth but also standards among youth set and monitored within their social order. Many of these standards are set for concerns for health, safety and performance.

**Life Skills:** "Abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life", to try to impart to those involved in high school athletics a learning experience that offers skills and abilities that can be used throughout life, long after their athletic career is over in the game of life.

**Caring and Support:** To show those involved in high school athletics that all stakeholders in the program care and support those who partake win or lose. That the adults in a community appreciate the athletes and what they are trying to achieve. That we are proud of them, not just for how well they play and what they achieve but also the kind of young people they are with regard to character and citizenship.

**Set High but Realistic Expectations:** To set expectations for youth to always try their best, to believe in themselves and to show dedication and focus and commitment to whatever they do and to instill in them that this experience is a privilege and honor afforded them to represent their community as ambassadors.

**What is the purpose in athletics for youth? What are we trying to achieve? Why is it important to assess our effectiveness? These are important questions to answer. The basis for "The Life of an Athlete", are listed below in six core areas. Examine each area and think how they relate to the programs you offer in your school district.**

Opportunity for Meaningful Experience: To not simply offer athletics as an activity, but to make it a special experience that it is unlike any other and to provide as much as possible, for a young person to gain a positive outlook and perspective from being involved in athletics.

Try to realize how important our job in athletics is, the impact it can have on youth and communities, and the potential it has in developing in youth, many of the skills and abilities they will need in their adult life and the world. Our job is monumental. Take pride in what you do and how you do it. Set standards that are never compromised. Make a positive difference in the life of every young person. Remember most, our job is to teach young people how to prepare for life.