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How to Motivate Students Only Interested in Sport to Improve their School Performances

Teachers of All Subjects

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Introduction

Many students who consider a career as professional athlete show little interest in school matters, or have difficulties in managing their school work and training at the same time.

These guidelines are addressed to teachers of all subjects (other than physical education) and aim to support this kind of student. Each step addresses a different aspect of the problem; they do not have to be followed in a specific order.



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Stay realistic regarding school results

Require rigour, work and assiduousness at school as well as in sport. In lessons, this is all the more necessary because – in particular in elite sport sections – students may have to skip some classes to participate in competitions, and have therefore less time to dedicate to their studies. Students will need to prove autonomous and serious if they wish to succeed.

On the other hand, remember to also be flexible and try to understand the requirements and restrictions that the sport may set to the student. Be aware of the legislation of your country on athlete students' rights and obligations regarding school attendance (in some countries, even if the student is not recognised as an athlete student, they can be entitled to a certain number of justified absences due to practices or competitions).

Encourage the students to talk with the study counsellors, or any relevant person of your school, whenever they feel to be lost or in difficulties with their studies and school performances. When there are absences due to the sport activities or for other reasons, make yourself available for extra explanations and make sure that the student receives all the missing information regarding the tasks in the classroom, coming exams and tests and also some options of how to work out for the compensation of the missing tasks. Even though they need a lot of help and support from their teachers, students also will need to prove autonomous and serious if they wish to succeed

Learning Objective

The learning objective of step 1 is to make a clear connection between the elite sport and studies. The schools should provide the students regular study guidance also then when there are sudden or expected absences. A constant interaction and communication between school and sport team should be guaranteed.

Online Resources

- [School-life balance](#)
In order to optimize functioning, it is necessary to find a balance between the various roles one plays. A student often wears many different hats: partner, worker, friend, classmate, etc. Often times these roles are in conflict, and a student must be adept at attending to a variety of factors and assessing priorities.
- [Study and Success Strategies](#)
Tips for realistic studying
- [Balancing sport and studies](#) (Only in Finnish)
Tips and materials for students and teachers
- [Tips for the students' time-management when balancing elite sports and studies](#) (Only in Finnish)
- [Tips for making study plans: how to choose the school, how to manage own studies](#) (Only in Finnish)
- [Guide for studies for young athletes](#) (Only in Finnish)

Value in the class the benefits of sport

Researches show that physical activities stimulate the production of substances that protect neurons, which can improve memory, concentration and attention span. Researchers also note that it increases confidence, self-esteem and self-image.

Philippe Godin, professor of sport psychology at the Catholic University of Louvain (Belgium) assures that the practice of sports develops qualities that are necessary to studies: “Doing sport improves time management skills, confidence and stress resistance, positively influences health and sleep. These benefits contribute to a good intellectual activity. Besides, collective sports improve relational and social skills, which affects psychological abilities and foster students’ motivation...” These social skills, such as team spirit, could be put to good use to improve the class group dynamics.

When creating the annual time schedule for the PE activities, try to place the PE lessons on such places that they support the above mentioned aspects and thus support students’ mental welfare and performances in other lessons.

Provide the students with as many different sport activities and physical activities for the PE lessons as possible. Ensure that the motivation can be guaranteed both for top athletes and for “normal” students.

Cooperate with teachers of various subjects for the integration of sports into other school subjects. There is a lot of possibilities for integrating sports and languages, sports and maths, sports and health education etc.

Learning Objective

The learning objective of step 2 is to give ideas for integrating sports into the school curricula and study programmes in a way that all learning activities support the individual development of the student.

Online Resources

- [Motor learning in practice](#)
Research results and case studies by Keith Davids
- [Teachers’ conceptions of integration PE and health education](#) (only in Finnish)
Master’s thesis, 2015, in the Finnish context
- [PE as a source of motivation in school context and as a support for students’ self-confidence and personal development](#) (only in Finnish)

Online Resources

- [The survey of the results of PE in comprehensive schools in Finland \(2010\)](#)
Statements and supporting materials from the National Board of Education in Finland
(only in Finnish)
- [Faut-il doubler les heures d’éducation physique?](#)
(Article in French)
Article in Belgian magazine “Prof” (March-April-May 2009, pp. 28-29) on whether the number of hours dedicated to PE in schools should be doubled. Contains the intervention by Philippe Godin (Catholic University of Louvain) quoted in this step.

Create bridges between sport training and intellectual activities

Because it is related to a more concrete effort than the intellectual effort, sport can often be used to explain students the meaning of homework or the need to persevere even when you do not understand at once: “like a football or basketball player needs to exercise shooting every day in order to do it during a game, likewise a student needs to do their homework carefully every day if they hope to have a good mark when they do the task in class”.

