

To achieve the goal of becoming a 3D coach it is imperative that coaches, players, parents and administrators all work together. West Des Moines schools are committed to providing a positive learning environment for all students and athletes. Administrators are challenged to hire and mentor teachers/coaches to guide young athletes. Being a middle school teacher and coach, I have the opportunity to work with a caring administrator, Zac Sinram. He has both the commitment to making middle school athletics a nurturing environment while also developing high level athletes. Zac is successful in this endeavor as he understands the 3 dimensions of coaching and works hard to make a difference in the lives of student athletes.

The strength of the program at Indian Hills is in the 1st dimension. Our school has a no cut policy and athletes are coming with varied experiences. Many of our athletes need to learn the basics of how to play a sport and the necessary skills. Other athletes show up with years of camps, clinics and club experiences. These factors place an emphasis on having coaches knowledgeable in the 1st dimension. However, one of Zac's strengths is that he understands coaches need to be mindful of all three dimensions. Skill development is not enough. Middle school athletes need coaches who understand the importance of motivation, confidence, character and purpose (2nd and 3rd dimensions). Zac's solution: hire good people! Good people know the importance of the 2nd and 3rd dimensions and work these aspects into their coaching philosophy.

Like most of us, Zac is growing in his understanding of the 3 Dimensional coaching model and the importance of staff implementing the 2nd and 3rd dimensions. I believe this is one of our program's weaknesses and one of Zac's strengths. Coaches get caught up in the day to day management of practices and games and often fail to recognize the importance of the other dimensions. Knowing this happens, Zac is committed to making these dimensions an integral part of our coaching and teaching staff. He leads our building in teaching Social Emotional Learning activities for the entire student body. One of his challenges is convincing staff and students of the importance of these SEL lessons. Some staff can be reluctant to tackle tough conversations about identity, value and self-worth. Middle school students at times are not intellectually ready for deep meaningful conversations. Though it is difficult, Zac is committed to these elements of personal development.

However strongly committed Zac is to coaching the "whole" athlete, his weakness, like mine and many of our coaching staff, is his competitive nature. As a former athlete, he thrives in competition and can get caught up in the wins and losses. I see Zac recognizing this attribute in himself and many of us. He is working to use his competitive fire to challenge all of us coaches to "be better". Coach all dimensions and we all are winners! Our program is not here yet, but we are trying. One thing I would suggest is giving all coaches the time and opportunity to write notes at the end of the season to each athlete. Additionally I would like to see athletes complete a short survey at the end of the season to help coaches reflect on their coaching. In twenty years no one will remember (or care) who won a middle school athletic event. People will remember they had fun, learned about teamwork, belonged to a community and were loved by a coach. I am grateful to be a part of the community of teachers and coaches at Indian Hills Junior High.