

SUMMARY REPORT

“MORE THAN A GAME:” LONGITUDINAL EFFECTS OF THE FIRST TEE LIFE SKILLS PROGRAMS ON POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT—YEAR 4

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Introduction

Four years ago, we began a research project to determine the impact of The First Tee life skills programs on positive youth development. In Year 1 (2005), we interviewed 95 youth participants about which life skills are learned, how they are taught, and how they are transferred to other domains. Over 90% of youth showed ability to transfer life skills learned in the golf context to other important domains (e.g., school, home). This evidence was corroborated through interviews with parents and coaches.

In Year 2 (2006), we assessed retention of life skills through interviews with a sub-sample of 20 youth from the 95 interviewed in Year 1. Analysis revealed that 90% provided evidence of retaining transfer of life skills learned in The First Tee. Domains in which life skills were used and life skill strategies (e.g., *Goal Ladder*) were consistently named over time. A second main finding showed that youth in The First Tee ($n=533$) compared favorably to youth in other activities ($n=159$) on most dimensions characterizing life skills transfer, general life skills, and developmental outcomes (*Nine Core Values*).

In Year 3 (2007), interviews with 18 of the 20 interviewees from Year 2 revealed that 89% of youth successfully demonstrated life skills transfer, and domains and themes for using life skills were consistent over time. Analysis using survey methods with 303 of the 533 youth from Year

2 revealed stable and relatively high scores on life skills transfer, general life skills, and developmental outcomes over time.

In Year 4 (2008), we analyzed four years of interview data and three years of survey data to assess youths' sustained ability to transfer life skills and demonstrate positive qualities. Our three purposes were to: (1) determine participation retention rates and predictors of active/inactive status in The First Tee, (2) assess retention of life skills and developmental outcomes over three years using quantitative ratings, and (3) assess retention of life skills over four years using in-depth interviews.

How Did We Conduct the Study in Year 4?

For purpose 1, we documented participation status (active/inactive) and predictors of continued or discontinued participation. For purpose 2, we surveyed 235 of the 303 youth (ages 11-20) from Year 3. These youth were assessed for trends in life skills and developmental outcomes over three years. For purpose 3, we conducted interviews with all 18 participants (ages 14-20) from Year 3 to determine trends in using life skills over the four-year span.

What Did We Find?

Purpose 1: Participation Retention Rates

- Of the 303 participants in Year 3, 221 are still involved as students or mentors for a 72.9% retention rate. This return rate is excellent given the numerous activities available to youth.
- Of the 82 youth (27.1%) no longer in The First Tee, just over half reported discontinuing because of doing other sports or activities, logistical constraints, and college or job commitments. These reasons characterize developmental trends of broadening activity opportunities and transitioning into adulthood.
- Over half (57%) of those youth no longer in The First Tee still play golf and over half (55%) participate in a variety of other sports. Remaining physically active is a sign of healthy youth development.
- Active participants scored higher on enjoyment of experiences, confidence in golf ability, and social support by coaches and friends. These findings are associated with coaching strategies to maximize participation motivation.

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Purpose 2: Retention of Life Skills and Developmental Outcomes Using Survey Ratings

Life Skills Transfer

- Trends revealed *stable scores* for managing emotions, goal setting, and resolving conflicts (Figure 1). Youth were able to maintain their ability to transfer these life skills to other domains, such as staying positive when frustrated with homework, setting goals for getting better grades, and working through arguments with a friend.
- Trends revealed *increasing scores* for meeting and greeting and appreciating diversity (Figure 2). Youth continued to improve their ability to transfer these life skills, such as starting a conversation with a new person and respecting people who are different from them.
- Trends revealed *decreasing scores* for making healthy choices, helping others, and getting help from others (Figure 3). These findings mean that youth do not view The First Tee as the *main source* for transferring such behaviors as being active everyday, being a role model, and seeking others for encouragement.
 - Because of the relatively lower scores on making healthy choices, suggestions are provided, such as teaching youth to chart daily water intake, sleep, and physical activity levels, as well as positive role modeling by coaches and parents.
 - Scores for helping others and getting help from others were relatively high despite a downward trend, so it is probable that youth learn about the importance of being a good citizen and seeking social support in challenging times from parents, teachers, coaches, community leaders, politicians, *and* The First Tee.

Figure 1. Life Skills Transfer, I.

