

Go Cowboys and Cowgirls!

It's the beginning of another fall sports season. Although practice sessions and games are played outside of the "regular" school day, it has always been my contention that these programs, both athletic and extra/co-curricular, are an extension of our learning environment and not just extra's.

The KSHSAA (Kansas State High School Activities Association) stresses the importance of extra/co-curricular activities. This organization, which oversees high school interscholastic competition in Kansas, believes that both athletic and non-athletic competition supports and enhances the academic curriculum, and provides a well balanced education that includes physical, social, and emotional development.

Head football coach, Jeff Geist, had this to say, "There are so many crossovers in academics and athletes. Responsibility, accountability, work ethic, unity, and pride are just a few of the life lessons that are needed in both. One trait that is needed more than any is cooperation. In football, you rely on 10 other individuals to do their part to make a play successful and it takes the entire team to achieve a common goal."

Coach Geist went on to explain, "The pressure to perform in front of a large audience can be trying. Wanting to perform at a high level, live up to expectations, and be successful can cause a great deal of stress. Many student athletes learn how to handle this type of stressor and carry this trait on in later life."

Jesse Patrick, senior AHS football player said, "Participating in football gives you the chance to be part of a team, and also provides you the chance to work well with others."

Troy Emig, who coaches cross-country, put his plug in for this sport, "These activities allow students to learn and build life skills. Individuals learn to be part of something bigger than themselves. A team allows for individuals to contribute to a group effort. Also, individuals set personal goals to attain. As students interact with one another social skills are developed and enhanced. Lastly, the benefit of physical activity for overall health is extremely important; research now supports the importance of movement to enhance brain activity."

Players from the other AHS fall sports teams also had thoughts on the importance of athletic activities. Senior Taylor Thompson noted, "Participating in volleyball keeps me in shape, helps me make new friends and find people with similar interests. Playing volleyball teaches me how to take instruction and I am always driven towards becoming better so I can be on varsity. I have learned fundamental leadership skills and have developed better communication skills. I don't know what I would do with a lot of my time if it wasn't spent playing sport." Her coach, Mike Jantz added, "Probably one of the most important lessons our players get from participating in volleyball is that team work and working together are so vital for success. Players must communicate and work together."

Susie Geiger, a senior, had this to say, "Tennis gives me a chance not only to utilize and improve my athletic skills, which I don't often get the chance to do otherwise,

but also to be a part of a group with a common goal. Being on the tennis team gives me a chance to contribute to my school's legacy in a fun way and builds up my school spirit!" Her coach, Justin Amos, commented, "Extra curricular activities allow students to experience the 'greater cause' of a team — that is very important to carry onward into their future. They also help to promote cooperative learning and community."

According to Will Burton, Abilene High School Athletic Director, we have 28 extra-curricular or co-curricular activities/athletics.

In the weeks to come, I'll give space in this column to some of the other activities and organization that complement the school's academic curriculum, enhance student's educational experiences, and helps them gain leadership and life skills.

But for now, I'll be rooting for the Cowboys and Cowgirl football, volleyball, tennis and cross-country teams!