

ARE TEACHERS PROMOTING EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES TO LOW-
ACHIEVING STUDENTS?

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Project Certification Page

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CERTIFICATION OF PROJECT WORK

We the undersigned, certify that this project entitled ARE TEACHERS PROMOTING EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES TO LOW-ACHIEVING STUDENTS? ACHIEVEMENT by Stephen Kirsch, Candidate for the Degree of Masters of Science in Education, Curriculum and Instruction Inclusive Education, is acceptable in form and content and demonstrates a satisfactory knowledge of the field covered by this project.


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Abstract

This research investigates teacher support of extracurricular programs to low-achieving students. Students who participate in extracurricular activities generally benefit from the many opportunities offered to them. Benefits of participation in extracurricular activities include better grades, scoring higher on standardized tests, fewer school absences, learning life skills that are not learned in the classroom, and a feeling of connectedness to their school. This study was designed to determine teachers' perceptions of extracurricular activities and their advantages, as well as how they encourage or discourage these opportunities to low-achieving students. A survey containing both Likert-scale and free response questions was administered to teachers in a rural middle and high school to analyze the aforementioned research questions.

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Introduction

Extracurricular activities can play an influential role in a student's life. Several life lessons are learned outside of school through these activities and peers. Interestingly, relatively few studies have been performed in this area. The purpose of this study was to consider how participation in Extracurricular Activities (ECA) impacts low-achieving students.

Studies have shown that students who participate in extracurricular activities often have greater academic achievement, score higher on standardized tests, attend school more regularly, have more socializing opportunities, have higher self-esteem, and show more school connectedness. Participants in out-of-school activities often learn skills like teamwork, leadership, and time management that they may not learn in the classroom. Since most after-school programs require the participant to sign a behavior form, they are often less likely to engage in risky behavior.

However, many also believe that these activities may affect student performance in a negative manner, claiming that conflicting time requirements and competing schedules take away from academics. Additionally, some negative outcomes of ECA's are: (1) Students may be more fatigued and acting out because they are spending too much time in school, (2) Students may be influenced negatively by peers with whom they are spending time during ECA, (3) Students could be misbehaving more because programs tolerate behavior for which students would be disciplined during regular school and (4) students too fatigued to complete homework assignments.

The recent implementation of the Common Core State Standards initiative places more pressure on teachers to perform better. They are expected to have all their students up to or

above the standard or benchmark before moving onto the next grade. This poses a challenge to teachers, especially ones that have a lot of low-achieving students in their class. However, research has shown that students who participate in programs after school typically perform better in their academics. This finding brings up an interesting controversy- should low-achieving students be required to focus solely on academics, or should they be encouraged to participate in ECA's to reap the resulting achievement benefits?

Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review will provide a discussion and examples of some of the positive and negative impacts of participation in extra-curricular activities (ECA's) on adolescent development. Additionally, this review of the literature will provide an overview of what teachers and related school personnel can do to encourage students to participate in ECA's. Lastly, this literature review will discuss how ECA's can positively affect academic, social, and behavioral development in middle/high school students.

Transition through School

For many young adults, the transition process from elementary school to middle school or from middle school to high school can be a challenging time in life. This transition is often associated with significant changes in both the classroom and social environment. In addition, the transition occurs during a time when these young adults are beginning to experience new physical and psychological changes, which may in turn affect their attitudes and motivation levels at school (Akos, 2006).

As students move from grade to grade, there is an increasing emphasis on their academic responsibility and performance. As students move from classroom to classroom throughout the school day, they experience fewer personal relationships with teachers in middle school and high school (Akos, 2006). Previous studies have shown that the changes in student-teacher relationships resulting from these transitions are associated with declines in self-perception and self-esteem, both of which have been shown to influence academic motivation and performance (Wigfield, Eccles, MacIver, Reuman, & Midgley, 1991). "The participation in that high-quality

extracurricular activity builds relationships between students and the competent, responsive adults who supervise such activities” (Holloway, 2002, p. 80).

With the transition to middle school or high school, students have reported concerns about failure and keeping up with assignments (Akos, 2006). “Students express concern about receiving lower or failing grades during a school level transition”(Akos, 2006, p.1). These transitions really affect students with disabilities, low-achieving students, and at-risk students. These adolescents often have fewer opportunities to interact with their fellow classmates (Carter, Swedeen, Moss, & Pesko, 2010). “Students with disabilities need to participate in extracurricular and other nonacademic activities, these students have fairly limited involvement in extracurricular activities relative to youth without disabilities” (Carter, Swedeen, Moss, & Pesko, 2010,p.275).

There are usually many opportunities offered for students to get involved in their school as they transition from school to school. But, for new upcoming students, many of these opportunities are missed because they do not know about the programs that are offered. Teachers in the school have the chance to welcome their new students, help them navigate the school, and instill a sense of belonging. They can provide information about how to get involved and make their school feel welcoming and personal (Benjamin, Earnest, Gruenewald, & Arthur, 2007).

