

Persuasive Essay:

Why Participation Awards should be given to children who play sports

Losing is never easy, and losing often is the worst. It's easy to stop loving something when you're constantly told that you're not good at it. So should children get participation awards? One common argument against participation awards claims that they are detrimental to a child's development and teach children that everyone's a winner when in reality, there can only be one. But why should society separate the winners from the losers? Doesn't that only teach children that no matter how hard they try, they'll never be good enough? So even though participation awards can be a gateway to entitlement and narcissism among young athletes, they should continue to be awarded to those who partake in sports because they fabricate a positive environment that boosts children's confidence and encourages them to participate in physical activity.

One reason that elementary-age children should receive participation awards in sports is because they help boost confidence. Children in sports often feel pressure to perform well and fear facing criticism or disappointment from their peers or coaches if they fail to meet expectations. When burdened with the feeling of uselessness, it becomes difficult to have a positive self image, which is why it's so important to reward children for their participation and effort. In her article "Participation Awards: Good or Bad?" Sunny Chen states, "There are a number of children who are never sure of themselves. They tend to doubt themselves and their abilities, so building up their self esteem through regular praise is crucial." (5) Obviously, awarding and recognizing children for their effort and presence helps improve self esteem tremendously. Furthermore, participation awards are also beneficial to a child's emotional health and promote future success for future events. Sports advocate, Travis Armedio, in his article "Pros and Cons: A Look At Participation Trophies For Young Athletes" explains that "Giving everyone involved some level of recognition goes a long way toward boosting confidence and promoting future success." (10) Clearly, participation awards are beneficial to a child's psychological well-being and provide a positive reinforcement for their efforts, regardless if they won the game or not.

Not only do participation awards boost confidence; they also encourage kids to continue participating in physical activity. Children who participate in sports gain numerous benefits such

as physical fitness. However, not all children have an innate talent for sports and may struggle to keep up with their teammates, which can oftentimes be discouraging. Sunny Chen, the writer of “Participation Awards: Good or Bad?” states, “Participation awards and similar accolades give kids motivation to persevere.” She continues, “Even adults will feel tempted to give up if there is nothing to show for their work—how can we expect kids to feel any different? (15)” This means that when children receive participation awards, they feel acknowledged and motivated to participate in sports. Clearly, these awards can also foster a sense of belonging and eagerness to improve among children who may otherwise feel unimportant or meritless. Furthermore, many young athletes lose interest in playing if they feel discouraged or unappreciated by their team or coach. When kids are recognized with participation trophies, it shows them that their hard work has been noticed and appreciated which motivates them to keep going, even when things get tough. For instance, in the context of school, when a teacher recognizes and appreciates your efforts, oftentimes you may feel compelled to work even harder, which is why children who receive participation awards are more likely to stick with a sport even if they face challenges or setbacks along the way. Travis Armedio, the writer of “Pros and Cons: A Look At Participation Trophies For Youth Athletes,” says “Losing is tough, but losing your interest is easy... especially when the losses start piling up. At the very least, a trophy is a nice light at the end of a tunnel for anyone who has to endure a tough season (25).” Participation awards are a useful tool that instills valuable life lessons into children such as perseverance and hard work. It is necessary to recognize children's efforts regardless of their skill level because they promote positive attitudes towards competition and encourage kids to continue participating in physical activities.

Despite the obvious benefits of participation awards, many adults argue that children should not receive them because they set unrealistic expectations for kids in the real world. In the workforce or other competitive environments, people are not awarded simply for showing up or applying minimal effort. Parents argue that by giving children participation awards, we are teaching them that they will be rewarded regardless of their performance or contribution. Additionally, it is believed that participation awards diminish the value of true accomplishments and can create a culture of mediocrity where nobody feels motivated to work hard or improve. Lisa Heffernan, writer of the essay, “In Defense Of Participation Trophies: Why They Really Do Teach The Right Values,” references Kenneth Barish’s book “Pride and Joy: A Guide to Understanding Your Child's Emotions and Solving Family Problems” where he states, “But what

about the child who doesn't work hard? The child who knows he's getting a trophy no matter what, so he does not need to apply effort?" (35) This implies that there can be potential motivational issues for children in the future if they receive participation trophies. Furthermore, it is believed by many coaches and parents that constant undeserved praise and recognition will cause immense struggles for children when faced with failure or adversity later in life. In Ashley Merryman's article, "Losing Is Good For You," she states "After such praise of their innate abilities, they collapse at the first experience of difficulty. Demoralized by their failure, they say they'd rather cheat than risk failing again." (20) This insinuates that participation awards can encourage children to give up and serve as a gateway to a common conceited and egotistical attitude, which is already present and unneeded in society. While aspects of these claims can be true, these points overlook the important role that participation awards play in promoting inclusivity and positivity. We as members of society need to recognize that not all children have equal access to resources and opportunities that are needed to succeed, so by acknowledging children's commitment through participation awards, we can help build their self esteem and teach them to never give up. Therefore, elementary age children should receive participation awards in sports because they boost confidence levels and encourage children to participate in physical activity. While there may be some valid concerns about the negative effects of participation awards, it is still important to recognize and celebrate all children who participate in sports, regardless of their performance on the field and participation trophies are an excellent way to do so.