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Comparison of grade point averages and dropout rates of students who participate in extracurricular activities and students who do not participate

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Running head: COMPARISON OF STUDENTS GRADE POINT AVERAGES

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree here or elsewhere.

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COMPARISON OF GRADE POINT AVERAGES AND DROP OUT RATES OF STUDENTS WHO PARTICIPATE IN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AND STUDENTS WHO DO NOT PARTICIPATE

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ABSTRACT

In this study, the author examined the effects of participation in extracurricular activities on high school students' grade point averages (GPA'S) and drop out rates. This study focused on high schools located in southwest Missouri. Students' grade point averages and drop out rates were obtained from high school athletic directors and high school principals. The data were analyzed to determine if participation in these activities was beneficial to students or a hindrance in their quest for a quality education. Data were gathered and analyzed and it was determined using t-tests that students involved in extracurricular activities had higher grades and dropped out less than students who did not participate in any activities. It was determined that schools should not cut their extracurricular activities during budget cuts. It was also determined that these activities are beneficial to the students who participate.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Schools today are faced with many challenging problems. One such problem is the controversy centered on the value of students participating in before and after school activities. Athletic programs and activities became formalized in approximately 1910 (Alkin, 1992). Since that time there has been debate over the actual worth of these activities.

Most schools want to keep a good balance of academic and athletic importance. "A school that provides a good broad-based athletic and co-curricular program will not only enjoy greater success academically, but will also experience fewer problems in student discipline and enjoy a wider range of parental support" (Hovland, 1990, p.16). While participation in these extracurricular activities is fun and can have many advantages, one must remember to keep everything is perspective. The opportunity to participate in high school activities is just that – an opportunity. It is an advantage, an honor and a privilege. Participation in high school activities is not a right. All after school athletic and activity programs, whether a debate team

meeting or a football game, fall into the category of "privilege" (Kanaby, 2008).

Twenty-three years ago there was an article written about academic standards for student-athletes that dealt with accountability becoming the watchword in athletic administration. This issue is just as important today as it was twenty-three years ago. Most leagues today, counties or associations, have eligibility standards for athletic participation. As stated earlier, it is well established that participation in extracurricular activities is a privilege and not a right. Academic monitoring by the coach is still an important aid to help athletes who may struggle in class (Hoch, 2006). It is fairly well established that athletes while in season perform better academically than when they are out of season and not playing a sport. The desire to participate and remain eligible fuels an athlete's efforts in the classroom. There is no appeal process for athletes who have missed the academic eligibility standards, since participation is not a right and eligibility standards are in place for all Missouri State High School Activities Association (MSHSAA) member schools. In the 23 years that have passed since the academic standards article, these accountability issues are

not decisions that can be made by the central administration or school boards. Issues such as accountability, monitoring the academic progress of student/athletes and eligibility standards are still at the forefront of athletic management today (Hoch, 2006).

When a student engages in high school sports or fine arts, certain responsibilities beyond those of a typical student are inevitable. That student becomes a representative of the school at-large and must display appropriate conduct not only in the classroom, but also while participating in the activity outside of the school setting (Kanaby, 2008).

Schools offer after school activities for the benefit of the children. Some people argue that activities take away from educational learning and are too stressful for adolescents to handle. In this day and age, there are so many activities for the children to choose from that being engaged in more than one activity on a school night is not rare. Stephens and Schaben (2002) stated, "The fact remains that students involved in co curricular activities, especially interscholastic sports, perform better than those who are not involved"(p.38). Studies have shown a

positive association between activities and academics (Stephens and Schaben, 2002).

A.C. Feldman used a fixed effects strategy to test whether activity participation provides an immediate return for student learning. His research shows that athletic participation is associated with a 2 percent increase in math and science test scores. Club participation is associated with a 1 percent increase in math test scores. Finally, involvement in either type of activity is associated with a 5 percent increase in graduation rate (Feldman, 2007). An activities director in one school in Iowa studied his school for three years and confirmed his belief that students who are involved in activity programs do much better in the classroom. He explained that grades in his high school improved with each additional activity in which the student was involved. It was stated that the grade point average of those students involved in activity programs improved each of the three years studied; and within each year of school, students' performances in the classroom improved (Showalter, 2008). Showalter went on to note that last year, 2007-2008, seniors participating in three activities had an outstanding 3.86 grade point average while seniors involved in no activities last year

had a GPA of 1.90. This past year 2007-2008, the average grade point average for those involved in no activities was 2.02 compared to 3.17 for those in one activity, 3.52 for those in two activities and 3.62 for those in three or more activities (Showalter, 2008). This high school in Iowa, students involved in activities were, for the most part, "A" and "B" students, while those not involved in activities were low "C" and "D" students (Showalter, 2008).

In looking at the debate over extracurricular activities, some supporters think involvement builds good work ethic, teamwork and character; whereas, some opposing views are that these activities cost too much, athletes spend too much time at practices and games and athletics are placed as a higher priority than academics. One supporter said that participation in these activities builds character, skills and attitudes that keep students out of trouble and make students more likely to succeed later in life, especially in business careers (Kostel, 1993). The values that extracurricular activities instill are certainly worth the added responsibility. Activity programs provide valuable lessons for practical situations – teamwork, sportsmanship, winning and losing and hard work. Through participation in activity programs, students

learn self-discipline, build self-confidence and develop skills to handle competitive situations. The public expects schools to produce these qualities in students so that they become responsible adults and productive citizens (Kanaby, 2008).

