



Advanced | Exemplar Essay

Trophies for Everyone

The True Purpose of Trophies



Claim and Focus

The writer introduces a clear and arguable claim (“Trophies represent success that comes from hard work and perseverance and should not be awarded for anything less than full effort”). The essay addresses both the claim and counterclaim while maintaining a strong focus on purpose and task (“show the fair and realistic consequences of putting in effort”).



Support and Evidence

The writer cites specific, relevant evidence in support of the claim (“Adults rarely have this barrier between life’s realities and their daily interactions”). Counterclaims are presented and convincing arguments are used to address them (“Exclusive trophies allow children to push themselves to do better”). Anecdotal and text references (“proof in the form of an infographic”) are used to fully support ideas.



Organization

Claims and counterclaims are effectively presented and linked through the use of transitions (“Although I believe strongly” and “there is proof”). Body paragraphs follow a clear sequence in support of the claim. The opening paragraph clearly states the claim and sets up the argument that will be presented in subsequent paragraphs (“an issue that is debated hotly concerns the actual success or failure of awarding a trophy”).



Language and Style

The essay addresses the topic using an objective tone (“Sports teach life lessons in addition to athletic ability and skill”). Precise vocabulary (“inevitable,” “phenomenon,” and “entitlement”) leads to a clear understanding of concepts (“old-fashioned work ethic” and “how to cope with harsh reality”). Sentence structure tends to be complex but is sound enough to avoid being unclear.



Using Exemplars in Your Lessons

Exemplar essays are tools to take abstract descriptions and make them more concrete for students. One way to use them is to print the clean copies of the essays and allow students to use the rubric to make notes or even find examples of important elements of an essay - thesis statements, introductions, evidence, conclusions, transitions, etc. Teachers can also use exemplars to illustrate what each score point within a trait ‘looks like’ in an authentic student essay. For additional ideas, please see “25 Ways to Use Exemplar Essays” by visiting the Curriculum Resources page in Help.

Trophies for Everyone



Notes

The True Purpose of Trophies

Children and teenagers who participate in school sports have the opportunity to learn many life lessons in addition to having the fun that comes from being part of a team. Because not everyone wins all the time and participation trophies have become a part of the sporting experience, an issue that is debated hotly concerns the actual success or failure of awarding a trophy for people who participate rather than excel at a sport. When considering whether or not to give all students who participate in school sports trophies, it is crucial to examine both sides of the argument when choosing one's stance. However, I firmly believe that not all high school students should be given trophies. Trophies represent success that comes from hard work and perseverance and should not be awarded for anything less than full effort.

Sports teach life lessons in addition to athletic ability and skill. Some parents consistently try to create an easier life for their children to make it seem as if it's not as hard as it really is. Although arising from good intentions, this practice of protecting them from life's harshness tends to end as a more negative process for children than a positive. Participation trophies are one such cushion for children. Adults rarely have this barrier between life's realities and their daily interactions. For this reason, participation trophies shouldn't be awarded as children grow older because they coddle the child and possibly create a false sense of entitlement. In addition, similar values can be taught without handing out trophies which have no benefit of achievement to back them.

A former teacher once told me that if you give someone the power to give you self esteem, you are also giving them the power to take it away. This same idea holds true of issuing participation trophies. It seems obvious that giving

trophies to everyone should not be the only thing that shows students the value of being a part of a team and working hard. This can easily be done throughout the season through verbal praise or a party at the end to show the whole team they did well even though they did not win. Receiving a trophy alone probably isn't enough to keep a child coming back to a sport he doesn't enjoy, but other positive reinforcements will no doubt increase the student athlete's self-esteem and confidence immensely, which is supposedly the goal of participation trophies.

Although I believe strongly that not all high school students should receive participation trophies, there is proof in the form of an infographic that shows an interesting trend that supports my opinion. "Should Kids Get Participation Trophies?" shows that as age increased, more people that said that only winners should get trophies. Since participation trophies are a relatively new phenomenon, it seems as if older people understand that what might seem like an old-fashioned work ethic to some actually provides a good foundation for life. Working hard and good effort lead to success. If the value of this isn't made clear to younger students and athletes, how will they learn how to deal with real failures and other hardships? If these lessons on how to cope with harsh reality aren't taught when students are young, they will have an extremely difficult time adjusting to adulthood.

The final and best argument against participation trophies is that trophies for achievement show the fair and realistic consequences of putting in effort. Winning trophies reinforce the idea that effort, practice, and hard work show the true essence of what a trophy means and why it has been given. Exclusive trophies allow children to push themselves to do better and not stay stagnant in their efforts. Whenever we get too much of something, it is inevitable that we grow tired of it. Earning a trophy means that the award represents the student athlete's ability to withstand hardship and overcome obstacles. No matter how good you are, eventually someone better or stronger will come along. We need to teach high school students that hard work, highly practiced skills, and effort are the only road to success in sports and in life.