Benefits of Participation

Many high schools in the United States offer some type of extracurricular program. Participation in these programs increases school connectedness and academic achievement (Ako, 2006; Bloomfield & Barber, 2010). This occurs because it enables: a) the acquisition of interpersonal skills and positive social norms b) relationship in common peer groups and c) stronger emotional and social connectedness to their school (Brown & Evans, 2005). It is

believed that participation in extracurricular activities contributes to an increase in academic achievement and peer social skills and a decrease in problem behaviors.

One study discusses how involvement in an after school program helps students feel more connected to their school and peers. Participation in extracurricular activities may influence mental well being of young people by reducing stress, giving more social opportunities, and for those who participate in athletics, feeling overall better about their appearance (Howard & Ziomek-Daigle, 2009).

Fredericks and Eccles (2008) did a studying involving 1,047 students from 23 middle schools who were enrolled in ECA's. Half of these participants were involved in some form of after-school program organized by their school at least once per week. The second group consisted of students who did not participate in any after-school program. The researchers found a positive relationship between the students who participated in extracurricular activities and academic achievement compared to those who did not participate.

A high priority for middle and high school students is to feel confident and be socially competent. According to a survey taken by adolescents, socialization and friendships are important in their lives and serve as an important part of their identity. Adolescents who participate in extracurricular activities often have greater opportunities to interact with others, develop friendships, and develop social confidence (Chomitz, 2009). Research has shown that those who participate in extracurricular activities have a higher self-perception than those who do not participate (Howard & Ziomek-Daigle, 2009). Also, adolescence is the time for students to experiment with various identities and explore ways they can influence and interpret their

world. “Extracurricular activities can offer adolescents a vision of self that entails commitment, belongingness, and passion” (Kunzman, 2002, p. 24).

According to Fox, Barr-Anderson, Neumark-Sztainer, and Wall (2010), middle school boys and high school girls and boys who participated on a sports team tended to have better grades, higher standardized test scores, more regular school attendance, and had higher self-esteem. In addition, adolescents who participated on a sports team were found to be less likely to use substances such as alcohol and drugs, less likely to drop out, but more likely to misbehave in school (Howie, Lukas, Pastor, Reuben, & Mendola, 2010).

Another benefit of extracurricular involvement is that participants are less likely to be found using substances like alcohol and drugs and partake in risky behaviors. In a research survey, 75 percent of the 25,797 participants aged 6-11 years participated in at least one after-school program. The students who participated were less likely to take part in risky behavior and had a lower dropout rate (Howie et al, 2010). These students are less likely to be absent from school and more likely to behave in school.

Participation in extracurricular activities not only has positive influences in students’ academic achievement, behavioral and social lives, but it also teaches important life skills, such as teamwork, leadership skills, and time management. These skills may help adolescents in other parts of their lives. If choosing to further their education, adolescents that participate in extracurricular activities are more likely to make friends easier, adjust to a new environment, and show leadership based on prior experience in extracurricular activities. They are also less likely to engage in problem behaviors. Research done by Howie et al. (2010) indicated that students who participated in extracurricular activities have lower dropout rates, were less likely to be

involved in risky behaviors, and had greater school performance, and better socializing opportunities.

Academic Achievement

Participants in extracurricular activities are positively correlated with academic achievement. Students who participated in extracurricular activities were associated with higher test scores, higher class grades, and greater academic achievement partially due to peer pressure to get work done and to keep grades up (Akos, 2006).

Positive impacts of extracurricular activities are seen in many programs offered including athletics, the arts, and after school programs. This participation comes with adult guidance, mentors or role models, and academic support. Some extracurricular activities have contracts participants must follow in order to stay enrolled. For example, an athlete on the soccer team must maintain a grade above a C and abstain from participating in risky behavior (e.g. no drug abuse). Other peers or teammates must maintain the same contract which serves as a network of support.. This helps students academically because they can work together and help each other. Adolescents who are involved with an extracurricular activity report that they have more friends and more socializing opportunities than adolescents who were non-participants. Because of this, students were encouraged by their friends to do their best in school and often had greater academic achievement (Blomfield & Barber, 2010).

Negative Impact of Participation

There are many positive impacts for students who participate in extracurricular activities, however there are some potential negative impacts of participation in extracurricular activities. Reeves (2008) suggested that some parents and teachers might fear that students may lose their

focus on academics when they become too invested in extracurricular activities. Athletics, rehearsals, and meetings may limit a student's only free time to work on academics. Also, students who are too involved may become tired easier, which may lead to spending less time on their academics.

Thompson (2008) further discussed this concept when stating "The level of commitment is much more important than the specific activity" (p. 10). Not only can over-scheduling impact academics and level of commitment, it can also impact the student emotionally and physically which could lead to stress, fatigue and burn-out.

