



Editor's mailbox

Dear Editor

I was glad to read Rupert Kaye's article, 'Physical Education is Character Education' in the Summer 2007 edition of *ACT Now*. It was certainly refreshing to read an article about the curriculum that was *not* about Religious Education, Sex Education or Collective Worship! Nonetheless, I was less happy about the author's apparent allergy to competitive sports in schools.

Life is competitive and any attempt to shield young people from this fact does them a great disservice. I believe the answer is for Christian teachers to encourage healthy competition at every opportunity. Competition encourages ambition. Ambition encourages hard work and the pursuit of excellence. Hard work encourages dedication and self-sacrifice. These qualities are as transferable as they are worthwhile.

I once heard someone say that Muhammad Ali was asked what he would have done if he couldn't box. He replied that it wouldn't matter what he did because his philosophy of life would have been exactly the same; if he had been employed to empty garbage bins for a living he would have aimed to be the best emptier of garbage bins in the world! I wonder how many Christians working in education strive to be the best librarian in the world or the best college principal in the world or the best teaching assistant in the world.

Not only is there nothing wrong with being competitive and striving to be the best, God created us to be this way. The parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30) – admittedly a story about using money to generate profit found in the one Gospel penned by a former tax-collector! – is a salutary reminder that choosing to do nothing or,

Subject: Prayers for groups
ACT Now issue: Autumn 2007
 Item responded to: Too busy for God

Dear Editor

This prayer really spoke to me and my situation. It reminded me that sometimes I am so busy 'doing' things that this becomes an excuse for not 'being' in the Lord's presence. If we are to be effective we owe it to the Lord (and to ourselves) to get to know Him more.

Tim Collins

at least, choosing not to compete with our peers is a recipe for personal, familial and communal disaster. God calls us to use and multiply what we have been given. Day by day, whoever we are and whatever we do, I believe this is how God wants us to live.

Please don't misunderstand me, healthy competition is not just about beating other people – although, self-evidently, competition leads to winners and losers – it leads to quality, innovation and wealth creation. Competitive sport, like competitive education, competitive art, competitive music and competitive science, brings out the very best in humanity because it forces people who, in a fallen world, have a tendency to otherwise be timid and lazy, to use their God-given gifts and talents to their fullest extent.

Mr Kaye concludes that 'PE should contribute towards the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all learners and, in common with every other curriculum subject, it should be relevant, enjoyable, inclusive and challenging.' I agree! However, instead of 'collaborative' activities like parachute games, aerobics and skipping, I favour competitive games. When children and young people are part of a team they understand that others depend on them as much as they depend on others. We should not be asking students to 'try' their best or 'aim' for a personal best simply so they feel warm and fuzzy inside. Instead, at every opportunity we should be modelling and teaching age and ability-appropriate levels of self-discipline and interdependence, in order to foster a sense of corporate pride and collective achievement.

In short, competitive sport helps to nurture a sense of communal identity, reinforce civil society and build up human civilisation and, much more importantly, it makes God happy to see humans using their talents to maximum effect.

Miles Anderson

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Subject: Eating disorders
ACT Now issue: Autumn 2007
 Item responded to: As easy as ABC

Dear Editor

Thank you for including Jill Smith's article in *ACT Now*. The interview with the housemistress was extremely enlightening and, even though I have worked in boarding schools for almost 30 years, I gleaned a number of helpful insights and practical tips. Already, I have been able to respond to pupils exhibiting the warning signs listed in this excellent piece.

Sandra Small