

by PAUL F. LEVY

teamwork

on the field & at work

visualizing things in three dimensions. Research suggests this is the result of the toys that girls play with compared to the toys that boys play with, and that early design courses can bridge the gap.

Along the way, we instituted other measures. We established a national web database (www.wieo.org) for women-in-engineering programs. We created innovative summer programs for high-school girls, and a program that pairs middle-school girls with Tufts engineering students and faculty to work at a local museum. We increased the representation of women on Tufts faculty to serve as role models and mentors. We also paid attention to things which are sometimes overlooked, like creating more women's bathrooms in buildings built when only 3 percent of engineering students were women. We changed the culture in a fundamental way.

And an amazing thing happened. Tufts became the only engineering school in the country that attracted more students from liberal arts than it lost to liberal arts. Today, 32 percent of Tufts engineering students—about twice the national average—are women; and 16 percent of the faculty are women, about four times the national average.

And in case you're wondering, the little girl with the frizzy hair won the science fair that year; in fact, she was the first of five girls in a row to win at her school, an unprecedented event. She eventually attended Haverford College and majored in history and biology, graduating with honors. Today, she works in Tanzania for her own nonprofit foundation that raises money, and designs and builds science laboratories for children. *

Ioannis N. Miaoulis is President and Director of Boston's Museum of Science.

ONE WAY THAT PEOPLE LEARN TEAMWORK, informal mentoring, and other workplace skills is through participating in sports. Yet, many women of my generation did not get a chance to develop these talents since they had fewer opportunities to participate in organized athletics when they were young. I came to understand the importance of sports from my own experience: My passion—all the rest is a hobby—is coaching girls' soccer, something I have done for the last 15 years.

My goal as a coach is to create an environment that rewards risk-taking, discourages criticism, and acknowledges the girls' desire to have social relationships while they play. In this environment, the girls gain prowess and confidence, and their individual satisfaction rises. They become more and more creative—trying out different approaches, fresh moves, new ideas—because they know they are not going to be criticized. Over time, what I would call the “explicit social intercourse” also grows, as girls from a variety of backgrounds become at least friendly, if not real friends.

But here is the magic. Imagine 22 kids moving around on the field. Eventually, the girls learn to place themselves as play develops during a game in a way that reflects their relative strengths and weaknesses as players. They do not have to be told to do this. They do it on their own, on the field. They talk to one another occasionally, but mostly it happens intuitively.

The result: a team that is truly greater than the sum of its parts. The players function as a cohesive group—going from offense to defense, left to right, one side to the other—and the team works as an organic whole. When mistakes are made, you hear, “Good try.” Or, “Don't worry about it. It'll be better next time.” And when successes happen, players are covered with compliments from everyone. And, most important, the girls are smiling when they leave the field, win or lose.

These lessons from the playing field also apply to companies and institutions. Mentoring works best when it happens informally with the person who happens to be standing next to you when you need it. A work environment that encourages risk-taking, discourages criticism, and supports social relationships will allow and encourage women to develop their skills and achieve high-level satisfying careers. And, the interesting part is that men like it, too. *

Paul F. Levy is President and Chief Executive Officer of the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center.