

# THE NEST

A CCS Resource for Discipleship in the Home

## Whose Game Is It, Anyway?

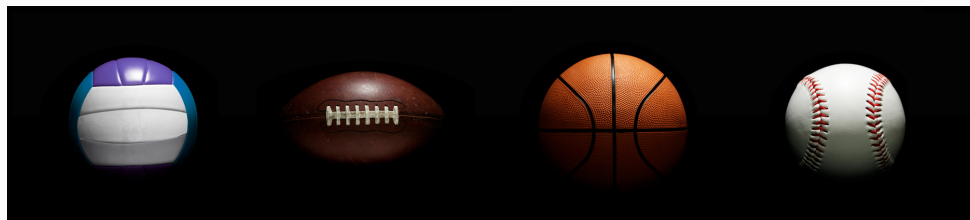
Today's culture places a significant value on student involvement in activities ranging from sports to music. I wonder if you, like me, have felt the disorienting switch of having our kids sign up for something and then feel like the game was changed? Or if we step back, perhaps we will discover prevailing perspectives and pressures that influence our choices around extra-curricular involvement?

In the book, *Whose Game Is It, Anyway?* Richard Ginsburg, Stephen Durant, and Amy Baltzell help mirror back to us the frenzy of extra-curricular and help provide intentional questions for parents and students to engage with healthy priorities and perspective.

## What's the Big Picture?

There's 10 seconds left in the final basketball game of the season. Your child is the best shooter on the team and she knows the coach is going to call on her in this moment. The pressure from teammates and spectators is palpable. There's a time out. What's the conversation? When everyone is focusing on the immediate outcome, the authors suggest that the best coaches keep the big picture in mind. They suggest that each family have a guiding vision for extra-curricular: *When my child is 21 years old, what kind of person do I want him or her to be and how will extra-curricular help us, as parents, get our child there?* Truly, whatever the conversation is, the most important thing isn't the score.

This echoes our very first issue in the question: *what are you building?* Yes - championship are fun. Character development, however, takes precedence.



## Key Thoughts:

The American Academy of Pediatrics issued a policy statement discouraging the practice of specializing in a single sport prior to adolescence.

In 2011, researchers found that athletes who were injured “had a significantly higher average of . . . sports specialization. Long hours spent pursuing one sport year-round means that sport injuries previously only seen in professional athletes are now on the rise in childhood.”

Replace the car-ride question: “Did you win” with questions that reveal our values:

- Did you have fun?
- How did you play?
- What is something new you learned?
- How do you feel about your effort?
- How did the team play together?

The authors provide three basic steps for evaluating engagement in extra-curricular: 1) know your child, 2) know yourself, and 3) know your child's extra-curricular environment.

### Questions for knowing your child

- How does my child approach new experiences?
- What is my child's usual activity level?
- How well does my child accept limits and take instruction?
- Can my child ask for help when it's needed?
- What is my child's learning style? Is my child a doer or a listener?



Each child is unique. What works for one doesn't always work for another. To measure your child's emotional health, consider these areas individually: confidence, judgment (decision making), interests, relationships, emotional control, and extra-curricular related skills.

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balanced and  
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**WHOSE GAME IS IT,  
ANYWAY?**

### Questions for knowing yourself

Here are some key questions that parents should address about themselves when reviewing and assessing their child's involvement in sports:

- Can I articulate my ultimate goals for my child's sports participation?
- Have my spouse or partner and I discussed and agreed upon an overall philosophy of extra-curricular involvement for our child?
- What three to five virtues do I see as essential to a positive extra-curricular experience?
- What extra-curricular behaviours or events (such as showing apathy, unfair outcome, errors, or defeat) sets me off emotionally?

### Questions for knowing your child's extra-curricular environment?

- Does the program have a clear expression of mission and guiding values?
- What do other parents (past and current) say about their child's involvement?
- What type of behaviour does the program formally reward?

**Myth: Specialization early is the key to exceptional performance.**

There is a prevailing perspective that is shaping involvement: Students must specialize early and focus on one sport/activity. The authors note, "We have found that the most balanced and centred children have the best chances to become great performers. We know that the message . . . early specialization is out there. **The research does not support this notion.**" Or consider this quote from another resource called, *How to Raise an Adult*: "In 2000 the American Academy of Pediatrics issued a policy statement **discouraging** the practice of specializing in a single sport prior to adolescence. . . In 2011, researchers found that athletes who were injured "had a significantly higher average of . . . sports specialization. Long hours spent pursuing one sport year-round means that sport injuries previously only seen in professional athletes are now on the rise in childhood."

Parents, *you are ridiculously in charge*. Ultimately, the extra-curricular culture will take its direction from the decisions of families like our own.

## Resource for the shelf:

