

Wayland High School 2015 Athletics Culture Study Report

Introduction

With support from Superintendent Stein, Principal Mizoguchi, and the Wayland School Committee, Northeastern University's Center for the Study of Sport in Society conducted a study of the culture of athletics at Wayland High School in the fall of 2015. The study consisted of an online survey and focus groups with high school students, high school staff, coaches and members of the community. The purpose of the study was: (1) to compare the perceived elements of the current athletics culture with evidence-based characteristics of a positive, athlete-centered high school athletics program; (2) to identify areas of strength and areas where improvement is needed; and (3) to present recommendations for improvement.

Data and Methods

The study was designed to examine the culture through both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Different sources of data and different methods of data collection were used in an effort to reduce systematic bias and strengthen the reliability of the findings (Patton, 1999).

Quantitative data were collected from three stakeholder groups (i.e., high school students, high school staff members, and community members) through an online survey. Qualitative data were collected through a series of focus group discussions with the same three stakeholder groups. The following three data collection methods will be described below: descriptive survey, qualitative survey, and focus group discussions.

Descriptive Survey of the Wayland High School Athletics Culture

The survey instrument was created by the Center for the Study of Sport and Society. The survey was constructed in three aligned versions for student, staff, and community. In total, the survey consisted of 11 demographic, 95 quantitative, and 5 open-ended comment items. The 6 pages of content items were based on themes identified through a review of current scholarly literature related to positive youth development and characteristics of positive, athlete-centered high school athletics programs. The survey was developed to describe stakeholder groups' perceptions of the importance of each of the following themes to the athletic director and coaches at Wayland High School:

1. Positive psychosocial development
2. Physical and psychological safety
3. Physical wellness
4. Motivational climate
5. Coaching effectiveness
6. Positive experiences
7. Negative experiences

Through the descriptive survey, students, staff, and members of the Wayland community were asked to provide feedback about the perceived importance of each cultural element to the coaches and athletic director at Wayland High School. Through the survey, the importance of each element was not actually measured; rather, perceptions of the importance of each cultural element to members of the athletics department was described. The goal of the survey was to understand, as opposed to measure psychosocial constructs within the culture. Additionally, respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with their experience with the athletics programs and the degree to which they trust various members of the Wayland High School community. The descriptive survey was administered using the Survey Monkey survey development and data collection website. The non-ordered response options were randomized so as to minimize selection bias. All content items were measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale. Response options for perceived importance of cultural elements included very important, pretty important, neutral, a little important, and not important. Response options measuring satisfaction included completely satisfied, satisfied, neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied, dissatisfied, and completely dissatisfied. Response options measuring trust included always true, sometimes true, neutral, rarely true, and never true. Numerical values were assigned to nominal responses to make them ordinal. For all items, an option to respond, “I do not know” was included; however, these responses were coded and included as missing data. Through the descriptive survey, the researchers sought to accomplish the following objectives:

1. To understand various stakeholder groups’ perceptions of the importance coaches and the athletic director place on evidence-based characteristics of positive, athlete-centered high school athletic programs; athletic department;
2. To understand the level of trust various stakeholder groups feel toward groups associated with the athletic program;
3. To understand why student-athletes choose to or choose not to participate in athletics;
4. To understand how various stakeholder groups describe the most and least desirable aspects of the athletic program;
5. To solicit recommendations from various stakeholder groups for future improvements within the athletic program.

Student Survey: The population of the student survey was 9th through 12th grade students at Wayland High School. Parental permission to participate in the study was obtained by the administration of Wayland High School through passive consent. The student survey was administered on September 22, 2015 during students’ weekly Advisory Program meetings. At the time of the survey, freshmen students had only been in school for two weeks and may have had limited basis from which to form opinions about the high school athletic culture; however, 95.1% of enrolled freshmen participated in the survey (Wayland Public Schools, 2015). The sample of 812 students who responded to the survey represents 96.7% of the 840 students enrolled for the 2015-2016 academic year (Wayland Public Schools, 2015). Of the students who

were invited to participate, 812 agreed to participate, but 42 gave no further responses or provided incomplete or nonsense responses, yielding 770 usable student responses (Table 1).

High School Staff Survey: The population of the staff survey included all staff at Wayland High School. Of the staff members who were invited to participate, 159 agreed to participate, but 6 gave no further responses, yielding 153 usable staff responses (Table 2). All staff members were invited to participate in the survey via email. The staff survey opened on September 15, 2015 and closed on September 17, 2015.

Table 1
Student Sample Size and Percentages

Student Demographics	N	Percent
Female	381	49.5
Male	389	50.5
TOTAL	770	100.0
Freshman	196	25.5
Sophomore	199	25.8
Junior	179	23.2
Senior	196	25.5
TOTAL	770	100.0
Student-Athlete	637	82.7
Non-Student-Athlete	133	17.3
TOTAL	770	100.0
Female Student-Athlete	296	46.5
Male Student-Athlete	341	53.5
TOTAL	637	100.0
Freshman Student-Athlete	141	22.1
Sophomore Student-Athlete	171	26.8
Junior Student-Athlete	155	24.3
Senior Student-Athlete	170	26.7
TOTAL	637	100.0
Varsity Student-Athlete	327	42.9
Subvarsity Student-Athlete	436	57.1
TOTAL	637	100.0

Table 2
High School Staff Sample Size and Percentages

Staff Demographics	N	Percent
Female	99	64.7
Male	54	35.3
TOTAL	153	100.0
Teacher	85	55.6
Coach	26	17.0
Teacher & Coach	14	9.2
Teaching Assistant	4	2.6
Guidance Counselor	3	2.0
Administrator & Coach	1	0.7
Administration	1	0.7
Athletic Trainer	1	0.7
Nurse	1	0.7
Administrative Assistant	1	0.7
Other, Unspecified	16	10.5
TOTAL	153	100.0
Former WHS Student-Athlete	13	8.5
Not a Former WHS Student-Athlete	140	91.5
TOTAL	153	100.0
Parent of Current WHS Student-Athlete	7	4.6
Parent of Former WHS Student-Athlete	15	9.9
Not a Parent of WHS Student-Athlete	130	85.5
TOTAL	152	100.0

Community Survey. The population of the community survey included all parents and community members of the Town of Wayland. The sample of 472 parents and community members who responded to the survey represents 3.9% of 12,224 non-high school student residents of the Town of Wayland (US Census Bureau, 2010). Of the parents and community members who were invited to participate, 474 agreed to participate, but 2 gave no further responses, yielding 472 usable parent and community member responses (Table 3). All parents and community members were invited to participate in the survey through public announcements in a local newspaper. The parent and community survey opened on September 17, 2015 and closed on October 9, 2016.

Table 3
Community Sample and Percentages

Community Demographics	N	Percent
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Female	320	68.4
Male	148	31.4
TOTAL	468	100.0
Former WHS Student-Athlete	47	10.2
Not a Former WHS Student-Athlete	416	89.8
TOTAL	463	100.0
Parent of Current WHS Student-Athlete	187	40.0
Parent of Former WHS Student-Athlete	133	28.5
Not a Parent of WHS Student-Athlete	147	31.5
TOTAL	467	100.0

Qualitative Survey of the Wayland High School Athletics Culture

Open-ended questions were included in the survey in an effort to elicit additional data that could be used to make systematic comparisons with the results of the quantitative analysis, in turn strengthening the reliability of the findings (Patton, 1999). In all versions of the survey, respondents were asked to provide open-ended responses to four questions and students were asked to respond to an additional question (Table 4).

Table 4
Responses to Open-Ended Survey Items

Open-ended Item	Student (N = 770)		Staff (N = 154)		Community (N = 472)		Total (N = 1396)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Please describe the best aspect(s) of the athletic programs at Wayland High School.	521	68	36	23	67	14	624	45
Please describe the least desirable aspect(s) of the athletic programs at Wayland High School.	489	64	30	20	54	11	573	41
Please provide specific recommendations for improving the athletic program at Wayland High School.	422	55	31	20	48	10	501	36
Please provide any additional information that you believe might help improve the athletics culture at Wayland High School.	125	16	25	16	22	47	172	12
*Why did you choose to play on a sport team at WHS? If you chose not to play, what was the reason for your decision?	602	78						

* Student survey only

Focus Group Discussions

Researchers from the Center for the Study of Sport in Society collected data from 13 focus group discussions that were conducted with 66 high school students, 19 high school staff members, and 38 parents. Focus group discussions were conducted on five separate dates between November 2, 2015 and November 10, 2015. Through the focus group discussions, researchers gathered

information to make comparisons with the earlier survey results. An interview guide was developed based on themes identified through an initial content analysis of the open-ended survey responses and through a review of current scholarly literature related to positive youth development and characteristics of positive, athlete-centered high school athletics programs. In each 60-minute focus group discussion, a researcher prompted participants to respond to questions from the semi-structured interview guide and responses were recorded by a scribe. Response data were collected from student-athletes ($n = 48$), non-student-athletes ($n = 18$), faculty ($n = 9$), coaches ($n = 10$), and parents ($n = 38$). Male and female student-athletes from all grades, all levels, and all sports were represented in the sample of student-athletes.

All content collected through open-ended survey questions and through focus group discussions was organized and managed in NVivo 11.0 (QSR International, 2015). Thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006) was used to analyze the data, identify new themes, and revise initial themes. Through thematic analysis, the following eight final themes were retained:

1. Equity
2. Physical safety
3. Psychological safety
4. Physical development
5. Life skills development
6. Holistic support
7. Motivational climate
8. Coaching effectiveness

Findings

Findings are presented for each of the eight retained themes: equity, physical safety, psychological safety, physical development, life skills development, holistic support, motivational climate, and coaching effectiveness.

Equity

Initially, researchers sought to describe the perceived importance of equity within the athletic programs by sport, gender, and skill level of athletes. Through analysis of responses to the open-ended survey questions and from the focus group discussions, two additional subthemes within equity were identified: differences by sport level (i.e., freshman, junior varsity, and varsity) and differences by athletic participation status.

Sport Equity. Respondents were asked rate a survey item related to the perceived importance of supporting student-athletes in all sports (Figure 1). Approximately half (51%) of all respondents indicated that supporting different sports equally appears to be pretty important or very important to members of the athletics department. Less than half (41%) of parents and community members responded favorably (Figure 1). The focus group discussions and open-ended responses provided no additional evidence to indicate that providing an equal experience for student-athletes in all sports is perceived as being a priority for the athletic department. Through the open-ended survey and focus group responses, the football program and boys' soccer program were the only two programs identified as appearing to receive more support within the athletic program. The following sports were consistently identified by respondents as appearing to receive less support within the athletic program: crew, track and cross country, field hockey, and softball. Support for these findings are provided in the following sample statements that were drawn from the open-ended survey responses.

Female, senior student-athlete:

“As a participant in sports which do receive respect and acknowledgement, it is disappointing to see the lack of respect for a sports team just because it isn't as successful as others.”

