

A Letter to the Editor

**Schools Should Encourage Children to Be Competitive?**

Dear Editor

In the past few years, whether schools should encourage children to be competitive has become controversial in society. Various opinions have been proposed and no one is able to convince others. Recently, I have participated in a debate on this motion. My stance was totally changed during the debate. I would like to share my thoughts on it.

Originally, I thought schools should not encourage children to be competitive because most of the children are not able to bear the pressure generated when they compete with others. Not having proper mental development, children cannot handle the huge stress which may lead to mental problems or extreme deviant behaviours. Recently, a girl committed suicide at school, reported by the media. She left a letter on her desk and in it, she wrote, 'Practices, practices and my life is all about completing endless practices! I hate those notes especially music notes! I hate the mock practices, the judges! I don't want to see them anymore!' Those were her last words left to the world. According to the news report, before she committed suicide, she had been appointed to participate in multitudinous music competitions as she was talented in music, studying a range of musical instruments including the piano, the violin, the flute and so on. She was expected to have a bright and great future in her music career. Unfortunately, she could not withstand the tremendous pressure and decided to give up her life. Therefore, I thought schools should not encourage children to be competitive and push them too much.

After my team proposed this point of view, the opponent put forward their rebuttal without a moment

of hesitation. They said that not only should school encourage students to be competitive, but also teach them how to deal with pressure and failure. There must be failure and stress imposed by competitions. Coping with them is unavoidable, which means knowing how to handle stress is paramount.

This is the critical point which has changed my mind. I realise that pressure resistance allows children to compete with others. When children can resist, withstand the pressure, it will be less likely for them to have mental illnesses and extreme misbehaviours. So, schools should teach students how to manage and deal with stress in life. The keys to good stress management are building emotional strength, being in control of the situation, having a good social network, and adopting a positive outlook.

Additionally, I have a deeper thought after the debate. There are more benefits when encouraging children to be more competitive. Firstly, competitions are everywhere in our lives. Only competitive and strong people will win and gain advantages in society. Generally, primary school students compete for a seat in a good secondary school whereas secondary school students compete for a ticket to enter the university. When they graduate from university, they keep competing for a better job. Competitions are countless, so children need to get well prepared for them to survive and so they will not be a deer in the headlights when they face an unexpected competition. Therefore, it is essential for children to be encouraged to be competitive at school in their childhood.

On top of this, a goal will be set up for children to achieve. Competitions might produce the drive for children to work harder. Competitions give a prominent target which provides children or students an opportunity to head for their goal and meaning to perform their best. A goal is requisite for children because they might easily lose their path in studies, leading to lose their motivation to do anything. Giving up all aspects in their life is the most undesirable situation. According to the

survey conducted by the Hong Kong Students News, students from schools encouraging children to be competitive are more self-driven as they have set their targets clearly.

Finally, it was a dramatic change of my mind after attending the debate. Being competitive is more beneficial to children in different aspects of life, including the academic work and even their personal growth. However, all of those should be under the condition that schools have to educate students how to deal with pressure and failure in a positive way.

Yours faithfully

*Chris Wong*

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