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The Effects of Participation in Extracurricular Activities on the Mean Grade Point Average of High School Students in a Rural Setting

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**THE EFFECTS OF PARTICIPATION IN
EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES ON THE
MEAN GRADE POINT AVERAGE OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS
IN A RURAL SETTING**

**A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Education
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville**

**Anthony Brian Watkins
August 2004**

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family. Especially my dad and mom, Eddy and Wilma Watkins, who encouraged, inspired, and always challenged me to be more than I ever thought I could.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank my committee members, Dr. C. Glennon Rowell, Dr. Thomas George, and Dr. Mary Jane Connelly. Special thanks to Dr. Terry Stratta, who challenged me to produce a document of high quality, and provided guidance, wisdom, and encouragement. I would like to thank my school family for encouraging and supporting me during this process. Thank you Dr. Judy Bean, Karen deMarche, Carol Hopper, LaMerle Howard, Dr. Ronda Hamilton, Amanda Counts, Bill Bankson, Betty Emmett, Paula Stallings, Patty Priest, and Dr. June Scoggins. I would also like to thank my extended family Mac and Nickie McReynolds. A special thanks to Beth for her “ink pen” skills. And to my good friend, Annice Goodwin, who provided support and encouragement to complete this document.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of participation in extracurricular activities (band, drama, student council and vocational clubs) on the mean grade point average (GPA) of students at one rural high school located in the South. Male and female students ($n=3,274$) who were enrolled in the academic program from 1997-2002 were categorized into one of the following four groups: interscholastic athletics only, co-curricular activities only, both co-curricular activities and interscholastic athletics, and no extracurricular activities.

Differences in mean GPAs of the various extracurricular activity groups by gender were tested with a One-way Analysis of Variance, followed by the Scheffé multiple comparison procedure. An alpha level of .05 was selected to determine significance for all statistical tests. The results of the One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) demonstrated a highly statistically significant effect of participation in mean GPA of male students ($F_{3,1619}=86.85, p<.001$), and of female students ($F_{3,1647}=96.02, p<.001$).

Given these results, the null hypotheses for male and female students were both rejected. More specifically, students who participated in any extracurricular activity had statistically significantly higher mean cumulative GPAs than those who participated in no extracurricular activities. Scheffé's multiple comparison procedure revealed that statistically significant differences in mean GPA were found between participating students by groups of activities. For both males and females, participating in both co-curricular activities and interscholastic athletics, along with their academic programs, resulted in mean GPAs that were statistically higher than participating in either co-

curricular activities or interscholastic athletics only. The mean GPA of male students who participated in academics and co-curricular activities only was statistically significantly higher than the mean GPA of male students who participated in interscholastic athletics only. Though the mean GPA of female students who participated in co-curricular activities only was higher than the mean GPA of female students who participated in interscholastic athletics only, the difference was not statistically significant.

The results of this study lead to the conclusion that student participation in some form of extracurricular activity, whether interscholastic athletics or co-curricular activities, is associated with higher academic performance, as measured by mean GPA, than does non-participation in any extracurricular activities.

As school districts cope with budgetary constraints, high school administrators should consider the potential advantages and disadvantages that result from reducing or eliminating school-sponsored activities, including interscholastic athletics. The researcher recommends that administrators consider the educational value of each program by examining the following: 1) its effect on the educational development of high school students, in spite of their individual differences (e.g., gender, level of intelligence, economic background), and 2) its potential to influence a large percentage of high school students. Administrators are thereby demonstrating support for diminishing the social and economic disparities that may affect student opportunities for success following graduation, particularly for those students who will not attend college.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

The Problem

Extracurricular activities have been offered as part of the education system in the United States since the early 1900s. These activities, currently referred to as co-curricular activities such as band, drama, student council, vocational clubs, and interscholastic athletics, did not acquire legitimate status in the education system until after the release of the Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education (Gholson, 1985). Published in 1918, by the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education, the seven Cardinal Principles; 1) health; 2) command of fundamental processes; 3) worthy home membership; 4) vocation; 5) civic education; 6) worthy use of leisure; and 7) ethical character, served as the philosophical basis for the development of a “comprehensive” institution. Utilizing a variety of curricula and activities, the comprehensive high school was developed to serve as a forum for teaching the ideals and values of an American democracy, and thus, functioned as an important socializing agent for youth from a variety of backgrounds and abilities.

As a result of the Cardinal Principles, extracurricular activities became an integral part of high school education. In particular, extracurricular activities were viewed as one method for building unification and cooperation (Spring, 1997). As the central feature of all extracurricular activities, student government taught the tenets of participating in a democratic government, while also functioning as one method for maintaining order in the schools. Similarly, athletics were viewed as a method for training students to participate in a democratic community. In particular, athletics taught cooperation,

teamwork, and the value of good health. Clubs were viewed as a means for teaching participation through cooperative activities. Finally, the inclusion of school newspapers in the school system was justified as a means of teaching English and teamwork, while also creating unity.

The current high school system remains philosophically consistent with the ideals of the comprehensive institution. Moreover, activities that historically were considered “extracurricular” have had a lasting presence and significant value as one examines the opportunities available to students beyond the formal classroom experience.

One of the primary reasons for the continuation of this modern day comprehensive high school has been the production of research that consistently demonstrates the value of including extracurricular activities in the high school system. According to the National Federation of State High School Association (NFSHA), co-curricular activities support the academic mission of the school and teach students “lifelong lessons as important as those taught in the classroom” (Black, 2002). Moreover, researchers have found a positive correlation between student involvement in extracurricular activities and success in nonacademic pursuits following high school and college.

Holloway (2000) found that a relationship exists between the participation of students in extracurricular activities and a decrease in the rate of early school dropouts for both boys and girls. For marginal or at-risk students, participation in extracurricular activities provided opportunities for establishing positive and voluntary connections to their school. In general, participation in extracurricular activities contributes toward the

overall development of the individual -- personal, social, mental, and physical (Holloway, 2000; Presley, 1996).

The degree to which the high school system offers a variety of learning experiences remains a critical issue. More specifically, for a large percentage of students, particularly those who live in rural school districts, the high school experience serves as the primary, and final forum for learning personal and professional skills in a formal public school environment.

One factor contributing to a reduction in the percentage of high school graduates who pursue a college education is the economic realities of this endeavor. In spite of a flourishing economy during the 1990s, the economic disparity in the American workforce continues to widen.

The public school system, therefore, plays a critical role in the lives of children. In addition to delivering an overall quality education, high schools, in particular, are positioned as the last chance for the public school system to “level the playing field,” and thus, to reduce inequities that impact students’ opportunities for achieving success in life.

Unfortunately, public school educators must fulfill this critical role in the lives of youth with less than adequate funding. Moreover, the appropriation of funds toward public school education has diminished proportionally over the years as politicians espouse the need for education reform. Recent “education reform” campaigns have served as one response to the apparent shortcomings in education. These campaigns have been used to justify the passage of large education bills; however, little consideration has been given to the resulting economic constraints placed on individual schools and existing programs following implementation.

If the academic welfare of each student, particularly those who are economically disadvantaged, is a significant factor during the budgetary decision-making process, then high school administrators should explore options for achieving a balanced budget, other than traditional ones (e.g., “What can we afford to cut?”). Co-curricular activities and interscholastic athletics are primary targets for elimination when education budgets become strained. In general, they are considered extracurricular and, thus, peripheral to the goal of academic achievement, the focus of education reform. The random elimination of these activities is frequently based on financial savings with little regard for the consequences of these decisions. Given the fact that a substantial body of literature reveals a positive correlation between participation in extracurricular activities and improvement in the overall performance and achievement of high school students, the future success of students, particularly those who are economically disadvantaged, may be hindered if budgetary decisions lead to the elimination of educational opportunities outside the classroom.

When budget constraints result in the elimination of educational opportunities for students, administrators should consider the exploration of options that are supported by research, in addition to those that are economically feasible, to avoid contributing to social and economic disparities that advantage some students over others in the attainment of success following high school.