Female, sophomore student-athlete:

“Some sports get more attention and seem to be considered more important which isn't necessarily fair.”

Teacher & Coach:

“Certain sports gain special favor and treatment within the school and within the community.”

Teacher:

“Kids are treated differently (in terms of discipline) if he/she plays a certain sport.”

School staff:

“Some sports are more popular (to athletes and/or spectators) than others which can unintentionally create unequal support from the community for those sports. While this is probably an unavoidable consequence, there is more that the community could be doing to support equal opportunities for all sports.”

Female, senior student-athlete:

“I think other teams, besides football, should get night games.”

Male, senior student-athlete:

“More equal funding amongst the sports. [My] team had to keep sharing uniforms. I never got a uniform, I had to keep sharing it with people.”

Gender. Respondents were asked to rate survey items related to the perceived importance of providing an equitable experience for male and female student-athletes (Figure 1). It is important to note that survey responses indicate individual perceptions related to the importance of supporting male and female student-athletes equally, and are in no way a test or measurement of actual equity or of compliance with laws related to gender equity.

Nearly two-thirds (64%) of all respondents indicated that supporting male and female student-athletes is important to the athletic department. Female (59%) student-athletes responded less favorably than male student-athletes (76%) regarding the perceived importance of supporting male and female student-athletes equally. The focus group discussions and open-ended responses yielded no evidence to indicate that providing an equal experience for male and female student-athletes is perceived as being a priority for the members of the athletic department. Specific examples of perceived inequity related to the hiring of coaches for boys’ teams who also work in the high school, field use (e.g., turf), scheduling of night games, availability of the athletic trainer, and access to the weight room. While one female student-athlete described a positive experience relative to equity, no additional positive examples were provided in the focus group discussions or in the open-ended survey responses. Support for these findings are provided in the following sample statements that were drawn from the open-ended survey responses.

Female, junior student-athlete:

“We are constantly getting kicked out of practice facilities and sometimes even our home field by boys’ sports.”

Female, senior student-athlete:

“There is ZERO equality or care for girls’ sports. I am sad that I have to leave this year and will never have felt like I mattered as an athlete to this school.”

Female, senior student-athlete:

“As a senior girl who plays on multiple varsity teams, I personally do not feel as though I have ever been discriminated against or lacked the necessary resources to thrive.”

Female, senior student-athlete:

“Let all the girls use the scoreboard.”

Skill Level. Respondents were asked to respond to two survey questions related to the perceived importance of providing support for relatively less- and more-skilled student-athletes (Figure 1). Approximately half (53%) of all respondents indicated that supporting less-skilled student-

athletes equally appears to be pretty important or very important to the athletic department. Less than one third (27%) of the parents of current student-athletes and less than one half (47%) of school employees who are not also coaches responded favorably regarding the importance of supporting less-skilled athletes. More than three-fourths (79%) of coaches, however, perceived supporting less-skilled athletes as being important to the members of the athletic department. More than 85% of all respondents perceived providing support for more-skilled athletes as being pretty important or very important to the athletic department. More than 80% of respondents from each separate sample subgroup perceived supporting more-skilled athletes as being pretty important or very important to the athletic department. Within the focus group discussions with parents, teachers, and students who do not participate in athletics at WHS, a consistent recommendation was to increase opportunities for less-skilled students or for students who are interested in a different commitment level to participate in sport or physical activity in other contexts (e.g., intramurals, non-traditional sports, fitness room). Support for these findings are provided in the following sample statements drawn from open-ended survey responses.

<p>Female, senior student-athlete: “Coaches will discard you if you are not one of the best – if they don’t think they see potential they won’t invest their time into that person, when I think that everyone should be seen as having potential.”</p>
<p>Male, sophomore student-athlete: “While many of the coaches I have had have been helpful, the vast majority pay little attention to kids that are struggling and devote the most energy to the people that are already excelling and winning awards for the school. Often times, they’ll completely ignore those who they know will not be winning a lot of points from the Wayland team.”</p>
<p>Female, senior student-athlete: “Less focus on winning and developing the stronger players, and more on developing the player as an overall person. Also, help kids who maybe aren’t as strong at a sport become better, rather than just ignoring them until they stop playing.”</p>
<p>Female, sophomore never participated in WHS athletics: “Less skilled athletes need to feel welcome. It should be possible to play on a team.”</p>
<p>Male, senior student-athlete: “A few more low-level teams might be nice. It’s ridiculously hard to make certain teams if you didn’t play sports in middle school or freshman/sophomore year.”</p>
<p>Community member: “More opportunities for the ‘average’ athletes to participate.”</p>

Sport Level. The focus group discussions and open-ended responses yielded evidence to indicate many student-athletes experience athletics differently at various sport levels (i.e., freshman, junior varsity, varsity). Through open-ended survey responses, a subtheme within the sport level equity theme was identified. Perceptions of inequity by sport level was described not only at the department level (e.g., quality of uniforms, field assignments, practice times), but also

between levels within individual sport programs. While there were some within-team experiences of inequity described, there were also positive examples of varsity head coaches using varsity and upper-classman student-athletes to mentor younger student-athletes and enhancing the engagement and involvement of younger student-athletes within the athletics program. Support for these findings are provided in the following sample statements drawn from the open-ended survey responses.

Female, sophomore student-athlete:

“The varsity team gets much better treatment than the rest of the teams.”

Female, sophomore student-athlete:

“[The coach] only cares about varsity and avoids conflict... I know of many people, including myself, for which [the coach] has ruined the sport.”

Female, senior student-athlete:

“I think the coaches that I have come into contact with during my experience have unfortunately very negatively affected my high school experience as a whole and not just in terms of sport participation. Specifically, [my coaches] have perpetuated a class system between the teams, fostering feelings of superiority of varsity athletes to non-varsity players. This is only enforced by coaches in neglecting and keeping non-varsity players out of events that were supposedly for the whole program.”

Female, freshman student-athlete:

“Don’t give athletes uniforms with stains on them.”

Participation Status. The focus group discussions and open-ended responses yielded evidence to indicate different groups of students feel as though they are treated differently than student-athletes. Through open-ended survey responses, a subtheme, equity by sport participation status, was identified. Of note within this subtheme was the desire to see non-sport extracurricular activities (e.g., theater, Windows dance) provided with a similar amount of attention and support from the school administration and school community. Additionally, concerns were raised regarding the potentially negative effect the athletics culture may have on students who do not participate in athletics. In the focus group discussions, a question was explicitly asked about the perceived experiences of students who do not participate in high school athletics. A teacher described her concerns for students who do not participate, “There are so many athletes, some kids don’t seem to belong or have friends.” One female student who does not participate in athletics described the athletics programs as having “no effect one way or the other” on her experience at Wayland High School. Support for these findings are provided in the following sample statements drawn from open-ended survey responses.

Male, senior student-athlete:

“The bias towards football and against the arts. Where’s the fine arts funding? We don’t get t-shirts, jackets, apparel, etc. We don’t get funding to make our performances better.”

<p>Female, freshman never participated in WHS athletics: “I have never been on a WHS sports team, but it does feel like the athletic programs are the only ones that people actually care about, and something about that just feels really off. In other words, it feels as though the arts programs and other activities are brushed aside to make room for the athletic programs.”</p>
<p>Teacher: “The student body feels there is favoritism of athletes. This is proven in last year’s Senior Show, during the spoofs of the athletic dept. This is pretty simple to fix, just treat all students the same, no favoritism.”</p>
<p>Female, senior never participated in WHS athletics: “They make people that don’t participate feel weird and out of the loop sometimes.”</p>
<p>School staff: “The team spirit (and "psych" things) can be a good thing, but at times it feels that it marginalizes non-athletes because it is so prevalent.”</p>
<p>Female, senior student-athlete: “It needs to focus more on equality. Treating all teams equally and treating students, both members and non-members, equally.”</p>
<p>Teacher & Coach: “Celebrate all accomplishments of teams and individuals. Celebrate the accomplishments of the arts and music the same as sports!”</p>

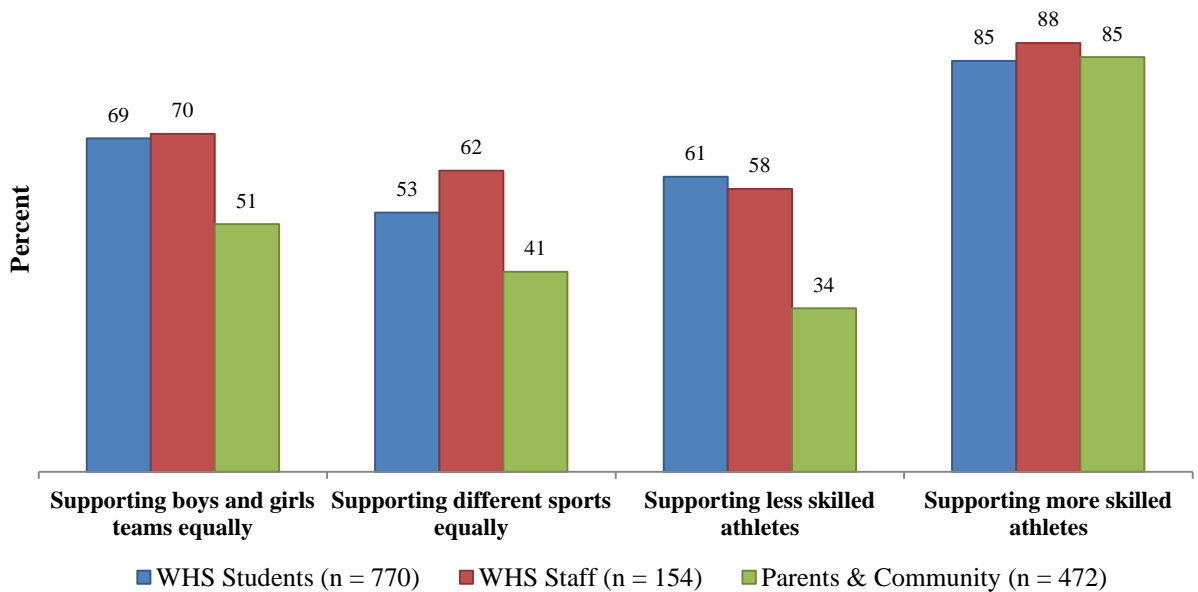


Figure 1. Percentage of participants who responded *very important* or *pretty important* to survey questions related to the perceived importance the coaches and athletic director at Wayland High School attach to each cultural element (N = 1396).

Physical Safety

Respondents were asked to respond to four survey questions related to the perceived importance of physical safety to members of the department (Figure 2). Most respondents indicated that providing safe and modern equipment (89%) and providing safe and modern facilities (86%) is pretty important or very important to members of the athletics department. Ensuring that student-athletes feel physically safe was also rated as being a priority (82.3%). The athletic facilities and equipment were mentioned by members of most stakeholder groups as being strengths of the program; however, many respondents described the physical condition of the track and the softball practice and game facilities as being physical safety concerns. Additional concerns related to the limited availability of the certified athletic trainer and unsafe coaching practices (e.g., rest and recovery, weather, training methods, return-to-play decisions) were described in the open-ended survey responses. Support for these findings are provided in the following sample statements that were drawn from the open-ended survey responses.