Another potentially negative impact of extracurricular activities is the unfair advantage for those of a higher economic status. According to Metsapelto and Pulkkinen (2012) students who come from lower socioeconomic status may want to participate in extracurricular activities but cannot due to costs of equipment, transportation to and from practice sessions, and other fees that may apply. These economic hardships can potentially bring disappointment and frustration to the student, or even exclude some from trying out in the first place.

In all after-school activities there is an adult figure in charge, whether it is a parent, teacher, or principal. These adult figures are supposed to be positive role models and mentors. Unfortunately, in reality, not all adult figures serve that purpose effectively.. Some mentors may lack leadership skills, which can lead to not enforcing good rules of sportsmanship. Poor adult supervision can lead students to quit or experience negative feelings towards the activity, fellow team-members, or even the coach.

After-School Programs

Extracurricular activities are defined as adult-supervised activities that are unrelated to the primary curricula and provide opportunities for participants be a part of a group after school hours (Metsapelto & Pukkinen, 2012). In 2001, 18.7% of children participated in school-based after-school programs, compared to 7.3% of students who participated in more traditional extracurricular programs (Hagedorn et al., 2003). A recent report surveying 86 city school districts nationwide found that in the 2002-2003 school year, 461,803 students participated in an official school-based after-school program (The U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2003).

The way adolescents are spending their out-of-school time continues to be an enormous concern to many parents and educators (Brown & Evans, 2005). More and more teens are participating in non-adult supervised programs. By participating in these types of activities, adolescents are more likely to drink, smoke, commit crimes, and engage in sexual activity (Larson, 2001). Educators, though, can motivate these students to participate in adult-supervised programs. "Participation in structured extracurricular activities provides important opportunities for social, emotional, and less time engaging in unsupervised activities" (Blomfield & Barber, 2010, p.115).

Participation in extracurricular activities is important, especially in the middle school years. Teenagers are beginning to make their own decisions about how to spend time after school and the people with whom they surround themselves. These peers often influence students' decisions, so it is important to encourage students to associate with responsible, productive students usually met through ECA's. This raises an important question- how can educators motivate students to participate extracurricular activities? Students often get motivated by the encouragement they receive from their teachers, peers, and parents (Howard &

Ziomek-Daigle, 2009). As one low-achieving middle school student relayed to his/her teacher “We all need someone to believe in us, someone who is on our side, in our corner” (Kunzman, 2002, p.1).

More importantly, educators should focus on encouraging their low-achieving students and students with disabilities to participate in extracurricular activities. Students with disabilities and students in inclusive classrooms have a limited opportunity to engage with other students. They are surrounded by the same peer group every day. Participation in extracurricular activities “provides a unique context for developing relationships with diverse peers and belonging to a group” (Fredericks & Eccles, 2008, p.1029). Students who participate in extracurricular activities have greater school connectedness and academic achievement (Akos, 2006; Bloomfield & Barber, 2010). Students who feel “separated” from their school might not know of some of the extracurricular opportunities offered to them. The separation may make students feel like they are not a part of their school. Educators can increase involvement when they communicate with parents and students to encourage them to participate in extracurricular activities, transport students to extracurricular activities (walk them down the hall to specific area), provide support or supervision to students in extracurricular activities, ensure that students participate in existing school activities in which they expressed an interest, sponsor an existing school club open to all students, and/or create a new school club that includes students with disabilities (Kleinert, Miracle, & Sheppard-Jones, 2007).

Since the after-school hours are critical as teenagers grow, it is important for educators to motivate and encourage their students to participate in after-school programs. School-based extracurricular activities are important, as they provide adolescents with a highly structured

environment. Within this environment, adolescents can exert control and express their identity through activities in which they show an interest in (Darling, 2005).

Promoting Extracurricular Activities in Schools

A student-teacher relationship has the potential to continue to grow and develop as the school year progresses. In fact, several teachers foster an extremely close mentor-like relationship with their students. As a result, teachers will get to know their students' interests and hobbies and can encourage them to participate in related activities. Silliker (1997) explained that teachers are typically aware of, and monitor, both academic performance and extracurricular activities. These activities enable students to master new skills and explore different roles outside of the classroom setting (Silliker, 1997).

The first few weeks of school are a critical time for student adjustment, especially if a student is new to the school or is transitioning from middle school to high school. Activities offered to students may differ from school to school. An educator's role in student success is imperative (Benjamin, Earnest, Gruenewald, & Arthur, 2007). Students need educators to help them strive to be the best students they can become. Educators should be creating an environment that enables students to do just that. "When adults show that they believe teenagers' interests matter, they reap a payoff in terms of higher student attendance and achievement" (Cushman, 2006, p. 34).

