

The First Principle of Becoming a Scholar-Baller®: Self-Identity

Identity is something that every individual should pride himself or herself on. This is an extremely important concept as it relates to being a student-athlete. Most student-athletes take pride in who they are and what they stand for as an athlete. The challenge that many institutions have is getting their student-athletes to equally value their identity as “student” and identity as “athlete.” While the majority of student-athletes have the appropriate perspective that their livelihood and well being after high school and college will most likely not be as a professional in their sport, some student-athletes view athletics and becoming a professional athlete as their ticket to a life of wealth and fortune. As a result, they place a much greater emphasis on the athlete identity. If the student-athlete comes from an environment where education is not a priority, they go to a college or university on an athletic scholarship and their focus tends to be less on academics and more on athletics. This is a direct result of not being able to identify with the importance of academics and athletics as one entity, therefore causing the student-athlete to not equally develop both aspects of their identity.

The goal of **the self-identity principle** is to create a consciousness and awareness of this multilayered identity and educate students about the stereotype threat processes that can be associated with certain identities and that can work against them fulfilling their promise. Getting students to engage in self-exploration through visualizations, collaborative learning activities and Scholar Baller® workbook exercises accomplishes these goals. There are three major themes: personal identity, and social identity, and values clarification. These themes will evolve through the self-exploration exercises used to assist the student with seeing how they identify themselves, being an athlete or a more rounded individual, as well as assisting the student to create a stronger sense of self. One lesson will also address the incorrect assumptions that stereotypes like the “dumb jock” create, and will carefully explain the process of stereotype threat using the educational approach described in Johns et al. (2005).

Finally, students will critically assess their own balancing act of being a student and an athlete and will be exposed to new strategies for managing the balancing act. This will give the student-athlete the ability to view academics and athletics as one, and also give them the ability to identify and distinguish the importance of the two equally. For example, student-athletes will have a sense of self-worth because they will know the importance of education and all that it has to offer. By going through the self-identity principle, future Scholar-Ballers® will be given the necessary tools needed to have a strong sense of self and the ability to dream.

1. Defining “Self-Identity”

An awareness of one’s self – internally and as seen by others, is the critical learning point of this principle. Beyond awareness, consciously shaping or reshaping one’s self concept is required. To these ends, the concepts must be developed in many contexts, and over different times and settings. The following are ideas to infuse into the curriculum where appropriate.

- **List and categorize things that would be good character traits of individuals that are considered to have positive self-identity.** Positive self-identity can be explained verbally or written. It can be formal or informal. It can be displayed or seen in one’s school environment or organizational setting. Ask student-athletes to give examples of individuals that they believe are considered to have positive self-identity.
- **Draw distinctions.** “What is self?” “What is identity?” “What is having “positive self-identity?” How do you distinguish having or not having positive self-identity?
- **Define context.** Ask student-athletes to get into a few small groups. Have a couple of these groups create images of athletes or entertainers that they believe have a positive sense of self. Have the other groups of student-athletes create images of educators that they believe have a positive sense of self. Have them compare and contrast the two different types of images.

2. Teaching Positive Self-Identity

Student-athletes are more likely to learn skills that are modeled or supported by the adults in their lives. The adult must not only use the skill consistently, but also help the student-athlete notice when others, including the student-athlete display the skills. For example, coaches are usually very influential in an athlete’s life. Most athletes on every level tend to value a coach’s opinion of his or her ability. Therefore, a coach that has a positive coaching staff or has a positive sense of self will usually have good positive relationships with his or her athletes, which in turn gives the athlete a positive sense of self. Here are some ways adults can help promote a positive self-image for student-athletes.

- **Try to promote positive attitudes.** By promoting positive attitudes whenever possible, student-athletes always have a strong sense of identity. It creates an environment that is positive and confidence levels will be raised.
- **Post phrases and images of positive role models.** If student-athletes can see or hear positive messages from individuals that they admire or look up to

consistently, they definitely will have a better understanding of positive self-identity.

- **Try to engage in positive dialogue with student-athlete.** It is always a good idea to talk with student-athletes to get a better understanding of his or her personality. By doing this, it allows you the opportunity to learn whether or not he or she has a positive self-identity.
- **Meet and Greet student-athletes and staff by name.** One way to promote an environment that allows individuals to feel a sense of belonging is the daily ritual of meeting and greeting practiced by every coach and staff member on the team. Coaches should engage in positive dialogue with student-athletes in the weight room, in team meetings, on campus, on the football field, and during study hall. Campus administrators and teachers should do the same. This gives student-athletes the feeling that they are a part of something and therefore will give them the boost of confidence needed to have positive self-identity.

3. Teaching Self-Identity by Using Symbolic Methods

Beyond an abstract definition, student-athletes need to learn what it means to have a positive self-identity in a social context. Seeing images of athletes that are viewed in society as having positive self-identity should help student-athletes to learn how to apply themselves positively in their own relationships.