Male, junior student-athlete:

“The trainer will actually work with you and try to make sure you’re truly ready to get back to your sport.”

Teacher:

“I have heard many stories from athletes about being encouraged to play hurt or being docked playing time if they miss practice for academic reasons. I have known kids with concussions to be encouraged to play or be teased (by teammates and coaches) without regard to return to play protocols. This is disconcerting and disappointing.”

Female, senior student-athlete:

“I think coaches need to be more educated about injuries in general. Not only should they view injury prevention as part of their responsibility, but also how to care for players that are already injured. Too many coaches allow players to continue playing when they are hurt. If the kid says they are okay, sometimes the coach needs to step in and realize they are not, instead of playing them to win the game.”

Male, senior student-athlete:

“I don’t like how our athletic trainer is only given a set number of hours per week and thus can only come in for a short time before games and practices. This makes it hard for me to get the treatment I need in time before practice. She should be given more hours.”

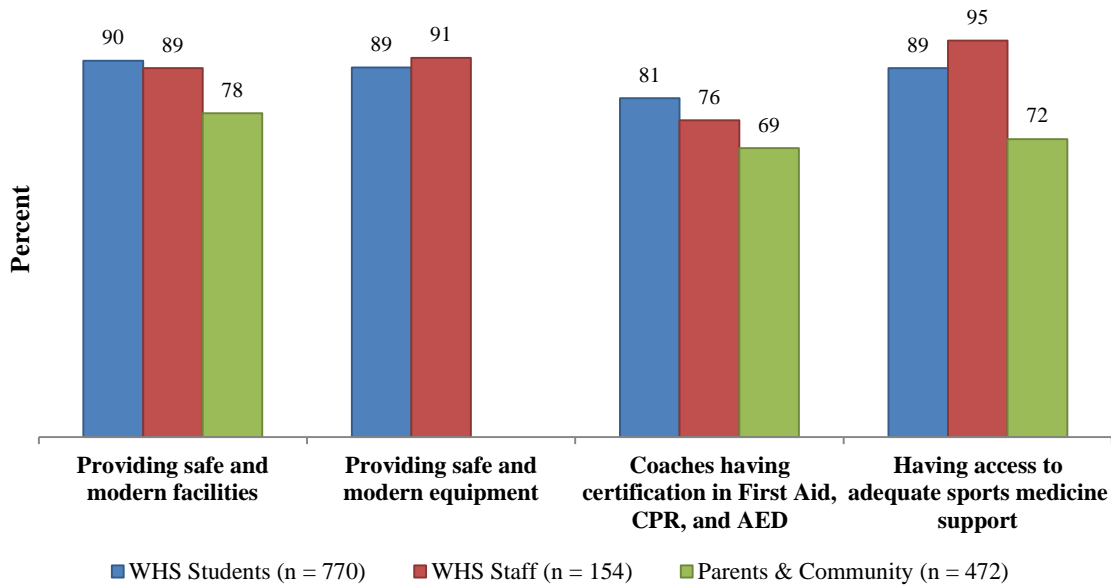


Figure 2. Percentage of participants who responded *very important* or *pretty important* to survey questions related to the perceived importance the coaches and athletic director at Wayland High School attach to each cultural element ($N = 1396$).

Psychological Safety

Respondents were asked to rate survey items related to the perceived importance of the psychological safety of student-athletes to members of the athletics department (Figure 3). The psychological safety theme was represented most frequently in the open-ended survey responses and was also the most varied in the nature of its representation. Psychological safety appears to represent many of the best aspects of the athletics program, as well as the majority of its least desirable aspects. Responses within this theme relate to enjoyment, interaction with coaches, and interaction with peers.

In a single open-ended survey question in which student-athletes were asked to provide a reason why they chose to participate in sport at the high school level, the following terms or word roots were identified in 69% of responses: fun, love, like, and enjoy. Terms and root words related to socialization and friendship were represented in 44.3% of responses. Enjoyment and belonging were described as essential elements of the athletics experience for several members of all stakeholder groups.

In the survey questions related to psychological safety, there were noteworthy differences between coaches, student-athletes, members of the staff, and parents of current student-athletes (Table 5). Differences were also identified in perceived importance of psychological safety among grade levels (Figure 4).

Table 5
Percentage of Respondents Rating Psychological Safety as Pretty Important or Very Important to Members of the Athletics Department

Question	Student-Athletes (n = 637)	Coaches (n = 41)	Staff (n = 112)	Parents of Current Student-Athletes (n = 187)
Treating all athletes with respect	81%	97%	71%	52%
Making sure athletes feel emotionally safe	78%	85%	68%	58%
Providing an enjoyable experience	76%	94%	70%	53%
Creating a sense of belonging for all athletes	74%	79%	63%	44%
Increasing the self-confidence of all athletes	71%	79%	63%	39%
Being empathetic to others	72%	82%	51%	38%

Support for findings related to enjoyment and positive interaction with coaches are provided in the following sample statements drawn from open-ended survey responses.

Female, sophomore student-athlete: “The best aspect of the athletic program is that the coaches are really nice and supportive.”
School staff: “There is a sense of school spirit and pride that is easily seen at WHS.”
Male, senior student-athlete: “The coaches are good in that they make practices fun while pushing athletes to become better every day. They’re approachable and easy to talk to if one has an issue.”
Male, senior student-athlete: “[My coach] is the single most important figure of leadership, responsibility, and compassion at this school.”
Female, sophomore student-athlete: “The focus is on your team and your happiness with your teammates. As well, [my coach] focuses on caring for all athletes and providing them with the support to reach their full potential.”
Male, senior student-athlete: “I have always been supported by my coaches from when I was a benchwarmer to when I was a starter. They have been supportive and understanding. If something is wrong, I can approach my [coaches] and they will be open and ready to help.”
Parent: “Playing on a team and competing makes my daughter happy, builds strength, confidence and community”

In open-ended responses and in the focus group discussions, students, parents, and teachers expressed concern about the psychological safety and well-being of student-athletes. While several coaches were described as fair and supportive of all student-athletes, others were described as openly favoring certain student-athletes. In many cases, those individuals described as favorites were the more skilled student-athletes. The following terms were used several times in open-ended survey responses and in focus group discussions to describe the behavior of coaches as it relates to the psychological safety of student-athletes: emotionally abusive, threatening, manipulative, disrespectful, insensitive, and humiliating. Many respondents described respectful, fair, supportive, open, and positive interactions between student-athletes and coaches; however, the prevalence of potentially damaging interactions was notable given the coaches responses to survey questions related to psychological safety of student-athletes (Table 5). Support for findings related to potentially damaging interactions between student-athletes and

coaches are provided in the following sample statements that were drawn from open-ended survey responses.

Parent: “There are quite a few coaches that genuinely care about their athletes and we are very lucky to have them coaching our kids. However, there are also coaches that practice a ‘bullying’ coaching style that is quite often tolerated which is a contradiction of the schools mission.”
Male, sophomore student-athlete: “Some of the coaches can be very harsh and punish us when we make mistakes in practice.”
Male, senior student-athlete: “Coaches that scream at players are the worst part of the athletic program. I play on one team that has positive coaching, and one team with a lot of negative coaching.”
Female, senior student-athlete: “Coaches who make you fear making mistakes.”
Female, senior student-athlete: “I have had many mean coaches, one who insulted the players at practice and before games. [The coach] was never a positive role model and made me dread practice and games.”
Female, sophomore student-athlete: “Rude coaches, coaches that disrespect you and call you out when you make a mistake instead of helping you get rid of the bad habit.”
Male, sophomore student-athlete: “When we lose, often times the coaches single out players on the team and blame them for the loss. I don’t think this is fair to the player.”
Female, senior student-athlete: “Some coaches show favoritism...and gossip with the athletes they favor.”
Male, sophomore student-athlete: “The way coaches favor certain players.”
Female, junior student-athlete: “Being the weak link and being promoted by the coaches as such. Not getting individual attention. Not improving because of lack of communication. Not being shown that I can do better. Feeling like the worst and knowing it too.”
Parent: “Coaches use favoritism and humiliation as tools to improve the quality of their teams and sacrifice the player’s self-worth in the process.”
Parent: “It has been quite difficult as parents to witness these coaches breaking down the spirit of not only our children but many others.”

<p>Parent:</p> <p>“I don’t think most of the coaches are equipped for supporting the whole student and often cause damage to their self-esteem. The coaches need more training.”</p>
<p>Female, senior student-athlete:</p> <p>“Make sure athletes know they are cared for and that they aren’t just showing up at practices and games to do nothing.”</p>
<p>Female, sophomore student-athlete:</p> <p>“Look into how the coaches actually make the players feel.”</p>

Support for findings related to belonging and positive interaction with peers are provided in the following sample statements drawn from open-ended survey responses.

<p>Male, freshman never participated in WHS athletics:</p> <p>“The best aspect of sports at Wayland High School is that it creates a community of friends that will be your friends for the rest of your life regardless of their grade.”</p>
<p>Female, sophomore student-athlete:</p> <p>“Belonging and sportsmanship.”</p>
<p>Male, junior student-athlete:</p> <p>“Just being a part of a team and having that camaraderie with the members of your team that you practice with.”</p>
<p>Male, junior student-athlete:</p> <p>“I know I’m not the best athlete and I admit, I’m one of the worst on [the team]. But my teammates and coaches always have my back and are very supportive. They make me a better athlete and a better person. My best friends are fellow teammates.”</p>
<p>Female, junior student-athlete:</p> <p>“Being on a team, being with friends, having fun, getting better, learning skills, improving together, learning how to deal with people who many not like you on the team, sticking together, not leaving anyone behind.”</p>
<p>Male, sophomore student-athlete:</p> <p>“I think the best aspect of this school’s athletic program is teamwork and that the coaches really care for you. Your team treats you like family.”</p>

In open-ended survey responses, a few respondents expressed feelings that they find the continued use of Native American imagery within athletic programs to be to be offensive and insensitive.

<p>Teacher:</p> <p>“I find the Wayland High School Athletic department's use of Native American imagery culturally insensitive. It went a way for over a decade and now has a prominent role on tshirts, chairs, and in the weight room. Last year multiple teams had</p>

a full Native American chief on t-shirts. I feel strongly that Wayland high school athletics should disassociate itself with this imagery.”

Female, senior never participated in WHS athletics:

“Stop people from wearing the headdresses and shaking the milk jugs at games. It is stupid and offensive.”