This study contributes to the body of literature on the benefits of participation in extracurricular activities by providing high school administrators in rural school districts with a more complete knowledge about the academic success of students who vary in

their participation patterns and a more thorough understanding of the ramifications of eliminating specific school-sponsored activities.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of participation in extracurricular activities on the mean grade point average of students at one rural high school located in the South. Students who were enrolled during the five year period of 1997-2002 were categorized by gender, and by membership in an extracurricular activity group: interscholastic athletics only, co-curricular activities only, interscholastic athletics and co-curricular activities, and no extracurricular activities. To determine if differences existed in the group mean GPAs by gender, the following null hypotheses were tested:

1) No statistically significant difference exists in the mean grade point averages of high school males who were grouped by their participation in extracurricular activities.

2) No statistically significant difference exists in the mean grade point averages of high school females who were grouped by their participation in extracurricular activities.

In this study, extracurricular activities is used as an umbrella term for all school sponsored activities performed outside the classroom which include co-curricular activities and interscholastic athletics. Co-curricular activities include: Band, drama, student council, and vocational clubs. Interscholastic athletics include: Boy's football, baseball, and wrestling; girl's softball; both girl's and boys' track, tennis, golf, basketball and cheerleading.

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the literature on academic achievement and participation in extracurricular activities by examining differences in group mean GPAs for students in

interscholastic athletics and in co-curricular activities. Previous studies have investigated differences in achievement between participating and non-participating students without differentiating among types of activities. Alternatively, researchers have examined differences between the achievement of non-participants and participants in only one kind of activity (e.g., either interscholastic athletics or co-curricular activities). This study provides greater depth of understanding about the value of each extracurricular activity by examining differences among extracurricular activities in addition to differences between participants and non-participants.

Even though a variety of factors influence the academic and professional success of youth, economic resources is one of the most visible and influential factors affecting access to opportunities that lead to personal and professional development. The percentage of middle class Americans has diminished (Horrigan, 1988). The issue that becomes manifest for children living in opposing economic realities is access to opportunities that lead to personal growth and professional development. The high school education, therefore, is positioned as the last chance for the public school system to reduce inequities that impact students' opportunities for achieving success in life.

The results of this study, therefore, provide insights about a group of students who are extremely vulnerable to the effects of inequitable opportunities. Any decisions by administrators that diminish the quality of education and opportunities for growth may lead to adverse effects that dramatically impact the professional opportunities and lifetime accomplishments for students, particularly those who complete their formal education with a high school diploma.

Findings from this study may also be used by high school administrators, from rural school districts make, more informed decisions about the value of each extracurricular activity in relation to the academic achievement of students. More specifically, the results of this study can assist rural school administrators in predicting, with more confidence, the impact of eliminating or retaining extracurricular activities on the academic achievement of students.

Definition of Terms

1) Academic Achievement - the academic progress of high school students based on grade point average.

2) Co-curricular Activities - Activities, other than interscholastic athletics, that are sponsored by the school and offered for student participation outside the formal classroom experience. In this study, co-curricular activities include band, drama, student council, and vocational clubs.

3) Extracurricular Activities – an “umbrella” term for all educational activities, outside the classroom, that are sponsored by the high school. In this study, extracurricular activities include interscholastic athletics and co-curricular activities.

4) G.H.S.A. - Georgia High School Association; the organization that governs Georgia high school athletics.

5) GPA – grade point average; a tool for measuring academic performance; refers to cumulative grade point average; the range of grades from which GPA is calculated is 0 (F) to 4.0 (A).

6) Interscholastic Athletics - Sports activities that are sponsored by the high school and offer students the opportunity to participate against other schools at the same

level of competition. The sports activities include: Boy's football, wrestling, baseball, girl's softball, both girl's and boys basketball, track, tennis, golf, and cheerleading.

7) NFHS – National Federation of High Schools.

8) NFSHA – National Federation of State High School Association; A national service and administrative organization of high school athletics and fine arts programs in speech, debate, and music.

9) Non-Participants - Students who do not participate in any extracurricular activities.

10) Scheffe' Test – A conservative multiple comparison technique appropriate for making any and all possible comparisons involving a set of means.

11) Type I Error – The rejection by the researcher of a Null hypothesis which is actually true.

Delimitations

This study was delimited in the following ways:

- 1) This study is delimited to the interscholastic athletics and co-curricular activities that occurred at Dade County High School, in Georgia, over the last five years.
- 2) This study is delimited to the students who attended Dade County High School from 1997-2002.
- 3) Extracurricular activities were divided into the following groups:
interscholastic athletics only, co-curricular activities only, both co-curricular activities and interscholastic athletics, and non-participation in any extracurricular activities.

Limitations

This study was limited by the following factors:

- 1) The number and types of activities in which students participate is unknown.
- 2) The level of participation in activities is unknown.
- 3) Academic achievement was limited to grade point average only. Based on all courses taken.

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

Introduction

High school athletics and extracurricular activities continue to play an important role in the educational process of America's public school students. Beginning in the 1960s and continuing to the present, a sizeable body of research demonstrates that participation in extracurricular activities is associated with an array of positive educational outcomes, including better attendance records, lower rates of discipline referrals, and higher academic self-esteem. Students participating in extracurricular activities also were more likely to be in a college preparatory curriculum, earn higher grades, and aspire to enroll in and graduate from college (Videon, 2002).

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of participation in extracurricular activities on the mean grade point average of students at one rural high school in the South. This chapter will provide an overview of the history of extracurricular activities, the benefits of extracurricular activities, factors threatening extracurricular activities, and criteria for measuring success in public schools.

History of Extracurricular Activities

The inclusion of extracurricular activities into the high school curriculum in the late 1800s was consistent with the philosophical stance taken by high school administrators (Terzian, 2000). Moreover, they felt a need to establish a unified institution as a whole and a unified spirit to compensate for class and racial inequities among an increasingly diverse student population. While students played a major role in shaping the high school extracurriculum to serve their own needs, this authority was lost

after high school administrators assumed control of extracurricular activities, and subsequently integrated them into the curriculum as “official” school activities. Students also initiated athletic associations; however, administrators worried that students were not responsible enough to manage such associations and that the reputation of the school would suffer. As a result, administrators of these high schools took control of the associations and eventually used high school athletics to enhance the reputation of their schools.

At the annual meeting of the National Education Association’s Division of Superintendents in 1904 (Terzian, 2000), the associations President, Boynton clarified his views concerning extracurricular activities in high school. He believed that the public school system in the United States was essential for mitigating cultural divisions brought by the wave of Southern and Eastern European immigrants by keeping American institutions from becoming Europeanized. According to Boynton, the public school system’s paramount duty was to cultivate future citizens who would, in turn, respect and perpetuate existing American institutions. In order to accomplish this, all American youth needed to subscribe to a common set of social and political tenets. Boynton’s conception of democracy emphasized cultural unity. Since public schools held such an esteemed position in Boynton’s mind, it was natural for him to conclude that secondary enrollments were desirable in order to mold the civic sensibilities of America’s adolescents. As a result, he exhorted his peers to promote and guide student clubs rather than combat their growth. Such proliferation of the extracurriculum, in his estimation, would continue to attract greater numbers of adolescents to the high school. Boynton strongly believed that teachers needed to supervise all student organizations even outside

of regular school hours. This sentiment coincided with his growing concern of the “leisure problem” among American teenagers at the turn of the century. The supervision of student activities, according to the superintendent, could compensate for this trend: “While their parents are at work or amusing themselves, the children roam the streets and acquire the language and the morals of the streets. What can we offer to the city boy in exchange for his paradise lost? His only road to paradise regained is through the gymnasium, the athletic field, and the playground” (Terzian, 2000, p. 96). Supervised extracurricular activities in high school assumed a moral prerogative upon which the fate of American democratic traditions ultimately rested.

Published in 1918 by the Commission of the Reorganization of Secondary Education, the seven Cardinal Principles in 1918 reflected an education trend in which an increasing number of American high schools adopted a curricular system of constants and electives. School administrators would offer consultation to help teenagers efficiently prepare for a particular vocation, whether for college, the factory, the business office, or the home. As the changing economy displaced teenagers from the workplace in the first half of the twentieth century, educational administrators in the United States sought to draw all adolescents into their high schools. Unlike some European models of secondary education, which funneled future workers into technical schools and future white-collar employees into academic schools, the high school in the United States would be a “comprehensive” institution where children from all backgrounds and abilities would congregate. Upon enrolling however, students would be separated into different classes based upon their abilities and interests. The proponents of this model also believed that a counterbalancing element was required in order to mitigate the divisive effects of

curricular specialization and the consequent student separation into the varying majors or electives (Terzian, 2000).

