



“Do Sports Really Matter?”

By Dr. George A. Selleck

EduSports Blue Paper for Schools & Parents

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I wish to make a passionate plea to parents and teachers who believe that schooling is the alpha and omega of a child's life. Often, schools have convinced students and parents that a child's focus must exclusively be centered on academic concerns during every waking hour. There is no question that a quality academic program and experience plays an integral role in the lives of our children.

However, do you as parents and teachers understand the necessity of creating a climate so that children are able to find a sense of balance in their lives? Schooling as it is, should not be the only focus of a child's daily life experience.

Enter play and sports! And the question – Do Sports Really Matter? Research shows that, in addition to it being a source of enjoyment and just plain fun, it also has the power to combat everything from racism to low self-esteem, to assisting kids in the classroom and lowering the school drop-out rate.

Perhaps, before going any further in our discussion, we need to ask another question and a more penetrating question “What are sports all about, anyway?” Are they about determining who the best is? Is it about trophies, champion-ships, scholarships, and successful superstars serving as inspirations for our young athletes? I think not. Between the winning and losing, there is a lot that can be learnt from athletics about the human experience. There is a deep value to be found in sports that goes beyond any scores, or news about dog fighting, game fixing, dope and the unreasonable behavior of some parents, athletes and coaches.

If you haven't seen the movie *We Are Marshall*, well, you should. The flick tells the tale of Jack Lengyel and his arrival as head coach of the Marshall University Thundering Herd football team in the days after a 1970 plane crash that claimed the life of the entire squad. Tasked with rebuilding the gridiron program, Lengyel instead found he was rebuilding the psychological and emotional structure of the entire community that had been torn apart by the tragedy.

Sports has the capacity to change lives and bring people together. I have seen first-hand how people who play sports are exposed to the value of character, integrity, sportsmanship, discipline, learning from adversity and getting back up – things that are

then transferable to other areas of life that have nothing to do with touchdowns or goals or baskets.

Perhaps you seek a more refreshing and satisfying sports experience for yourself and your children and family — one that highlights caring, consideration, and cooperation. I firmly believe that when parents, teachers, coaches and educators carefully examine the values and opportunities that an expanded, balanced, and carefully thought-out sports program offers kids, they will conclude that there is a high potential return on their investment in such programs and activities. I remain convinced and committed to the belief that the major function of sport is to renew the human spirit - a time-out from the trials and tribulations of everyday life and an opportunity to take a break from our daily struggles and challenges and enjoy the experience of connecting with oneself and others.

Being active in youth sports can help build a foundation for cooperative play, teamwork, and good sportsmanship while helping to refine gross motor skills in children's rapidly developing bodies.

My recent activities which include introducing physical education and sport to schools in India, training coaches from Lebanon, Nigeria, Afghanistan, Mozambique, and my own country have deepened my belief in the potential of the sport experience to develop, renew and connect people across the globe. Carefully crafted conversations between parents and kids as well as among teachers, coaches and educators can help kids not just enjoy their time spent chasing a soccer ball or shooting baskets, but also help them gain valuable skills and attitudes that will benefit them throughout their lives. Specifically, well-orchestrated sports can:

- Improve physical fitness and health (i.e., physical activity can lower the risk of developing coronary heart disease, strokes, some cancers and Type 2 diabetes)
- Contribute toward the integration of mind and body
- Positively enhance self-confidence and self-esteem
- Enhance social and cognitive development and academic achievement
- Help learn discipline, teamwork, commitment, sacrifice, coping with skills, perseverance in the pursuit of excellence, and better concentration and listening skills at school and home
- Provide opportunities for learning life lessons (such as how to deal with performance pressures, manage emotions, maximize one's potential, set and follow

through on goals, develop determination and focus, deal with frustration, relate to others, and work together toward common goals)

- Teach kids important life lessons about creating and setting goals, being disciplined, working as a team, management of time, etc.
- Empower kids in sport and in other areas of their lives.
- Develop strong character development (doing the right thing) and integrity
- Help kids develop a broader perspective on sport that allows them to think “outside the box” when it comes to finding ways to enjoy and learn from their sports experiences.
- Promote school and club spirit
- Improved social skills (kids get to know new people, learn how to communicate with others, learn tolerance and respect, learn how to adjust to team/collective objectives such as cooperation and cohesion, and improve their concentration and listening skills)
- Strengthen family bonds by introducing physical activity and sport as something fun to experience together

Do Sports Really Matter? Our answer is an emphatic yes!

About the Author

George A. Selleck, Ph.D, M.Div, M.A., the director of Sports for Life Education Programs and the cofounder of Parents for Good Sports, is a counseling psychologist with more than 35 years of professional expertise. He has successfully integrated his knowledge of human behavior and his experience as an accomplished athlete and coach to become a national sports workshop specialist and recognized author in the field of sports education. He has presented seminars to hundreds of organizations, including the NBA Rookie Transition Program, the American Basketball Coach's Association, the American Football Coach's Association, Anaheim Unified School District, and more. Dr. Selleck is a former CIF Player of the Year and Stanford All-American, and is a member of the Stanford Basketball Hall of Fame. He was twice named the Los Angeles Times High School Coach of the Year.

Dr. Selleck is on the Advisory board of Edusports.

About EduSports

EduSports is India's First and Only Private Initiative providing Integrated Sports Management Services to Schools. We are working with Schools all over the country helping them fulfill the dreams of millions of school going children for High Quality, Holistic Education. EduSports' pioneering "Physical Education and Sports Management Platform", SOARTM, has been designed by a distinguished Advisory Panel comprising leading Sports Personalities, Psychologists, Educationists, and Professionals specifically for the K-12 Schools.

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