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SHOULD MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS HAVE TO MEET A GRADE REQUIREMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN SPORTS?

Word Generation - Unit 2.22

Focus Words

eligible | affect | maintain | prerequisite | previous



Weekly Passage

Svenka worked hard on her soccer skills and made the school team. When she got an F on her report card, the coach told her she was not eligible to play unless her grades improved. The school that Svenka attends, like many others around the country, has a rule: If you don't pass a class, you don't get to play. Svenka thinks that this is unfair. She does not think this one bad grade should affect her place on the team.

Some people think that middle and high school students should maintain certain grade point averages to play sports. Many schools use grades as a prerequisite for participation in after-school activities. They feel that the students should work as hard in the classroom as on the field. If students really want to play they should work extra hard in school to make sure that they can.

On the other hand, there are people who do not think grade requirements are a

good idea. They think that forcing students to get a certain grade will keep too many from participating. In previous years, some students took easier classes just so they could play sports. This was unfair to the students who kept up their grades in harder classes.

What do you think about this? Does the “no pass, no play” rule seem fair to you? Should middle and high school students have to meet a grade requirement to participate in sports?

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Reading Comprehension/Discussion Questions:

- ▶ What is the rule about playing sports in Svenka's school?
- ▶ Why do some people think that middle and high school students who play sports should maintain certain grades?
- ▶ Why do some people think that grade requirements are not a good idea?
- ▶ Is there a grade requirement to be eligible to play sports in your school?

**Unit 2.22 -
Should middle and high school students have to meet a
grade requirement to participate in sports?
Focus Word Chart**

| Word | Meaning | Forms | | |
|--------------|--|--|--------------------|---|
| | | Inflectional | Basic Word Classes | Prefixes/ Suffixes |
| prerequisite | (n.) - requirement that must be met before moving on | prerequisites | require | requisite requisitely requirement |
| eligible | (adj.) - qualified for | | | ineligible ineligibleness ineligibly eligibility eligibleness eligibly |
| maintain | (v.) - to keep | maintains maintained maintaining | | maintainable maintenance maintainer |
| affect | (v.) - to have an effect on | affects affected affecting | affect (n.) | disaffect disaffected unaffected affection |
| previous | (adj.) - earlier | previously | | previousness |

Unit 2.22 - Should middle and high school students have to meet a grade requirement to participate in sports? Problem of the Week



In Georgia, students must **maintain** good grades to be **eligible** to play sports. For a student to join a sports team, he or she must have met certain **prerequisites** the **previous** semester. In 2009, the Georgia school board made a change that **affects** middle school students. Before, middle school students had to pass five classes the semester before playing a sport. Now, students have to pass at least 70% of their classes the semester before playing a sport. One reason the Georgia School Board changed their sports **eligibility** rule is because different Georgia schools follow different schedules. Some students only take four classes each semester, so even if they passed every class, they didn't meet the **eligibility** requirement of passing five classes.

Option 1: If students take four classes, how many must they pass to pass at least 70% of their classes?

- A) at least 1
- B) at least 2
- ☒ C) at least 3
- D) at least 4

Option 2: Sierra passed five of her classes, but she did not meet Georgia's new sports **eligibility** requirement. (The new requirement says students must pass at least 70% of their classes.) How many classes must she have taken?

Answer: Sierra must have taken a minimum of 8 classes. (Here is one way to think about it: If we let t = classes taken and p = classes passed and solve the inequality $p \geq .7t$ when $p = 5$, we get $7.1 \leq t$. Since t must be a whole number, Sierra must have taken 8 or more classes.)

Discussion Question: Under the previous rule, passing a certain number of classes was a **prerequisite** for playing sports. The new rule asks students to pass a certain *percentage* of classes. In some schools, students can choose to take extra classes. Under the new rule, if students take more classes, they must pass more classes to **maintain** their **eligibility**. Will the new rule **affect** how many classes students take? Do you think it will discourage students from being ambitious and taking more classes? Why or why not?

Torres, K. (2009, November 4). State changes no pass-no play rule for middle school athletes. The Atlanta Journal-Constitution. Retrieved on October 24, 2010 from <http://www.ajc.com/news/state-changes-no-pass-186316.html>

Should middle and high school students have to meet a grade requirement to participate in sports?

Debating the Issue



GO!

1. Get ready...

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

A Students who play sports should have to maintain certain grades in school. This is the best way to ensure that they are giving as much effort to their studies as they are to sports.