Extracurricular activities are a big part of many high schools. However, not all students are great athletes or have exceptional talents. Are these students still benefiting academically from these activities? Research has found numerous studies linking academic success to co-curricular participation, indicating "educators should encourage students to be involved in interscholastic sports, intramurals, or other co curricular activities" (Stephans & Schaben, 2002, p.39).

Another factor that is affecting athletics is peer relationships. Being on a team or in a group allows students to feel more involvement in school. McNeeley, Nonnemaker and Blum (2002) said, "The main development needs of middle and high school students include steadily increasing opportunities for autonomy, opportunities to demonstrate competence, caring and support from adults, developmentally appropriate supervision, and acceptance by peers"(p.140). Peer status has become very important in

schools today. Students gaining self-image through these activities develop much needed life skills (McNeeley, Nonnemaker, Blum 2002).

Students who are involved in activities do better for a number of reasons. One is they feel "connected" to school when involved in activities. Another is these students have pride in their school and their performance in the classroom as well as on the athletic field or on the stage (Showalter, 2008). Students are put in situations in which they are with and taught by caring, supporting educators. These coaches and sponsors make good "connections" with the students. They monitor attendance, behavior and grades for participants in their activity. They are mentors who help students with personal skills as well as academic issues (Showalter, 2008). Activities teach a strong work ethic and many personal skills like responsibility to the team. Activities teach students to set goals and to establish plans to achieve those goals. These students make a connection to the school. The fact that these students are around caring and hard-working coaches and sponsors is vital to academic success (Showalter, 2008).

For the past 19 years, participation in high school sports has been rising, proving that activities remain important to young people regardless of the changes in life that have occurred during that time (Kanaby, 2008). Ultimately, the hope is that students continue to appreciate the inherent benefits of participation and understand the responsibility involved. Through that understanding, students may be better able to take advantage of this privilege that does not exist in most countries (Kanaby, 2008).

It is important to understand how these different extracurricular programs affect the academic success of students. Grade point average and dropout rate are ways to determine if all the extra time that is put in before and after school have a positive correlation or a negative correlation to the overall success of these students.

Problem Statement

The purpose of this study is to compare the grade point averages and dropout rates of Southwest Missouri high school students who participate in extracurricular activities and those students who do not participate. The affect the size of the school has on grade point average and the grade in which the students are in school will also

be studied to determine if there is a difference in students' overall grade point average and dropout rate. Missouri State High School Activity Association (MSHSAA) is the governing body that was used in this study; this association oversees all athletic and extracurricular activities in the state. Data was collected from the 2007-2008 school year.

Rationale for study

High school students have been participating in different extracurricular activities for years. There has been much debate concerning students' classroom performance and their participation in extracurricular activities. The purpose of this study is to determine if there are educational benefits provided by the participation in extracurricular activities. When school budgets are tight, school administrators and boards of education will inevitably look at cutting programs including extra curricular activities. If there is significant research that shows a program is beneficial to students, it is more difficult to justify cutting that program.

Questions:

1. What effect does extracurricular participation have on students' grade point averages?
2. What effect does extracurricular participation have on student drop out rates?
3. Does the size of school affect students' grade point averages?
4. Does grade level have an affect on grade point average?

Hypothesis

1. There is a statistically significant higher grade point average (GPA) for students who participate in extracurricular activities when compared to those who chose not to participate in any activity.
2. There is a statistically lower dropout rate for students who participate in extracurricular activities when compared to those students who do not participate in any activity.
3. There is no significant difference in grade point averages between schools that are large – medium – or small in size when comparing participants to non-participants.

4. The higher the grade level of the student, the higher the grade point average will be when comparing participants to non participants.

Limitations of study

The following limitations have been acknowledged in this study.

1. The students in this study are all from schools in the southwest Missouri region.
2. There was no discrimination; all students in high school (grade 9-12) were used.
3. The population is not disaggregated by sport or activity.
4. Only Missouri State High School Athletics Association (MSHSAA) sponsored extracurricular activities were used.
5. Some schools have grading policies that exceed the MSHSAA minimum standards.
6. The collected information was accurate to everyone's knowledge.
7. Students' information from one calendar year is comparable to information over a number of years.
8. The school year researched was the 2007-2008 academic year.

9. Students' participation in extra-curricular activities not governed by MSHSAA was not considered.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study the following terms will be defined:

Athlete – Athlete refers to a student who participates in a sport offered by a school district.

Athletics – Athletics refers to interscholastic sport activities in which students must meet eligibility requirements and which a coach sponsors.

Dropout - Students who elect not to stay in high school and not to graduate.

Eligibility – Students must meet a certain criteria before being able to participate in any extra curricular activity.

Extracurricular Activities – Athletic and academic events sponsored by MSHSAA.

Grade Point Average (GPA) – Grades were used on a standard four-point scale (A=4 points, B=3 points, C=2 points, D=1 point, F=0 points). The students' grades are calculated each semester and are cumulated.

MSHSAA – Missouri State High School Activities Association is the state organization that governs all the sponsored events in Missouri.

High School – For the purpose of this study, southwest Missouri communities used in this project have 9-12 grade enrollments from 50 - 550 students.

Summary

For years, researchers have studied participation in extracurricular activities. There is a large body of research concerning grade point averages of athletes. There seems to be very limited research concerning all extracurricular activities. Dr. Kerwin Urhahn, the executive director of Missouri State High School Activities Association, stated that he would be very interested in a study concerning student participation. Dr. Urhahn feels like any data gathered on this topic would be of interest to all schools. This study was used to help fill some gaps in past research.

