

This week's issue:

SHOULD EVERYONE GET A TROPHY?



Parents cheered from the sidelines as Daniela scored her third goal. Her team was up 5–0 in the final game of the kindergarten soccer tournament. But at the closing ceremonies, there were no winners or losers. Every child who **participated** in the tournament was awarded a trophy.

While some people believe we should teach children that participating in the game is more important than winning, others worry that too many children today are being protected from life's challenges. They think children will not learn to recover from disappointment or failure. There is little **consensus** about whether competition at a young age helps or hurts the development of resilience—the ability to bounce back from disappointment, failure, or hardship.

Those who oppose competition argue that childhood should be a time for building self-esteem. Early in their development, children learn to categorize and compare. They separate big from small, heavy from light, tall from short, and sweet from sour. Competition **yields** another set of categories to compare: winners and losers. Identifying as a loser from a young age could damage a child's confidence and make him or her less likely to take part in competitions later in life. In fact, some kids report feeling so much pressure to win from their parents that they can't enjoy participating in games. Giving every participant a trophy reduces the focus on winning and can free children to work together, pass the ball, and support each other. Furthermore, when coaches are not worried about losing, they are more likely to encourage less talented players to participate and take risks. More children can feel good about themselves.

On the other hand, learning to lose at an early age could make children more **resilient**. Competition is part of adult life. People compete when they apply to college, interview for jobs, audition for parts in a play, and seek promotions. Some are chosen because they are considered **superior** candidates, and the rest are rejected. Everyone is likely to fail at something. By failing at a young age, kindergartners can learn to try their best and work around their limitations. Furthermore, giving everyone a trophy could harm children's motivation. If a child who works tirelessly to memorize words for the spelling bee receives the same prize as a classmate who did the bare minimum, why would anyone work hard? Losing might motivate children by teaching them that hard work is required to succeed.

What do you think? Should kindergartners get trophies just for participating?

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yield | participate | superior | resilient | consensus

USE THE FOCUS WORDS *and alternate parts of speech

yield (*verb*) to make or produce

➡ **Sample Sentence:** Competition **yields** another set of categories to compare: winners and losers.

🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** If a recipe **yields** 36 cookies, how many cookies would halving the recipe **yield**?

***yield** (*noun*) the amount of something that is produced

➡ **Sample Sentence:** The apple **yield** was lower than normal because of the early frost.

🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** How could climate change cause crop **yields** to be lower than normal?

participate (*verb*) to take part or be involved

➡ **Sample Sentence:** Every child who **participated** in the tournament was awarded a trophy.

🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** If you **participated** in a talent show, what would your talent be? Why?

superior (*adjective*) higher quality; better

➡ **Sample Sentence:** Some are chosen because they are considered **superior** candidates, and the rest are rejected.

🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** Some people think cats make **superior** pets, and others prefer dogs. What is your preference, and what features do you think make a pet **superior**?

resilient (*adjective*) able to recover quickly

➡ **Sample Sentence:** Learning to lose at an early age could make children more **resilient**.

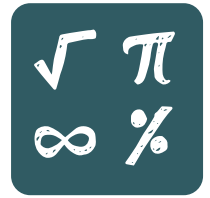
🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** Are young people more **resilient** than adults? Explain.

consensus (*noun*) general agreement

➡ **Sample Sentence:** There is little **consensus** about whether competition at a young age helps or hurts children.

🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** Some organizations make decisions by **consensus**. What are some drawbacks to this method?