B Students who play sports should not have to maintain certain grade requirements. Good performance on the field has nothing to do with good performance in the classroom.

C Grade requirements for sports are too strict. They should be lowered so that more students will be able to participate in sports.

D Extracurricular activities are important to a student's well being. Denying students who do not meet the grade requirements the chance to participate in a sport may negatively impact their classroom performance.

E _____

Be a strong participant by using phrases like these.

I think it's more accurate to say...

That's interesting - can you tell why you think that?

I think the evidence is contrary to what you're saying because. . .

Let me share something from the reading that will help us...

2. Get set...

Be ready to provide evidence to back up your position during your class discussion or debate. Jot down a few quick notes:

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Whatever the debate format, ask students to use academically productive talk when arguing their positions. In particular, students should provide reasons and evidence to back up their assertions. It may be helpful to read these sample positions to illustrate some possibilities, but students should be encouraged to take their own positions about the issue at hand.

Unit 2.22 - Should middle and high school students have to meet a grade requirement to participate in sports? Science Activity



This activity is designed to help you practice thinking like a scientist and to use this week's focus words. Sometimes the data are based on real research, but they should never be considered true or factual.

Professor Kahn finds Vickie sitting sadly in the hallway, holding a basketball.

“What’s wrong, Vickie?” Professor Kahn asks.

“I’m not **eligible** to play in the game tonight,” Vickie says. “Our coach made good grades a **prerequisite**. I try to **maintain** a strong B, but I failed a history test last week and an English test the **previous** week. I’m so frustrated! I’ll probably just quit the team.”

“Don’t do that!” says Professor Kahn. “Basketball can help you keep your grades up. Exercise **affects** your brain power.”

“Really?” asks Vickie.

“Let’s investigate!” says Professor Kahn.

Question:

How does exercise affect brain power?

Hypothesis:

Students who run before a memory test will score higher than students who sit.

Materials:

- ▶ Group A (10 students)
- ▶ Group B (10 students)
- ▶ Memory test

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Real Research

-The article cited below describes a study where college students ran, lifted weights, or sat quietly before a memory test. The runners consistently performed best. The article connects this finding to other studies that have suggested that exercise in general and aerobic exercise in particular stimulates helpful brain activity.

Reynolds, G. (2009, September 16). Phys ed: What sort of exercise can make you smarter? The New York Times. Retrieved on January 22, 2010 from

<http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/09/16/what-sort-of-exercise-can-make-you-smarter/>

Classroom Discussion

Summarize the real research. (People who ran before a memory test outperformed people who sat or lifted weights.) Are students surprised by this finding? Why or why not? How does the finding connect to this week’s topic? Which side(s) of the debate could it support?

Procedure:

1. Ask Group A to run for ten minutes.
2. Ask Group B to sit for ten minutes.
3. Give memory test.
4. Calculate the average score for each group.

Data:

| | Group A (runners) | Group B (sitters) |
|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Average score (out of 10) | 9 | 7 |

Conclusion:

Is the hypothesis supported or not by the data?

Supported, but review the issue of correlation vs. causation

What evidence supports your conclusion?

The runners earned a higher average score than the sitters.

How would you make this a better experiment?

Encourage students to consider sample size, number of trials, control of variables, whether the procedure is a true measure of the question, whether the experiment can be repeated by other scientists, data collection and recording systems, and other potential explanations for the outcome. Students should understand that these simple experiments represent the beginning of an exploration, not the end. If time permits, have students suggest how the experiment could be strengthened, emphasizing the use of the target words in the discussion.



Writing Prompt

Should middle and high school students have to meet a grade requirement to participate in sports?

Focus Words

eligible | affect | maintain | prerequisite | previous

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

A tool to help you think about your own writing!

Remember you can use focus words from any of the WG Units.

Check off what you accomplished:

Good Start

- ☐ Stated my own position
- ☐ Included 1 focus word

Pretty Good

- ☐ Stated my own position clearly
- ☐ Included 1-2 arguments
- ☐ Included 1-2 focus words

Exemplary

- ☐ Stated my own position clearly
- ☐ Included 1-2 arguments
- ☐ Included 1 counterargument
- ☐ Used 2-5 focus words

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Ask students to write a response in which they argue a position on the weekly topic.

Put the writing prompt on the overhead projector (or the board) so that everyone can see it. Remind students to refer to the word lists in their Word Generation books as needed.

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