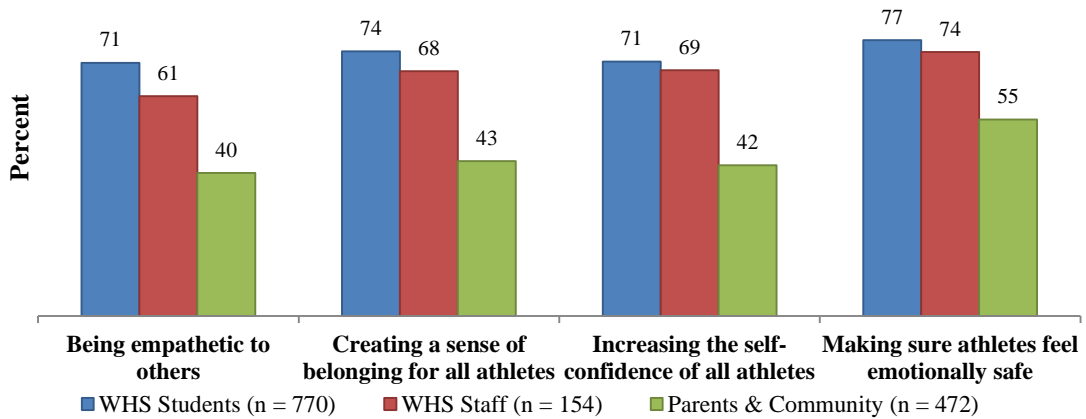


Figure 3. Percentage of participants who responded *very important* or *pretty important* to survey questions related to the perceived importance the coaches and athletic director at Wayland High School attach to each cultural element ($N = 1396$).

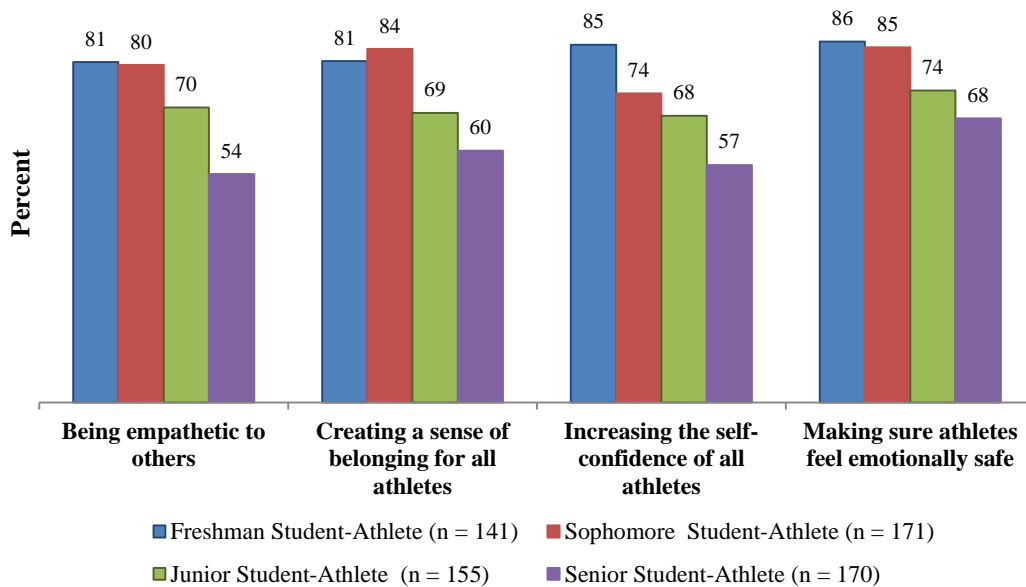


Figure 4. Percentage of student-athletes who responded *very important* or *pretty important* to survey questions related to the perceived importance the coaches and athletic director at Wayland High School attach to supporting different sports equally ($N = 637$).

Physical Development

Respondents were asked to rate five survey items related to the perceived importance of the physical development of student-athletes (Figure 5). Most respondents indicated that improving physical fitness (87%), developing sport knowledge (85%), and developing physical skills (84%) are pretty important or very important to members of the athletics department. The perceived importance of developing physically literate (75%) and physically educated (74%) student-athletes was also rated by the majority of respondents as being pretty important or very important to members of the athletics department. The perceived importance of physical development is much lower for senior student-athletes than for freshman and sophomore student-athletes (Figure 6). In a single open-ended survey question in which student-athletes were asked to provide a reason why they chose to participate in sport at the high school level, the following terms or word roots were identified in 26% of responses: fitness, in shape, health, physical, and activity.

In survey questions related to physical development, there were noteworthy differences between coaches, student-athletes, members of the staff, and parents of current student-athletes (Table 6). Difference in perceived importance of physical development was also identified between grade levels (Figure 6). Support for these findings are provided in the following sample statements drawn from open-ended survey responses.

Parent:

“There is a need for a fun athletic experience that does not include the more competitive arena like soccer. In my ideal world an athletics program would include something less intensive like intramurals (all ages even across gender) for all the kids who played and loved soccer up to high school when it became more competitive than they could manage... exercise that builds on what the students do in wellness to set them up for that transition from athletics to exercise for life. Not everyone is inherently competitive but everyone needs to move to be a good student. I think athletics departments need to support all students not just those in competitive sport.”

Female, junior never participated in WHS athletics:

“I would like to learn more about working out and how to stay disciplined about my fitness. How to take a good snapshot of how ‘fit’ I am and what I need to do just to stay healthy.”

Female, junior never participated in WHS athletics:

“Even though I haven’t immersed myself in athletics, I believe that here at WHS, you are always encouraged to stay physically fit and throw yourself into sports.”

Male, senior student-athlete:

“I get exercise and I can be with my friends.”

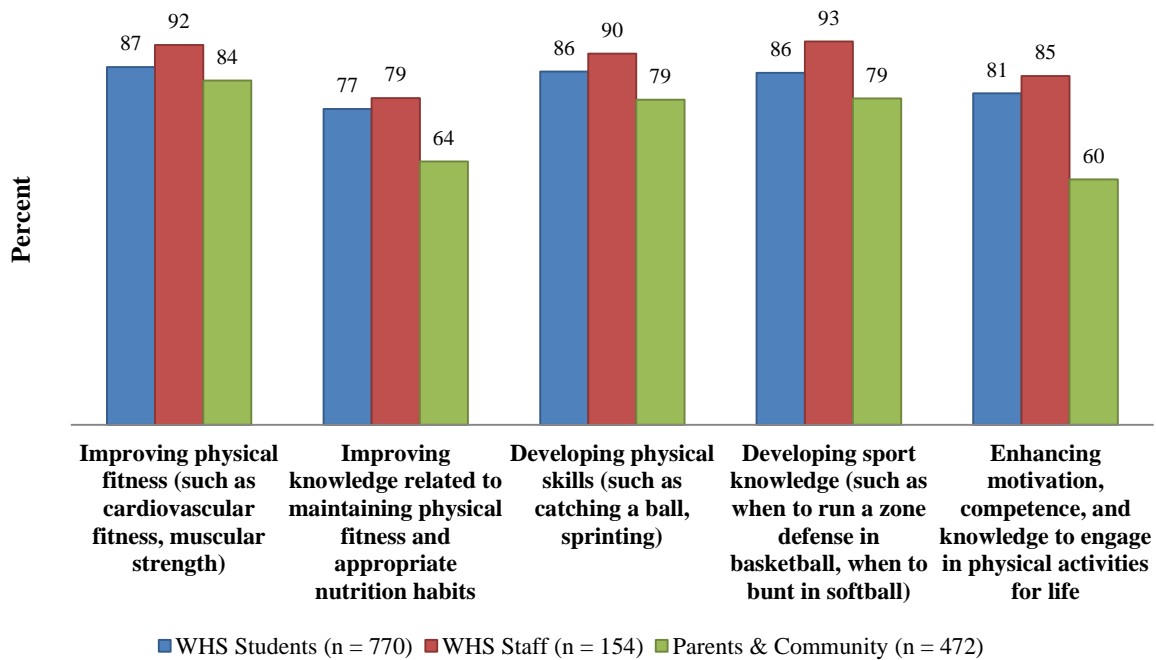


Figure 5. Percentage of participants who responded *very important* or *pretty important* to survey questions related to the perceived importance the coaches and athletic director at Wayland High School attach to each cultural element ($N = 1396$).

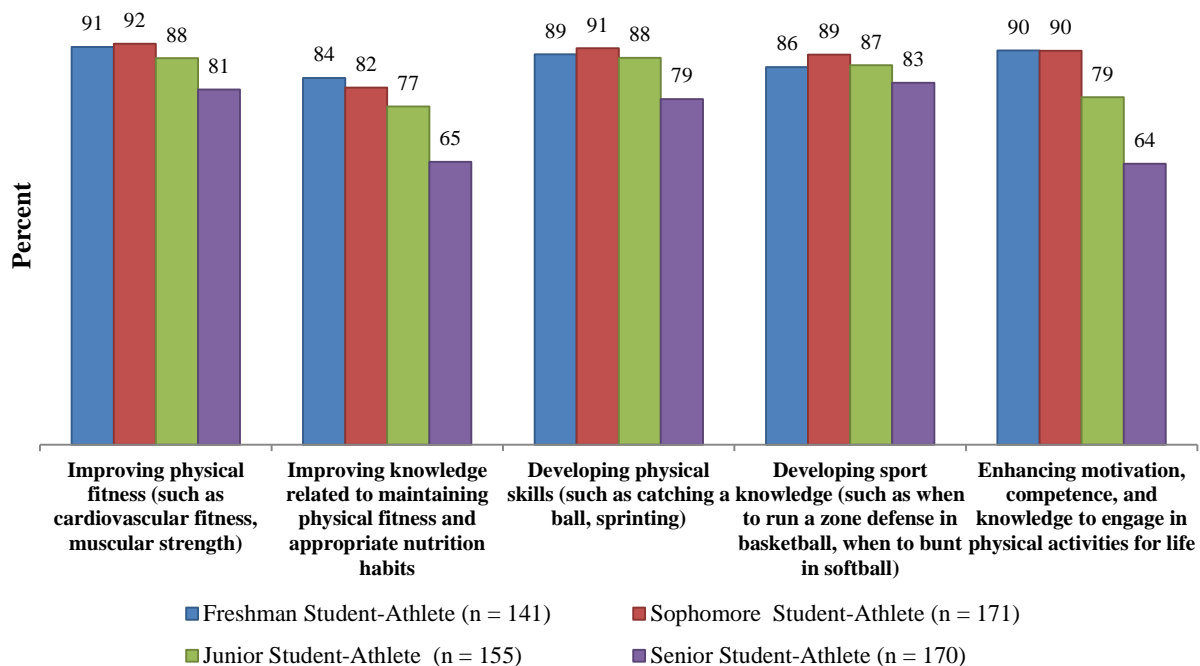


Figure 6. Percentage of student-athletes who responded *very important* or *pretty important* to survey questions related to the perceived importance the coaches and athletic director at Wayland High School attach to each cultural element ($N = 637$).

