

Schools should not support competitive interscholastic sports

Key terms

Extracurricular
Interscholastic
Competitive
Intramural

Sources

National Middle School Association
<http://www.nmsa.org/research/ressum10.htm>
American Association of School Administrators
http://www.aasa.org/publications/sa/1998_11/McEwin.htm
Interscholastic Sports and the Middle School Student
<http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/theses/available/etd-120299-170148/unrestricted/mssports.pdf>

Fact Set

- Most schools have competitive interscholastic sports programs. Between 80-90 percent of middle schools and virtually all high schools and colleges have these programs.

Arguments for schools not supporting competitive interscholastic sports

- Schools could offer intramural programs instead of competitive, interscholastic programs. This would allow students to gain the health benefits of sports without some of the drawbacks.
- Participation in sports distracts students from their school work. Time spent at practices and games could be spent studying or doing homework.
- Participation in sports causes injury. Interscholastic football is particularly likely to cause injury. Additionally, wrestling often supports unhealthy eating habits that hurt students that are still physically developing. In general, students are at an age at which they are particularly vulnerable to injury, and a sense of competition might encourage students to push themselves to injury.
- Students might become overly competitive. If this happens, they may take performance-enhancing drugs, cheat, and be disrespectful to other students that are not as athletically talented. The competitive nature of sports may also exclude many students from participation.
- Parents of school-age athletes go overboard when watching interscholastic contests. They often disrespect to student athletes and sometimes may attack other fans.
- These programs are too expensive. Interscholastic sports cost schools a lot of money in uniforms, coach salaries, transportation and equipment. With schools facing increasing budget deficits and having trouble paying for academic needs, the cost is too high.

Arguments for schools supporting competitive interscholastic sports

- Sports programs give students an opportunity to meet and interact with students at other schools.
- Sports give incentives for students to be physically active and stay in shape. Now that teenagers are 3 times more likely to be overweight than they were 20 years ago, it is important to encourage students to be physically fit.
- Sports programs teach teamwork and make students “good sports.” These skills are important in many areas of life, such as group projects in school and in the workplace.
- Participation in sports programs encourage students to keep minimum grade point averages, attend classes, follow school rules and stay away from illegal substances.
- Interscholastic, competitive sports allow community members to connect with their schools. This generally helps the relationship between the citizens and the schools and increases the chances that school funding ballot initiatives will pass.
- Participation in sports programs qualify students for many scholarships and catches the eye of college recruiters, increasing their chances of attending colleges and being able to pay tuition.

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Discussion Questions

- Why do schools have interscholastic sports programs?
- How might athletic programs be separated from schools? How do other countries administer athletic programs outside of schools?
- How are other activities separated from schools? Does this make them more or less successful?
- What are the differences between competing in interscholastic sports and participating in gym classes or other noncompetitive athletic activities?
- What opportunities are opened to students based on their participation in interscholastic sports?
- Does our society emphasize sports ability too much? What place do sports have in a healthy society?