This study is designed to compare grade point averages and drop out rates of students who participate in Missouri State High School Athletic Association (MSHSAA) extracurricular activities and students who do not participate in any MSHSAA sponsored extracurricular

activity. This study consists of Southwest Missouri high schools with enrollment ranging from 50 – 550 students. The students' grade point averages and drop out rates from the school year 2007-2008 were investigated. The size of the school as well as the grade level a student is in school was also investigated. The researcher used data collected from student records, state eligibility records and yearbooks. Athletic directors and principals from these various schools were questioned and involved in gathering this information.

During difficult financial times and the resulting budget cuts, school administrators need knowledge and research information to decide if participating in extracurricular activities is important enough to keep these activities as school programs. When money is extremely tight, administrators must be armed with as much information as possible to justify the overall importance of including these activities in the school district's budget.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to compare student grade point averages and the dropout rate between high school students who participated in extracurricular activities and students who did not participate in any extracurricular activity. Extracurricular activities have become a huge part of our American culture. Because of this, there have been many studies dealing with activities and academic achievement. All schools want students to experience academic success. Hovland (1990), a principal in Minnesota, stated the following:

The overall instructional goal of any educational organization, but especially in high school and middle school, is to develop an integrated program that will allow each student to maximize his or her intellectual, physical, emotional, moral, and social capacities. A program such as the one mentioned would need a well-planned and well-structured activities program that would assist and compliment the goals of the total school (Hovland, 1990).

Extracurricular activities are a large part of most

high schools in the United States. There is much controversy over the actual benefits of these activities and because most schools are experiencing financial difficulty, extracurricular activities are being affected by budget cuts. John H. Holloway, a consultant for the teaching and learning division of the Educational Testing Service based in Princeton, New Jersey, believes that research indicates that participation in these extracurricular activities will significantly contribute to student success in high school (Holloway, 1999). He also states that the research indicated that participation in school activities, especially athletics, leads to students having higher self-esteem and higher status among their peers. There are some who argue and say that having a positive self-esteem will hurt a student and develop antisocial behavior (Holloway, 1999).

The National Federation of High School Association (NFHSA) published an article (2006), "The Case for High School Activities." This article states, "At a cost of only one to three percent (or less in most cases) of an overall school's budget, high school activity programs are one of the best bargains around" (p.55). When looking at the big picture and looking at the entire school's budget, the

extracurricular budget is very small. In many cases when facing budget cuts, school activity programs are considered first. The National Federation also believes that athletic participation supports the academic achievement objective much more than most people realize (nfhs. 2006). Surveys conducted by this national group, reveal that students who participate in these activities often receive better grades while their activity season is in progress. They also note that students who participate in any activity do better academically than those not participating in activities. The survey also notes that 94% of students who drop out of high school do not participate in any sporting activities. Athletes were also found to have better attendance and much fewer discipline problems than non-athletes (nfhs. 2006).

History of Extracurricular Activities

To get a good picture of the importance of both athletics and academics, one must look at the history of organized programs. In approximately 1910, athletics and the complex of activities that constitute the extracurricular program of many schools today became more formalized (Alkin, 1992). In 1960, R.C. Fraunce believed that there were actually three eras when discussing extracurricular activities. The first stage was

characterized with apathy and opposition (Fraunce, 1960). From around 1880 to around 1896, educational leaders actually ignored and rejected all extra student activities and stressed only the formal curriculum. The second stage was from approximately 1896 to 1917; educators slowly began to accept certain extra programs. In the third stage, beginning about 1918, the educational leaders recognized extracurricular activities as being important in the educational system (Fraunce, 1960).

By the 1920's, educators really started to embrace the extra curriculum as an avenue to developing social learning. This acceptance of the value of the extracurricular activities was a part of the growth of curriculum. During the 1920's and 1930's, Elbert K.Fertwell became the recognized leader of the extracurricular activity movement. By the mid-century, extracurricular activities became a solid fixture in most schools. Research demonstrates a correlation between participation in these extra activities and outcomes such as self-esteem, academic achievement and community participation later in a student's life (Fertwell, 1931). Jones (1935) concludes from his study that high school athletes are higher in intelligence than non-athletes and that fewer athletes are

found in the lower IQ range. Culley (1940) concluded from a study involving lettermen, non-lettermen, and the rest of the student body that insofar as the IQ measures native ability, athletic participants are comparable to the general student body. The difference was so negligible that both groups could be considered essentially of the same ability. Boys that participate in athletics on average achieve grades that are about 5% above the remainder of the student body (Cully, 1940).

In 1957, the Journal of Educational Sociology devoted an entire issue to athletic influences on achievement. Much research since then has focused on the effects of athletic participation at the secondary level. Results of research studies indicate that athletes demonstrate a higher level of academic performance than non-athletes (Rehberg & Schafer, 1968).

Schendel (1965) concludes that ninth grade athletes generally possess desirable personal-social characteristics to a greater extent than non-participants from the same grade. This trend continues to the twelfth grade, but seniors in college who participate in athletics generally have less desirable personal-social characteristics than students who did not participate in athletics (Schendel,

1965).

