Svenka worked hard on her soccer skills and made the school team. When she got an F on her report card, the coach told her she was not eligible to play unless her grades improved. The school that Svenka attends, like many others around the country, has a rule: If you don’t pass a class, you don’t get to play. Svenka thinks that this is unfair. She does not think this one bad grade should affect her place on the team.

Some people think that middle and high school students should maintain certain grade point averages to play sports. Many schools use grades as a prerequisite for participation in after-school activities. They feel that the students should work as hard in the classroom as on the field. If students really want to play they should work extra hard in school to make sure that they can.

Not only does this rule encourage student athletes to keep up with their schoolwork, it also motivates coaches to teach players how to balance their time. Coaches don’t want their star athletes to fall behind in school and be dropped from the team.

On the other hand, there are people who do not think grade requirements are a good idea. They think that forcing students to get a certain grade will keep too many from participating. In previous years, some students took easier classes just so they could play sports. This was unfair to the athletes who had to work harder to keep up their grades in challenging classes.

What do you think about this? Does the “no pass, no play” rule seem fair to you? Should middle and high school students have to meet a grade requirement to participate in sports?
USE THE FOCUS WORDS  * and alternate parts of speech

prerequisite (noun) requirement that must be met before moving on

Sample Sentence: Turning in all your homework is usually a prerequisite for getting good grades.

Turn and Talk: What are some prerequisites for getting a driver’s license?

*prerequisite (adjective) required before something else can happen

Sample Sentence: Punctuality (being on time) is a prerequisite behavior for getting a raise.

Turn and Talk: What are some prerequisite achievements for becoming a doctor?

eligible (adjective) qualified for

Sample Sentence: Students must bring in signed permission slips to be eligible to participate in field trips.

Turn and Talk: Do you think students who don’t do their homework should be eligible to go on field trips?

maintain (verb) to keep up; to sustain

Sample Sentence: Raphael got a 100% on the quiz, which allowed him to maintain his A+ average in class.

Turn and Talk: What can you do to maintain a good reputation among your peers?

affect (verb) to have an effect on

Sample Sentence: Eating a healthy breakfast can affect how well you do in school.

Turn and Talk: Besides diet, what else can affect your performance in school?

*affect (noun) observable emotion

Sample Sentence: Ella’s affect changed as soon as she saw the grade on her test.

Turn and Talk: Describe a poker player’s affect.

previous (adjective) earlier, most recent

Sample Sentence: We won our game last night because we played a lot better than we had in the previous game.

Turn and Talk: If you could choose any of your previous teachers to teach your class next year, who would you choose and why?
In Georgia, students must maintain good grades to be eligible to play sports. For a student to join a sports team, he or she must have met certain prerequisites the previous semester. In 2009, the Georgia school board made a change that affects middle school students. Before, middle school students had to pass five classes the semester before playing a sport. Now, students have to pass at least 70% of their classes the semester before playing a sport. One reason the Georgia school board changed their sports eligibility rule is because different Georgia schools follow different schedules. Some students only take four classes each semester, so even if they passed every class, they wouldn’t meet the eligibility requirement of passing five classes.

Option 1: If students take four classes, how many must they pass to pass at least 70% of their classes?

A. at least 1
B. at least 2
C. at least 3
D. all 4

Option 2: Sierra passed five of her classes, but she did not meet Georgia’s new sports eligibility requirement that students must pass at least 70% of their classes. How many classes must she have taken?

Sierra must have taken a minimum of 8 classes. Here is one way to think about it: Let $t$ = classes taken and $p$ = classes passed. Then, solve the inequality $p \geq .7t$. When $p = 5$, we get $7.1 \leq t$. Since $t$ must be a whole number, Sierra must have taken 8 or more classes.

Discussion Question: Under the previous rule, passing a certain number of classes was a prerequisite for playing sports. The new rule asks students to pass a certain percentage of classes. In some schools, students can choose to take extra classes. Under the new rule, if students take more classes, they must maintain more passing grades to stay eligible to play sports. Will the new rule affect how many classes students take? Do you think it will discourage students from being ambitious and taking more classes? Why or why not?
Mr. Seemy finds Vickie sitting sadly in the hallway, holding a basketball. “What’s wrong, Vickie?” Mr. Seemy asks.

“I’m not eligible to play in the game tonight,” Vickie says. “Our coach made good grades a prerequisite. I try to maintain a strong B in each class, but I failed a history test last week and an English test the previous week. I’m so frustrated! I’ll probably just quit the team.”

“Don’t do that!” says Mr. Seemy. “Basketball can help you keep your grades up. Exercise affects your brainpower.”

“Really?” asks Vickie.

“Let’s investigate!” says Mr. Seemy.

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**Some of the students in Mr. Seemy’s class volunteer to participate in a study Vickie does on physical activity and memory.**

| Question: How does exercise affect brainpower? |
| --- | |
| Hypothesis: Students who run before a memory test will score higher than students who sit. |
| Materials: |
| • Group A (10 students) |
| • Group B (10 students) |
| • Memory test |
| Procedure: |
| • Ask Group A to run for ten minutes. |
| • Ask Group B to sit for ten minutes. |
| • Give memory test. |
| • Calculate the average score for each group. |
| Data: | Group A (runners) | Group B (sitters) |
| Average score | 89% | 66% |

Is the hypothesis supported by the data or not?

**Supported. Note: Review the issue of correlation vs. causation.**

What evidence supports your conclusion?

**Runners earned a higher average score than sitters.**

**How would you make this a better experiment?**

**Consider sample size, number of trials, control of variables, whether the procedure is a true measure of the question, replicability, data collection, etc.**

**Real Research:** The article cited below describes a study where college students ran, lifted weights, or sat quietly before a memory test. The runners consistently performed best. The article connects this finding to other studies that have suggested that exercise in general and aerobic exercise in particular stimulates helpful brain activity.


**Classroom Discussion:** Summarize the real research. (People who ran before a memory test outperformed people who sat or lifted weights.) Are students surprised by this finding? Why or why not? Which side(s) of this week’s debate could the finding support?
DEBATE THE ISSUE

Pick one of these positions (or create your own).

**A**

- Students who play sports should not have to maintain passing grades in any of their classes.

**OR**

- Students who play sports should have to maintain passing grades in all of their classes.

**OR**

- Students who play sports should have to maintain passing grades in a certain percentage of their classes.

**OR**

- Students who play sports...

**CREATE YOUR OWN**

Jot down a few notes on how to support your position during a discussion or debate.

- ______________________
- ______________________
- ______________________
- ______________________
- ______________________
- ______________________
- ______________________
- ______________________
- ______________________
- ______________________
- ______________________
- ______________________

Be a strong participant by using phrases like these:

- “Can you show me evidence in the text that...”
- “I believe that...”
- “You make a good point, but have you considered...”
- “I agree with you, but...”
TAKE A STAND

Support your position with clear reasons and specific examples. Try to use relevant words from the Word Generation list in your response.

eligible | affect | maintain | prerequisite | previous

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