Table 6

Percentage of Respondents Rating Physical Development as Pretty Important or Very Important to Members of the Athletics Department

Question	Student-Athletes (n = 637)	Coaches (n = 41)	Staff (n = 112)	Parents of Current Student-Athletes (n = 187)
Improving physical fitness	88%	97%	90%	87%
Improving knowledge related to maintaining physical fitness and appropriate nutrition habits	77%	88%	75%	61%
Developing physical skills	87%	97%	87%	81%
Developing sport knowledge	86%	97%	91%	78%
Enhancing motivation, competence, and knowledge to engage in physical activities for life	81%	97%	79%	59%

Life Skills Development

Respondents were asked to rate 12 survey items related to the emergence and development of life skills through sport participation (Figures 7, 8, & 9). Relative to other themes presented in this report, items related to the perceived importance of life skill development were rated among the lowest in the descriptive survey. Items related to development of desired skills, such as leadership (73%), and empowering student-athletes to practice leadership skills (72%) were rated most frequently by all users. Responses to survey items related to life skills development indicate noteworthy differences in responses from coaches, student-athletes, members of the staff, and parents of current student-athletes (Table 7). In particular, the difference between coaches' perceptions and parents' perceptions for most items should be noted.

Through open-ended survey and focus group responses, individuals primarily report developing leadership, effective communication, and coping skills through their participation in sports. This theme was expanded upon in the focus group discussions through specific questions related to learning outcomes associated with high school sport participation. Individuals had particular difficulty responding to this direct question. In one case, a female student-athlete described her confusion by stating, "I'm not sure. Nothing is explicitly stated." The most frequently mentioned learning outcomes included the following: leadership, hard work, communication, pursuing goals, resilience, time management, responsibility, teamwork, following rules, responsibility, accountability, respecting others, and prioritizing. Developmentally appropriate outcomes that were not mentioned as current learning outcomes in open-ended survey or focus group responses include the following: independent thinking, problem solving, risk taking, critical thinking, reflection, taking initiative, and autonomous decision making. All data sources indicate that opportunities are being missed to provide student-athletes with positive developmental challenges and opportunities that are essential in their successful transition into independent and self-reliant adults. Support for these findings are provided in the following sample statements drawn from the open-ended survey responses.

Coach:

"Our athletic program is comprised of dedicated and compassionate coaches and athletes who compete hard each day but maintain the teaching and learning of life lessons as the ultimate goal of the WHS athletic program."

Male, junior student-athlete:

"It connects the grades to each other. I have met many people from all over the place through sports. It also helps me plan my schedule if I am busy. It is a good dose of competitiveness as well as individual development."

Female, freshman never participated in WHS athletics:

"I think that the athletic programs help to build one's courage, leadership skills along with being athletic. There is definitely a sort of confidence that comes with sports. Helping you face other situations."

Male, junior student-athlete: “More meetings with captains and AD.”
Male, freshman never participated in WHS athletics: “Give the athletes a little more independence when it comes to certain decisions on the field. This can lead to athletes not needing a ‘piggy back ride’ from coaches when they don’t know what to do, and help teaches students to be more independent outside of athletics.”
Female, senior student-athlete: “Have the students have more of a say of what they want their coaches to be like and really take into consideration the captain and teams opinion of a new coach.”
Female, senior student-athlete: “I think it would be really beneficial for team captains to have a place to input their thoughts during the season.”

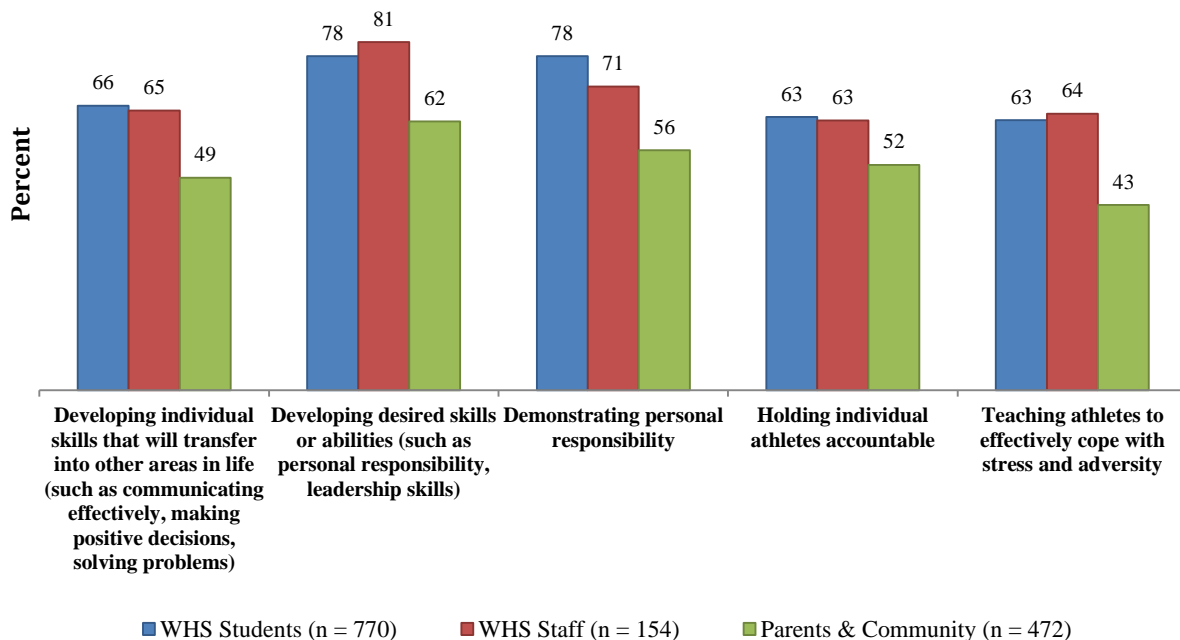


Figure 7. Percentage of participants who responded *very important* or *pretty important* to survey questions related to the perceived importance the coaches and athletic director at Wayland High School attach to each cultural element ($N = 1396$).

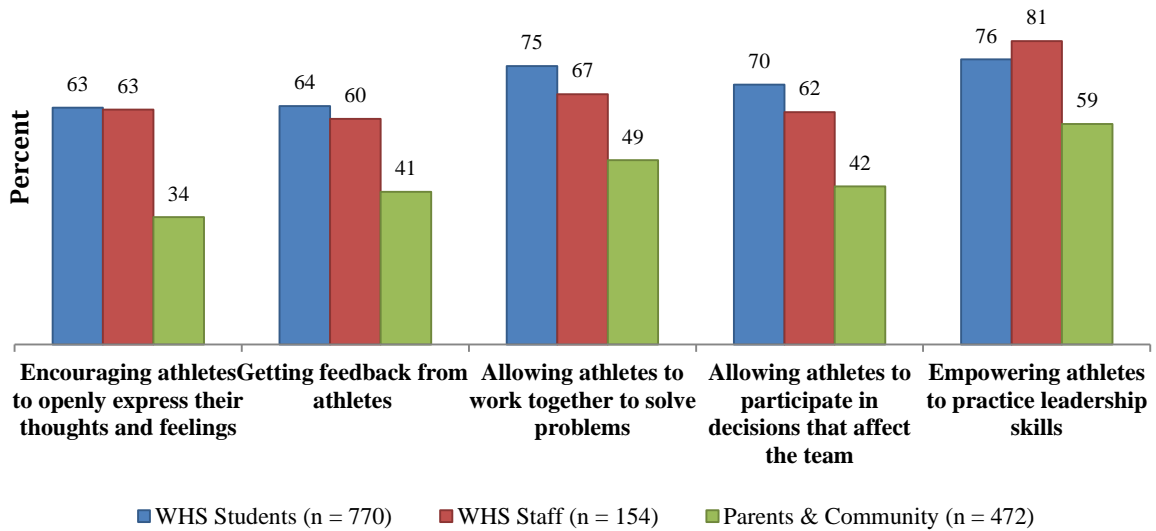


Figure 8. Percentage of participants who responded *very important* or *pretty important* to survey questions related to the perceived importance the coaches and athletic director at Wayland High School attach to each cultural element ($N = 1396$).

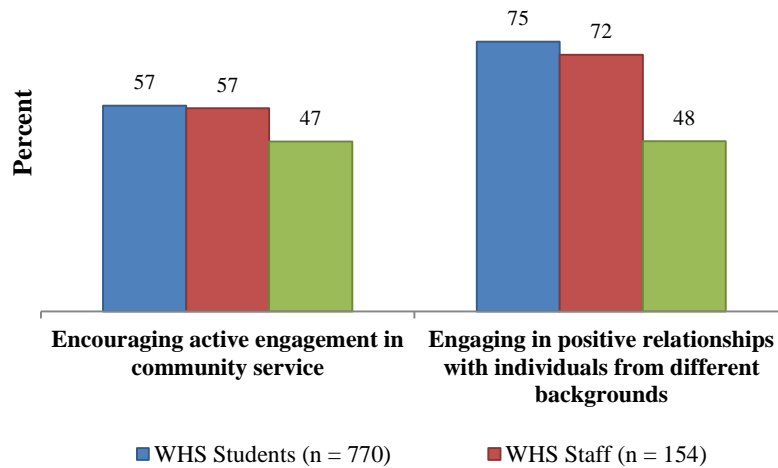


Figure 9. Percentage of participants who responded *very important* or *pretty important* to survey questions related to the perceived importance the coaches and athletic director at Wayland High School attach to each cultural element ($N = 1396$).

Table 7

Percentage of Respondents Rating Life Skill Development as Pretty Important or Very Important to Members of the Athletics Department

Question	Student-Athletes (<i>n</i> = 637)	Coaches (<i>n</i> = 41)	Staff (<i>n</i> = 112)	Parents of Current Student-Athletes (<i>n</i> = 187)
Developing individual skills that will transfer into other areas in life (e.g., communicating effectively, making positive decisions, solving problems)	66%	94%	50%	45%
Developing desired skills and abilities (e.g., personal responsibility, leadership skills)	78%	85%	79%	64%
Demonstrating personal responsibility	78%	88%	62%	60%
Holding individual athletes accountable	64%	79%	55%	52%
Teaching athletes to effectively cope with stress and adversity	62%	79%	56%	39%
Encouraging athletes to openly express their thoughts and feelings	63%	91%	47%	27%
Getting feedback from athletes	63%	86%	46%	34%
Allowing athletes to work together to solve problems	75%	81%	59%	46%
Allowing athletes to participate in decisions that affect the team	69%	76%	54%	41%
Empowering athletes to practice leadership skills	77%	88%	78%	58%
Encouraging active engagement in community service	57%	69%	50%	49%
Engaging in positive relationships with individuals from different backgrounds	75%	94%	61%	45%

Holistic Support

Respondents were asked to rate 10 survey items related to the emergence and development of life skills through sport participation (Figures 10 & 11). While many student-athletes reported individual examples of a coach providing support for their goals and interests that are unrelated to sport participation, far more respondents indicated feeling unsupported with regard to their academic goals, their time with family, their non-sport interests, and their overall identity development. Based on responses to all sources of data, the quality of adult leadership on athletic teams is mixed. Although most student-athletes report trusting their assistant (83%) and head coaches (87%), open-ended and focus group responses indicate that athletes do not feel respected and supported outside of athletics.