Counselors' Views

Counselors are very important people when discussing academics and athletics. Dr. Gysbers and Dr. Henderson in 1998 discussed a model that fosters the development of student competency in broad areas of lifelong learning, personal effectiveness and life roles. Extracurricular activity participation (EAP) is one way to promote learning and development in some of these areas. Unfortunately, EAP can be perceived as interfering with academic success. "Moreover, it is our experience that students or their parents often use academic pressures as a reason to avoid EAP" (Gysbers & Henderson, 1998, p.225).

School counselors and researchers agree that high-school sports produce more than dumb jocks, and practice can motivate students academically. When students participate in extracurricular activities, their grades and attendance go up on average, while dropout rates and discipline problems tend to go down, according to reports during the past 20 years by the National Federation of State High School Associations and the National Center for Education Statistics (Kelly, 2003). Kelly believes there's a sense of pride and of community; but more importantly,

she believes there is a sense of ownership. Kelly Collins is a high-school counselor from Midwest, Oklahoma, and she believes students find motivation in making their schools look good academically when they participate in fine arts, athletics and ROTC programs (Kelly, 2003). But some researchers and school counselors are asking how much is too much for students involved in extracurricular activities because there's no time left for much else, including family interaction. Brenda Melton, past president of the American School Counselors Association, said many parents believe "the busier I have them, the less they'll have to deal with peer-pressure issues" (Kelly, 2003, p.2).

Research

A recent study suggests that participating in extracurricular activities promotes learning and development in some areas (The Effect of Extracurricular Activity participation..., 1997). These areas include lifelong learning, personal effectiveness and life roles. According to this particular study, participating in these extracurricular activities may contribute to higher career aspirations, improved school attendance, reduced delinquency, lower dropout rates, less involvement in drugs and a positive factor for overall development. It seems

that Extracurricular Activity Participation (EAP) may help students succeed and in turn result in higher grade point averages for these students. This study also concludes that "participation in athletics does not jeopardize either the academic performance or school attendance of both male and female high school students, student academics may even be enhanced" (The Effect of Extracurricular Activity..., 1997, p.1). This study also notes that athletes' grade point averages actually went up during the athletic season in which they participated. Many who believe sports detract from academic performance may not expect these results. Basically this study reports that EAP for high school age students does not endanger, but may actually enhance academic performance (The effects, 1997). EAP has been shown to be a positive in the overall development of adolescents (Holland & Andre, 1987). In addition, EAP has been associated with positive student outcomes including higher career aspirations, better school attendance and reduced delinquency (Jable, 1986). Furthermore, Jable saw beneficial consequences of EAP in lower dropout rates and less involvement with drugs. Most impressive, involvement in extracurricular activities was identified as the variable most predictive of success in later life (Jokel,

1985).

For children, sports and school are a winning combination. So finds Jomills Henry Braddock, who in 2001 completed a three-year, $350,000 research project for the Department of Education. Some 14,000 eighth graders were surveyed on their involvement in school sports, and they were tracked for six years (Braddock, 2001). This study indicates that student athletes were less likely to drop out of school and, in class, showed more effort, were better prepared and tended to complete homework. Their parents were also noted as being more involved. "Athletes are more likely to develop a stronger sense of worth," (Braddock, 2001, p. 12). Braddock (2001) adds "and athletes feel they have more control over their fate than those not involved in sports"(p.12). Sports, the center research shows, produce other benefits as well. One example is that sports offer youth the opportunity to travel, and this travel may help build youngsters' "cultural capital." And because adults tend to pay more attention to student athletes, these students form a social circle of adult networks and mentors that fosters personal success. The data that was collected was consistent among major ethnic groups and across gender (Braddock, 2001).

Additional support for EAP comes from self-complexity research. Linville (1987) demonstrates that diversity in abilities and group membership might serve as a buffer against stress, which could improve student achievement. EAP enables students to master new skills and explore different roles outside the normal classroom setting. Another assertion of the inherent value in self-complexity and diversity is the advice that no life component should contribute more than one-third to self-esteem (McCarthy & McCarthy, 1992). Thus, it seems that healthy human development is balanced across many domains. The balance is the goal of comprehensive, developmental school counseling programs (McCarthy & McCarthy, 1992).

A research group chaired by Mark Lopez states that one reason to offer sports in school it to teach youth the values, skills and habits that will make them more active, engaged, and responsible citizens (Lopez, 2006). Past evidence on the civic effects of sports is mixed but points to some potential positive civic effects. Data collected in 2002 showed that on some dimensions of civic engagement, such as voting, volunteering and news attentiveness, youth who are involved in sports report higher average levels of civic engagement than counterparts who do not participate

in sports (Lopez, 2006). Researchers found that young people aged 18 to 25 who were involved in sports during high school were more likely than non-sports participants to have volunteered in the community, registered to vote, voted and followed the news closely. These results suggest but do not prove that sports have positive civic effects for many young people (Lopez, 2006).

In pursuit of ways to reach students who have never shown academic success and have lost interest in academic pursuits, Hawkins in 1992 believed the answer was to use the students' interests to drive them to achieve academic investment (Hawkins, 1992). (Hawkins showed that there is a relationship between academics and extracurricular activities.) Researchers have consistently noted a positive relationship between athletic participation and educational attainment. Both interscholastic and intramural sport participants derive social status advantages, popularity and a sense of importance among their schoolmates, which is directly related to their involvement in athletics (Hawkins, 1992). The data in Hawkins study shows positive links between athletic participation and pro-academic behaviors and attitudes. The athletes were less likely to be involved in school misconduct, less likely to be judged

as lazy by their teachers and more likely to do well in their core curriculum classes. This data offers evidence that athletic participation can often have a positive impact on students' motivation and engagement in traditional pro-academic norms and behaviors, and that these positive benefits are for both male and female athletes (Hawkins, 1992).