Most schools offer an array of extracurricular activities to their students. These activities are generally available to all students, but not all students take advantage of these offered activities. Often, the ones that need to participate in these activities are the ones that are missing out. "Students with disabilities need to participate in extracurricular activities and other

nonacademic activities” (Carter, Sweeden, Moss, & Pesko, 2010, p.275). A study done in 2005 found that out of 400 students with IEP’s only 11.3% were involved in extracurricular activities (Carter et al., 2010). (You should avoid using questions in your writing, especially because you don’t go on to answer it in the next paragraph)

It is important for teachers to understand the importance of involvement in extracurricular activities, because students can benefit from being a part of a group, especially some of the low-achieving students who may spend most days in self-contained classrooms. Those students may not know all of the opportunities that exist at their school; teachers need to become educated about some programs they could promote to their students. “Students who have had limited opportunities for choice-making and who lack strong self-determination skills may need significant encouragement to explore their potential interests and connect to outside activities” (Carter, Sweeden, Moss, & Pesko, 2010, p. 276).

Gilman (2004) discussed the concept of structured extracurricular activities as a strategy for schools to build resiliency, support pro-social behavior, offer opportunities for engagement with school and related activities, and provide constructive academic performance and growth in subjective well-being. One of the methods discussed was trying to establish a school-identity for students. Students who identify with schools have an internalized sense of belonging, are discernibly part of the school environment, and the school constitutes an important part of their own experience (Gilman, 2004). Structured extracurricular activities can help develop a sense of identification with the school and the community. Participation in such activities can be important for students who are at-risk of dropping out of school, since these students are not likely to identify with their school or the values and norms that it fosters (Gilman, 2004).

Another idea that may be useful for school faculty members to encourage is the promotion of individual strengths. Students usually choose activities depending on their interests that fit their personal strengths. Thus, according to Gilman (2004), structured extracurricular activity participation provides a venue to express personal talents while mastering challenging skills that are consistent with the larger school value system. For example, these core values can be applied in the classroom setting, and the challenges that students might face on the field or the court may lead into problem solving not only in the classroom, but in the student's lives on a day-to-day basis. In a large school setting, this may allow students the opportunity to express themselves and not get lost in the mix of a larger school district. This is another reason to promote student involvement in structured extracurricular activities.

Interaction with competent adults is another suggestion that is presented in Gilman's research. Resilience and identity could be enhanced through interactions with competent non-parent adult figures that can instill knowledge and skills, provide opportunities to challenge students, and serve as role models (Gilman, 2004). Interactions with competent adult figures may lead to achievement of goals, development and improvement of skills, and enhanced social and leadership skills (Gilman, 2004). For those students with disabilities, their social network may be limited or they may share few classes with their peers without disabilities. Therefore, they may not know how to interact with those types of adolescents. Faculty members can help these students by incorporating icebreakers or team building activities in their lessons. Teachers who can "encourage students to spend time finding out about each others' interests, hobbies, and talents can provide a starting point for initial conversation among students" (Carter, Sweeden, Moss, & Pesko, 2010, p. 276).

These after school activities might appeal to students' interests and help them feel more connected to their school and peers, but it is still not certain if teachers are promoting these activities to low-achieving students enough. Some teachers might worry that these activities will interfere with their academics and limit their time to do their schoolwork. Haensly, Lupkowski, and Edlind (1986) found that some teachers were not encouraging students to participate in their school's after school program because it was all "fun and games" with little time to do work. Instead of fearing that after school activities might interfere with students' academic performance, "educators can generalize the lessons of students' extracurricular engagement to inform classroom practice" (Holloway, 2002, p. 80). Studies show that participation benefits most adolescent development, which implies that ECA's should be encouraged for every student.

In conclusion, research studies have found that adolescents who have participated in extracurricular activities have had many opportunities for positive development. These individuals are given opportunities with more benefits than negatives related to participating in ECA's. Many students feel more attached to their school while being a part of an extracurricular activity; they have more opportunities to make friends, are less likely to be absent from school, and are more likely to avoid risky behaviors, which all lead down a path to greater academic success. In theory, involvement in extracurricular activities offers many positive impacts on adolescent development, so it is questionable as to why some teachers feel that participation in extracurricular activities should be discouraged. This study will evaluate teachers' decisions about whether they believe involvement in extracurricular activities is important to their low-achieving students.

Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to determine if teachers in schools are promoting extracurricular activity involvement to low-achieving students. In order to determine whether teachers are encouraging their low-achieving students to participate in the school's after-school programs, the researcher will survey teachers from a local rural school.

Participants

The sample included seventy-three kindergarten through twelfth grade teachers, consisting of 42 female participants (57.5 percent) and 31 male participants (42.5 percent). Participants were recruited through submitting a letter that identifies the research question at hand, the expectations of the participants, and the means of data collection. The potential participants can then decide if they wish to participate in the study. The potential participants will be given a short 10 question survey. All of the participants have a varied background in extracurricular activities ranging from being a current extracurricular activity advisor to never participating as an advisor before.