Think of how to integrate sport and PE into vocational and other general studies; cooperate with other teachers, create teams of teachers. Participate in school outings and extracurricular activities that involve physical activities and contribute to their organisations with physical education teachers. This way, physical and sport activities could be mixed with curricular content (such as discovering the geography, flora and fauna of the region during a trekking activity) Likewise, sport-related matters could be included in lessons (effects of sport on the body for the biology course...). Sport can also be used to enhance soft and relational skills (teamwork, interpersonal relationships, etc.) among all students (not only athletes).

If the cause and effect relationship between practice and achievement is the same in both cases, it is often better perceived in sport.

Learning Objective

The learning objective of step 3 is to remind of the fact that sport can be used as a support of the studies giving reasons for the studies and raising the level of motivation among students. It is possible to show ways to explain the subject matters via sports. The closer the school comes to the student’s everyday life, the more concrete connections can be made..

Online Resources

- [Training for PE teachers](#) (only in Finnish)
A research of sport education in vocational schools integrating sport and vocational education
- [L & T Research Articles](#) (only in Finnish)
A set of articles and research results about different aspects of balancing sports, studies and intellectual performances from different points of view
- [Jungle Race](#)
A mobile game designed for students of all ages to motivate them for physical performances and activities.
- [Itinéraire Wallonie-Vélo 2013-2014](#)
In June 2014, thirty-six students between 11 and 13 years old (accompanied by eleven adults) left Liège by bike to reach Brussels five days later, using 250 kilometers of cycle path. The project also gave the opportunity to address school matters: distance calculation and problem solving in mathematics; discovery of the bicycle in history (including the role they played in the first World War)...



Help the student set priorities

Put the sport activity to its place in its confrontation with school:

- One sport result will not determine the future.
- A sport career is temporary, there is a life after sport.
- An injury or a health problem can put a brutal end to a sport career.
- Not everybody can achieve excellence in sport.

Explain to the student that only being in the service of one's school studies the sport they practice will be useful. Spend time on face to face conversations with the students, ask about their personal objectives and about how they are aiming at receiving them. Help them set small and short-term goals and steps in order to see also the achievements during the school year. By setting concrete and achievable priorities and objectives students are able to monitor and assess their own development and continue setting new objectives. Self-assessment skills are important as part of the studies and of lifelong learning skills.

Learning Objective

The learning objective of step 4 is to keep in mind that the school has to set priorities to the student's personal development. Even though the sport career may seem to be the only option for a young student, they must be reminded from time to time of the importance of getting a profession and a certificate from the school.

Online Resources

● [Chat with champions](#)

Time management and prioritizing education from athletes' viewpoint

● [Open University portal](#) (Only in Finnish)

Tips and supporting materials for setting goals in studies and for achieving them

● [Guide for studies for young athletes](#)

● [Case studies on "Not Only Fair Play"](#)

A collection of interviews with students who explain how they manage to balance sport and education, what support they receive.

Online Resources

● [Know-how with our objectives](#) (only in Finnish)

A set of recommendations for students' use to set priorities for their learning and find their skills and strengths.

● [Balance between sport and studies](#) (only in Finnish)

A set of instructions for helping students to set priorities and to balance sport and studies successfully.

● [Effective Goal Setting for Students](#)

The process of setting goals allows students to choose where they want to go in school and what they want to achieve. By knowing what they want to achieve, they know what they have to concentrate on and improve. Goal setting gives students long-term vision and short-term motivation. Ideas and tools for helping students setting goals.

Help the student organise their schedule

Good time management is usually the most difficult element to achieve. Sport requirements often increase with time while school requirements intensify during a session, not to mention other requirements from daily life.

Planning can help to reduce stress and give a feeling that one manages their life well:

Offer concrete tools such as a diary or a time management application to help the student set their sport timetable (training, competition, travels, medical check-up...) and school timetable (courses, homework, deadlines, exams...), as well as their free time, like sleep and nutrition (a pressure valve when one's schedule is busy).

Before adopting a definitive schedule, set a "test" period.

Listen to the coaches and parents and create an open and confident atmosphere for interaction and communication. Arrange regular meetings and evaluation discussions with the student in order to follow his / her progress and ability to balance the sport career and studies. In case of problems or absences, start tackling the issue immediately and try to find, together with the student, solutions for the problems. Let the student find the solutions by himself/herself, if possible. Try to act as a support, do not give ready answers, if possible

Learning Objective

The learning objective of step 5 is to remind the importance of a common planning and scheduling, together with the student, parents and sport teams. An open atmosphere and discussion help the teachers to understand the requirements set by the sport team for the students, and vice versa. Parents are on an important position when supporting the student's progress in studies and sports and all these actors have to be aware of what is going on in the student's life.

