



Should I Let My Child Play Despite Academic Problem?

This resource stems from a question submitted to the Ask PCA blog. Responses come from our experts including PCA Trainers, who lead live group workshops for coaches, parents, administrators and student-athletes.

“My son loves playing hockey we have used his love of the sport to help drive his performance in the classroom. Overall he is a good student but recently he has been receiving poor grades. Our initial reaction is that he should not participate in extra curricular activities this spring and should focus on school. My concern is that if we take away the thing that he loves he may rebel and check out all together. Any thoughts on how to encourage him to go the extra mile in the classroom like he does on the ice without completely deflating him?”

PCA Response by Ray Lokar, PCA Trainer–Los Angeles

The balance between academics and athletics is often difficult. The term “student-athlete” reminds us which role to emphasize.

Many people view “extra-curricular activities” as a hindrance to academic achievement, rather than as complementary or even a key driver of academic success. The misconception that sports are “extra” is at the heart of this sentiment, as though anything “extra” must conflict with activities that are “necessary.” Meanwhile, many schools that treat sports as CO-curricular (rather than extra-curricular) help students excel academically and athletically.

Counter-intuitively and contrary to what many people think, numerous studies show student-athletes perform better in the classroom during their season of sport – when they need to manage their time – than in the off-season when they feel like they have more free time.

Of course, sports can also provide many other benefits, including confidence, health, discipline, teamwork, time management, social skills, dealing with successes and failures, fun, following rules, meeting expectations, competitiveness, improved self-image, sportsmanship, school spirit, belonging, grace under pressure, finding a niche, friendship, goal-setting, mentoring, leadership, access to role models, patience, humility, positive peer pressure, decision making and commitment.

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Co-curricular activities offer opportunities to experience joy balanced with rigor in a way that makes school more fulfilling and prepares student-athletes for purposeful lives. It also gives competitors a physical release that may make concentrating on studies a bit easier.

Competing in athletics reinforces the need to do your best. If you can help your son transfer these habits so there is a correlation between practice and school, a translation between athletic competition and academic achievement, you will go a long way toward developing Better Athletes, Better People.

Ray Lokar has coached a variety of sports for over 25 years at the youth, high school, and college levels, including his son and two daughters who have gone on to play college athletics, as well as an 8-year old son playing youth sports. Ray was the Head Basketball Coach of the 2002 California Interscholastic Federation Champions while at Bishop Amat High School and is a Past-President of the Southern California Interscholastic Basketball Coaches Association.

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