Instruments

A survey instrument will be used in this study and is designed to determine whether or not teachers are promoting extracurricular activities to their students, especially to their low-achieving students. The survey that will be administered will be made up of ten questions using a Likert-type scale, ranging from "great deal" to "very little", and open-ended questions. The questions will be focused on teachers' involvement in advising extracurricular activities and their perceptions about student involvement. The full survey is shown in Appendix A. This survey

instrument will be distributed through e-mail to the faculty of this small, rural school district. Participants will be given three weeks to complete the survey via Survey Monkey.

Statement of Significance

The question of whether or not teachers are promoting extracurricular activities to low-achieving students is important to address within the field of education. The vast majority of previous research that indicates that participation in extracurricular activities has a positive influence on adolescent development. This research explores whether or not teachers are encouraging their students to part-take in after school activities and how they are encouraging those students.

New York State Common Core Standards can add a lot of stress on teacher performance in the classroom. This study will determine whether there is a correlation between teachers who encourage and motivate their low-achieving students to participate in ECA's and those who do not. If a strong correlation is found between teachers promoting their low-achieving students to participate in extracurricular activities and higher academic achievement, then researchers and educators can work together to persuade more teachers to encourage their low-achieving students to become involved in an extracurricular activity.

Implications for Future Research

This study will be completed with seventy-three participants ranging in experience from being an extracurricular activity advisor to never participating as an advisor before. Future researchers could replicate this study and compare students participating on an athletic team to students who attend an after school program (i.e., Boys & Girls club). If researchers can find a positive or negative correlation, researchers can then determine if participation in extracurricular activities leads to positive adolescent development.

Limitations

The limitations of this study include taking a survey of a small rural school district. There may be only a few faculty members that are extracurricular activity advisors that advise multiple groups. Being a small school, the data can be inconsistent. Another potential limitation is how the potential participants respond to the survey. Being on a Likert-scale, participants could respond by answer “Strongly Agree” or “Strongly Disagree” to all the questions just to get the survey done. Their responses will be collected using Survey Monkey. It is unlikely that any face-to-face interaction will be used throughout the course of this study.

Design and Data Collection

The general strategies that were employed in the collection of the data include analyzing the response into graphs and charts to either show a positive or negative correlation of promoting extracurricular activities. Also, it suffices to compare the similarities and differences of responses between the participants who are an extracurricular activity advisor and participants who are not. This would serve to confirm or deny my hypothesis that extracurricular activity advisors are promoting after school activities to their low-achieving students and that these students are positively influenced because of it.

Procedure

After receiving approval from the State University of New York at Fredonia Human Subjects Board, a request was made to Westfield Academy & Central School District to perform research within their jurisdiction. Once approved by the secondary school principal, a letter was delivered informing the participants of the intent of the study and the request for their participation and cooperation (See Appendix B).

Teachers and school administrators were asked to complete a short 10-question survey titled *Are Teacher's Promoting Extracurricular Activities on Low-Achieving Students?* (See Appendix A). The survey took approximately 5-10 minutes to complete. The survey was sent out to every middle and high school teacher and administrator in the district. Of the 73 surveys that were sent out, 19 were returned to the researcher. The questions were presented through a Likert-scale and open-ended questions. Scores were given a weighted value with a general scale from 1-5.

Results

The primary goal of this study was to examine whether teachers in a rural school district in Western New York are promoting extracurricular activities to their low-achieving students. The data gathered were from 19 teachers from this particular school district. Four primary results were evident following the collection and analysis of the survey answers.

- Most teachers relate academic achievement with student participation in extracurricular activities.
- Most students take advantage of the school's offered extracurricular activities.
- Many teachers' feel that it is important that they promote their low-achieving students to participate in extracurricular activities.
- Few teachers' actually have individual discussions with their low-achieving students about getting involved in extracurricular activities.

Findings

To determine if extracurricular activities were offered and how they were being promoted to the student body, especially to low-achieving students, teachers were asked to answer a short

10-question survey. A total of 19 teacher surveys were used for this study. Questions from the survey can be seen in Appendix A.

All teachers agreed that there was some form of extracurricular activity (i.e., team sports, school involvement activities, performing arts, and academic clubs) that is offered at their school. In this sample, teachers recorded that their students are heavily involved in extracurricular activities. Of 215 students in grades nine through 12, 65% of students were involved in at least one extracurricular activity in 2013. However, of those 65% extracurricular activity participants, only 19% were students determined to be low-achieving in terms of the criteria of failing at least one class.

An adult figure is needed to supervise all extracurricular activities. Teachers reported that all activities were supervised by at least one teacher. Three teachers reported that administration, the athletic director, or a parent supervised extracurricular activities also. One teacher commented, “It depends on the activity. Some coaches are not teachers, we get community volunteers to help out too.”

