



Lower School Update

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Play. When we think about playing, what comes to our mind? To me, playing is smiling, giggling and having fun. Unstructured play is a great time for kids to learn to cooperate, listen to each other and enjoy themselves. It is a time to enjoy the movement and fresh air that comes with being on a playground. Even our seniors in high school find the playground a place where they can be silly, run around and laugh when they visit our first graders.

Playing a sport is different from free play. We keep score and we have coaches and lots of rules and strategies. Many students enjoy sports at differing levels, but they are also used to having a coach and referees to manage the games.

Lower School students can participate positively in sports and enjoy free play too, since both are important for their overall development. What is becoming a lost art is being able to play just for fun.

Time spent in low stakes games allows kids to broaden their friendships by including more people who may not understand the complicated rules and strategies in a sport. Kids can change the game they play often and see that someone else's idea may be fun too. The lack of scoring, winning and complex rules can increase enjoyment.

So how can you help your child enjoy free play? First, have a conversation about competition. A free play game is more relaxed. If you have to win, then that can make it hard for you to enjoy the game. Next, talk about encouraging words. No one really likes to hear "You're out!" every time it happens. Give the other person a chance to learn the rules. Finally, encourage others and help model kind words. Too many kids are being exposed to behaviors at the college and pro-level sports that aren't necessary on the playground.

I know that play has plenty of benefits for our kids. Let's help them see that it's okay to smile, have fun and giggle sometimes.

Thank you for your support, and let's keep free play alive and well.