As the person on my junior high’s coaching staff who has been here the longest and coached the most sports at varying levels, I feel confident in knowing our program very well. I am able to see the strengths and weaknesses for each season as well as our program as a whole. And even though I’ve not looked at our program through the lens of 3Demonsional Coaching, I still feel confident in recognizing our perceived strengths and weaknesses as well as offering up a suggestion or two for how we can better meet the needs of our coaches in the 3 dimensions. Although, to be honest, due to the environment in which we coach, I’m not sure how feasible it will be to incorporate the 3 dimensions wholly into our program.

The knowledge our coaches have in their respective sports of the fundamental skills and strategies is exceptional and their ability to teach the skills and strategies in a variety of ways to meet the needs of all participants is clearly evident in their practices. Opportunities for coaches to attend conferences or conventions to continue to better themselves are available and many of us take advantage of them when they come up. Our athletic director also provides resources allowing us the ability to really enhance our practices and give our athletes the best opportunity at improving their skills.

The community that is formed amongst each team is something I have witnessed first hand by athletes. In asking them what they most enjoyed about the season, many girls will say that they made friends with girls with whom they never thought they would. They also state that they enjoyed the process of working together to get better.

The two main challenges I feel we face in incorporating all three dimensions into our program are the ratio of athletes to coaches; especially at the lower level, and the length of our seasons. At our junior high, eighth grade is the first opportunity for the students to participate in extracurricular sports. Because of this, we typically have a large number come out yet we don’t have enough coaches for there to be an equal ratio of coaches to players. This is more evident at the lower levels where a coach may have upwards of 30 kids under their care. The length of our season also presents challenges to incorporating the dimensions. We have our athletes for 7-8 weeks and during those weeks, we may be limited with the number of practices we can have.

I feel our athletes have the authority figure to believe in them as a whole group. However, because of our numbers and the length of our season, I feel we may lack the ability to have each individual member of the team have that experience. I don’t doubt for a second that our coaches care about their athletes as individuals and want to devote as much individual attention as possible throughout the season; but I feel as though some students leave our seasons not having that feeling.

Goal setting gives our athletes the opportunity for purpose, not only during the season but potentially in other areas of their lives as well. Unfortunately, the previously mentioned challenges don’t really allow us the ability to sit down with each of our athletes to help them through the process of assessing the progress they are making with their goal. It’s something that I have tried to do in previous years and even though it starts off on a positive note and my girls are really into it, but our season goes by so quickly and there’s so much to go over with the team as many are experiencing the sport for the first time that assessing the progress of the goal ends up going by the wayside.

Even with the roadblocks our program has for incorporating the 3 dimensions, my suggestion for how we could work towards slowly implementing elements of it is to reflect on those four questions posed at the beginning of the program: 1) Why do you coach?, 2) Why do you coach the way you coach?, 3) How does it feel to be coached by you?, and 4) What is your definition of success? The start of the school year, or the start of each season, could have the coaching staff get together to come up with our own individual answers to these questions. Putting these answers at the forefront of our minds as we prepare for our seasons can help give focus to our goal of the type of experience we want our athletes to have, how we can provide activities to better their skills and teamwork and finally, how we can help them feel as though they are an important member of the team and matter to the success of the group.