4. Who supervises your school’s offered extracurricular activities?

Administration	Athletic Director	Parents	Teachers	Total
15.79% (3)	15.79% (3)	21.05% (4)	100% (19)	19

Based on the survey question number 6, 89.47% of teachers reported that it is “very important” or “somewhat important” to promote extracurricular activities to their low-achieving

students. Some teachers stated, “It is not only important to promote extracurricular activities to our low-achieving students, but to all students.”

6. How important is it to promote extracurricular activities to low-achieving students?

Great Deal	Somewhat	Unsure	Little	Very Little	Total	Average Rating
57.89% (11)	31.58% (6)	5.26% (1)	5.26% (1)	0.00% (0)	19	4.42

However, 73.69% of teachers say they “occasionally” or “never” have had a discussion with one of their low-achieving students about getting involved in an extracurricular activity.

7. How often do you have individual discussions with your low-achieving students about becoming involved in an extracurricular activity?

Very Often	Often	Occasionally	Never	Total	Average Rating
5.26% (1)	21.05% (4)	63.16% (12)	10.53% (2)	19	2.21

Even though most teachers stated that they do not have regular discussions with their low-achieving students about becoming involved in ECA’s, many of them commented that they would invite and encourage their students to participate. Some teachers even went to the extent of having other peers encourage them.

Participation in extracurricular activities is important to all students, but especially low-achieving students. Few teachers reported that these opportunities allow for students to make friends and maintain passing averages. Twelve teachers commented that they would encourage

their students to participate and only 2 teachers mentioned that they would inform their students about certain programs they may not know about. Of all the comments, 0 teachers said they would help create and supervise an activity that is of interest to students.

When teachers were asked about other aspect of participation in extracurricular activities that they feel is important, one teacher commented: “Leaders need to be willing to devote the time to make them meaningful.” All respondents (100%) thought that socialization, school connectedness, esteem-building, leadership skills, and academic motivation were important aspects of participation in extracurricular activities.

Discussion

The research hypothesis predicted that teachers are promoting extracurricular activities to their low-achieving students. These findings, however, indicate the opposite outcome. Most teachers have responded to “occasionally” or “never” having a conversation with a low-achieving student about participating in an extracurricular activity. “Participation in extracurricular activities in high school appears to be one of the few interventions that benefit low-status, disadvantaged students—those less well served by traditional educational programs—as much as or more than their more advantaged peers” (Everson & Millsap, 2005, p. 7).

Generally, students who participate in extracurricular activities benefit academically. Students, school administrators teachers, and parents all need to be aware of the effects that participation in extracurricular activities have on the academic performance of students. Furthermore, they also need to be aware of the specific extracurricular activities available to them and the effects of each specific activity on performance. Not every child will benefit from

or be impaired in the same manner that studies revealed concerning extracurricular activities. Each student performs at his or her own level of ability and one cannot expect excessive amounts of academic abilities from a child solely because he or she is actively involved in several extracurricular activities.

There are several reasons why it is important for teachers and school administrators to seek out the low-achieving students and help encourage them to participate in these offered activities. Some students may not know about all of the opportunities that exist at their school. Many adolescents with high-incidence disabilities experience difficulties with interpersonal skills, and some students may be afraid to join a group with unfamiliar peers (Carter, Swedeen, Moss, & Pesko, 2010). As educators it is beneficial to get to know our students and their interests. This helps with promoting extracurricular activities that appeal to the students' interests. When teachers and administration have conversations with these students, it helps build positive student-adult relationships.

There are numerous ways for teachers to promote extracurricular activities. Educators can generalize the lessons to that of students' extracurricular interests, have a conversation about all the possible activities available to the student, and have another peer invite the student to join the group.

Limitations of the study

The findings of this study were limited by a number of factors. The first limitation was that the participants in the study came only from one rural school district. Furthermore, the study was limited to 73 teachers and school administrators in the one school district. In addition, data

that was collected was through a survey. A total of 19 were completed and sent back out of 73 surveys that were sent out.

Recommendations for Future Studies

The results of this particular study indicated that teachers generally are not promoting extracurricular activities to low-achieving students; however, further research in this area may generate interesting results. For example, it would be beneficial to consider giving a similar study to teachers inquiring about their promotion of extracurricular involvement to high-achieving students to serve as a comparison group. Along the same line, using a larger sample of teachers and school districts may contribute to more conclusive results. Finally, the implementation of researcher-teacher interviews would allow for more reliable and in-depth responses to survey and/or interview questions.

Conclusion

The motivation behind this study was to determine if teachers are promoting extracurricular activities to their low-achieving students. Based on the results of the study, it appears as though teachers believe that participation in extracurricular activities is related to academic achievement. While several teachers expressed views supporting the benefits of extracurricular involvement, it is clear that discussions promoting involvement with their low-achieving students do not happen very often. Many participants in the study also indicated that their survey responses would be the same for all students as opposed to just low-achieving students. This finding suggests that extracurricular activities are valuable for all students, regardless of academic ability, and as a result, should be encouraged by teachers.

