Yelena Gerhardt

Mrs. Gerhardt

English 2 pre-honors

21 March 2019

Sports are Useless in Schools

In her article “Have Sports Teams Brought Down America’s Schools?” (2013), Elizabeth Kolbert argues that placing too much emphasis on sports and assigning very little value to education are problematic issues of the American culture. She supports her claim by first describing the experience of an American student in Poland, where sports programs are non-existent in public high schools, and noting that Polish education is much more successful than American. She then provides an example from her own life, wondering how it is perfectly acceptable for sports teams to require her sons to attend practices several weeks before school starts. Yet if academic subject teachers would request similar daily “practices” in early August, both students and parents would definitely complain. Kolbert continues by offering current data of U.S. students’ ranking compared to the rest of the world and points out that it is very low. Towards the end, she states that the emphasis placed on sports is the result of parents’ preferences. She concludes that kids are excited about sports only because parents have high expectations in sports, but they would perform just as successfully in academics if parents raised their expectations in that area as well. Kolbert’s purpose is to explain what typical American parents think of sports and to encourage them to reevaluate their priorities. She establishes a commanding and straightforward tone for adults, who, in Kolbert’s opinion, are mostly responsible for the problems with current American educational system. This work is significant because it challenges typical beliefs of the American culture and offers a practical suggestion to improve academic performance in schools.