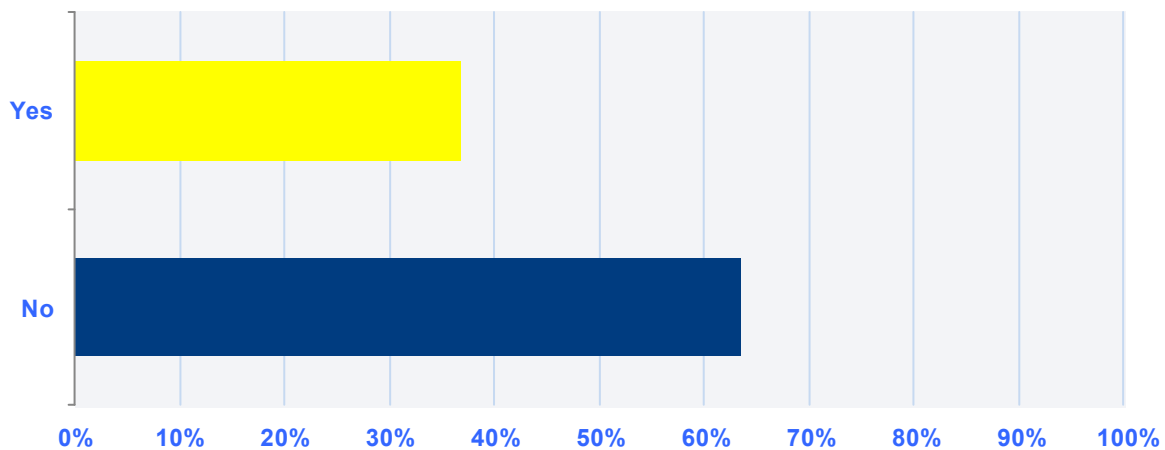




Should Sports Day Be Changed So That Children Compete Against Their Own Personal Best Times, Rather Than Traditional Races With Winners & Losers



Some schools doing away with ribbons, medals, trophies and participation certificates - shifting the focus to learning, rather than a prize.

One public schools has also ditched the old sports day where students race against each other and instead all students compete against their own personal best; focussing on personal improvement, instead of winners and losers.

SAASSO asked parents and educators what they think.

872 respondents completed the survey. 93% of these were parents and 43% work in a school.

Asked if schools should do away with trophies and certificates and go reward free:

- 23.76% said 'Yes'
- 76.24% said 'No'.

Overall, school staff (26.74%) were more inclined to do away with rewards than non-school staff (21.24%)

51.72% of teachers were in favour of disposing with trophies and certificates, compared with only 12.5% of principals.

19.25% of parents support a call to abandon the rewards. 80% of non-parents concurred.

Asked if sports day should be changed so that children compete against their own personal best times, rather than each other:

- 36.63% voted 'Yes'
- 63.37% voted 'No'.

School staff were slightly more supportive of changing the traditional sports day. Teachers were most in favour with, with just over 50% voting to change.

The greatest disparity wanting a change was between parents (32.62%) and non-parents (86.67%).

Comments showed support for changing sports day format, without completely doing away with competition.

Many comments also espoused the benefits of children learning to deal with the disappointment of not winning.

Selected Comments



The world is competitive, it is not competition free, so what are these schools trying to teach the kids. One of life's greatest lessons is how to lose gracefully.

Kids are adults in training. While kids should be treated like kids we do them a disservice if we do not teach them that sometimes we win and sometimes we lose. I we don't teach them this they will grow up as adults who have no idea on how to cope when things do not go their way.

Competition is a part of life and we need to recognise the efforts of others. We need to celebrate high achievement and to ensure that children develop an understanding that it is a result of practice and hard work that those children have achieved success.

Why can't it be both?

While I answered yes to 4 and 5 I don't think it's that simple. I think there is room to award children for different things, just not everything. We all like to be rewarded in some way or recognised for achieving our best in whatever we do.

Recognition needs to occur. You still need to know you are doing well at something, are on the right track, are being innovative. Making recognition happen in front of an audience provides the audience with an example of what you need to do to reach the same level.

Children need to learn to lose and not get their own way all the time, participation certificates are great, but giving a trophy to everyone who participates is not.

Let the kids enjoy sports and not be so competitive .. It's about having fun.

Healthy Competitions help to perform better. Competition can be with yourself or with others.

Ridiculous idea.

There should a combination of both rather than completely getting rid of one thing. No extreme makes sense. It's impossible for kids to race against one another and not compare each other regardless of whether or not a ribbon is given.

I have long been an advocate for measuring and rewarding academic "success" according to a student's personal improvement or gains, after all, that is the purpose of education - to improve the academic outcomes for all students. This means that even the least capable students can be rewarded and those who are more capable and coast along, constantly being rewarded for little improvement, need to work to achieve too.

I think that students should be involved in traditional sports days but tailored so that they are competing against students with a similar ability level.

For every winner there's 10 losers.

All of my children have been effected by giving their absolute best consistently to not receive any acknowledgement or reward. They see bad behavioural children receive rewards often. Encourages children not to try. They give up! Competing against self is an excellent idea.

In life you are always competing against others. Competing against others helps you become better at whatever it is you are doing. It does not make sense for children to grow up without competition amongst themselves.

My answers to Q4 and Q5 contradict each other as I believe there is room for both. Children want and need to know how they measure against their peers, but schools could place greater value on recognising personal improvement.

Not all students are gifted at sports, however all need to participate so if they are rewarded aftersay...5 pd's the child receives a reward and encouragement and that way, even the least capable has a way of getting a reward.

This depends on the school culture and what the school community value. In regards to sports days we have personal bests and ribbons. It shouldn't be one or the other. Ribbons etc. are special and valued. There are students that shine at sports and not in academics and sports competitions allow these students to shine and be acknowledged.

We are no longer setting our kids up for the real world. Schools teach students that they are all equal. Then they get in the work force and wonder what hit them. That is half the reason we have so much youth depression because they can not cope with the real world. As an employer I see it time and time again.

Children need to learn how to lose. They need to learn its not all great in the wide world.

I would hate for my children to leave school and realise that beating their "best" means that they might still come last. Improvement comes from learning from defeat, not winning against yourself.

I think all decisions should be evidence based. Take certificates and the like. Do they encourage people to try? Look at physical performance (Sports day). Fitness is important, yes, and should be encouraged. The fact is some kids are faster and stronger than others and there is nothing the slow/weak can do about it. They will place, where they place. The idea though of going faster has merit, but it doesn't mean that on the day they are faster! They could have peaked during training days.

They could do both - have a personal best and compete against others where there is a winner and loser for individual events as well as teams. There are winners and losers in life and sporting events as they grow up so this would prepare them for the future and their ability to cope with being a gracious loser or a humble winner. Especially if they choose to pursue their sporting interests. In any competition there are winners and losers against other participants and teams so it seems ridiculous to 'shelter' kids from this and then get to a sporting club or high school where this still exists.

This getting a medal for just competing is ridiculous

There should be a sliding scale of recognition as well as recognition for winning, of course, there should be personal bests and points for volunteering. But don't take away from our children the possibility of learning to strive for success.

Sometimes competing against others makes you work and try harder. Also kids need to learn that they can't always win and trying your best is most important.