

Headline: Getting Smart but Acting Foolishly: There is a Solution

By Karissa Niehoff, Executive Director of the National Federation of State High School Associations and Ron Laird, Commissioner of the Wyoming High School Activities Association.

We communicate on smart phones, drive smart cars, make purchases using smart cards and even drink smart water. But, really, how smart are we?

Between college admission and internet privacy scandals, sexual misconduct investigations, stolen trade secrets and the growing concern about how we communicate and connect with each other, technology seems to be outpacing our capacity to understand the most responsible way to use it.

In other words, how are tomorrow's leaders being groomed to make decisions that provide the perspective, balance and strength of character that today's advanced world needs?

The answer is by participating in high school sports like the ones offered by the high schools in Wyoming.

Most researchers agree that leaders are made, not born, through relationships with others. Human interaction and life experiences enable young men and women to develop leadership characteristics such as trust, mutual respect, integrity and accountability. These are the same values that are learned as a result of playing on a high school sports team.

And while club sports often have only a singular focus (the participant's athletic abilities), research documents that high school sports programs have an unparalleled positive effect on the physical, academic and emotional growth of teens, including a more mature level of character development.

In other words, high school sports have a more profound role to play in society today than you may realize.

The high school sports and activity programs in Wyoming—including music, speech, theatre and debate—typically account for only about one to three percent of a school's overall budget, making them one of the wisest investments your community makes. You can help by attending as many games and events as possible, donating to the booster club and volunteering to work in the concession stand.

Most of all, encourage your children to participate in as many sports and activities as they can. Because when they do, they will be joining a new generation of leaders who are both technologically smart and ethically responsible.

And that's exactly the kind of leadership our hyper-intelligent world needs.