



Proficient | Exemplar Essay

Trophies for Everyone

Should Everyone Receive Trophies?



Claim and Focus

The essay makes a clear claim (“Potential benefits from receiving a participation trophy far outweigh any perceived negative consequences”). Focus on the topic is maintained throughout. Counterclaims are addressed (“In some situations, the players who are the stars are the worst ones in terms of attitude”) and the demands of the prompt are met.



Support and Evidence

The claim and counterclaim are supported and explained using appropriate evidence (“Not being able to make 3 point shots all the time doesn’t mean that the player didn’t give it his best effort, or consistently support the players who can and do”). Anecdotal support is offered alongside quotes balanced from two sources (Heffernan and Dweck), though relevant evidence from Source 4 would increase the strength of this trait.



Organization

The essay begins with a clear introduction (“Rewarding kids that show up, give good effort, and have a positive attitude is more likely to lead to them becoming better adults”) and moves logically toward a conclusion that supports the claim. Some transition words are used to show relationships between claim and counterclaim, as well as a progression of events (“First of all” and “In conclusion”).



Language and Style

While part of the introduction uses the first-person perspective, it effectively engages the audience and writing thereafter shifts to and maintains a formal third-person voice. Word choice is precise and interesting (“perceived,” “symbolize,” “perseverance”). Sentences are varied throughout and used for effect (“Now, I understand why”).



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.

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Notes

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Some of my best memories are of my cousins and me playing in YMCA sports when we were younger. At the end of each season, we were given a participation trophy. I never understood why we got the trophies if we were rarely put into the game. Now, I understand why. A participation trophy was given to us whether we played or not because it was concrete proof that we had finished something. Finishing something is an accomplishment in itself for some people. The trophy made some of my teammates happy, but the idea of giving out participation trophies like Halloween candy may bother others who feel that not everyone earned it based on skill levels or overall team record. The potential benefits from receiving a participation trophy far outweigh any perceived negative consequences. Rewarding kids that show up, give good effort, and have a positive attitude is more likely to lead to them becoming better adults.

First of all, giving a child a participation trophy doesn't mean that he didn't actually make valuable contributions to the team. People who argue against giving participation trophies typically mention players who aren't talented at that sport. Not being able to make 3 point shots all the time doesn't mean that the player didn't give it his best effort, or consistently support the players who can and do. Just because he isn't the most skilled player doesn't mean he hasn't supported others and been a positive force for the team.

In some situations, the players who are the stars are the worst ones in terms of attitude. They have been told all their lives how good they are and they don't always seem to feel that they should have to work to hear all the

good stuff. In Source 4, Dweck says, "Her daughter rarely showed up for her soccer team. She had a terrible attitude" and "at the end she got a giant trophy and would have been devastated had she not," she's making a point but this doesn't show all kids, just some of them. In the real world you need to put in a lot of work. The success you have at the end of all the work you put in is the reward. That work doesn't always end up with winning the championship but it's still valuable so getting a participation trophy is definitely appropriate.

In the article "Why They Really Do Teach the Right Values" by Lisa Heffernan, she says "Participation trophies tell them that what matters is showing up for practice, learning the rules and rituals of the game and working hard." This is accurate in that as long as a child is putting forth effort, they shouldn't be discriminated upon by their actual abilities. There's nothing to say that the participation trophy you get at the end of the season doesn't symbolize the dedication you put in, like the sweat, the hard work, and the beating you took to earn it. Trophies have come to mean more than just winning and that's perfectly acceptable.

In conclusion, kids should definitely continue to earn trophies for participation. Players should earn trophies because they worked hard for them, dedicated themselves to the sport, and because they represent their success. Success as a person means more than just a long season full of victory. Showing that hard work and perseverance are valued is just as important as getting that "W". The trophies are a good boost to a growing child's self esteem which is mandatory for the shaping of a child's life. There is no evidence of a participation trophy negatively affecting the egos of children, only suspicion. A simple trophy, ribbon, or award will not make anybody feel entitled.