Both the athletes and non-athletes must study in order to keep their grades at high levels. Researchers have found that athletes study as much as non-athletes (Anderson, 1990). Jomills Henry Braddock completed research involving 14,000 students for 6 years. His research project found that athletes were less likely to drop out of school, showed more effort in class, were better prepared and completed their homework. In addition parents of athletes were more involved (Sports, 2001). According to one study, the "schools where academic excellence is valued, not much harm is done to educational expectations by athletic participation" (Anderson, 1990, p. 507). Student athletes must structure their time effectively and stay on very rigid schedules.

A study conducted by the Springfield Public Schools (Missouri) Athletic Office (1996) determined that 47.7% of

the student body was participating in at least one activity. The study revealed an 86 academic average for participants compared to 79 academic averages for non-participants. Participants averaged four absences per year while non-participants averaged seven. In the Springfield Public Schools in 1995, participants had a 3.25 GPA compared to a 2.51 GPA for non-participants. Attendance was 94.96 percent for participants compared to 90.50 for non-participants. Reported discipline referrals for students involved in extracurricular activities were 1707 and those not involved in extracurricular activities was 6765. The number of students involved in extracurricular activities who dropped out was 12 compared with 468 for students not involved in these activities.

A study done by Terenzini (1993) assessed the extent to which student learning is guided and shaped by both formal academic activities and by the students' out-of-class experiences. Students learn holistically, and their learning incorporates knowledge from all aspects of their lives. The evidence in Terenzini's study indicates students' academic and non-academic experiences both separately and jointly shape student learning (Terenzini, 1993). It is absolutely essential that faculties and

administration take into account the inter-relatedness of academic experiences and non-academic experiences as they plan and develop educational activities to enhance students' academic behaviors (Terenzini, 1993).

A survey commissioned by the Alberta Canada Schools' Athletic Association (ASAA) indicated that almost 80 percent of the province's senior executives who responded participated in interscholastic sports. Of those 80 percent, over half indicated that school sports significantly contributed to their career development (Berrett & Paton, 2008).

This survey of these top chief executives was conducted in order to determine the extent to which those leaders were engaged in high school sports and the benefits they derived from their participation (Berrett & Paton, 2008). Of the executives who responded, 78.3 percent indicated they had participated in high school sports and 54 percent indicated that the participation significantly helped them in their career development. While this obviously does not mean all student-athletes will be corporate executives, it presents an argument for support of these activities (Berrett & Paton, 2008).

The normal participation rate in sports in the

province is 30 – 35 percent and the fact that 76.6 percent of CEO's and 80 percent of provincial officers participated in high school sports could mean that participation is a predictor of success later in life. Of those responding, nearly half believed there was a significant relationship between academics and school sports participation (Berrett, 2008). It was also noted other benefits:

- Physical fitness
- Promotion of lifelong activity
- Mental health
- Friendships
- Having fun
- Development of character
- Personal growth
- Travel
- Fair play
- Acceptance of others

As expected, teamwork was the number one skill learned through school sports according to almost all of the 100 participants who responded to the survey. Other skills that were derived from participation were discipline, leadership, goal setting, independence and self-confidence

(Berrett, 2008).

According to the American Psychological Association (1999), the payoff of playing Little League Baseball does not only come in the form of stronger muscles and better hand eye coordination. Participation in these organized sports also will boost children's self-esteem and motivate children who want to be athletes (American, 1999). Mrs. Maureen Weiss and her University of Oregon colleagues have conducted over 60 studies on how children's participation in activities and sports affects their psychological development. Her research reveals an association between motivation, high self-esteem and sports participation (American, 1999). "Physical activity and sports have tremendous potential to enhance children's self-esteem and motivation," said Weiss, a professor of sport and exercise psychology. Her research consistently shows that self-esteem and perception of physical ability could predict achievement, behavior, motivation and positive affect. The research found that children who under-estimated their abilities were less motivated and experienced more anxiety than those who estimated capabilities accurately; that activity-specific self-perceptions predicted achievement in that sport but not others; and that the positive and

negative experiences in sports were directly related to self-esteem and motivation for future involvement (American, 1999).

"Society's emphasis on athletics is seen as being in conflict with such manifest functions of the school as promoting academic excellence, transmitting knowledge, and fostering the psychological development of the adolescent," (Chandler & Goldberg, 1990, p.169). Davis and Guthrie in (1996) studied athletic and academic perceptions of student athletes, teachers and parents. The exclusive study reveals student athletes spend approximately 2-3 hours per day on athletics, and only 1-2 hours outside of school is allotted for academics. Seventy-nine percent of those athletes surveyed intended to continue sports after they graduated from high school while a huge ninety-four percent plan to continue their academic endeavors after high school graduation (Davis & Guthrie, 1996). Sixty-two percent claimed their academic performance to be better than their athletic performance with over eighty-nine percent earning a C average or 2.0 GPA or better. Most athletes indicated their academic performance is better once their season is over. Nearly all the students surveyed agreed that athletes should be required to perform in the classroom as

well as on the athletic field (Davis & Guthrie, 1996).