Online Resources

- [Instructions for independent learning for athletes](#) (only in Finnish)
- [Balance between sport and study](#) (only in Finnish)
Time-management when balancing elite sport and studies
- [Time Management For The Athlete](#) (only in Finnish)
Time-management among elite athletes: how to manage to do it
- [Planning and using a daily schedule](#)
Easy to use guidelines and template to produce a daily study schedule, by the Carnegie Mellon University (Pittsburgh, USA)
- [Training and communication diary](#)
An example of diary used in Belgium for training schedule and communication between school and coaches
- [Case studies on "Not Only Fair Play"](#)
A collection of interviews with students who explain how they manage to balance sport and education, what support they receive...

Help the student in case of failure

Failure is never inevitable, in sport nor at school. Any result has an explanation, related to a bad physical condition, lack of technique or simply lack of motivation. It is important to be available and to listen to the student.

Remind the student how important preparatory work is before a deadline. Sport analogies, such as those given as examples in Step 3, could be used to motivate the student who does not see the point of studying.

Encourage the student and increase their self-esteem emphasising their strengths and successes. Propose remediation (update, catching up), homework support, individual follow-up, review their timetable. There are sometimes homework clubs specifically addressed to athlete students. Some sport clubs also offer premises at the sport halls for homework support and homework clubs. Be aware of such opportunities and encourage the students to make use of this help.

Other classmates, in particular athlete students who succeed at school, could also provide support. There might also be a possibility to get help and support from other (elder) athletes who have passed the same training program and are practicing the same sport.

If the student's current section does not seem appropriate to their skills or aspiration, propose a change of section. Consider a sport-study section if one is available in your school and the student is not part of it.

Learning Objective

The learning objective of step 6 is to remind the fact that there should be various mechanisms to support the student in case of a failure that could be either related to studies or to sports. The school should be able to offer help and support that may be different in each case.

Online Resources

- [Maison des sportifs](#) (document in French)
Initiative by the Province of Liège, Belgium, to support athlete students who have school difficulties: remedial classes, resource person entirely dedicated to the student, support to the organisation of sport competitions in and outside school.
- [Diacor](#)
Diacor offers the services of physicians with extensive experience in treating sports-related injuries, as well as specialists in various medical fields who have a special interest in sports. They work in close cooperation with the National Olympic Committee in Finland.
- [What To Do When You Are Injured?](#) (only in Finnish)
How to recover from the physical injuries or exertion.
- [The young growth and development](#) (only in Finnish)
- [Floorball injuries: epidemiology and injury prevention by neuromuscular training](#) (only in Finnish)
Surveys and articles on physical injuries in sports

Coordinate with sport leaders to foster double success

Organise meetings with the coach to adapt the timetables, monitor the student's progress in sport and at school.

Invite the coach or sport coordinator to participate in the class council.

Integrate a sports note in the report (based on the student's motivation, their commitment in the activity, their progress and behavior).

Implement a contact tool such as the "training and contact book" used in French-speaking Belgium (see resources). This tool enables communication between the athlete, their family, the coach, their sport federation and the school they attend. It interrelates useful information about the sport and school life for the best integration possible. The Belgian diary includes among other a calendar of practices, a timetable of lessons, spaces for comments by the parents, the sport referent at school and the sport referent from the sport club or federation, spaces for communication to parents, the athlete's chart, spaces to request absences in case of competition or activity, personal data. This tool is signed by all the stakeholders. It is part of the student's school file.

Learning Objective

The learning objective of step 7 is to give examples and ideas for developing the cooperation and interaction between schools and sport clubs' coaches.

Online Resources

- [Training and communication diary](#)
An example of diary used in Belgium, mentioned in the step, for training schedule and communication between school and coaches
- [What motivates young elite sports?](#) (only in Finnish)
The purpose of this study was to discover if young athletes enjoy doing sports, if they are satisfied with different aspects of sports and training.
- [Cooperation between schools and sports clubs](#) (only in Finnish)
A presentation giving ideas of how to promote cooperation between schools and sport teams (case: ringette)

Agree with parents to supervise their child's school path

Agree with the parents on the ways to communicate between school and home. Make sure that the student is also aware of these means and participates in the communication in a way that is clear for all.

Arrange frequent meetings and encounters. For day-to-day communication, use a contact book in which all parties can write notes and send wishes that might help the student's study process. Try to inform the parents regularly but not too often (if not needed) about the student's progress and try to be sensitive for hearing what happens after school days: in other words, is everything balanced in a student life and is everyone (student, parents, coaches and teachers) aware of it?

Agree together with the parents on the amount of responsibility that is given to the student and how to support him / her in his / her studies and sports activities

Learning Objective

The learning objective of step 8 is to give ideas of how to promote the cooperation and discussion between schools and families.