- **Image investigation.** Have student-athletes investigate different athletes within their respective sports. Have them do a character analysis of these athletes and rate their images.
- **Brainstorming.** Hold a brainstorming session or formal discussion on how having a positive self-identity may have given an athlete an opportunity to affect his or her environment.
- **Use the Socratic methods to help students understand what it means to actually have a positive self-identity.** For example, cite a current event (i.e. Maurice Clarett underclassmen early draft entry, Barry Bonds steroid scandal, Mark McGuire plea of no contest to steroid use). Decide whether these incidences promoted positive self-identity for athletes involved. Discuss incidents with student-athletes and get feedback.

4. Teach by Live Models

Live models, together with labeling, teach student-athletes how to promote positive self-identity.

- **Use positive quotes from industry that promote positive self-identity.** Dhani Jones quoted, "Football is not Who I Am, It's just something that I Do!" Nas, "I Know I Can.....Be What I Wanna Be.....If I work Hard at It!!!!!! Be What I Wanna Be!!!!!!!!!"
- **Notice not only results but also the effort or work that student-athletes have shown toward changing their identity.**
- **Notice the absence of undesirable behavior as well as the presence of desirable traits.**

5. Teach by Monitoring and Self-Monitoring Results

- **Have student-athletes create ways of collecting and graphing data.** This will allow student-athletes an opportunity to monitor their progress in creating a new self-identity.

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Principle I – Self Identity and Social Identity

Lesson 1.1: Who Am I?

Objectives

Student-athlete will:

- a. Analyze the concept of self-identity and discuss the multilayered facets that create who we are in society.

Materials

Facilitator:

- A whiteboard or overhead

Student-Athlete:

- Scholar Baller® workbook and pen or pencil

Introduction

Today, we are beginning a series of discussions. A group of former football student-athletes came together several years ago and formed an organization called Scholar Baller®. They were concerned with making sure that student-athletes are well-balanced human beings who make the most of their opportunities educationally; developing life skills and graduating, while being the best athletes they can be. During these conversations, we will be covering topics that focus on some of the following:

- Your identity
- Your competitive spirit
- Your personal life mission on this earth
- Decision-making

We are going to begin these conversations by focusing on a very critical element of our existence as a human being on this planet and as a player on your team: YOUR IDENTITY!

1. As a member of the _____ team, what identifies you as being a member of this team? (uniform, colors, commitment, amongst other things)

Describe some other teams that you belong to (their family, any clubs or organizations, church groups, etc.)

What identifies you as being a part of these other groups?

2. Today, we are going to begin this process by doing some self-exploration. We are going to connect with our own personal perception of self. Today, we will discuss self-identity and how we become who we are?

Let's think for a minute about 'others' perceptions of us. If the person who raised you was standing here today, how would he or she describe the person you are? (SB Workbook)

- Take a second and think of how your peers in class perceive you?
- How do your teammates perceive you?
- How does your family perceive you?
- How do your friends perceive you? (After each question give student-athlete 30 seconds to respond to each question in their Scholar Baller® workbook, page 1).

How are these perceptions about you created? (Allow for some conversations among the group)

3. What do you think is the difference between social identity and self-identity? Are they the same (allow for some class discussion, have SA come together and define both using specific words, when the class comes up with an answer they all agree on write it on the white board).

Visualization exercise: Turn the lights off. Ask the student-athlete to picture themselves at home, alone in their rooms. It is late at night, but they can't sleep. Picture yourself lying there...alone...look at yourself. Who is the person you see? Don't think about the clothes you are wearing, whether or not you drive a car or whether or not you have a girlfriend/boyfriend...Just look at the young man/woman you see lying there. Who is (s)he? NOT who does (s)he portray himself/herself to be, NOT who (s)he wants to be... who is (s)he TODAY, at this MOMENT?

4. Ask the student-athletes to reflect on the vision they just observed. Ask them to answer the questions in their Scholar Baller® workbook, page 1.
 - a) Write down your feelings about the young man/woman you just observed in your visualization exercise. In the workbook exercise decide whether or not you are content with the person you observed.
 - b) What are the best three attributes of the young man/woman you observed, or the best three things you like about him/her.

- c) List three things that you would like to change about the young man/woman you observed.
- d) List five words to describe overall, the young man/woman you saw.

Allow for 10 minutes individual work

5) Ask the student-athlete to get into groups of four. Write this question on the board. 'What makes you who you are?' (If the group seems to struggle with this question, prompt them by asking them: Who or what has shaped you? Who or what influences have affected your life? What events have affected your life?) Ask the student-athletes in each group to discuss amongst themselves. (Allow for 3 minutes discussion time)

- Call attention back to the front of the room. Ask student-athletes to discuss out loud what general ideas they discussed in their group (5 minutes).