Community puts a lot of pressure on athletes, and this makes it very difficult for these young boys and girls to keep everything in perspective. The school community expects athletic teams always to win. If the team does not win, the athletes report that they are ignored by the public and by classmates who do not seem to understand all the emotion that accompanies losing (Davis & Guthrie, 1996). However, if a team is successful and is winning, their peers go out of the way to brag and cheer for them. According to the parents who responded to a study, most of their children who participate in these extracurricular activities spend between one and three hours a day studying outside of the regular school hours. All parents were in agreement that athletes should be required to perform well academically before they should be allowed to participate in activities. Seventy-six percent of parents surveyed believed that schools support academics more than athletics (Davis & Guthrie, 1996).

When the teachers were surveyed, those who also coach athletics expressed that some special consideration regarding extra time for homework should be given to student athletes when away games are involved (Davis &

Guthrie, 1996). These coaches also believe their fellow teachers need to work with the coaches to do what is best for these students. Regular classroom teachers surveyed agreed an equitable balance must be maintained. However, there was a lot of concern from the teachers that these student/athletes were much more difficult to motivate after their specific season was over (Davis & Guthrie, 1996).

Academic Standards/Programs

When discussing extracurricular activities, athletics are usually thought of first. Athletics are usually funded and supported by the school district. In some schools athletics are the only link between the school and the community (McMillan, 1991). There has been a stigma placed on athletics. People blame the athletes' lack of knowledge on the teachers who pass these athletes in order to allow them to compete on the athletic field. "Schools in every city and state in America have their prized team and will make sacrifices in the classroom to have their students score touchdowns on the field" (McMillan, 1991). This is obviously wrong wherever it happens. McMillan (1991) also states: "the only way to reverse the imbalance of athletics is to address the problem at every age group" (p.95). He also recommends that "minimum pass-to-play standards should

be applied to all students to ensure that they understand the importance of getting an education. A school system needs to establish firm policies on expectations for athletes. If the athletes do not live up to the criteria, they should not be allowed to participate (McMillan, 1991).

One study examined the "No pass/No play" rule on student achievement in Mesa, Arizona. The purpose of this study was to articulate that academics are a priority over athletics (O'Reilly, 1992). When the rule was first initiated, it created a very heated debate. The proponents of the rule praised the message that academics are the most important function of the school. The opponents stated the rule was an attack on minority athletes and would only increase their dropout rate. Some of the predictions O'Reilly (1992) made were as follows:

* Students GPA's will increase due to the rule.
* The rule will result in fewer students becoming ineligible.
* Students will take less challenging courses to avoid the possibility of getting a failing grade.
* The 'No pass/No play' rule will increase dropout rates especially for the participants (O'Reilly, 1992).

The research showed that the overall grade point averages of the students did improve. The research also showed that fewer students, as a whole, became ineligible. The number of students taking honors courses increased from the previous year. The dropout rate increased, but "the only major increase in dropout rates appears to be from special schools for behavior problem students, special education students, pregnant teens, etc." (O'Reilly, 1992, p.23). The only clear negative impact of the rule was that minority athletes were disproportionately affected. This was measured with the minority athletes' slight drop in grade point average and their increased dropout rates. It appears that the results of this study can cite the overall increase in grade point average, and the opponents can cite the increased dropout rate of the minority athletes. The "No pass/No play" rule effectively addressed the need for increased awareness of student athletes not succeeding academically and established the priority of academics over athletics (O'Reilly, 1992).

There are other programs in schools that promote academics for students who participate in sports and may not be performing up to academic standards. One such program is called PASS, which stands for Promoting

Achievement in School through Sports. This particular program looks for effective interventions for promoting academic achievement and school success. "The Pass program helps athletes to see the connections between athletic and academic success" (American Sports Institute, 1993, p.49). This program plays a preventive role in the relationship between academics and athletics. Three states have passed legislation related directly to academics and athletic participation: Texas, West Virginia, and Hawaii. Souza (1990) explains that the Hawaii State Board of Education passed a statewide minimum academic standard for participation in co-curricular activities. The Hawaii regulation requires that any student who wishes to participate in a non-educational-related co curricular activity must have a minimum grade point average of 2.0 and pass all courses required for graduation at the end of each grading period (Souza, 1990).

Failure to meet these standards placed on the athlete would require the athlete to be ineligible until the next grading period. With the "PASS" program, the overall emphasis is on prevention. This program is based on four philosophies in which each athlete, parent and coach must firmly believe: "family/individual needs, academic needs,

peer/self-esteem needs, and athletic/sport needs (Souza, 1990). These priorities can be listed in any order as long as "athletic/sports needs" are always listed last. This philosophy enables all the athletes to realize that athletics is not the number one priority in their lives. The two most impressive statistics showed that the grade point average of the entire athletic program was a very impressive 3.04 and the second statistic showed that 97.5 percent of all students who participated in athletics maintained a grade point average of 2.0 or higher (Souza, 1990). "The Kahuka pilot study has shown that academic support systems such as 'PASS' do have a tremendous effect on the academic achievement and grade point averages of student athletes" (Souza, 1990, p.24).

There was more research conducted on the "PASS" program during a three-year impact study by the American Sports Institute (1991-1993). The first year of the study showed an overall grade point average increase of .30 grade points per student. In contrast, the control group grades dropped by an average of .19 grade points per student (American, 1993). In the second year, the study showed an overall grade point average increase of .20 and a decrease in the control group of .20. In the third year of this

study, there was an overall grade point average increase of .04 grade points per student. The control group grades decreased by .20 grade points per student. "This study is evident that 'PASS' is achieving its set goals to improve grades, behavior, self-esteem, and appreciation for learning" (Academic Sports Institute, 1993). Another factor in this program is that there must be an increased emphasis on appropriate methods of studying and a balance between studying and the practice of sports.