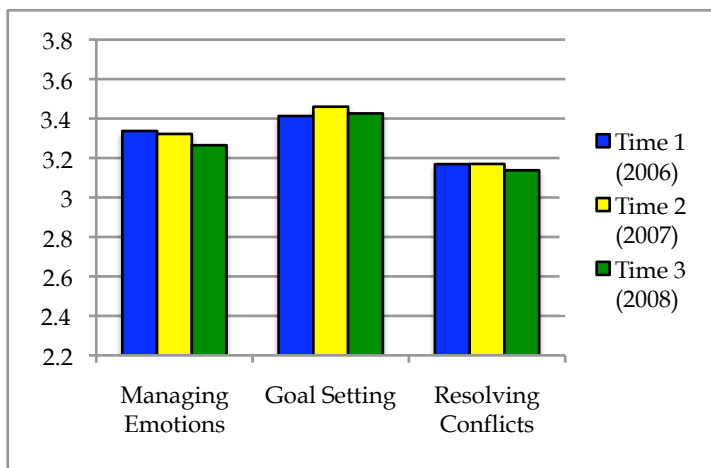
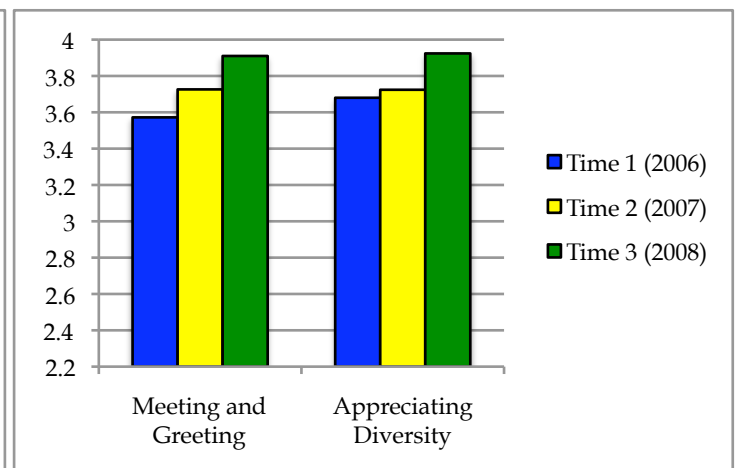


Figure 2. Life Skills Transfer, II.



“I kind of struggled with math this year, but I kind of used some of the life skills to stay positive...like on a couple of tests I didn’t do as well as I would have liked to and the 4Rs...it’s relax, replay, ready, redo, so you kind of just relax, just calm down after the test, I replay what happened, so what happened with the test, did I study like I wanted to or did I review all the questions, read the directions...I get ready, study for the next test or do my homework like I need to, then I redo.”

(15-year-old boy)

Figure 3. Life Skills Transfer, III.

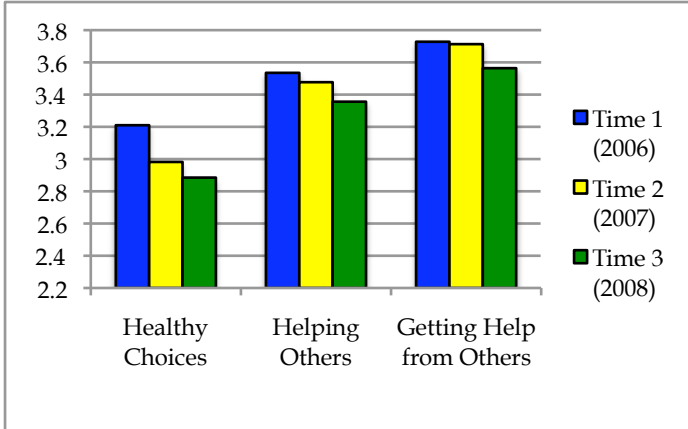
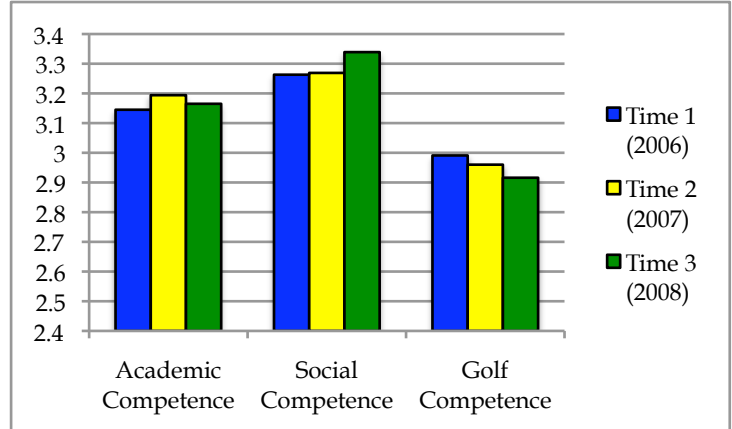


Figure 4. Confidence



General Life Skills

- Youth were also assessed on their general life skills usage in the activity context. Three-year trends revealed:
 - relatively stable scores for goal setting, initiative, emotional regulation, prosocial norms, group process skills, and adult networks, and
 - increasing scores for diverse peer relationships and positive relationships.
- Youth continue to learn and improve skills in The First Tee context such as problem solving, managing time, controlling one's temper, making friends with diverse peers, working well with others, and improving relationships with family and community.

