

Teamwork = Accomplishment

By Dan Olberg, Park Elementary Principal

Imagine your favorite sporting team just won the game. The scoreboard shows that they won by 2 points. But, wait. What if the game was not over and there are still points to be awarded or taken away based on the behavior of each team's members during the game? Did they encourage their teammates? Assist each other? Give the opponent suggestions when they made a mistake? What did their body language show about their character after losing or winning? How about applauding a good play or nice effort from their opponent? Would your favorite team *still* win the game?

Students are graduating from school to take jobs where they are placed in work teams. Examples can be found in various job sectors. In health care, many decisions are based on an interdisciplinary team that can include a physician, nurse, dietitian, social worker, therapist, and others. In the business world, teamwork is important for improving the productivity and creativity of a company. These team members learn from each other through competition and collaboration. When constructing, builders will meet with an architect, electrician, plumber, cabinet maker, and others to be able to offer the best design and building ideas to their customers. In education, teams of teachers work together to share ideas, analyze student data, and coordinate plans that allow more individual learning activities for students. Collaboration through teams is occurring in all fields more than it ever has in the past.

Children need to learn the importance of being assertive in a team. Some of the best indicators of assertiveness in school is the ability to ask questions in a group, offer feedback to other students without putdowns, and to ask for help from teachers or other students when needed. This, along with the ability to listen and be open to other ideas, is an early indicator of how children will evolve as productive team members later in life.

I am happy to say that our Lego League team excels in their level of sportsmanship. They lead by example. During the State tournament, they took to the performance stage to assist another team with their robot, mid-competition. Our student members offered tips and ideas for their opponent. Needless to say, they received high marks for their sportsmanship. As such, they were announced proud winners of the State Lego League Championship due to the team's focus and tremendous character traits.

The vast majority of jobs require assembling a team to tackle a task in the most creative, cost efficient, and time effective manner. Doing this requires team members that are accountable to each other, give each other positive feedback, and have the skills to communicate.

In our society we often focus on individual awards for individual accomplishments. But when you really look at our nation's significant accomplishments, from writing the *Constitution* to putting a man on the Moon, you will find that it took teamwork from individuals who trusted and learned from each other. Sometimes we get caught up in the competitive nature of our lives and miss opportunities to model or teach the importance of working together. As parents and educators we need to continue to expect, encourage, and model good teamwork as much or more than we focus on the score at the end of the game to encourage the character traits in our children that will allow them to prosper as they enter the work field.