American educators felt that the comprehensive high school needed to unify all students into a distinct student body for the perpetuation of democracy. Significantly, these educators implied that unification and conformity were identical to the notion of equality. The comprehensive high school, as articulated in the Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education, was a place where students learned how to become good American citizens; adults in training who gained a respect for existing American institutions and who learned proper social habits to promote social order. As a result the architects of the comprehensive high school appropriated an array of extracurricular activities that would ostensibly teach America's adolescents these desired values. School administrators worked to gain greater control over the social lives of high school students and to steer them into supervised activities that would further their distinct conception of democracy. Regarding the social realm, progressive administrators believed that perpetuating the social order and sacrificing individual aspirations were more important than individual pursuits and goals. A coherent extracurriculum, with clear rules and regulations set by adult educators, would mold a generation of young adults who would carry on the cultural priorities of the middle class (Terzian, 2000).

In order to achieve those objectives, the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education's final recommendation called for the creation of a comprehensive high school that would include a wide variety of curricula designed to meet the needs of different types of students. The commission used the rhetoric of social efficiency to justify the comprehensive high school. They argued that this school would allow for

what they identified as the two components of democracy – specialization and unification. The document stated that a specialized and differentiated curriculum would train each student to perform a specific task that would benefit society. The second component of democracy, unification, was bringing people together and giving them common ideas, thoughts, feelings, and actions that brought cooperation, social cohesion, and social solidarity (Spring, 1997).

During the nineteenth century, educators stressed the importance of building social cohesion through the educational system, however their focus was on the early grades. The Cardinal Principles gave the responsibility of socialization to the high school. They believed that “in this process the secondary school must play an important part because the elementary school with its immature pupils cannot alone develop the common knowledge, common ideas, and common interests to American democracy” (Spring, 1997, p. 229). One of the techniques used to promote such ideas was the participation of pupils in common activities such as athletic games, social activities, and the government of the school.

Extracurricular activities in the high school became the solution for building unification and cooperation through education during the twentieth century. High schools did not include extracurricular activities merely to serve a social purpose. Many high schools offered these activities before the report was published, but in the 1920s educators started to use these activities for educational purposes. These purposes included: student demand, maintaining order in the schools, and controlling student behavior. Student government was the central feature of all extracurricular activities. It taught participation in democratic government and introduced a method of maintaining

order in schools. Including school newspapers in high school was justified as a means of teaching English, teamwork, and creating unity. Clubs were also used as a means of teaching participation in cooperative activities. Athletics were used as a method of training students to participate in the democratic community in two ways: 1) as a part of general good health, and 2) as a means of teaching cooperation and teamwork (Spring, 1997, pp. 231).

The reform of secondary education with democratic ideas accounts for many of the changes including the introduction of extracurricular activities. In 1985, Powell, Farrar, and Cohen discussed the rise of extracurricular activities in secondary schools. Boys' sports were the first activities that made their way into the public school. Between 1890 and 1910, baseball, football, and track and field became part of school activities. By 1920, there was a veritable avalanche of non-academic activities in the public high school.

Student council, glee clubs, chorus, band, orchestra, clubs for academics, clubs for hobbies, special interest clubs, recreational clubs, and social clubs began to play a major role in the daily lives of public school students. Powell, Farrar, and Cohen (1985) concluded, as did Spring (1997), that educators in secondary schools embraced the extracurriculum for several reasons. Extracurricular activities assisted schools in dealing with students who were in school for reasons not related to education. Educators felt that sports, clubs, music, and drama offered the students an alternative, one that could be uplifting and interesting. The educational system also believed that extracurricular activities offered boys a way to get rid of excess energies in an appropriate manner. Secondary educators also embraced these activities to gain community support, to create

an attachment between school and community, and to broaden the school's appeal. By 1930, extracurricular activities had become so important in the public high school that many of the schools began to offer the opportunity to earn credit for these activities (Powell, Farrar, and Cohen, 1985).

Gholson (1985) summarized the history of extracurricular activities by dividing it into three phases. The first phase, approximately 1870-1900, was a period labeled a period of rejection. Educational leaders concluded that few benefits could be derived from the school program, which they labeled the "extracurriculum." Phase two, approximately 1900-1920, was labeled the era of passive acceptance. Educational leaders concluded that student clubs and organizations were indeed capable of providing learning experiences for young people. During this second phase, two significant developments occurred which fostered the acceptance of student activity programs. These two developments included a report on the Seven Cardinal Principles by the Commission of the Reorganization of Secondary Schools; and the work of Elbert Fretwell of Columbia University who, in 1918, offered the first college level course in the student activities area (Spring, 1997, p.229). Phase three, approximately 1920-1956, was described as a period of active acceptance and encouragement. During this phase, state and national "parent" organizations provided direction and assistance to the local school club or chapter.

During the past thirty years, the line between school-sponsored and non-sponsored activities, to a large degree, has been fused. The school, however, continues to be the primary center for social life and socialization among young people. The degree to which the school offers a variety of learning experiences remains a critical issue.

Extracurricular activities have evolved into a permanent program within the public high school, and continue to serve as a significant contribution to the contemporary comprehensive secondary school. Moreover, the original purpose for including extracurricular activities into the public school curriculum has essentially remained the same for over 60 years.

Benefits of Extracurricular Activities

Young adults face a complex future. Achieving success will depend on the ability of students to develop a variety of skills, including leadership, communication, and cooperation. The responsibility for developing these skills is placed on public schools. Within this system, student activity programs contribute significantly to attaining this goal. According to Marano (1985), student activities have become a part of the regular school program because of their value in supplementing the goals of academics.

Given this similarity in outcomes, student activity programs are viewed as a practical extension of the school curriculum (Joekel, 1985). According to Joekel, programs that teach citizenship, ethical character, healthful living, and the worthy use of leisure time are particularly appropriate for student activities.

Extracurricular activities have traditionally provided students with avenues for expression and relevant experiences, and have been consistent with academic pursuits. In particular, they provide students with opportunities for developing leadership skills, for enhancing self-worth, and for addressing social and emotional needs (Joekel, 1985). Student grades were not jeopardized by involvement in student activities. In the majority of cases, school-related activities drew a disproportionate number of students with the

highest grades. In fact, the only factor that Joekel (1985) found to be predictive of success later in life was achievement in extracurricular activities.

According to The 29th Annual Phi Delta Kappa Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public School of September 1997, 63 percent of Americans believed that extracurricular activities were very important, another 27 percent believed that they were fairly important while 8 percent believed not too important and 2 percent not important. The importance assigned to these activities was substantially greater in the 1997 poll than in previous polls. More specifically, only 45 percent of the public judged extracurricular activities to be "very important" in 1978. This figure fell to 31 percent in 1984, but continued a constant increase to 39 percent in 1985.

Virtually all students in public school reported that a core of extracurricular activities were available to them, including sports, performing arts, publications, and honor societies, and all but a small percentage had access to academic clubs and student government. Slightly less available were non-academic clubs and student government, such as vocational/professional clubs, followed by service and hobby clubs. The students reported that any extracurricular activities were available 99.8 percent of the time, while publications, performing arts, sports (individual and team), and honor societies were available 90.1 percent or more of the time. Student government, academic clubs, and vocational/professional clubs were offered from 93.2. to 96.5 percent of the time (National Center for Education Statistics, 1995).

Interest in the developmental consequences of extracurricular and after-school programs have been stimulated by the growing interest in positive psychology and positive youth development (Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003). Advocates for

positive youth development, in particular, agree that such programs are needed to fully prepare our youth for transition into adulthood. Developmentalists and youth advocates argue that constructive, organized activities are a good use of the adolescents' time because such activities provide opportunities to acquire and practice specific social, physical, and intellectual skills that may be useful in a wide variety of settings, including school; to contribute to the well-being of one's community and to develop a sense of agency as a member of one's community; to belong to a socially recognized and valued group; to establish supportive social networks of peers and adults that can help in both the present and the future; and to experience and deal with challenges. In turn, those assets are predicted to facilitate both current levels of school engagement and achievement and subsequent educational and occupational attainment; and to prevent the emergence of risky behavior patterns among young people. Support for these suggestions came from both classic sociology studies of the relation of extracurricular activities to school achievement and the more recent research in leisure studies, sports, sports psychology, prevention science, and the interdisciplinary studies of adolescent development (Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003).