Developmental Outcomes

- Three-year trends revealed relatively stable scores for confidence (academic, social, golf) (Figure 4), respect, and responsibility (Figure 5). These findings mean that youth continue to believe that they can successfully perform schoolwork, get along with peers, and do well at golf skills. They also continue to show respect toward others and self, do the right thing, and exhibit self- and other-responsibility.
- Three-year trends also show decreasing scores for honesty (Figure 5), self-efficacy to resist peer pressure, and self-regulated learning (judgment) (Figure 6). These findings mean that youth do not view The First Tee as the main source for learning honesty about effort and rules and reflect lower confidence in resisting peer pressure and implementing self-regulation skills.
 - As kids get older they may encounter more peer-pressuring situations (e.g., to smoke, do drugs) and feel less confident about their ability to say no. An emphasis on *how* to say no may be beneficial.
 - Also, academic demands tend to increase with age, so kids may feel less confident in finishing their schoolwork. An emphasis on life skill strategies to encourage better self-regulation skills may be beneficial.

Figure 5. Character

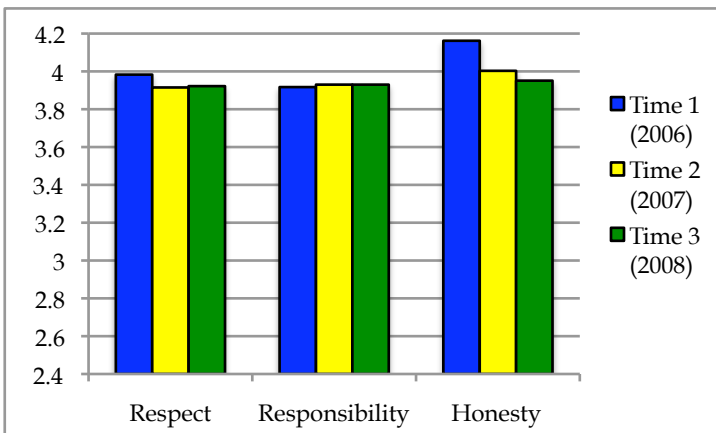
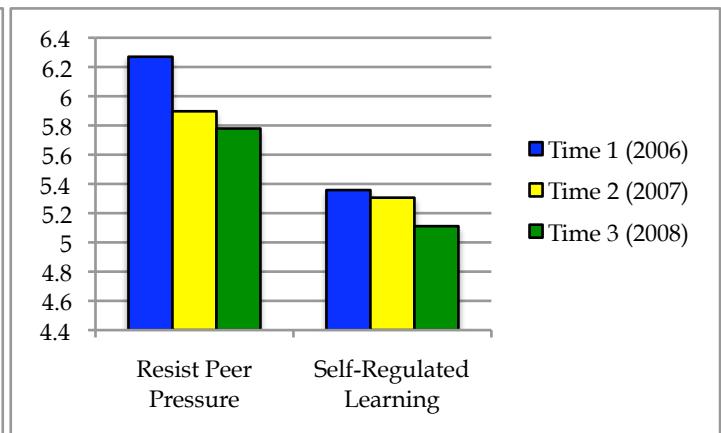


Figure 6. Judgment



Purpose 3: Retention of Life Skills Using In-Depth Interviews

- Fourteen of 18 interviewees (78%) were convincing through examples and stories of retaining ability to transfer life skills to domains and situations involving school, family, friends, sports, jobs, college, career, and out-of-school-time activities. The other four interviewees attributed their life skills learning more to their parents rather than The First Tee.
- For life skills domains (Table 1), school was unanimously named all 4 years, while fluctuations were observed for other contexts. The job/college/career domain showed an increase followed by stabilization over 4 years. Both family and sports teams decreased, while friends and out-of-school-time-activities increased. These changes reflect developmental needs, interests, and aspirations characteristic of adolescence and emerging adulthood.
- Themes for life skills were also retained over 4 years, including *STAR* and *4Rs* for managing emotions, *Goal Ladder* for setting reachable and positive goals, *STAR* and staying positive for overcoming challenges, and compromising and being a good listener for resolving conflicts. These are memorable strategies that facilitate transfer of life skills to relevant domains.

Table 1. Life Skills Domains
(percent of interviewees naming each domain)

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
School	100%	100%	100%	100%
Job/College	35%	55%	67%	61%
Family	85%	75%	50%	33%
Friends	60%	65%	50%	78%
Sports	70%	75%	61%	39%
Activities	30%	25%	50%	56%

Conclusion

- Our 4-year findings demonstrate longitudinal, data-based evidence for the effectiveness of The First Tee life skills programs. Through interview and survey responses, youth provided converging evidence that they transfer life skills to multiple domains, learn and use life skills in the golf context, and demonstrate desirable qualities defined by the *Nine Core Values*, such as confidence, character, and judgment over time.
- Because our evaluation research is one of the only ones to our knowledge with a sport-based youth development program, findings suggest that *The First Tee Life Skills Experience* and *The First Tee Coach* could be used as exemplary curricular and coach education programs for other youth organizations whose mission is also to foster positive youth development.

“I don’t think I go a day without being thankful for the values I’ve learned in The First Tee. The transition to college was seamless because I’m already used to so many different things...each time it’s been a week in a dorm...and each week it’s just a new set of people. I’m used to not having a reputation right off the bat and just basically starting from scratch. The comfort level when I first came here [college], I really have to give that to The First Tee ‘cause they kinda branched me out of my shell and just, you know, made it so it’s easier.”

(18-year-old boy)