Academic support. Across all participant groups, respondents described the importance of actively supporting the holistic well-being of student-athletes. In focus group discussions, “driven” and “high achieving” were adjectives used to describe student-athletes at Wayland High School. In open-ended survey and focus group discussion responses, the high level of academic rigor was presented as rationale for needing to provide increased flexibility and support relative to academic demands. More than 93% of coaches who responded, indicated that enhancing student-athletes’ academic effort and performance and supporting the educational mission of Wayland High School are very important or pretty important considerations of the coaches and athletic director. The coaches’ rating can be compared with 37% of parents of current and/or former Wayland High School student-athletes, 54% of senior student-athletes, and 53% of staff members who view the coaches and athletic director as having a less favorable view. In additional survey questions related to perceived holistic support, there were noteworthy differences between coaches, student-athletes, members of the staff, and parents of current student-athletes (Table 8). Difference in perceived importance of physical development was also identified between grade levels (Figures 11 & 12).

Open-ended responses and feedback from the focus group discussions supported the perspective of parents, student-athletes, and non-coaching staff members. While many students may not consider athletics to be more important than academics, some report feeling pressured to prioritize athletics when conflicts arise. The following quotations reflect a culture that is perceived by students, staff, and members of the community as being less supportive than the coaches indicated in survey responses.

Teacher & Coach:

“Coaches, athletes, parents, community active support and recognition of athletics value in education.

Teacher:

“I think that many students thrive at WHS as students and sports because of their involvement with athletics.”

<p>Female, junior student-athlete: “They were flexible with my schedule and the time I had to put in for school work. The team agreed that academics will always come first and if you next extra time to dedicate to that then you will be excused from practice.”</p>
<p>Male, senior student-athlete: “Most coaches I have had are pretty open to putting education before sports, but I have had one coach that doesn’t accept education or an injury as a reason to not attend practice.”</p>
<p>Female, sophomore student-athlete: “[My teammate] was called out in front of the whole team for being a bad student and needing to stay after school for extra help.”</p>
<p>Teacher: “I don’t know much about the overall tone of the athletic program, but it does seem that students are reluctant to schedule a conference after school if it means they would have to go late to any practice. On the other hand, I know that many of the coaches are teachers themselves and would hate to think students feel that way.”</p>
<p>Female, senior student-athlete: “Be fair to kids who have home or school issues. Don’t act like sports is their only interest and that they aren’t interested in anything else.”</p>
<p>Community member: “Integrate deeper into the curriculum. Athletics and arts are very important in providing balance to academics.”</p>
<p>Female, senior student-athlete: “Make sure head coaches are empathetic and understand the demands on students in addition to athletics.”</p>
<p>Female, freshman student-athlete: “I think that we should have one day where we don’t have to go to practice if we choose. If we have a giant test the next day, or just need a break, we can have one day that we don’t have to go.”</p>
<p>Male, sophomore student-athlete: “Improve balance between academic and athletic standards. Make sure they are in a line. Make sure they work out so students don’t have to choose between the two of they want both.”</p>
<p>Male, junior student-athlete: “To help athletes with their work after practice and games, coaches should make sure practice ends exactly at the scheduled time so that sports do not cut into time that could be spent completing schoolwork or studying. This is especially important during finals and SATs.”</p>
<p>School staff: “Communicate expectations and create partnership between coaches and school staff (administration, counselors, teachers) to support student athletes.”</p>

Support for non-sport interests. Evidence related to support for non-sport interests is provided in the following sample statements drawn from open-ended survey responses.

<p>Male, junior student-athlete: “Most coaches understand that other matters are more pressing than practice or meets.”</p>
<p>Female, senior student-athlete: “Some of my head coaches respect my outside commitments while others do not.”</p>
<p>Female, senior student-athlete: “I think it is unfair for teams to have mandatory attendance over vacations. Especially, now that blackout dates are gone. Players should be using this time to spend with their family, take a break from school and sports, visit family, visit colleges, etc. I think it unfair that as a three-sport athlete, my whole family can’t do anything for vacation over ANY of the vacations.”</p>
<p>Male, junior student-athlete: “Coach would schedule practice to end at a certain time, but would almost always hold us for an extra 30 minutes or so. It got in the way of my schedule as I never really was sure of when practice was going to end.”</p>
<p>Female, senior student-athlete: “There are practices on weekends, which may get in the way of other activities or religious choices (church).”</p>
<p>Male, sophomore student-athlete: “Sport is inflexible. It is always inflexible. So, everything else in our lives has to be flexible and revolve around it.”</p>
<p>Coach: “If they face conflicts, they need to prioritize the commitment they made to their team and be responsible adults.”</p>
<p>Teacher: “I feel that the balance between sports, family and academics has been lost. There have also been incidents I have witnessed where coaches place the "win" before academics and the well-being of the student-athlete.”</p>
<p>Parent: “Expecting high school sports participants to forego summer and school vacations so that they continue practicing or playing in a game is an unfair expectation. Everyone needs a break, including athletes, and summer vacations and school or holiday vacations offer an opportunity for the often times over extended high school student to reconnect with his or her family, yet the student athlete is penalized or given a hard time for not being available for the practice or game because of such family commitments. It is an all or nothing mentality. Most of these students will not go on to play in college, let alone receive athletic scholarships, and the perspective of the coaches in this regard is missing. Their academics and families are given less value in importance than the team. That is not sending the right message.”</p>

Parent:

“Sports are running families’ lives.”

Table 8

Percentage of Respondents Rating Holistic Support as Pretty Important or Very Important to Members of the Athletics Department

Question	Student-Athletes (n = 637)	Coaches (n = 41)	Staff (n = 112)	Parents of Current Student- Athletes (n = 187)
Supporting athletes’ individual academic goals	63%	94%	53%	61%
Supporting the educational mission of Wayland High School	67%	94%	46%	43%
Enhancing the academic effort and performance of athletes	66%	88%	49%	37%
Being sensitive to family demands	66%	77%	49%	37%
Supporting athletes’ non-sport interests and commitments	53%	68%	45%	33%
Supporting individual differences in values and interests	69%	94%	52%	27%
Enhancing or developing individual character strengths and values	71%	91%	62%	45%
Encouraging athletes to explore and reflect on their identity beyond that of an “athlete”	61%	81%	40%	28%
Supporting each athlete’s individual goals	72%	86%	62%	34%
Supporting team goals	90%	97%	71%	52%

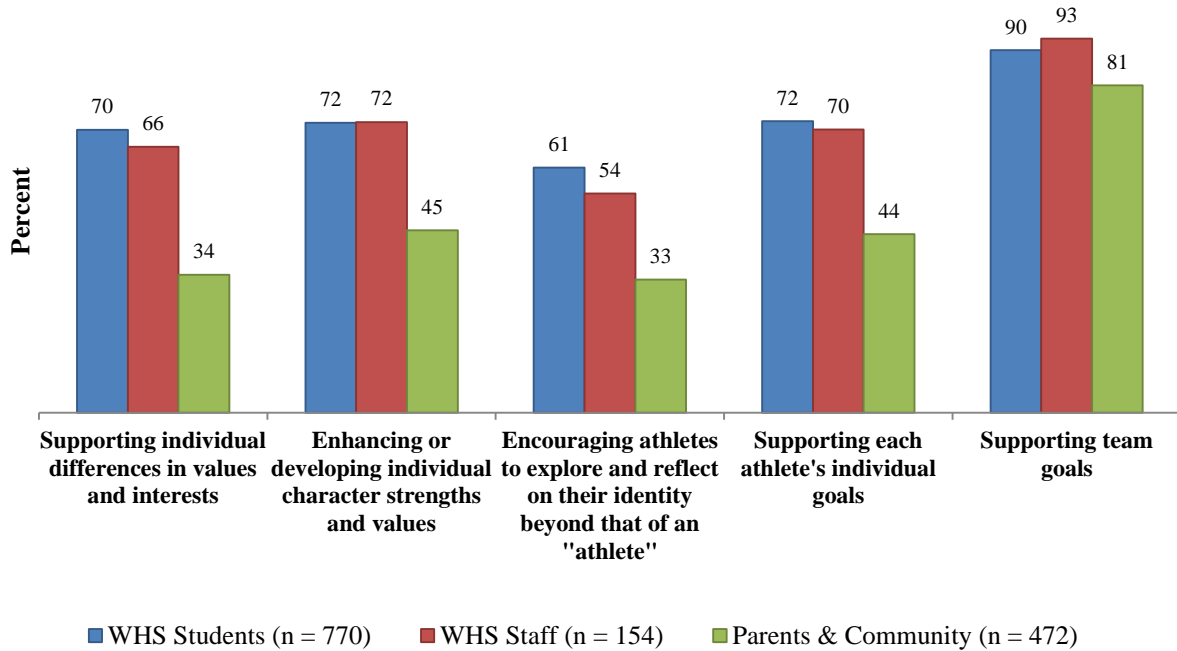


Figure 10. Percentage of participants who responded *very important* or *pretty important* to survey questions related to the perceived importance the coaches and athletic director at Wayland High School attach to each cultural element ($N = 1396$).

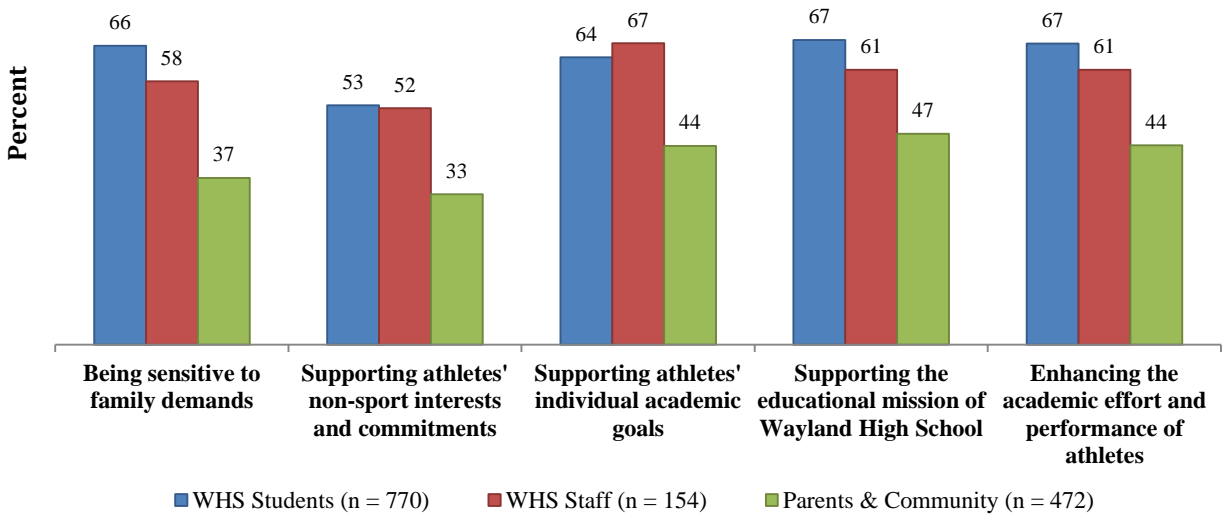


Figure 11. Percentage of participants who responded *very important* or *pretty important* to survey questions related to the perceived importance the coaches and athletic director at Wayland High School attach to each cultural element ($N = 1396$).