Mahoney (2003) suggested that participation in voluntary, school-based extracurricular activities increases school participation and achievement because it facilitates: a) the acquisition of interpersonal skills and positive social norms; and b) membership in pro-social peer groups and stronger emotional and social connections to one's school. In turn, those assets should increase mental health, school engagement, school achievement, and long term emotional outcomes and should decrease participation in problem behaviors, provided that the behaviors are not endorsed by the peer cultures

that emerge in these activities. Consistent with other studies, clear evidence was found that participation in extracurricular activities during the high school years provides a protective context in terms of involvement in risky behaviors and a promotive context in terms of academic performance. Participation in all five types of extracurricular activities predicted better than expected educational outcomes including high school GPA, college attendance, and college graduation.

The National Federation of State High School Association (2000) and its members purported that interscholastic sports and fine arts activities promote citizenship and sportsmanship. Extracurricular activities also instill a sense of pride in community, teach lifelong lessons of teamwork and self-discipline, and facilitate the physical and emotional development of our nation's youth. These activities support the academic mission of the school. They are not a diversion, but rather an extension of a good education program. Generally, students who participated in activity programs tended to have higher grade point averages, better attendance records, lower dropout rates, and fewer discipline problems than other students. Activity programs provided valuable lessons for practical situations. Through participation in activity programs, students learned and developed self-discipline, self-confidence, and skills to handle competitive situations. The public expects schools to develop these qualities in students so that they become responsible adults and productive citizens. In general, the National Federation of State High School Association believe that participation in high school activities is highly correlated with future success – in college, in a career, and as a productive member of society.

Snyder and Spreitzer (1992) found a positive relationship between participation in the athletics and academic achievement, self-esteem, locus of control, and involvement in school activities. The findings also indicated that students who were involved in multiple school activities had more positive social and psychological characteristics than students who participated in fewer or no activities. Finally, many participants believed that athletic participation “builds character, discipline, self-esteem, and other achievement-related qualities and results in deferred gratification” (Snyder & Spreitzer, 1992, p. 520). Spreitzer, Holland and Andre (1987) found that students who experienced enhanced publicity while involved in extracurricular activities (e.g., a starter on a team) had higher self-esteem scores than non-starters and non-athletes.

According to Biernat and Klesse (1998), students who participated in co-curricular activities not only did better academically, but also developed and enhanced other valuable characteristics – i.e., self-esteem, self-confidence, social cooperation, and leadership skills. Research conducted by Haensly, Lupkouski, and Ellind (1986) also found a positive relationship between participation in extracurricular activities and academic achievement. Moreover, extracurricular activities provided a context for the development of positive social characteristics.

Otto (1977) posited that the level of extracurricular participation in high school accounts for “more variability in educational attainment than socioeconomic statuses, academic ability, or academic performance” (p. 108). Extracurricular activities were crucial to the academic curriculum because they provided “opportunities for acquiring, developing, and rehearsing attitudes and skills from which status goals evolve and upon which future success is grounded” (p.112).

Following the design of the “High School and Beyond Study and Total Extracurricular Activity Participation” (TEAP), Marsh’s (1992) findings were favorably associated with social self-concept, academic self-concept, taking advanced academic courses, time spent on homework, post-secondary educational aspirations, GPA, parental involvement, absenteeism, being in the academic track, and college attendance.

According to Hunt (1996) participation in most types of extracurricular activities had a statistically significant effect on grades. This effect was primarily positive, except in the case of work, which was negative during the sophomore year. The effect of participation in all types of activities remained fairly constant throughout high school enrollment.

The Office of Educational Research & Improvement of the U.S. Department of Education (1986) completed a comprehensive study on co-curricular activity participation and academic achievement. The longitudinal study was sponsored by the Center for Statistics using the “High School and Beyond” data. Estimates of GPAs were based on high school transcripts. Researchers found a positive relationship between GPA scores and involvement in co-curricular activities. In fact, students who were involved in more activities attained a higher ranking in their class. Students who reported participation in at least four of the eleven available activities were only one-third as likely, as students not involved in any activities, to have a GPA of 2.0 or less. During the years following this 1986 study, researchers reported similar findings – i.e., the more a student was involved extracurricular activities, the higher their overall GPA (Brown & Steinberg, 1991; Sabatino, 1994). Researchers also found that the GPAs of athletes are higher than non-athletes (Foltz, 1992; Howley, 1991).

According to Holland and Andre (1987), many factors influenced the development and socialization of American adolescents including family, peers, schools, and the media. Although family and peers provided the dominant influences, the opportunities and context provided by secondary schools also influenced adolescent development. Through the offering of extracurricular activities, schools allow or disallow, facilitate or inhibit, the pattern of tangible and intangible rewards provided for participation in activities. In addition, schools influence personality development and socialization.

Holland and Andre (1987) stressed that the value positions pertaining to schools have either an academic or developmental focus. The academic perspective focuses on intellectual competence and stresses that the purpose of the schools was the pursuit of academic excellence and transmission of formal knowledge. From this perspective, extracurricular activities provide a means of relaxation or fun, but are clearly unimportant to the primary purpose of schools. The developmental position stresses that school programs should provide experiences that further the total development of individual students. The developmental position was more equalitarian, stressing that the development of all individuals must be considered in planning a school program. To achieve this goal, non-academic programs could be as important as academic programs in facilitating the development of the individual.

Most American secondary schools exist to serve a diverse population of students. High schools not only serve as an institution that socializes adolescents, but also assist students in accomplishing the developmental tasks of adolescence – i.e., to construct a self-governing adult (Holland and Andre, 1987).

Factors Threatening Extracurricular Activities

For much of the 1990s, states were flush with money from a booming economy and a rapidly growing stock market. However, an inevitable downturn, combined with the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States, has left a number of states with huge revenue shortfalls. In addition, it has left school districts in financial distress. To compensate, some school boards have laid off employees, cut back on bus transportation, and reduced or eliminated spring sports. Other school boards have called for volunteers within the school to perform janitorial duties. School supporters in some districts have been asked to donate classroom supplies, such as copy paper, pencils, and crayons. Fundraising is no longer just for extras, but also for necessities (Parrino, 2003).

Parrino (2003) states that as many districts look for ways to cut costs, many systems consider the benefits of eliminating some extracurricular activities or rescheduling them throughout the day. As with other options, such cuts have potential disadvantages, especially in terms of morale. From a cost standpoint, activity programs are an exceptional bargain when matched against school districts' overall budget. The National Federation of State High School Association has determined through data collected from across the country that activity programs make up only one to three percent of the overall education budget in a school. In Chicago, for example, that figure is even lower. In 1992, the overall budget for the Chicago Board of Education was 2.6 billion dollars; activity programs received only 2.9 million dollars, a miniscule one-tenth of one percent (.001%) of the overall budget (University Interscholastic League, 2000).

Yet in recent years, high school extracurricular programs have been restructured or in relative decline, particularly in urban school systems. As local and state

governments face weakening economic conditions, one of the first casualties of diminished state coffers are public schools. In particular, programs in public schools that are deemed unnecessary or not fundamental to a minimum proper education required under the law are often the first to succumb to the funding war that has become commonplace in states. Indeed, when urban school districts experience fiscal crises, one of the first components to be considered for reduction or elimination is the extracurriculum. These school systems also experience some of our nation's highest dropout rates; disengagement of students from schools continues to occur. Researchers of the inner city point to the general absence of social resources and conventional role models as contributing factors to this disengagement (Quiroz, 2000).

Roth (2003) explored in depth the funding crises that schools are currently facing and their effects on the extracurriculum. He noted that the debate concerning how to provide for and fund a system of free public education has continued unabated. Yet, in spite of continued debate and political rhetoric concerning better schools for the future, the plight of education funding in many jurisdictions has remained unaltered from year to year. The resulting inadequacy in funding has been, to some observers, a primary culprit in deepening the chasm between social groups. The reduction of opportunities because of a lack of adequate funding for education is contrary to the vision held by the proponents of public education, which was to allow those youth from families with less means to break the barriers of illiteracy, political passivity, and poverty.