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Appendix A

Promoting ECA on Low-Achieving Students Survey

1. Does your school offer extracurricular activities to its students? (i.e., Clubs, Sports, Music, etc.)				
Yes		No		
2. Is participation in extracurricular activities related to students' success in your school?				
Great Deal	Somewhat	Unsure	Little	Very Little
3. Who takes advantage of the school's offered extracurricular activities?				
All Students	Most Students	Some Students	No Students	
4. Who supervises your school's offered extracurricular activities?				
Teachers	Administration	Athletic Director	Parents	
Comments:				
5. How much does your school support student participation in extracurricular activities?				
Great Deal	Somewhat	Unsure	Little	Very Little
Comments:				
6. How important is it to promote extracurricular activities to low-achieving students?				
Great Deal	Somewhat	Unsure	Little	Very Little
Comments:				
7. How often do you have individual discussions with your low-achieving students about becoming involved in an extracurricular activity?				
Very Often	Often	Occasionally	Never	
Comments:				
8. What are some advantages of student participation in your school's offered extracurricular activities?				
Comments:				

9. How could you help a low-achieving student become involved in an extracurricular activity?
Comments:
10. What other aspects of participation in extracurricular activities do you feel are important?
Comments:

Appendix B

Promoting ECA on Low-Achieving Students Survey Answers

1. Does your school offer extracurricular activities to its students? (i.e., Clubs, Sports, Music, etc.)

Yes	No
19	00

2. Is participation in extracurricular activities related to students' success in your school?

Great Deal	Somewhat	Unsure	Little	Very Little	Total	Average Rating
26.32% (5)	52.63% (10)	10.53% (2)	10.53% (2)	0.00% (0)	19	3.95

3. Who takes advantage of the school's offered extracurricular activities?

All Students	Most Students	Some Students	None Students	Total	Average Rating
0.00% (0)	52.63% (10)	47.37% (9)	0.00% (0)	19	2.53

4. Who supervises your school's offered extracurricular activities?

Administration	Athletic Director	Parents	Teachers	Total
15.79% (3)	15.79% (3)	21.05% (4)	100% (19)	19

Comments:

- Depends on the activity
- Community Volunteers
- Coaches- Some are not teachers, assistants and aides as well

5. How much does your school support student's participation in extracurricular activities?

Great Deal	Somewhat	Unsure	Little	Very Little	Total	Average Rating
42.11% (8)	36.84% (7)	21.05% (4)	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)	19	4.21

6. How important is it to promote extracurricular activities to low-achieving students?

Great Deal	Somewhat	Unsure	Little	Very Little	Total	Average Rating
57.89% (11)	31.58% (6)	5.26% (1)	5.26% (1)	0.00% (0)	19	4.42

Comments:

- Same as all students

7. How often do you have individual discussions with your low-achieving students about becoming involved in an extracurricular activity?

Very Often	Often	Occasionally	Never	Total	Average Rating
5.26% (1)	21.05% (4)	63.16% (12)	10.53% (2)	19	2.21

Comments:

- My answer would be the same for all students
- Same as all students

8. What are some advantages of student participation in your school's offered extracurricular activities?**Survey Responses:**

- Friendship and maintaining passing averages
- Motivation to stay off the ineligibility list
- Some groups have small numbers which gives more attention to students involved
- They must be passing their classes to participate so it helps them keep their grades up
- Community service and the feeling that they are part of a group
- New experiences, new friends, perhaps a difference social group, sense of school spirit, sense of accomplishment, involvement, belonging, recreation, physical activity, learning life long skills, team building, resume building.
- Gives students something to do. They make new friends
- Socialization, service, learning new skill, fun
- Helps motivate kids to keep up their grades
- Team Building
- Something to do after school
- Activity outside of school day, social interaction, developing a life long interest
- Motivation to keep grades to passing. Interest in school, increased attendance

- n) It often gives them the opportunity to excel at something. It gives them motivation to do better in their classes. It is often more fun than classes for them and teachers many crucial lessons better than can be taught in class. Many of the lessons cross from sports to life in general and therefore to their studies!!!
- o) Develops discipline, teamwork and stick to its qualities in a student.
- p) It can build self-esteem, allowing students to find success in another area
- q) It builds a bond of friendship and commitment. It can give a child a feeling of belonging.
- r) Learning how to get along with others; taking and giving feedback. Satisfaction and events and activities that interest them. Helping others.
- s) Building a sense of community and promotes students taking ownership of their school and education.