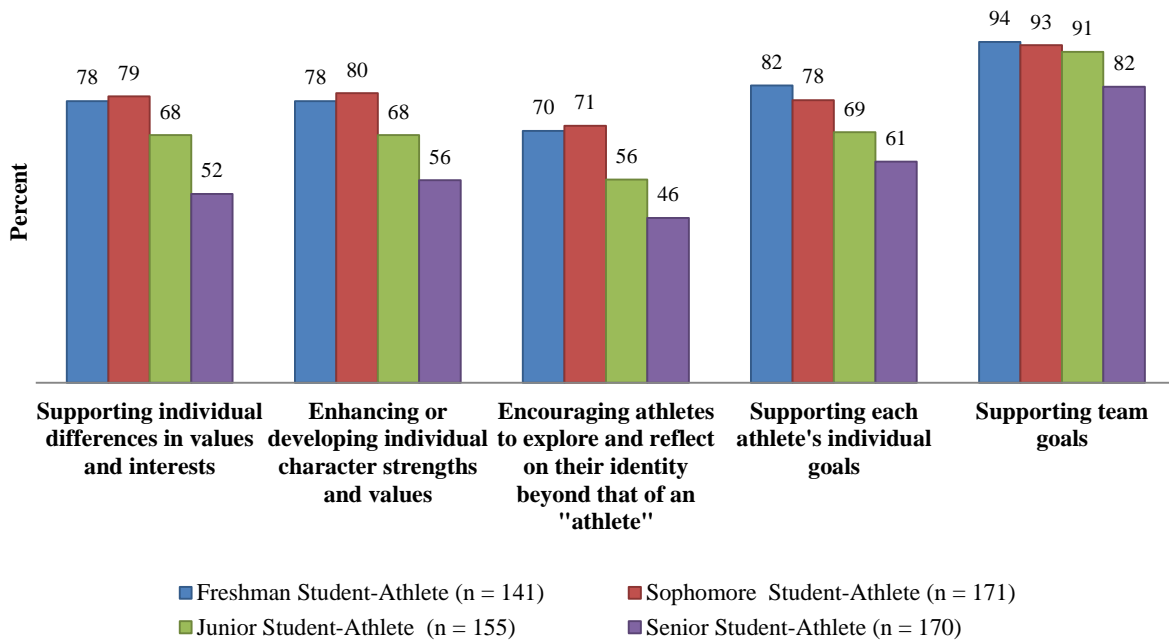


Figure 12. Percentage of participants who responded *very important* or *pretty important* to survey questions related to the perceived importance the coaches and athletic director at Wayland High School attach to each cultural element ($N = 637$).

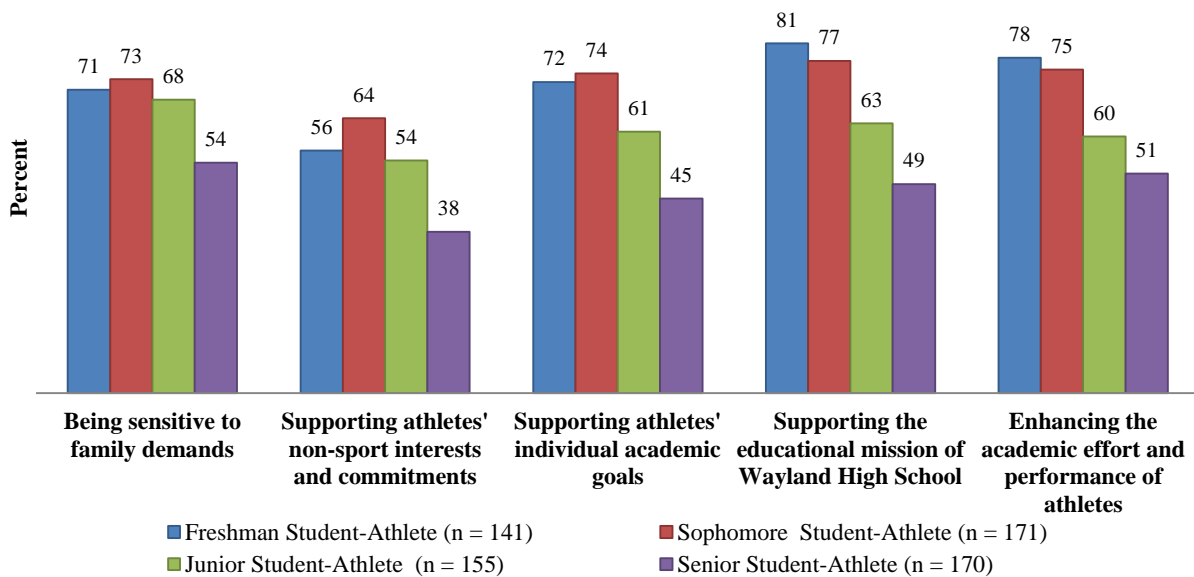


Figure 13. Percentage of participants who responded *very important* or *pretty important* to survey questions related to the perceived importance the coaches and athletic director at Wayland High School attach to each cultural element ($N = 637$).

Motivational Climate

Respondents were asked to rate five survey items related to perceptions of the motivational climate within athletics (Figure 14). Approximately three fourths (76%) of all respondents indicated that winning, an element of an outcome-oriented motivational climate, is pretty important or very important to members of the athletic department. Most (85%) respondents indicated that improvement of sport skills, an element of a growth-oriented motivational climate, is also important to the members of the athletics department. In a single open-ended survey question in which student-athletes were asked to provide a reason why they chose to participate in sport at the high school level, terms or word roots related to the pursuit of excellence were reported by 11% of student-athletes. Slightly less than 1% of student-athletes indicated their reason for playing as being related to winning or championships and .6% reported playing to earn a varsity jacket or college athletic scholarship.

Open-ended survey and focus group responses indicated that the motivational climate within the athletics department appears to be quite balanced. With the exception of some individual team environments, the athletics program is described as one in which individuals and groups are encouraged to pursue excellence, in the form of winning and championships; however, team and individual growth and improvement appear to be equally, if not more, emphasized in most cases. As is indicated in the open-ended survey responses below, individual experiences do vary with regard to a balanced (i.e., outcome-orientated and process-oriented) motivational climate. Support for these findings are provided in the following sample statements drawn from the open-ended survey responses.

Female, sophomore student-athlete:

“One of the best aspects of the athletic programs at the Wayland High School is that they hire coaches that are not just focused on winning but improving.”

Male, sophomore student-athlete:

“The [coaches] share a passion for working with student athletes and wanting you to strive to be the best possible on and off the court.”

Female, sophomore student-athlete:

“Having a group of people with whom you practice doing something that you’re passionate about. Realizing that you’re playing a lot better than you were in the beginning of the season. Seeing changes in yourself is an amazing feeling. Realizing the coach really wants to see you improve and helping you reach your goals which is rare and hard to find.”

Male, sophomore student-athlete:

“The coaches care a lot about winning and intensity. Playing to win makes the game very fun and intense. When you do win, the coaches are proud and happy with the team, which makes it enjoyable.”

Teacher & coach:

“It is a program that celebrates all team accomplishments. There is a place for students who want to be involved no matter their ability or skill. It is highly competitive for a school of its size. Students feeling a sense of belonging, and the coaches helping those students come together as teams. Emphasis is on success not winning.”

Male, freshman student-athlete:

“[Coaches] really push you to push your own limits to improve.”

Female, senior student-athlete:

“There is a lot of focus on being the best and winning, and not so much as a sport to do for fun and to be part of the community. A lot of teams I was part of I did just because I wanted that experience and there wasn’t that much emphasis on teaching us how to play or participate as there was to just do it and do it well.”

Male, sophomore never participated in WHS athletics:

“Winning is the only goal. So, I don’t think the athletic programs the school has will be enjoyable for everyone.”

Female, junior student-athlete:

“Although I really like our head coach, I think in the sport I care about most there’s often a greater focus on winning or playing the most talented and experienced people on the team than trying to help players improve who maybe aren’t as innately talented but are really working hard to develop their skills and become good at their sports through those skills.”

Male, senior student-athlete:

“Coaches place high expectation on winning and don’t seem to care about what your personal life is throwing at you. They put such a hard focus on winning that if you don’t perform all that well they just kick you to the curb.”

Parent:

“Emphasis on winning at the expense of personal development.”

School staff:

“Coaches and athletes are committed to their sports. Winning is always a goal, but not the only goal. A positive life experience is much more the case.”

Male, junior student-athlete:

“Need more support from coaches and they should acknowledge growth in your athletic ability.”

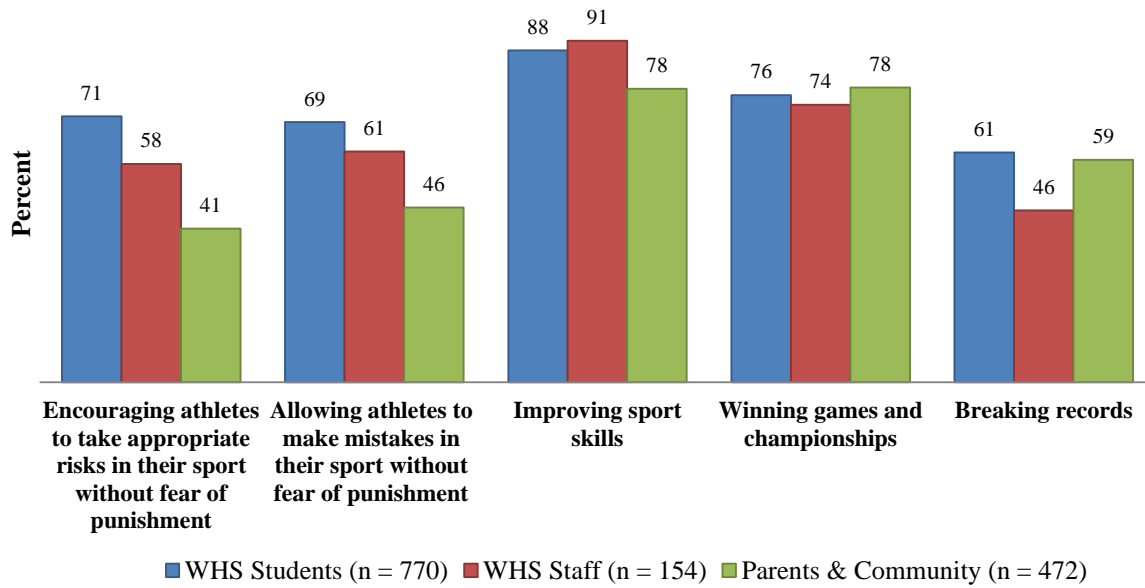


Figure 14. Percentage of participants who responded *very important* or *pretty important* to survey questions related to the perceived importance the coaches and athletic director at Wayland High School attach to each cultural element ($N = 1396$).