Roth (2003) discussed one particular idea that school administrators have employed recently to address funding difficulties. A "pay to play" program is an alternative funding scheme, whereby students in public schools must pay a fee to take

part in certain educational and sports programs, including extracurricular activities such as football and band that have played a traditionally vital role in the proper physical and mental development of school-aged children for many generations. Thus, instead of terminating certain sports programs and other extracurricular activities because of inadequate funding, the school charges participating students a fee to offset the cost to the school system.

Recently, students have been concerned about their ability to afford to participate in their favorite activities. One result of requiring students to pay to take part in school-sponsored activities is the perception that “our programs are falling apart,” as Brian Brown, athletic director of the Ashburnham – Westminster (Massachusetts) Regional School District noted. “We’re losing kids, and they’re losing interest – We have lost six sports in two years” (Gehrman, 2003, 7).

Two years ago one school district completely eliminated its athletic budget; this decision re-directed the responsibility for funding school sports to student athletes and their parents. Over time, the participation fees increased from \$35 per sport to its current rate of \$350 to \$1000 per sport, a situation not limited to the district’s high schools. This drastic increase has led to several problems. For example, many students quit if they do not agree with the amount of playing time they are granted. Furthermore, many freshmen and sophomores are no longer trying out for sports teams.

According to the athletic director, the early high school years had previously been the times during which students usually joined new groups, tried new things, and found their niche in high school. During the first year of the cutbacks, 2000-01, the district’s participation declined by 25%. The following year, participation continued to decline by

38%. “This is not the way to fix the district’s budget; it’s not a good option, and it’s not worth it (Gehrman, 2003, 7)

Inflated participation fees, such as those in Massachusetts, have become a trend across the nation, as many states have dramatically changed their policies during the last five years. The number of districts implementing fees has increased. For example, in 1998 in Michigan, participation fees were not prevalent; only a few schools charged small fees. This year in Michigan, more than 100 school districts implemented varying fees. “Participation fees promote the notion that school sports could become a participation opportunity for only those who could afford it, which runs counter to our school systems’ objective – education for everyone,” said John Johnson, Communications Director of the Michigan High School Association (Gehrman, 2003,7).

Similar sentiments, that “pay to play” programs enacted in public schools violate the free education guarantee, have been expressed around the nation. Proponents of this argument must first demonstrate that extracurricular activities are fundamental components of the proper education of children, setting them on a par with classic subjects such as mathematics, physics, and writing.

Roth (2003) described the Supreme Court of California case in 1984, *Hartzell v Connell*, the court discussed the history of the free school guarantee in California and its importance to a democratic form of government. The court concluded that it can no longer be denied that extracurricular activities constitute an integral component of public education, and that such activities are no less fitted for the ultimate purpose of our public schools, to wit, the making of good citizens physically, mentally, and morally, than the study of algebra and Latin. Thus, the court held that all educational activities – curricular

or extracurricular – offered to students by school districts fall within the free school guarantee.

Other state courts have followed, at least indirectly, and supported the rationale of the Hartzell suit in holding that the place of extracurricular activities in education is not subordinate to classic classroom subject matter. For instance, an Ohio federal court stated that extracurricular activities are, in the best modern thinking, an integral and complementary part of the total school program. In a similar fashion, a New Jersey court found that, even though extracurricular activities commonly occur outside of regular classes, such activities form an integral and vital part of the educational program. In an discussion of the importance of school sports, the Supreme Court of Arizona outlined the evolution of extracurricular activities in the school setting and then made an argument that athletic games promote the proper development of the body.

In light of these court determinations, many school districts have found other methods of dealing with budget constraints, such as team fundraising, booster clubs, and gate entrance fees. In South Dakota, for example, a current tax freeze inhibits the amount of money generated by taxes for the schools. The only way to fund high school athletics is through property taxes, according to the Executive Director of the South Dakota High School Association. With very little funding many South Dakota, schools are forced to cut the levels of their programs. For example, a school must cut its sophomore B squad and junior varsity teams in order to maintain its varsity team, Carney reported.

Minnesota faces similar budget problems, but the majority of its school districts charge participation fees. In Anoka – Hennepin County, budget cuts in the last few years influenced administrators to increase participation fees, which they thought could

generate \$1.3 million for the school districts. Some current charges include \$375 for ice hockey, \$200 for the debate team, and \$95 for music. In Minnesota, schools make up the only group that must ask for the legislature for funding; the government sets aside a levy to help other non-profit organizations with their funding needs.

“If the districts and the legislature truly value the activities like they say they do, then I think that they should pay for it,” said Dave Stead, executive of the Minnesota State High School League. “Kids don’t have to pay for algebra class or physical education class, so why should they have to pay for these activities? These aren’t just extracurricular activities; they’re an integral part of a youngster’s life.”

“Utah has been involved with student pay to play for many years – probably close to twenty years,” said Evan Excell, executive director of the Utah High School Activities Association. “It’s a sore spot within the state. However, with the budgetary cuts throughout education, it has been impossible for districts to continue to fund extracurricular activities without help from participation fees. Administrators and coaches agree that if there was a way to eliminate such fees, they would gladly do just that, however, I don’t see that happening in the near future.” Many administrators have similar reactions and believe that sports and activity programs are not extracurricular, but rather, co-curricular, upholding the belief that learning takes place both inside and outside the classroom (Gehrman, 2003).

Criteria For Measuring Success

The traditional means of measuring academic achievement for high school and college students throughout the United States has been grade point average (GPA). The literature indicates that researchers have accepted GPA as a measure of student

achievement (Barden, 2002). Certainly, within the arena of student eligibility, GPA is the most widely used measurement of student academic success. Research available on the effects of extracurricular activities on student achievement has used GPA as the tool for measurement of academic performance (e.g., Hunt, 1993; Milus, 1998; Eccles et al, 2003). The standard for calculation of GPA is the four-point scale. Four points are awarded for an A in an academic class, while 1 point is awarded for a D and 0 points for an F (Dowell, 2003).

One study that supported the use of GPA with regard to academic achievement was The High School and Beyond study. In the study 18,500 students who participated in activities generally had a higher GPA than students who did not participate. Dowell (2003) cited numerous studies, all of which attempted to ascertain a difference in GPA between participants and non-participants of extracurricular activities.

Barden (2002) reported that GPA was used as measurement for success among students who participated in extracurricular activities and those who did not participate, based on a 4-point scale. She also cited numerous additional studies that used GPA as a measure of academic success in comparisons of students who participated in extracurricular activities and students who were non-participants.

Summary

High school athletics and extracurricular activities continue to play an important role in the educational process of America's public school students. This chapter provided an overview of the history of extracurricular activities, the benefits of extracurricular activities, factors threatening extracurricular activities, and criteria for measuring success in public schools. Many school boards across the nation, faced with

cutbacks in funding, have had to address the possibility of reducing or eliminating extracurricular activities from school curricula. Discontinuing funding for extracurricular activities would be counterproductive, however, as they have been demonstrated to contribute significantly to academic achievement (Harvancik & Golson, 1986). Our nation's youth face a complex future, one that will demand skills for all our citizens; such a complex society will require leadership and communication skills among its people along with the ability to work together. Our schools have a responsibility to develop these skills. Student activity programs address these needs in multiple and important ways.

CHAPTER III

Method

Introduction

This chapter explains the methods used to obtain and analyze the quantitative data examined in this study. The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of participation in extracurricular activities on the mean cumulative grade point average (GPA) of students at one rural high school located in the South. In particular, male and female students who were enrolled from 1997-2002 were categorized into one of the following four groups: interscholastic athletics only, co-curricular activities only, both co-curricular activities and interscholastic athletics, and no extracurricular activities.

The following null hypotheses were tested:

- 1) No statistically significant difference exists in the mean grade point averages of high school males who were grouped by their participation in extracurricular activities.
- 2) No statistically significant difference exists in the mean grade point averages of high school females who were grouped by their participation in extracurricular activities.

