

Aligning School Communities Around

WHY WE PLAY

In an effort to align school communities around the purpose of education-based athletic and activity programs, the League's Board of Directors will require local school boards to complete a short training on WHY WE PLAY—Defining the Purpose of Education-Based Athletic and Activity Programs for the 2015-2016 school year. The training must be completed before approving the Minnesota State High School League's Membership Resolution. The intent of this requirement is to assist schools and their communities in aligning around a shared common language, where every stakeholder clearly understands the purpose of education-based athletic and activity programs.

We must provide students with growth that will sustain them beyond physical skill development and the ability to play and win a game. For this to happen, we must align school communities around a deeper purpose.

The purpose of education-based programs is the human growth and development of students who participate and connecting them to caring adults in their learning community. Fewer than 3% of the students who participate in high school athletics will play at the collegiate level and less than 1% will go on to play professionally. This means 97% of the students involved in high school sports will have a terminal experience—they will never again participate in sports at the same organized level in their lifetime. So what are we really giving students if we are only concerned with winning? We must provide students with growth that will sustain them beyond physical skill development and the ability to play and win a game. For this to happen, we must align school communities around a deeper purpose.

WHY WE PLAY is a national initiative, whose intent is to reclaim the educational purpose of sports. Sports in America engage more individuals, families, and

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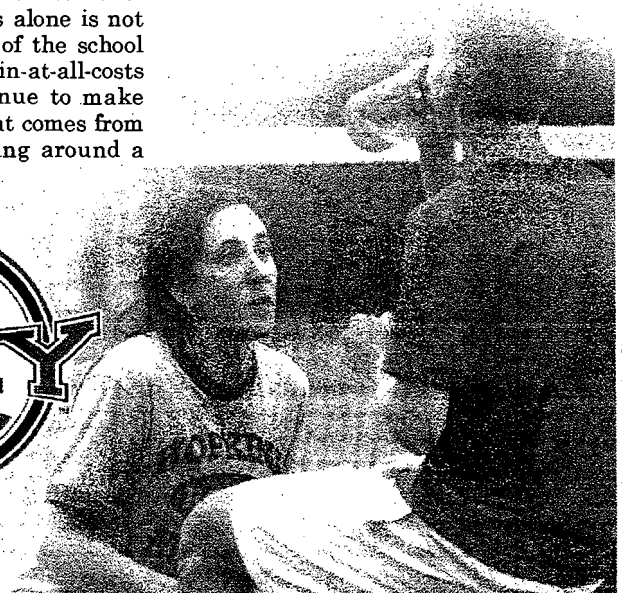
communities in a shared experience than any other cultural activity, organization or religion and have significant perceived value. We value sports because we believe the students who are involved acquire something meaningful through their participation. Sports provide countless teachable moments where core ethical values such as caring, honesty, fairness, responsibility, and respect for self and others can be developed. With that said, one of the great myths in our culture is that participation alone builds and develops this character, as if doing a handstand, running a race, hitting a curveball, or simply suiting up are sufficient to strengthen a young person's moral fiber. Unless a coach teaches and models character and encourages its development in student-athletes, it is more likely organized sports will spoil play and undermine the development of the very character and virtue it claims to build. The potential for the growth and development of character in students only exists if the adults who are in charge of and oversee these experiences are aware of and intentional about this significant role.

Coaches clearly play a significant role in the experience that students have. However, training coaches alone is not enough. Without support of the school community, the current win-at-all-costs sports culture will continue to make winning the only value that comes from participation. This training around a

shared common language will provide an effective response to the demands and pressures of the current win-at-all-cost sports culture.

In an effort to support school leaders around the purpose of education-based programs, the Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA) has endorsed the WHY WE PLAY initiative that clearly defines the purpose of sports in an educational setting. The initiative will provide school boards with the same shared common language that is being delivered to athletic administrators, coaches, parents, officials, and students around the value of these programs.