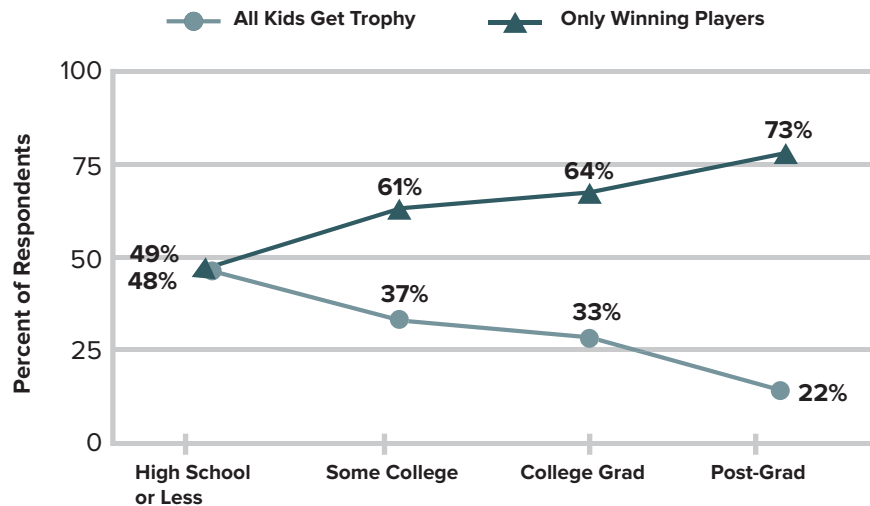
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DO THE MATH

Factors like education, income, and age influence our opinions about important issues. One way to learn about people's views is to conduct a poll. Responses can be analyzed to **yield** patterns and trends. Below are results from a 2014 Reason-Rupe poll in which 1,000 people were asked the following question: Do you think all kids who play sports should receive a trophy for their participation, or should only the winning players be awarded trophies?



Option 1: At which education level do people show the strongest **consensus** that only winning players should get trophies?

- A. high school or less
- B. some college
- C. college grad
- D. post-grad

Option 2: It is your job to expand the poll to include the opinions of people in middle school. **Participate** in a class survey of the question above, and tally your class' responses below. Next, determine the percentage of students who agree with each perspective. Add your results to the graph to see if they **yield** a similar trend to the one that is shown. Before you begin polling, think of a way to ensure that each student **participates** in the poll only once.

All kids get trophy	Only winning players
_____ % all kids get trophy	_____ % only winning players

Discussion Question: According to the World Values Survey, the United States is one of the most competitive countries in the world. Competition encourages people to work harder so that they can be considered **superior** to others. That might account for the U.S.'s powerful economy. But competition usually **yields** one winner and many losers, and some people think that children should be protected from the pain of failing. Given that we live in such a competitive society, what are some ways to teach children to be **resilient** when they face a failure?

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THINK SCIENTIFICALLY

Franklin Middle School lost an important game in a basketball tournament last night. Ms. Kahn watches her students shuffle into class. It seems that all of her students **participated** in or attended the game, and there is clearly a **consensus** that this loss was especially difficult.

“That team was not **superior** to ours!” exclaims Mylie. “I’m never going to get over this.”

Sierra is more **resilient**. “That’s the thing about tournaments,” she says. “A bunch of teams sign up, but only one can win.”

“The same kind of thing happens in science, Mylie and Sierra,” says Ms. Kahn. “Thousands of brilliant scientists work really hard, but only a few get a Nobel Prize. I wonder if this kind of competition **yields** better science, or simply discourages people.”

“Maybe it’s different for different people,” says Mylie. “I like that our middle school science fair is noncompetitive. But my older sister thinks it stinks. At her high school science fair, they have first, second, and third place. It motivates her to work hard on her project.”

“Let’s take a poll,” says Ms. Kahn. “How many people in our class would prefer a competitive science fair? And how many would prefer a noncompetitive one?”

Take a poll in your class, and tally the results.

	Strongly prefer competitive	Don’t feel strongly	Strongly prefer noncompetitive
Boys			
Girls			
Total			

Discuss with your partner/with the class whether the data suggest strong support for either competitive or noncompetitive science fairs, and write your joint conclusion here.

Discuss whether boys and girls show the same general preference or not, and write your conclusion here.

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DEBATE THE ISSUE

Pick one of these positions (or create your own).

A

Young children should all get awards for **participating** in competitions.

OR

B

Only young children who win should get awards in competitions.

OR

CREATE YOUR OWN

Jot down a few notes on how to support your position during a discussion or debate.

Be a strong participant by using phrases like these:

“Can you show me evidence in the text that...”

“I believe that...”

“You make a good point, but have you considered...”

“I agree with you, but...”

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TAKE A STAND



Support your position with clear reasons and specific examples. Try to use relevant words from the Word Generation list in your response.

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