High School Demographics

Data were collected from Dade County High School, a rural high school located in the northwest corner of the state of Georgia. The county has a population of 15,508 with a per capita income of \$16,127. During the five-year period of 1997-2002, the total enrollment in grades 9-12 at Dade County High School was 3,274 students, with an average annual enrollment of 655 students (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Number of Males and Number of Females by Academic Year

Academic Year	Males	Females	Total
2001-2002	332	337	669
2000-2001	304	326	630
1999-2000	336	341	677
1998-1999	332	336	668
1997-1998	319	311	630
Total	1623	1651	3274

During this study, the average number of students earning college preparatory and vocational technical diplomas each year was 26.6% and 49.8% of the total number of seniors, respectively. While the number of students earning both college preparatory and vocational technical diplomas were 18.2% of the total number of seniors. The average number of special education diplomas conferred over the five-year period was 5.4%.

The average high school completion rate for Dade County High School was 73.5%, compared to the average state high school completion rate of 70.4%. The mean percent of graduates entering Georgia colleges from this high school was 16.2%, while the mean percent of graduates entering Georgia technical schools was 14.4%. The average student dropout rate was 6.0%.

Subjects

The sample for this study was the population of male and female students who attended Dade County High School in grades 9, 10, 11, and 12 during the academic years from 1997-2002. The data that were collected included the grade point average of each student for each year of enrollment. The students were classified according to gender and according to their participation in interscholastic athletics, co-curricular activities, both

Table 3.2: Male and Female Participants and Non-Participants by Academic Year

School Year	2002-2001	2001-2000	2000-1999	1999-1998	1998-1997
Male					
Participants	142	156	144	147	131
Male Non-Participants	190	148	192	185	189
Female					
Participants	141	153	144	131	106
Female Non-Participants	196	173	197	205	205
Total					
Participants	283	309	288	278	237
Total Non-Participants	386	321	389	390	393

interscholastic athletics and co-curricular activities, and non-participation in any activity (see Table 3.2).

Procedures

Permission to collect data for this study was obtained from the Superintendent of the Dade County School System. After permission was granted, data were obtained from the OSIRIS database. This database is used to communicate information to the Georgia Department of Education from school systems throughout the state. Cumulative GPA was weighted in the course database for each academic year. This step was performed because grades for honors courses are weighted higher than regular academic courses. Thus, while the grade point system is based on a 4.0 scale, students could potentially earn a maximum grade point average of 4.2, depending on enrollment and performance in honors classes. Each student was classified, based on participation into four groups: interscholastic athletics, co-curricular activities, both co-curricular activities and

interscholastic athletics, and no participation in any extracurricular activities. The GPA for each student was computed for each academic year. Finally, a database was created of student GPAs by gender, participation group, academic year, and grade in school. Students' names and identification numbers were omitted to protect the anonymity of the students in the study.

Data were manually entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 11.0 for Windows. Data were analyzed using a One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). An alpha level of .05 was selected to determine significance for all statistical tests. After the ANOVA determined that there was a significant difference in mean GPAs, the Scheffé multiple comparison procedure was used to identify where the significant differences in mean GPAs were located. The Scheffé procedure was selected to correct for unequal groups and to minimize the possibility of Type I errors.

Summary

Chapter III explained the methods used to obtain and analyze the quantitative data investigated in this study. Two null hypotheses were generated to examine the relationship of extracurricular activity participation and academic achievement, as measured by mean GPA. Subjects were identified and procedures were explained. Finally, the statistical analysis was described; results will be discussed in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

Findings and Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of participation in extracurricular activities on the mean grade point average (GPA) of students at one rural high school located in the South. In particular, male and female students who were enrolled from 1997-2002 were categorized into one of the following four groups: interscholastic athletics only, only co-curricular activities, both co-curricular activities and interscholastic athletics, and no extracurricular activities. Using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 11.0 for Windows, differences in mean GPAs of the various extracurricular activity groups by gender were tested with a One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) followed by the Scheffé multiple comparison procedure. An alpha level of .05 was selected to determine significance for all statistical tests.

The following null hypotheses were tested:

- 1) No statistically significant difference exists in the mean grade point averages of high school males who were grouped by their participation in extracurricular activities.
- 2) No statistically significant difference exists in the mean grade point averages of high school females who were grouped by their participation in extracurricular activities.

Table 4.1: One-way Analysis of Variance – Male Students

	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F
Between Groups	151.46	3	50.49	86.85*
Within Groups	941.18	1619	.581	
Total	1092.64	1622		

* $p < .001$

Findings

The results of the One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) demonstrated a highly statistically significant effect of participation on mean GPA of male students ($F_{3,1619}=86.85, p<.001$). Given this result, the hypothesis stating that no statistically significant difference exists in the mean grade point averages of high school males who were grouped by their participation in extracurricular activities is rejected (see Table 4.1).

Scheffé's multiple comparison procedure was conducted to examine the differences in mean GPAs of high school males. Use of this procedure resulted in the following pairwise comparisons of mean GPAs for male students:

- 1) Non-participants in any extracurricular activities and participants in interscholastic athletics
- 2) Non-participants in any extracurricular activities and participants in co-curricular activities
- 3) Non-participants in any extracurricular activities and participants in both co-curricular activities and interscholastic athletics

4) Participants in interscholastic athletics only and participants in co-curricular activities only

5) Participants in interscholastic athletics only and participants in both co-curricular activities and interscholastic athletics

6) Participants in co-curricular activities only and participants in both co-curricular activities and interscholastic athletics

Male high school students who did not participate in any extracurricular activities had a significantly lower mean grade point average than males who participated in interscholastic athletics only. The mean grade point average for males who did not participate in any extracurricular activities was 2.13, while for males who participated in interscholastic athletics mean grade point average was 2.49. The mean difference of .36 was significant at a level of $p = .000$ (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2: GPA of Male Non-Participants in Extracurricular Activities and Participants in Interscholastic Athletics Only

Group	Mean GPA	Min-Max	Mean Difference	Significance
Non-Participants	2.13	.06-4.09	.36	.000
Interscholastic Athletics Participants Only	2.49	.25-4.13		

Table 4.3: GPA of Male Non-Participants in Extracurricular Activities and Participants in Co-Curricular Activities Only

Group	Mean GPA	Min-Max	Mean Difference	Significance
Non-Participants	2.13	.06-4.09	.64	.000
Co-Curricular Participants Only	2.77	.84-4.13		

Male high school students who did not participate in any extracurricular activities had a significantly lower mean grade point average than males who participated in co-curricular activities only. The mean grade point average for males who did not participate in any extracurricular activities was 2.13, while the mean grade point average for participants in co-curricular activities only was 2.77. The mean difference of .64 was significant at a level of $p=.000$ (see Table 4.3).

Male high school students who did not participate in any extracurricular activities had a significantly lower mean grade point average than males who participated in both co-curricular activities and interscholastic athletics. The mean grade point average for males who did not participate in any extracurricular activities was 2.13, while the mean grade point average for males who participated in both co-curricular activities and interscholastic athletics participants was 3.16. The mean difference of 1.03 was significant at a level of $p=.000$ (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4: GPA of Male Non-Participants in Extracurricular Activities and Participants in Both Co-Curricular Activities and Interscholastic Athletics

Group	Mean GPA	Min-Max	Mean Difference	Significance
Non-Participants	2.13	.06-4.09	1.03	.000
Both Co-Curricular/ Interscholastic Athletics Participants	3.16	1.66-4.12		

Male high school students who participated in interscholastic athletics only had a significantly lower mean grade point average than males who participated in co-curricular activities only. The mean grade point average for males who participated in interscholastic athletics only was 2.49, while the mean grade point average for males who participated in co-curricular activities only was 2.77. The mean difference of .28 was significant at a level of $p=.002$ (see Table 4.5).

Male high school students who participated in interscholastic athletics only had a significantly lower mean grade point average than males who participated in both co-curricular activities and interscholastic athletics. The mean grade point average for males who participated in interscholastic athletics only was 2.49, while the mean grade point average for males who participated in both co-curricular activities and interscholastic activities was 3.16. The mean difference of .67 was significant at a level of $p=.000$ (see Table 4.6).