Coaching Effectiveness

Respondents were asked to rate survey items related to the motivational climate within athletics (Figures 15 & 16). Most respondents indicated coaches clearly communicate what they expect from student-athletes (81%) is important to members of the athletic department. The perceived importance of coaches continuing to develop their coaching skills and knowledge (72%) and knowing how to create a positive environment for the development of young people (71%) was also indicated by the majority of respondents. Open-ended survey and focus group responses indicated inconsistent experiences and expectations with regard to high school coaches. Responses also indicated that there is the perception that coaches care deeply about students and their experiences; however, many respondents question whether coaches are aware of what their goals are with regard to high school athletics. As one student-athlete stated in the focus group discussion, “[Coaches] seem disconnected from what we want.” Another student-athlete indicated that coaches are “dedicated,” yet “sometimes forget what their priorities are.” This variability in student-athletes experience with coaches is further highlighted by the differences in responses provided by coaches, student-athletes, members of the staff, and parents of current student-athletes (Table 9). Open-ended survey and focus group responses also support the possibility that coaches are unclear about the expectations and nature of their role as a member of the high school community. Support for these findings are provided in the following sample statements that were drawn from the open-ended survey responses.

Male, sophomore student-athlete: “The structure of the program is very good. I know what I have to do to make a team and to succeed on it.”
Teacher: “There have been incidents I have witnessed where coaches place the ‘win’ before academics and the well-being of the student-athlete. Sometimes coaches also forego important conversations about decisions they have made regarding an athlete (position, playing time, etc.) and I feel that leaving an athlete in the dark or ‘surprising’ them with a change goes against the development we are trying to foster.”
Teacher: “I have had students receive texts in class from [a coach] to discuss athletic-related material- in the middle of class!”
Male, sophomore student-athlete: “Too much fitness and not enough skills.”
Male, senior student-athlete: “I feel as if my coaches haven’t always put me in the best position to succeed, but I’ve never questioned their fundamental values.”
Female, senior student-athlete: “Please observe the coaches during practice.”

<p>Male, sophomore student-athlete: “Tell us ahead of time how long the practice is going to be and when it will end and start. Sometimes they don’t tell us till the night before and they don’t say how long it will be. It is hard to coordinate rides/plan things when they don’t tell us when we will go out.”</p>
<p>Parent: “Make sure the coaches know their sport. The coaches do not need to have been really good Athletes: They need to be good coaches and there IS a difference. Some of the best coaches are not the best players.”</p>
<p>Male, junior never participated in WHS athletics: “Fairness and honesty. That’s all that’s needed.”</p>
<p>Male, junior student-athlete: “Communication between athletes and coaches should be better.”</p>
<p>Male, junior student-athlete: “Have reasonable expectations for student athletes. Mean what you say (if you say that family and academics come before soccer, actually mean it and implement it).”</p>
<p>Female, senior student-athlete: “Having set guidelines, a good team community and coaches who push and challenge the team as a whole and individually.”</p>
<p>Teacher & Coach: “Written expectations for coaches about fundraising, policies about practice length, vacation practices. Written policies/ expectations for varsity athletes about commitment, standard consequences of missed games or practices. Support from Athletic director for head coaches developing policies and punishments for missed game/ practices.”</p>

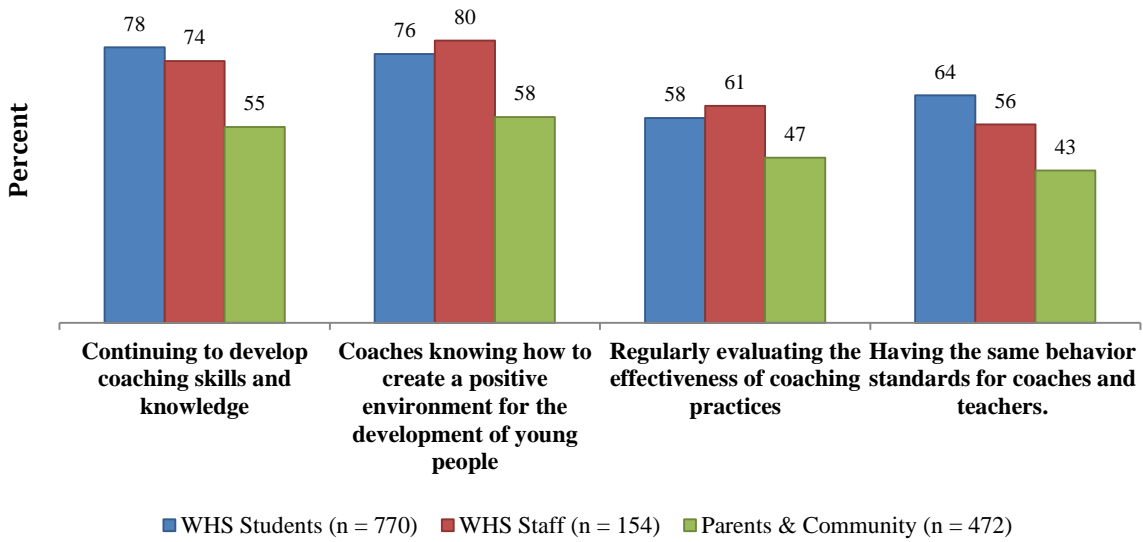


Figure 15. Percentage of participants who responded *very important* or *pretty important* to survey questions related to the perceived importance the coaches and athletic director at Wayland High School attach to each cultural element (N = 1396).

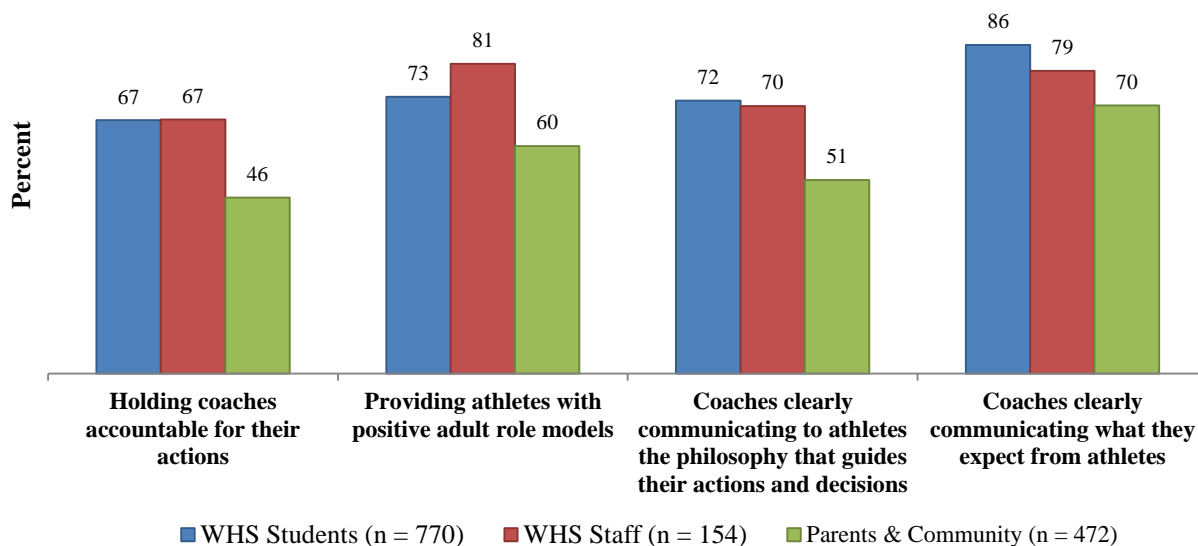


Figure 16. Percentage of participants who responded *very important* or *pretty important* to survey questions related to the perceived importance the coaches and athletic director at Wayland High School attach to each cultural element ($N = 1396$).

Table 9

Percentage of Respondents Rating Coaching Effectiveness as *Pretty Important* or *Very Important* to Members of the Athletics Department

Question	Student-Athletes (n = 637)	Coaches (n = 41)	Staff (n = 112)	Parents of Current Student-Athletes (n = 187)
Coaches clearly communicating what they expect from athletes	87%	91%	74%	69%
Coaches knowing how to create a positive environment for the development of young people	76%	94%	73%	58%
Coaches clearly communicating the philosophy that guides their actions and decisions	73%	91%	54%	46%
Holding coaches accountable for their actions	67%	74%	63%	43%
Having the same behavior standards for coaches and teachers	65%	76%	47%	41%
Regularly evaluating the effectiveness of coaching practices	57%	62%	61%	39%

Recommendations

Prompted by a request from Superintendent Stein and Principal Mizoguchi, Northeastern University's Center for the Study of Sport in Society conducted a study of the culture of athletics at Wayland High School. The Center for the Study of Sport in Society was charged with:

1. Comparing perceived elements of the current athletics culture with evidence-based characteristics of a positive, athlete-centered high school athletics program
2. Identifying areas of strength and areas where improvement is needed; and
3. Presenting recommendations for improvement.

It is recommended that Wayland High School implement the following strategies to support a culture in which its sport participants can thrive.

1. Create a student-athlete advisory committee for athletics that is charged with providing feedback and insight into issues, rules, regulations, and policies that affect the experiences of student-athletes. The makeup of the committee should reflect the various stakeholders associated with Wayland High School athletics. The student-athlete advisory committee would promote opportunities for service and active student learning, while serving as a vehicle for continued positive and productive communication between student-athletes, staff, the administration and the community.
2. Identify web content related to the mission and values of the athletics department. Revise and/or develop an athletics mission, purpose, and statement of core values that is in alignment with the student-centered Wayland High School Mission and the Wayland Public Schools core values. Disseminate this information to all coaches and meet with them to discuss and reflect on their role in fulfilling the mission.
3. Expand opportunities for participation in sport and physical activity beyond traditional high school sport offerings. Consider creating opportunities to participate in Unified Sport, increase student-centered intramural and non-traditional sport offerings, and expand access to the school's fitness center.
4. Establish school-wide, evidence-based standards for effective coaching practice and a system of evaluation of coaches that is modeled after the 5-Step Cycle for educator evaluation established by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2015).
5. Expand formal and informal professional development opportunities for coaches that include support for creating a climate in which transferrable life skills are intentionally taught and positive youth development is promoted.

6. Establish or consider revising existing policies and procedures relative to the following areas of concern or confusion identified through this study:
- Practice hours
 - Athletic activities during school vacations or weekends
 - Cut policy
 - Earning a varsity letter
 - Discipline and consequences
 - Missed practices
 - Uniform tracking
 - Academic standards
 - Field use, prioritization
 - Process for prioritizing equipment purchases
 - Weight room/fitness facility use
 - User fee determination
 - Vetting and monitoring volunteer coaches
 - Former students use of weight facilities and participation in sport training (e.g., CORI, monitoring)
 - Monitoring system for CORI and background requirements for all adults associated with the program