By providing school boards across the state with brief but dynamic video training that clearly defines the purpose of education-based athletic and activity programs, we will align school communities across the state around a shared purpose. We will also provide support so coaches can function from an education-based mindset instead of a win-at-all-cost mindset. This initiative will ultimately provide students with a richer experience; one that fosters learning, growth, fun, and a connection to caring adults in the school community.



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CORE VALUES

Authenticity

Knowledge

Generosity

Courage

Responsibility

Honesty

Relationships

Open-Minded

Inspiration

Honesty

Fun

Life

Inclusion

Togetherness

Family

Commitment

Openness

Happiness

Empathy

Serenity

Energy

Empathy

Leadership

Patience

Change

Loyalty

Enthusiasm

Accountability

Kindness

Friendship

Concern for Others

Respect for Others

Health

Fairness

Role-Model

Encouragement

Passion

Courage

Love

Trust

Empathy

Commitment

Balance

Loyalty

Genuineness

Creativity

Security

Humor

Listening

Mentor

Composure

Caring

Family

Positivity

Connections

Freedom

Compassion

Perseverance

Harmony

Excellence

Service to Others

Teaching

Modeling

Compassion

Driven

Integrity

Competitive success is desired and valued, but is always secondary to the educational results.

We believe:

- students are our highest priority
- in dignity, worth, and self –esteem of participants should be paramount in all our activities
- the most important result of competition is the development of life-long values and skills
- that the extra-curricular programs are an integral part of the high school experience
- that extra-curricular programs should be fun and rewarding
- in open communication and mutual respect
- morale, satisfaction, and performance are enhanced when we work together on challenges
- positive parent support and involvement enhance student growth and program quality.

Star Qualities:

- Self-confidence: Believing in my abilities
- Risk-taking: expanding my comfort zone
- Responsibility: Being someone others can count on
- Self-discipline: Taking control of myself
- Flexibility: adapting to change
- Toughness: dealing with adversity
- Courage: responding in spite of fear
- Commitment: putting forth my full effort
- Fun: enjoying the activity
- Acceptance: valuing diversity
- Teamwork: working well with others
- Focus: keeping my attention on the goal
- Persistence: sticking with the job until it's finished
- Patience: knowing the success often doesn't come easily
- Resourcefulness: finding a way to get the job done

Why High School Athletics Exist:

- To provide students with the opportunity to grow, learn, achieve, and fail in an environment of minimal risk.
- Education-based athletics does not warrant that students athletes and coaches play to entertain the public.

Keeping Parent Support in Perspective

All parents should be proud parents. All parents should be advocates for their children. All parents should help and encourage their children to pursue their potential. When these important parental attributes are taken to extreme, however, athletes can miss important life learning, and can miss significant growth opportunities. Unfortunately, we have all seen parents who seem satisfied only when their athlete is starting and/or winning. Some parents seem to have difficulty maintaining perspective. Supporting student athletes, even though one may disagree with the coaches' judgment, regarding playing time and level or position placement, is an important parental role. However, challenging the coaches' judgment regarding playing time or selection which is his/her assigned role, is not appropriate. Supporting the athlete in the pursuit of improved skills or alternate interests is the appropriate parent role.

Objectives of High School Sports:

- To expand the horizons of each student
- To promote fitness
- To build better citizens through participation
- To equip students to handle adversity
- To develop Leadership

Why we play:

- To have fun
- To learn
- To improve
- To conduct yourself well
- To appreciate the opponent
- To do your best
- To learn life skills (star qualities)
- To learn from both winning and losing

High School Athletics Vs Club Programs:

High school athletics is truly a co-curricular and it's not a club program. The high school athletic program is designed and operated deliberately as a valued educational experience for all participating athletes.

Balance is the key, which includes:

- Maintaining a balanced perspective between savoring the possibility of one's student athlete becoming a professional athlete, and a realistic assessment of skills and possibilities.
 - Keeping a balance between protecting one's athlete from adverse events and helping student athlete learn from the lessons of adversity.
 - Balance between blaming others and accepting responsibility.
 - Balance between holding onto perceived injustices and moving forward positively.
- Being a supporting parent is a complex business. The athletic skill of balance is appropriately applied here, too.