Table 4.5: GPA of Male Participants in Interscholastic Athletics Only and Participants in Co-Curricular Activities Only

Group	Mean GPA	Min-Max	Mean Difference	Significance
Interscholastic Athletics Participants Only	2.49	.25-4.13	.28	.002
Co-Curricular Participants Only	2.77	.84-4.13		

Table 4.6: GPA of Male Participants in Interscholastic Athletics Only and Participants in Both Co-Curricular Activities and Interscholastic Athletics

Group	Mean GPA	Min-Max	Mean Difference	Significance
Interscholastic Athletics Participants Only	2.49	.25-4.13	.67	.000
Both Co-Curricular/ Interscholastic Athletics	3.16	1.66-4.12		

Table 4.7: GPA of Male Participants in Co-Curricular Activities Only and Participants in Both Co-Curricular Activities and Interscholastic Athletics

Group	Mean GPA	Min-Max	Mean Difference	Significance
Co-Curricular Participants Only	2.77	.84-4.13	.39	.001
Both Co-Curricular/ Interscholastic Athletics	3.16	1.66-4.12		

Male high school students who participated in co-curricular activities only had a significantly lower mean grade point average than males who participated in both co-curricular activities and interscholastic athletics. The mean grade point average for males who participated in co-curricular activities only was 2.77, while the mean grade point average for males who participated in both co-curricular activities and interscholastic activities was 3.16. The mean difference of .39 was significant at a level of $p=.001$ (see Table 4.7).

The results of the One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) also demonstrated a highly statistically significant effect of participation on mean GPA of female students ($F_{3,1647}=96.02, p<.001$). Given this result, the hypothesis stating that no statistically significant difference exists in the mean grade point averages of high school females who were grouped by their participation in extracurricular activities is rejected (see Table 4.8).

Table 4.8: One-way Analysis of Variance – Female Students

	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F
Between Groups	153.65	3	51.22	96.02*
Within Groups	878.44	1647	.533	
Total	1032.09	1650		

*p<.001

Scheffé's multiple comparison procedure was conducted to examine the differences in mean GPAs of high school females. Use of this procedure resulted in the following pairwise comparisons of mean GPAs for female students:

- 1) Non-participants in any extracurricular activities and participants in interscholastic athletics only
- 2) Non-participants in any extracurricular activities and participants in co-curricular activities only
- 3) Non-participants in any extracurricular activities and participants in both co-curricular activities and interscholastic athletics
- 4) Participants in interscholastic athletics only and participants in co-curricular activities only
- 5) Participants in interscholastic athletics only and participants in both co-curricular activities and interscholastic athletics

6) Participants in co-curricular activities only and participants in both co-curricular activities and interscholastic athletics

Comparison of the mean grade point averages of female high school students using Scheffé's multiple comparison procedure revealed similar results as those for male high school students. Female high school students who did not participate in any extracurricular activities had a significantly lower mean grade point average than females who participated in interscholastic athletics only. The mean grade point average for females who did not participate in any extracurricular activity was 2.56, while the mean grade point average for females who participated in interscholastic athletics only was 3.04. The mean difference of .48 was significant at a level of $p=.000$ (see Table 4.9).

Female high school students who did not participate in any extracurricular activities had a significantly lower mean grade point average than females who participated in co-curricular activities only. The mean grade point average for females who did not participate in any extracurricular activity was 2.56, while the mean grade point average for female participants in co-curricular activities only was 3.14. The mean difference of .58 was significant at a level of $p=.000$ (see Table 4.10).

Table 4.9: GPA of Female Non-Participants in Extracurricular Activities and Participants in Interscholastic Athletics Only

Group	Mean GPA	Min-Max	Mean Difference	Significance
Non-Participants	2.56	.27-4.13	.48	.000
Interscholastic Athletics Participants Only	3.04	1.25-4.13		

Table 4.10: GPA of Female Non-Participants in Extracurricular Activities and Participants in Co-Curricular Activities Only

Group	Mean GPA	Min-Max	Mean Difference	Significance
Non-Participants	2.56	.27-4.13	.58	.000
Co-Curricular Participants Only	3.14	.94-4.13		

Table 4.11: GPA of Female Non-Participants in Extracurricular Activities and Participants in Both Co-Curricular Activities and Interscholastic Athletics

Group	Mean GPA	Min-Max	Mean Difference	Significance
Non-Participants	2.56	.27-4.13	.80	.000
Both Co-Curricular/ Interscholastic Athletics Participants	3.36	2.06-4.13		

Female high school students who did not participate in any extracurricular activities had a significantly lower mean grade point average than females who participated in both co-curricular activities and interscholastic athletics. The mean grade point average for females who did not participate in any extracurricular activities was 2.56, while the mean grade point average for female students who participated in both co-curricular activities and interscholastic athletics was 3.36. The mean difference of .80 was significant at a level of $p=.000$ (see Table 4.11).

Female high school students who participated in interscholastic athletics only did not have a significantly lower mean grade point average than females who participated in co-curricular activities only. The mean grade point average for females who participated in interscholastic athletics only was 3.04, while the mean grade point average for female participants in co-curricular activities only was 3.14. The mean difference of .10 was not statistically significant ($p= .523$) (see Table 4.12).

Table 4.12: GPA of Female Participants in Interscholastic Athletics Only and Participants in Co-Curricular Activities Only

Group	Mean GPA	Min-Max	Mean Difference	Significance
Interscholastic Athletics Only	3.04	1.25-4.13	.10	.523
Co-Curricular Participants Only	3.14	.94-4.13		

Female high school students who participated in interscholastic athletics only had a significantly lower mean grade point average than females who participated in both co-curricular activities and interscholastic athletics. The mean grade point average for females who participated in interscholastic athletics only was 3.04, while the mean grade point average for female participants in both co-curricular activities and interscholastic athletics was 3.36. The mean difference of .32 was significant at a level of $p = .000$ (see Table 4.13).

Female high school students who participated in co-curricular activities only had a significantly lower mean grade point average than females who participated in both co-curricular activities and interscholastic athletics. The mean grade point average for females who participated in co-curricular activities only was 3.14, while the mean grade point average for female participants in both co-curricular activities and interscholastic athletics was 3.36. The mean difference of .22 was significant at a level of $p = .018$ (see Table 4.14).

Table 4.13: GPA of Female Participants in Interscholastic Athletics Only and Participants in Both Co-Curricular Activities and Interscholastic Athletics

Group	Mean GPA	Min-Max	Mean Difference	Significance
Interscholastic Athletics Only	3.04	1.25-4.13	.32	.000
Both Co-Curricular/ Interscholastic Athletics	3.36	2.06-4.13		

Table 4.14: GPA of Female Participants in Co-Curricular Activities Only and Participants in Both Co-Curricular Activities and Interscholastic Athletics

Group	Mean GPA	Min-Max	Mean Difference	Significance
Co-Curricular Participants Only	3.14	.94-4.13	.22	.018
Both Co-Curricular/ Interscholastic Athletics	3.36	2.06-4.13		

Discussion

The analyses of data over the five-year period 1997 through 2002 demonstrate that students who participated in some extracurricular activities consistently performed better academically, as measured by mean GPA, than students who participated in no extracurricular activities. The One-way Analysis of Variance conducted for both male and female students revealed that participation in extracurricular activities had a positive effect on mean (GPA). The post hoc comparisons for both male and female students, using the Scheffé multiple comparison procedure, revealed that the mean GPA of participants in all forms of extracurricular activities, whether interscholastic athletics or co-curricular activities or both, was higher than the mean GPA of non-participants in any extracurricular activity. Moreover, these comparisons revealed that the mean GPA of participants in co-curricular activities alone or in both athletics and co-curricular activities was higher than that of students who only participated in interscholastic athletics. This finding was consistent for both male and female students, with one exception. Though the mean GPA of female students who participated solely in co-curricular activities was higher than that of female students who participated solely in interscholastic athletics, the difference was not statistically significant.

These findings are consistent with numerous other studies which link higher academic achievement with participation in athletics and other extracurricular activities. Spady (1970) concluded that athletics and co-curricular activities are not a diversion for students, but rather an extension of a good educational program. Other researchers, such as the National Federation of State High Schools (2000), Snyder and Spreitzer (1992), and Biernat and Klesse (1998), found similar results: Individuals who combined the

student role with participation in extracurricular activities increased their academic outcomes.

