

Character-based activity programs benefit students

Student athletes have better test scores, fewer discipline problems, studies suggest

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Athletic and activity programs for youth and young adults that focus on developing positive character traits are more likely to produce students with higher grades than non-participants.

Research shows that student athletes score higher on standardized tests and have fewer discipline problems at school.

These traits, such as responsibility, fairness, trustworthiness, accountability, dedication, work ethic, sportsmanship, teamwork, treating others with respect, never quitting, goal setting, commitment and holding oneself to high standards of behavior, effort and attitude are the same values, attitudes and approaches that help young people find success in the classroom, at work or later in life.

Positive character is not an automatic outcome of participation in a sport or activity, but requires an intentional approach. Coaches and advisors can help develop our young people into respectful, hardworking, goal oriented citizens that are the leaders in the school and future leaders in the community.

Be it the football coach, band director or forensics advisor, positive adult role models who hold high expectations for the participant's behavior on and off the field or stage can not only make a positive impact on the life of a young person but can infuse positive change on the school climate.

On the court, teams of character consistently display sportsmanship, respect for others, accountability for their actions, poise, and modesty in victory and humility in defeat. Off the court, teams of character display service to others, team work, leadership, role modeling and responsibility.

For schools, the bottom line is that students who participate in programs focused on positive character do much better academically. One report from a school with a character-based athletic program showed that more 72 percent of their athletes received a 3.0 GPA or above, while the percentage of non-athletes achieving the same standard was 52 percent.

Attending a contest at the home gym of a program of character is also a pleasant departure from the ordinary. Rather than the constant chirping of coaches and fans complaining about the official's calls that didn't go their team's way or the student section bent on getting under the

skin of the opponents players, you will find a true example of school spirit, a focus on cheering positively for the home team.

Perhaps even more amaz-

ing is witnessing home fans applauding for a great play made by the visiting team, players showing respect for their opponents, and coaches displaying rapport in their in-

terchange with the referees.

Certainly, the biggest wins for young adults are related to the successes that are long lasting and aren't related to the scoreboard.

