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## [Q: What Are Some Good Ideas Related to Meeting the Needs of At-Risk Student-Athletes?](#)

A: Student-athletes who are 'at-risk' academically need to be surrounded with an academic support system that (a) provides more structure to study time and academic preparation, (b) enables closer oversight of academic responsibilities and achievements in order to catch problems early and reward successes, (c) provides assessments that may identify underlying learning disabilities or learning skill challenges and (d) surrounds the student-athlete with positive people who are confident in their ability to succeed in the classroom. Following are practices that address these needs:

1. **Early Tests of Learning Skills.** High school GPAs and SAT scores should be examined to determine whether students are entering the program at academic risk. This group of potentially at-risk student-athletes should be tested for learning disabilities and basic reading and writing skills.
2. **Team Academic Coach.** If a team has a high number of at-risk students and the team is small enough, consideration should be given to assigning an academic support staff member to the entire team. The Academic coach will then have the option of coordinating team-wide solutions (study halls customized to match up to team practice and competitive schedules, study halls on the road, etc.) that are difficult to implement with larger squads. This practice also minimizes the labeling of individuals as "at risk" and increase the prospect of academic success for all athletes on the team.
3. **Study Hall Time.** Consider moving study hall to immediately prior to team practice instead of after practice when student-athletes are both tired and hungry.
4. **Using Sport Participation as an Incentive.** Coaches should consider implementing a team rule such as "we don't miss class, we don't miss study hall and we don't miss practice" with loss of playing time as a penalty. If such a rule is enforced early in every athlete's career, the desired result is quickly realized because the athlete knows the coach is serious about the importance of all of these expectations and implementation of the penalty usually comes early in the season when game results aren't as critical.
5. **Reporting Grades.** Consider having every team member bring every graded quiz, test and report to his or her academic counselor upon receipt and having tutors and academic counselors communicate achievements to coaches immediately in order to permit them to instantly comment

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on and reward performance. This practice creates a team culture of pride in academic achievement and acknowledgement of success as well as enabling early detection and remediation of deficiencies.

6. **Assign Mature Tutors.** Consider assigning the highest quality tutors to work with the same at-risk athlete(s) year around in order to establish strong student/tutor relationships and tutor knowledge of learning and studying patterns.
7. **Review of Class Notes.** Consider requiring tutors to begin every tutoring session by reviewing the athlete's class notes and discussing what the student retained from his or her last class session. This review often provides critical insights on both information retention and understanding of material.

-- Prepared by Donna Lopiano, SMR President

Topics

[Academic Issues](#)

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