A longitudinal study by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (U.S. Department of Education, 1986) found that students who ranked high on GPA tended to be more involved in co-curricular activities. In fact, the more activities the students were involved in, the higher they ranked. Presley and Whitley (1996) found that improvement in academic performance of young people required effort to get them involved in more co-curricular activities, not fewer. The results of several studies indicated that the more a student was involved in extracurricular activities, the higher the GPA (Brown & Steinberg, 1991; Sabatino, 1994).

Other researchers have found similar results specifically for student athletes; grade point averages of high school athletes were higher than those of non-participants in athletics (Eidsmore, 1961, 1962; Howley, 1991; Foltz, 1992; Colorado High School Activities Association, 1992, 1999). Nuhn (1991) found a significant difference in grade point average between athletes and non-athletes in small rural schools, with athletes outperforming non-athletes academically. Nuhn reported that this significant difference in GPA between athletes and non-athletes existed for female, as well as male, students.

This study however adds to the existing literature by focusing on academic achievement of students who attend rural high schools, which for many of them (Approx. 50%), serves as the final participation to their formal education. Given the results of this study elimination of extracurricular activities may have a more dramatic effect on these student's future employment and success in life than on students who attend high schools in non-rural settings.

Summary

In summary, students who participated in some form of extracurricular activity, whether interscholastic athletics or co-curricular activities, academically outperformed students who participated in no extracurricular activities, using mean grade point average as the measure. This conclusion was supported in the review of literature through multiple studies with similar results. Moreover, differences in mean GPA were found for students who participated in certain groups of activities. For male students, participation in co-curricular activities alone or participation in both co-curricular activities and interscholastic athletics was associated with significantly higher mean GPA than participation in interscholastic athletics alone. Similar significant differences were found in the mean GPA of female students, except for the female students who participated solely in interscholastic athletics and those who participated solely in co-curricular activities. Though the mean GPA of female students who participated in co-curricular activities only was higher than that of female students who participated in interscholastic athletics only, the difference was not statistically significant.

CHAPTER V

Conclusions

Introduction

At any given time across the United States, students are participating in co-curricular activities and interscholastic athletics. Music, band, student council, football, basketball, softball, baseball, and cheerleading are some of the co-curricular and interscholastic athletic activities in which students can participate throughout the school year. Often, activities such as these carry over into the summer, as students continue to improve their skills through summer leagues and camps. Extracurricular activities have become a mainstay in the public school setting since the early 1900s (Powell et al, 1985; Terzian, 2000).

Most American secondary schools exist to serve a diverse population of students. Schools serve as one component in the way our society socializes adolescents and helps them accomplish the developmental tasks of adolescence. High school athletics and other extracurricular activities continue to play an important role in the educational process of America's public school students. Beginning in the 1960s and continuing to the present, a sizeable body of research demonstrates that participation in extracurricular activities is associated with an array of positive educational outcomes, including better attendance records, lower rates of discipline referrals, and higher academic self-esteem. Moreover, students participating in extracurricular activities are more likely to be in a college preparatory curriculum, earn higher grades, and aspire to enroll in and graduate from college (Videon, 2002).

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of participation in extracurricular activities on the mean grade point average (GPA) of students at one rural high school located in the South. In particular, male and female students who were enrolled from 1997-2002 were categorized into one of the following four groups: participation in interscholastic athletics only, participation in co-curricular activities only, participation in both co-curricular activities and interscholastic athletics, and no participation in extracurricular activities. The results of this study led to the conclusion that student participation in some form of extracurricular activity, whether interscholastic athletics or co-curricular activities, is associated with higher academic performance, as measured by mean GPA, than does non-participation in any extracurricular activities. Participation in interscholastic athletics alone, while associated with an increase in mean GPA from those students who did not participate in any extracurricular activities, is not associated with the highest level of mean GPA. Moreover, student participation in both interscholastic athletics and in co-curricular activities contributes to the highest academic performance of all the groups of students. This result suggests that academic and nonacademic student activities reinforce each other beyond either variable alone.

Following several researchers (e.g., Douctre, 1992; Presley and Whitley, 1996), this study reinforces the proposition that co-curricular activity and interscholastic athletics may be solutions to our educational problems, rather than distractions from academic achievement among students. Marano (1985) stated that student activities have become a part of the regular school program because of their close relationship to academics and because of their value in supplementing academics with leadership skills

training. In light of this status, it seems that the once popular term “extracurricular” should be put to rest. Those educators who work closely with and value the type of learning that takes place in student activities look upon school-sponsored student activities as co-curricular, not extracurricular. In many circles, “extracurricular” means “not necessary”, frivolous, and “ripe for the axe at budget time”. Along with the academic programs, co-curricular activities make up the total school curriculum, which is designed to teach students the skills and abilities they will need to function successfully in society.

Public education continues to come under scrutiny for its perceived inability to educate children. Education reform continues to be on the minds of federal and state legislatures, political candidates, and the American public. The role of the educator has increased as society and government continually place demands on the educational system that traditionally have belonged to the parents. Education must focus on the whole student, and on experiences that help students grow, rather than on a strict interpretation of academic involvement.

The school continues to be the primary center for social life and socialization among young people. School activity programs represent a significant and critical area of the contemporary comprehensive secondary school. There is a positive correlation between student involvement in school activities and success in nonacademic pursuits following high school and college. Activities which have historically been considered “extracurricular” appear to have a significant and lasting value as students move beyond formal classroom experiences (Joekel, 1985; Cuccia, 1981; Spring, 1997).

As rural school districts cope with budgetary constraints, administrators should consider the potential advantages and disadvantages that may accrue when reducing or eliminating school-sponsored activities, including interscholastic athletics. High school administrators should consider the educational value of each program by examining the following: 1) its effect on the educational development of students, in spite of their individual differences (e.g., gender, level of intelligence, economic background), and 2) its potential to influence a large percentage of students. With this perspective, administrators are supporting an environment that remains committed to diminishing the social and economic disparities across students, particularly those who will not attend college, that affect their opportunities for success following graduation from high school.

Other effects of trimming or eliminating school-related student activities that should be considered include community involvement in the school and morale of students and community. For example, districts that are considering re-scheduling sponsored activities during the day should weigh how much community involvement would be lost if these activities are not held in the evening, as well as the possible financial losses in ticket sales for performances and games. Before cutting an activity entirely, districts should evaluate the cost in relation to effectiveness in educational value, the numbers of students involved, and the potential impact on the community. Indeed, given the continuing emphasis on educational reform and the focus on improving student academic achievement, expanding rather than contracting co-curricular activities may be the least expensive means of improving academic performance.

Suggestions For Further Research

As a result of this study, administrators of small rural school systems should consider continuing research to determine the academic and social value of particular programs in their schools as they struggle to meet budget constraints. In particular, administrators should consider research that explores the following hypotheses regarding the effects of co-curricular activities, including interscholastic athletics, on their educational mission:

1. Elimination of co-curricular activities would increase the average dropout rate.
2. Elimination of co-curricular activities would hinder students from pursuing higher educational goals.
3. Elimination of co-curricular activities would be detrimental to the instruction of basic health and leisure concepts.
4. Elimination of co-curricular activities would impede the process of developing positive leadership skills and social characteristics.
5. Elimination of co-curricular activities would result in increased idle time with the likelihood of delinquent behavior.
6. Elimination of co-curricular activities in rural districts would cause a decrease in community participation and morale.
7. Elimination of co-curricular activities in rural districts would deny students the opportunity to participate in organized activities because of the isolation of rural communities and the lack of community activities.

8. Elimination of co-curricular activities would remove an effective method of meeting the social and emotional needs of students, particularly in rural districts.
9. Elimination of co-curricular activities would decrease the feeling of “ownership” of school and community.

In addition to these hypotheses, future research should include:

1. Attitudes of parents regarding participation in interscholastic athletics, co-curricular activities, and non-participants.
2. Socio-economic background of families to determine if the socio-economic status has a direct impact on the activity participation.
3. Student participation in intramural activities and the relationship to academic performance.
4. Perceptions of students who are participants in interscholastic athletics and co-curricular activities and non-participants with regard to self-esteem and leadership qualities accruing to their participation.
5. Data regarding dropout rate, attendance, and student discipline among students who participate in interscholastic athletics and co-curricular activities and non-participants.

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Vita

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