Online Resources

- **[Parent toolkit](#)**
The toolkit will help parents navigate their child's journey from pre-kindergarten through high school. It is designed to help track and support progress at each stage.
- **[Co-Operation Between Home And School In Basic Education](#)** (only in Finnish)
Guidelines and laws for the cooperation between homes and schools by the Finnish National Board of Education
- **[Home-school cooperation](#)** (only in Finnish)
Tips and ideas for the cooperation between homes and schools:
- **[Good teacher!](#)**
<http://www.kodinjakoulunpaiva.fi/materiaalit> (only in Finnish, 2 link)
Concrete ideas and examples on how to arrange parents' meetings and info evenings at schools

Online Resources

- **[Wilma](#)**
A web interface for the student administration program to facilitate interaction and discussion between teachers and parents about students' study performances and notifications of absences etc.
- **[A Good Night's Sleep for Student Athletes](#)**
Adequate sleep for student athletes is key in preventing negative outcomes. Recommendations and notifications of the importance of rest for both parents and student-athletes.
- **[Benefits of School-Based Sports](#)**
School-based sports programs can bring out noticeable positive reactions and behaviours in teens. But what are the deeper benefits from these programs?

Monitor signs of despondency or depreciation of the student

Do not assume at once that athlete students are necessarily uninterested in other matters, there could be various causes to their difficulties. Talk with them about their project, their obligations. Are they still interested? If the answer is no, help them reintegrate a regular class as easily as possible.

Keep in mind athlete students could face different kinds of problems (health problems, tensed family and social relationships due to their particular status...) and take into consideration the student's general situation: allow some times the student stay at home and sleep instead of coming to school – if there is a good reason for tiredness, like late practices in the evening, late arrival from a game tour etc. Sometimes there are very simple reasons behind the student's behavior, like a lack of time, tiredness, lack of motivation for some reason, lack of success in the sport career etc. Regular discussions with the student, parents and coaches should be a tool of interaction for the teachers and study counsellors.

Also take into account the student's particular sport. A student engaged in an individual sport may be less at ease in social relationships, and therefore in the class group, than one doing a team sport

Learning Objective

The learning objective of step 9 is to make sure that a student is considered as a whole: there are many factors that affect to the performances both at school and in sport performances. Constant discussions both with the teachers and study counsellors help students to take more responsibility of their development; they feel secured and understand that they are able to get help for different questions and problems, whenever they need.

Online Resources

- [Case studies on "Not Only Fair Play"](#)
A collection of interviews with students who explain how they manage to balance sport and education; what support they receive.
- [Motivating Students](#)
Different aspects and impacts of motivation.
- [A introduction to holistic education](#)
An introduction to a holistic approach on education.
- [Holistic Approach](#)
Reflection on what a Holistic Approach to Learning Could Look Like?

Make use of digital learning solutions (materials and methods)

There is a lot of digital learning material available on the internet and also in schools platforms and official education websites. Help students use these materials as a support for their studies. Especially during the training camps and game tours it would be good to provide the students with some additional or supporting learning material in order to keep them in the study rhythm.

You can also use digital tools and media for communication when the student is absent from the classes, if possible (e.g. mobile phones, iPads, chats etc.).

It is also recommendable to reflect on the use of digital device for the follow up of everyday physical activities: games and monitoring device may increase students' motivation for monitor their own performances. There are several European and national funded projects that promote the awareness of this approach.

Finally, digital tools can be used to organise one's schedule. Different functions like reminders of the tasks, activities, tests etc. can be used to help when organising everyday school and sports activities. They may also be used as tools for the follow up of physical performances: some tools can even be used in an interactive way: the program may give feedback to the registered results: they may congratulate or ask for more performances.

Learning Objective

The learning objective of step 10 is to get acquainted and learn how to use digital solutions and show students how to use them to support their learning and physical activities.

Online Resources

- [Sporteef](#) (Website in French)
A French e-learning platform for athlete students
- [Technology and sport](#) (only in Finnish)
Reports and recommendations of using technology and digital solutions in PE
- [Evaluation of Physical Education](#) (only in Finnish)
Supporting materials and methods for assessment of PE
- [Increasing physical activity](#) (only in Finnish)
How to increase the physical activities at school

Online Resources

- [Online teaching materials](#) (only in Finnish)
A database of digital online teaching materials in PE
- [Omnia](#) (only in Finnish, support language can be chosen)
A learning platform Moodle used by many VET providers to provide digital learning materials and interaction between students and teachers, online tool to help distance studies and self -studies as part of the main training programme.
- [Learning Landscape](#)
Teaching and Learning in the Digital World: Possibilities and Challenges
- [Conference presentation by Gordon Stobart](#)
Assessment for learning – what is it and how can digital toolshelp?