9. How could you help a low-achieving student become involved in an extracurricular activity?

Survey Response:

- a) Encouragement and recommendations from staff members who think certain students would be good for teams/clubs
- b) Encourage them to try it out. Have other students encourage them too.
- c) Create activities based on students interests
- d) Encourage them to try and get them help to keep their grades up
- e) Encourage them to do so
- f) Make sure they know what is available, encourage them, use a trusted peer to help get them involved
- g) Encourage them
- h) Invite them
- i) Work with other teachers, coaches, administration, guidance counselors, and student mentors to encourage involvement and better grades
- j) Encourage them to participate
- k) Encouragement
- l) Same as with other students in talking with them and encouraging them to become involved in activities outside the school day
- m) Having the opportunity to participate
- n) Invite, Encourage
- o) Provide encouragement, and help with academics
- p) We encourage students to try. If someone comes to talk to me about whether or not he/she should try something, I encourage him/her to try
- q) Be a mentor
- r) It's tough. I talk a lot to them, but it is rarely that I see a low-achieving student take advantage of the extracurricular activities offered. Maybe they feel intimidated?
- s) Tell students about clubs that they might not know exist, or might know about. But now know what they entail.

10. What other aspect of participation in extracurricular activities do you feel are important?**Survey Responses:**

- a) Learning how to get along with others as part of a group
- b) To have them available to all types of students. Activities that hit a variety of individuals (i.e., not just sports, although sports is highly motivating for most students because they want to play and if their grades aren't good then they don't play)
- c) –
- d) Socialization
- e) They have to keep a certain GPA and it allows them to do well outside of school
- f) (In addition to #8 answers) Once students leave school, they may never sit in another classroom again, they will, however be involved (hopefully) in many of “life's” extracurricular activities. This helps they stay activate and connected to the community in which they choose to live. The “extras” enrich our live – Too bad many are going away due to budget cuts.
- g) They may feel better about themselves
- h) Commitment
- i) Involvement helps students make friends and feel part of a group. It gives them a sense of belonging.
- j) Building friendships
- k) Builds self-esteem and community involvement
- l) It is important students develop interests that may lead to lifelong community involvement and also leisure activities and interests.
- m) We need to offer a variety of extracurricular activities, so the students have choices.
- n) See # 8 above
- o) Discipline and Team building
- p) It offers a chance to excel at something else; it is great for learning time management and priorities. It gives an outlet for a student that might not have one otherwise. **Note: In my school, core subjects take a backseat to other activities, and that is very disruptive for many students. With an overemphasis on other things, grades suffer and no one has “time” to get math help because they “have” to be at some of these “extra” things. Too much of a good thing is exactly that—Too much.
- q) They also bring the community together, whether it is helping or just watching. They can showcase talents that may not be known. Inspire to imagine careers not thought of before by the students.
- r) It develops great leadership skills. I think extracurricular activities might help low-achieving students “own” a skill or interest they didn't know they had before. This might even motivate them to a difference level of academic achievement.
- s) Leaders need to be willing to devote the time to make them meaningful.

Appendix C

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Participation in Extracurricular Activities

You are invited to take part in research about promoting extracurricular activities to low-achieving students. You are a potential participant because you are a faculty member at a school that has the potential to encourage your low-achieving students to participate in extracurricular activities. Stephen Kirsch is conducting the research. I ask that you read this form before agreeing to participate in this study.

Purpose

The purpose of the research is to find out if and how teachers of low-achieving students are encouraging these students to part take in after school activities that are offered by your school.

Procedures

If you agree to be in this research, and sign this consent form, I ask that you complete a short 10 question survey that will take about 5 minutes to finish.

Risks and Benefits

You will be asked to answer questions that directly ask about if you are an advisor for an after school program. Some of the questions may be personal, but the information will not be shared with anyone else. You may refuse to answer any questions on the surveys that will be sent to you. I will not share this information with anyone, and your identity will remain confidential as the results are graphed.

The benefits of this study include finding correlations with low-achieving students and participation in extracurricular activities. If a consistency can be found, then future researchers may be able to replicate this study, and it may allow them to further research with participation in extracurricular activities and how it impacts low-achieving students.

Confidentiality

The results of this study will be kept private, and only used for the purpose of completing a Master's Thesis Project. In any sort of report of the study, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Your name and other identifying information will not be kept with this survey. The surveys and results will be kept in a locked file cabinet, and only the researcher for this study will have access to the records.

Voluntary nature of study

Your decision whether or not to participate in this research will not affect your current or future relations with the researcher. Even if you sign the consent form, you are free to stop your participation in the study at any time. You do not need to complete it if you feel uncomfortable doing it.

Contact

You can ask questions about the study at any time. If you have questions or decide you want to stop participating in this study, please contact Stephen Kirsch. Additionally, you may also contact the following individuals if you have any questions.

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Catherine Kilpatrick

SUNY Fredonia Faculty Member

Acting Human Subjects Administrator

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If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact Catherine Kilpatrick, Acting Human Subjects Administrator. You may also contact her about any problems, complaints, or concerns related to this research study.

I, _____, want to be involved with Stephen Kirsch's research study described in this form.

Signature: _____ Date: _____