

Get Certified!

Editor's Note: This article was written by Barb Waldsmith, administrative assistant to Tim Flannery who is in her ninth year on the NFHS staff. She also is the parent of a former high school athlete and NFHS intern.

It is estimated that only 16 percent of the approximately one million adult coaches in U.S. schools have any formal coaching education. These coaches interact with students on a regular basis, influence their lives (both positively and negatively), and play an important role in how a school's team – and by extension, the school itself – is perceived. Yet a student can leave the practice field where he or she was supervised by a coach who had no formal, professional coaching education, and get a haircut from a barber or stylist who is required to have a license or certification to show proof of training.

The purpose is not to equate coaches with barbers, rather to discuss professional development and the reasons why certification for coaches is critically important to the interscholastic mission. The NFHS has developed its Coach Education program, with one of the goals being to certify coaches because these individuals are key people in the lives of high school students. Educating students about the purpose of interscholastic athletics, life skills and healthy lifestyles, among other topics, will help them prepare for high school and beyond. The NFHS Coach Education Program purposely uses the terminology “teacher/coach” in the Fundamentals of Coaching course to stress the continuation of teaching and learning in sport, and the concept of a coach as first and foremost being a teacher.

In considering the legal and liability issues related to athletics, it becomes clear that coach education is not a luxury that a school district can afford to ignore. It is a necessity in order to contribute to the development of the whole child and fulfill the educational mission of interscholastic athletics. Can we really afford to put coaches into situations for which they are not adequately prepared? The NFHS Coach Certification Program has as its core course, the Fundamentals of Coaching, designed with and for

interscholastic coaches. It covers the eight domains of coaching competencies and is accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Coaching Education (NCACE).

The Fundamentals course, along with an approved First Aid component (such as First Aid for Coaches), and a sport-specific course, e.g., Fundamentals of Coaching Soccer, are the three courses that comprise the Level 1 - Accredited Interscholastic Coach (AIC). If there is not yet a sports-specific course developed in a coach's particular sport, the Teaching Sport Skills course will serve as the third component to fulfill the AIC requirement. When a school hires a coach with the AIC credential, this individual will have received education in student-centered, age-appropriate coaching; first responder and injury-related scenarios; and training to teach skills and tactics of sport.

There are so many great reasons for a coach to Get Certified! Check them out today at www.nfhslearn.com.