

75 percent of athletes' parents let their child skip exams for a game

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Three quarters of parents of young athletes let their child forgo an exam for an important game, a new study conducted at the University of Haifa has found. In comparison, only 47% of parents of young musicians will agree to their child choosing a performance over an exam. "Parents usually don't understand their role in the course of their child's career development, and cross the line between involvement and intervention," the study's authors said.

The study, which was conducted by Sharon Yaniv, Prof. Ron Lidor and Prof. Avigdor Klingman, examined 203 students from 7th to 12th grade in four different schools in northern Israel who participate in high school sports leagues. Some of the students were on their school all-star teams (basketball, volleyball and athletics); others were active in various sports leagues (basketball, soccer and athletics); and the rest, as the control group, were student-musicians. Seventy parents, 6 coaches, 4 team managers, 10 educational counselors and 5 school principals also took part in the study.

The findings showed a distinct difference between all-star athletes, athletes in local leagues and musicians, in almost all of the parameters examined. For example, participation in sports has different effects on teenagers' moods. A high percentage of all three groups reported that their participation in sports causes them to be in a good mood; 97% of all-star players; 92% of those in sports leagues; and 88% of musicians. However, 80% of all-star sportsmen reported that their sports participation may cause them to be in a bad mood, compared to just

51.5% of those involved in sports leagues and 28% of musicians.

Participation in sports also causes all-star athletes more disappointment - 70% of all-star athletes compared to 60% of league players and 28% of musicians. The findings are much the same in causing frustration – 66% of all-star athletes felt frustrated by their sporting endeavors compared to 50% of those in leagues and 32% of musicians.

One of the accepted assumptions among high school students is that the athletes who represent the school receive preferential treatment, and the study reinforces this assumption - 63% of all-star athletes responded that the school gave them special consideration, compared to 52% of musicians and 41% of those in leagues. In addition, 66% of all-star athletes reported that their school helped them in extending deadlines for assignments and exams, compared to 44% of musicians and 30% of those in sports leagues. Also, 63% of the all-star athletes responded that their school helped them with tutoring sessions – compared to 11% of those in leagues and 8% of musicians.

In light of these findings, it is no surprise that school principals interviewed for the study said: "Sports is one of the most popular interests in the school. This can be seen by the fact that the athletes' needs are met through designing special programs, consideration of their needs, consideration of their teachers, competitions and placing the school athletics program high on our list of priorities." And "Sports is as popular a subject as communications and electronics, but sports raise school pride while other areas of study do not."

And what do the educational counselors say about the young athletes? "They are cognizant of their own needs but not the needs of others. It's not a good part of their character, or their personality; the contempt for others, their condescending behavior and their feeling of superiority," said one of the counselors in the study.

"For young athletes, those that are active in sports leagues and primarily those that represent their school, there are unique needs that require special handling. Given that, the focus on athletic achievements and the pride they bring the school could harm other educational values that students should be taught," the researchers summarized.

Source: University of Haifa

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