



PRINCIPAL'S DESK [31/08/09]

From the sideline

Watching our winter sports clashes with other schools always reinforces for me the huge contribution that sport makes to a child's education through the physical, social, emotional and intellectual domains of learning. While the physical aspect of this challenge is always very obvious and most certainly the talking point of the sideline spectators, the high level of emotional intelligence that is on show deserves recognition in its contribution to sports education. Emotional intelligence in a game sense is recognised in how the players feel about their participation and contribution to the team they represent, and the development of their understanding of how others think, feel and respond. We all appreciate that the ability and role modeling of the coaches impacts on this considerably.

Media comment has recently heightened the debate around sportsmanship, competitive ambition and fair play. Most parents and coaches are there supporting their children to play to the best they can, fair and with a huge appreciation for the spirit of the game being enjoyed. We know that the large majority of parents and coaches support positive comment, praise, and complimentary overtures to opposing teams. Sadly when children are exposed to sports brawls on TV, raised tempers and outbreaks of unfair criticisms of the officials, they can be forgiven for thinking that these behaviours are all part of playing sport. School sports games can be very exciting and there is always an element of competitiveness when schools are playing against each other. We very much appreciate the part that parents and coaches play in maintaining a positive mood amongst those watching on the sideline. Our children strive to win, and so they should! But they are not "playing to win at all costs". Learning to maintain self-control, learning to lose with dignity and develop strategies to improve, learning to overcome setbacks as well as developing strong professional behavioural ethics are all significant aspects of 'winning' that our children also need to develop. As spectators it is incumbent upon all of us to role model such behaviours at all times and be constructive in our praise and criticism.

During the sports exchanges our players consistently demonstrate an impressive array of strategies involving certain key competencies that help children succeed in their goals. Successful game play requires practising ball-handling skills, developing co-ordination, maintaining and improving fitness levels. It also requires strong people skills to learn to understand and interpret the intentions and moves of other players. The high levels of adrenalin running through all the teams and the strategising emerging through the stages of play amazes sideline enthusiasts.

The after match celebrations where captains share the highlights, thank the coaches and parents, and offer their praises to the opposition are also a very special aspect of the games.

So let's give these kids high praise for the educational dimensions that they exhibit through their sports. They are truly becoming our role models and stars of the future.

To all the coaches – and parents who support our Elmwood's sports teams – congratulations. Sport has essential ingredients of intellectual development that shape our values and attitudes and help develop success strategies.

Kevin Gooch, Principal