Hollrah (1999) noted in an interview that not only did extracurricular activities aid students who were already successful to continue to excel, but also helped students who were considered at-risk of failing and at-risk of dropping out of school. In this interview, it was noted that students who received an (F) in two classes would not be able to participate in these activities (Hollrah, 1999). Basically, students who really enjoyed participating in certain activities worked extra hard so they would be eligible to continue and participate. Administrators and officials should continue to support these activities since they obviously benefit students in many different ways. Schools should also spend time to educate the coaches, teachers and the community of the many benefits of

participation in these activities. If these activities are sponsored correctly, the wins and losses are only secondary. The real lesson taught should be ones that will benefit a student for a lifetime (Hollrah, 1999).

Financing School Athletic Programs

It is always an exciting time of the year when high school students suit up for the first practice, polish their instruments, and prepare for their upcoming game or event with high fives all around (Hoff, 2006). This excitement can be replaced with much anxiety and dismay, as many of these students learn they must first pay a participation fee, which may mean they cannot take part after all. "Pay-to-play" is catching on across the country, sometimes with harsh consequences for students and schools (Hoff, 2006).

There is no doubt that the costs of running school districts are very staggering. Fuel for heat and buses, salaries and benefits for employees, and the ever changing curricular demands combined put a lot of pressure on administrators and school boards to cut spending and raise revenues. In many districts, funding is shrinking and extracurricular activities are being looked at as possible cuts (Fredericks & Eccles, 2006). Extracurricular

activities, particularly sports, have a tradition in most public schools. Originally school teams were a means of giving boys a way to channel their energy in a positive direction and give the school a sense of pride. Over the years, the scope and inclusiveness of these programs have expanded, and the benefits of sports and other extracurricular activities have been well documented by most everyone (Fredericks & Eccles, 2006).

Obviously like everything, the costs of furnishing these extracurricular programs have risen. The cost of transporting the students to events has risen as well as stipends for the sponsors. Expenditures for sports have also risen steadily (Fredericks & Eccles, 2006). As competition and potential for college scholarships have increased, so have the cost of maintaining competitive programs, which in turn demands expert coaching, high tech training equipment and better facilities. With a sue-happy mentality of the public, schools must have the safest equipment for their athletes. There must be added supervision and added liability insurance to protect the schools (Fredericks & Eccles, 2006).

Looking to cut these costs, districts developed the concept of pay-to-play. This concept passes some of the

financial burden of these extracurricular activities to students and their families. On the low end, some schools have enacted policies to charge fees ranging from $15 to $50 a year to be able to participate in activities. On the high end, a West Coast school charges fees of $1500 for cheerleading, $1000 for football, and $800 for the marching band (Hoff, 2006). Obviously fees are ranging widely throughout the country but are becoming more and more common. A poll taken in 2004 showed that 34 states had at least some schools charging fees for extracurricular participation (Hoff, 2006). Whether these fees are large or small is beside the point. Once established, fees tend to increase as the costs of programs escalate and as parents become desensitized to the policy. There are many potentially negative consequences to these policies, especially for the underprivileged families. This author, Hoff believes that all the negative consequences will in no way offset the limited revenues that will be collected (Hoff, 2006).

State constitutions across the nation guarantee a free public education. There is much debate over whether extracurricular activities are integral parts of the school program or whether they fall outside the bounds of free

education because they are voluntary (Hunt, 2005). First, extracurricular activities are an outgrowth of the school's curriculum. Whether it is clubs or sports, all activities have their roots in curricular and school goals. Second, extracurricular activities are governed and supported by public education (Hunt, 2005). Students must meet academic requirements to participate and the facilities they participate in are supported by tax dollars. Charging fees for participation may undermine a school's authority to make decisions on playing time, uniforms, etc. (Hunt, 2005). This policy creates a slippery slope, meaning that if schools are allowed to charge fees for clubs and sports because they are "extra and voluntary," is it a very big stretch to say the policy could be applied to other school programs? Some schools charge to be in select groups like the National Honor Society (Hunt, 2005).

The Supreme Court of California ruled that fees for curricular or extracurricular programs violate the state's constitutional guarantee for free public education (Hoff, 2006). Other states have rulings that support the premise that extracurricular activities are as important to the school program as academic classes. Thus there can be wide differences in the language and interpretation of state

constitutions on this issue (Hoff, 2006).

With pay-to-play on the increase and just a few conflicting court rulings on the issue, it is surprising that pay-to-play policies are not challenged more frequently (Hoff, 2006). The benefits of extracurricular activities go well beyond the specific skills acquired through participation. Many families in the United States live near or below the poverty line, which means that fees for these extracurricular activities can be out of reach for a large number of students. That poverty has several negative effects on children's school readiness, academic achievement and mental and physical health is well documented (Hoff, 2006). Some argue that the majority of fees associated with pay-to-play are minimal and that most families can afford small fees. Waivers or scholarships seem to make the practice acceptable to school policy makers. However, these policies created to help children who live in poverty can do more harm than good because many high school students are very resistant to seeking help. Educators are familiar with children who will not eat lunch to avoid being identified as poor and needy. Pay-to-play represents one more obstacle to engaging students, and it is likely to have negative effect on attendance,

achievement, discipline and graduation (Hoff, 2006).

