BACKGROUND

What are SEL Kernels?
SEL Kernels are strategies used by effective prevention programs that have been shown to effect specific behavior changes. These SEL Kernels, or kernels of practice, represent a smaller scale, personalized approach to SEL, and ultimately aim to provide educators and other adults with a menu of needs and preference-based strategies that are quick, low lift, and easily integrated into team practice.

Where did these SEL Kernels come from?
Drawing from a content analysis of 25 leading SEL curricula, we pulled strategies and practices commonly existing across programs and developed these further to fit the Kernels model. While comprehensive, packaged curricula/programs are currently the most common approach to building social and emotional skills, this type of high burden approach is not always feasible for all schools or organizations. Our team is looking to test a new approach to building SEL, breaking down programs into individual activities and strategies that are feasible for educators and other adults to implement given common constraints of time, resources, and energy.
TIPS FOR SUCCESS
*Note: These are general tips for high quality instruction for all Kernels and can be applied when relevant.

INSTRUCTION...

Model behaviors, procedures, strategies, and language. Demonstrate thought processes and appropriate responses in a variety of situations and settings.

Use clear, simple language to explain the purpose for rules and expectations.

Incorporate youth interests into activities and examples.

Include information in instructions that answers the following questions:
- How much do I need to do?
- What exactly do I need to do?
- When do I need to do it?
- What is the reason for doing it?

Contextualize activities by explicitly connecting new concepts to previous learnings and activities in children’s daily lives:
- Ask youth to brainstorm what they already know about a topic.
- Use activities that are relevant to children’s cultural experiences.

SETTING...

Establish a positive team culture characterized by support, safety, belonging and respect where all participants are valued as decisionmakers:
- Engage all youth athletes in co-creating and setting positive norms, rules and routines for practices and games and work with them to consistently reinforce the structure.
- Ensure all youth are included, with equitable access to activities, being sensitive to different learning styles.

Incorporate teamwork into activities to provide opportunities for peer modeling and use of comprehension clues:
- Prepare young athletes for teamwork by role-playing appropriate behaviors.
- Assign partners with specific tasks, and pair youth who struggle with partners who can model positive prosocial and communication skills.
YOUNG ATHLETE RESPONSE...

Provide children with options to demonstrate their learning. Offer a variety of methods for youth to receive and express information:

- Allow flexible scheduling for youth who need more time to complete tasks, practice, etc.
- Ensure all youth are included in activities, being sensitive to different learning styles.
- Allow additional opportunities for questions.
- Encourage and celebrate effort.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY CONNECTION...

Engage with families, schools, and community members whenever possible. Seek opportunities to share what you are working on with parents and other community members:

- Encourage participants to practice skills at home, school, and in the community, and to share with their families and teachers what they are learning and working on.
- Connect with parents, teachers, or other coaches to collaborate and connect learning, or to share ideas, resources, and activities.
THE BIG IDEA
Learning how to work together in order to reach goals is important in building our People Powers. If we work together to reach goals, we can celebrate successes together and build a stronger and more cooperative community for all of us.

WHY DO THIS?
IF WE understand the actions and behaviors that help us connect with one another...
THEN WE can use these actions effectively...
SO WE will have a strong and cooperative community for all.

MATERIALS:
• Poster Paper (optional).

INSTRUCTIONS:
1. Start by saying THE BIG IDEA.
2. Depending on the age of the youth, time or year, and overall tenor of your team, set team goals that allow everyone to contribute and celebrate. Set short-term goals for mini-celebrations and longer-term goals for bigger celebrations. Examples include following directions, learning a new skill, demonstrating effort, winning a game, completing the season, etc.
3. Short-term goals can be set in a way that will allow youth to celebrate as much as once per day to once a week, while the time period for longer-term goals can be anywhere from once a month to the end of the season.
4. Use any system that works for you to keep track of positive behaviors – points, stars, marbles in a jar, etc. Let athletes know that once they have earned the points, the points will not be taken away.
5. Celebrations should be non-material and fun! Brainstorm ideas with your kids and let the team vote on what they want to do for these. Giving youth a choice will increase their motivation and excitement! Examples include pizza party, having a team picnic, etc.

MUST DO: Give children tangible tools to work through conflict.
CAN ADAPT: Celebrations.
AFTER THE ACTIVITY, DEBRIEF:
• Are you excited to reach our team goals?
• When are some other times you need to work with a team to reach a goal?
• Do professional athletes work together to reach goals? Do you think it takes teamwork for them to win games? Do they celebrate together?
• Is it easy to work together as a team? Why or why not?

ADAPTATIONS:
• Youth might forget the goal they’re working towards. Remind them during practice as needed.
• Use the team’s favorite Kernels as celebration activities!
• Use this strategy for individual athletes who may be struggling to achieve certain goals—set a list of potential individual celebrations that can be used to celebrate reaching personal goals.
• Brainstorm a reward that doesn’t go to the team but serves others instead!
• Get creative with what you celebrate: being inclusive, considering diverse perspectives, helping each other learn new skills.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS:
• For those who might need extra time, give them more time prior to the activity to think of potential team goals.