**Jot down notes of the major themes.

6) Take a moment and think to yourself, are you a different person when you interact with friends, family, schoolmates and teammates. How are you different? EX: Do you use different language (i.e. would you use street slang with your parents or older family members, would you use cuss words when talking with them?) Probably not, but would you with your friend? Or teammates? Probably so...WHY? What is the difference? Which one is the 'real you' (discuss)

CRITICAL LEARNING POINT

As you and other student-athletes seek to maximize your human potential in all areas of your life, the most important thing you can be in tune with is who you are; *who you really are*. Not who you WANT to be, who you HOPE to be, or even who you CAN be, but who you are today. Being real about the person you are today allows you to be real about what it takes to become the person, scholar and athlete you want to be!

Scholar-Baller
Principle I: Self-Identity and Social Identity

Lesson 1.1: Who Am I?

1. **If the person who raised you was standing here today, how would he or she describe the person you are?**

How do you think your peers in class perceive you?

How do your teammates perceive you?

How does your family perceive you?

How do your friends perceive you?

2. **Write down your feelings about the young man/woman you just observed in your visualization exercise.**

What are the best three attributes of the young man/woman you observed?

List three things that you would like to change about the young man/woman you observed.

List five words to describe the young man/woman that you observed.

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Principle I – Self Identity and Social Identity

Lesson 1.2: Definition of Personal Identity

Objectives

Student-athlete will:

- a. Discuss the aspects of personal identity
- b. Gain insight into their own self (personal) identity and how social identity impacts their life

Materials

Facilitator:

- A whiteboard or overhead

Student-Athlete:

- Scholar Baller® workbook and pen or pencil

Introduction

Have student-athletes discuss if they believe people create their own destiny or if they just get lucky in life.

- Put this list on white board / overhead:

Michael Jordan, P. Diddy, Bill Gates, and Barry Sanders, Dhani Jones.

Did these individuals “get lucky” by achieving the success and status they have or did they “create” the outcomes they are experiencing?

Lesson

- 1) Ask entire group: How does Who you are affect your life? In the visualization exercise and the questions you examined afterwards (the things you liked, and the things you think needed to improve) – how does who you are, affect how you life your life? (Allow for volunteers to answer).

- 2) Let's use a couple of highly recognizable 'Old School' athletes to dig a little deeper into the question. There are numerous stories about young men who had some athletic talent, who were told they were too small or too slow, to be a high achiever in their sport. Can you think of any stories like this? (Allow for anyone in the group to name).
- Barry Sanders, an NFL Hall of Fame inductee and one of the top five rushers of all time in the NFL, had no scholarship offers until the week of signing day.
 - Michael Jordan was cut from his high school basketball team twice.

Because of who these student-athletes were as human beings, they did not allow these temporary setbacks to keep them from accomplishing their goals, and ultimately becoming 'legends' in their sports. How did they see themselves? What was their SELF IDENTITY like? Did they listen to others when they were being told they were too small or too short? Where did they find the drive and perseverance to become the best?

Write 'Identity' on the board and have them brainstorm what the definition is; put the classroom definition on the board.

Think about and respond to this question in your workbook, page 2: **How does 'knowing who you are' affect your life?** (It doesn't have to be just the good stuff either)

**Allow for 4 to 5 minutes of reflection and journaling.*

- 3) Your personal identity is the set of characteristics and values that you have embraced in your personal life. This is how you see yourself on both the outside and the inside. It is the picture you saw during the visualization exercise to begin the first session.

Who you are – becomes what you do. It is very important at the beginning of this journey that you are honest with yourself about who you are. If you are a leader, you will lead... If you are a follower you will follow.

- 4) What do you know about Barry Sanders?
- He didn't play running back until he was a senior in high school
 - He didn't have a scholarship offer until signing day
 - He didn't start at OSU until his junior year
 - How does a guy with these circumstances become an ALL NFL player, one who goes to the Pro Bowl EVERY year he is in the NFL, and then one who retires within a season of becoming the all-time NFL leading rusher?

It is all about the man, the human being he is and how he SEES HIMSELF!

- 5) Ask for volunteers to stand up in front of the group and describe 'who they are' to the group.

Now in your Scholar Baller® workbook, page 2, write five words that you would 'like' to use to describe yourself, they cannot be any of the other ones you have already written. Take a few minutes more and look at your three lists, the first one that describes you the second one that your family would use and now the last one that you would like to describe yourself. How close are they...are you heading in the right direction of who you are to become?

Closing

- Ask the group to make a commitment to reflect on who they are at the end of each day.
- Think about all the different hats you wear throughout the day. Who are you? Are you a student, an athlete, as son, a daughter, a brother or a sister? Are you a leader? How do your actions plan your path? How does your decision making ability form the type of person you want to be and will become?

CRITICAL LEARNING POINT

Your self-perception and personal identity are critical in dictating your future. We are telling you today that this could be the single most powerful thing you can do – be in touch with your personal concept of self and what you can accomplish!

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Principle I: Self-Identity and Social Identity

Lesson 1.2: Definition of Personal Identity

1. How does “knowing who you are” affect your life?

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