The most promising approach to this problem is for everyone to work together to establish cost-saving policies across conferences and within the state. They could share transportation costs, eliminate team travel to expensive training camps and conventions, emphasize intramural activities and cap the number of interschool competitions (Hoff, 2006). Keeping the programs focused on the educational benefits rather than the win-at-all-cost mentality will lower expenditures and reinforce core curricular values. Cost containment and a level playing field can be achieved if school districts unite to establish ground rules (Hoff, 2006). Only with such pro-student approach can public school ideals be upheld and viable and successful extracurricular programs be maintained in the time of financial difficulty (Hoff, 2006).

Right or Privilege

With accountability becoming the watchword in athletic administration, the spotlight has been turned on the academic side of student athletes (Ostro, 2006). There are many questions: Are they maintaining reasonable grade point averages? Are they being coddled academically? Are they

graduating with the skills that will prepare them for the next educational level? Are colleges accepting athletes who are academic underachievers (Ostro, 2006)?

The Los Angeles Board of Education passed a rule requiring students to maintain a "C" average in order to participate in interscholastic athletics. The new regulations are an outgrowth of scandals where athletes with miniscule grade point averages earn scholarships to major colleges (Ostro, 2006). The people responsible for the new "C" requirement have the right motivation in place, but the question remains in the courts. The question is whether it is discretionary to require some students (athletes)to have different standards than other students (non athletes). Also, if athletics is a vital part of the total educational process, should it not be made available to every student in school (Ostro, 2006)?

The question that is always difficult to answer is if participation in the after school athletic programs is a right or a privilege? The courts seem to be unsure, but for the most part, the courts have not viewed participation as a constitutionally protected right and have ruled in favor of schools and organizations (Ostro, 2006). There have been cases where athletes were even reinstated whenever courts

have felt the plaintiffs were not afforded due process or their failure to meet eligibility standards were beyond their control (Ostro, 2006).

In the present climate, the argument that participation in after school athletics is a privilege and the coach's word is final is no longer sacrosanct. Obviously districts must have regulations and rules to supervise a meaningful program. However, athletics is an important part of the educational experience and can be a strong force of motivation for some students to stay in school and achieve academically (Ostro, 2006). Every student should be allowed to try out for a squad. At the same time, educators should never dilute academic standards or offer special privileges for athletes. Athletes who are struggling academically should not be able to participate but should be allowed to stay on the team (Ostro, 2006).

Helping Students Succeed

Coaches must become involved in young students' lives. They must try to develop strategies that will help these student athletes achieve their set goals for life after athletics, and these coaches should help them work on their stick-to-it-iveness. One strategy would be a daily report card given to athletes and signed by each teacher (Ostro,

2006). The school counselor should also be involved with setting up tutorial programs, etc. Interested faculty could help tutor these children. There have been cases where a dial-a-tutor program was put in place (Ostro, 2006). Basically, interested parents and other citizens with competence in specific areas can man the phones and help students in need. These and other programs can be successful if they are marketed and made available to everyone, not just the athletes (Ostro, 2006).

Every effort should be made to help a failing child. Too many of these children who are not involved drop out of school and hit the streets and drift into undesirable social channels. Educators must make an effort. Educators may not save them all, but it never hurts to try. Coaches should not be judged by their record but should be judged by how many children they have helped achieve their maximum potential and graduate with their class (Ostro, 2006).

Everyone must see that all students are given a fair opportunity to participate in after school programs. Everyone must believe in what they are doing and show concern for the health and welfare of all the students. If school districts continue to do this, most states and

schools will be able to remain in command of their programs (Ostro, 2006).

Specialization

Bergin (1992) states that athletics had a positive effect on achievement, regardless of school size. It was found that participation enhanced test scores. An Office of Educational Research and Improvement Bulletic (1986) believed that the more activities students were involved in, the higher they ranked on four related performance measures: course credit, hours of homework, test scores, and grade point average. Chandler and Goldberg (1990) wanted to find out if athletics could be a character builder for its participants. Their findings are interesting. In order for character building experiences, coaches must not merely encourage athletes to display gallantry, dignity and integrity but model those behavior themselves (Chandler and Goldberg, 1990). Valued qualities of character need to be promoted in young athletes through their participation in sports. Athletes then need to appreciate and recognize the difference between displaying sportsmanlike behavior and playing with character. When parents and coaches place too much emphasis on winning, any character building aspects that might have been fostered

tend to diminish rapidly (Chandler and Goldberg, 1990). Sports should never be the only measure of an individual's self-worth on any level of athletics. Moral character can be developed in sports, as it can be developed in other areas of life. However, in sports, it can only be developed under the guidance of a caring coach and understanding parents. "The positive role that sports can play in peoples' lives can contribute to their self-worth, both in and beyond athletics" (Chandler & Goldberg, 1990 p. 175).

When soccer coach Tim Twellman looks over his new team on the first day of practice every year, it does not take long to spot the players who specialize in the sport. Their skill levels do not set them apart; it is their lack of enthusiasm (Ulrich, 2008). The players who compete in other sports are eager and excited, wide-eyed and ready to start practice. The students who play year around are asking what time practice ends. As a high school soccer coach, he believes by the time they get to him in high school, they are tired of soccer. He believes the best athletes he gets are the ones who play other sports (Ulrich, 2008).

Dr. Joel Brenner, Director of Sports Medicine and Adolescent Medicine at Children's Hospital of the King's Daughters in Norfolk, Virginia, sees the same thing as

other coaches. He treats high school athletes for overuse injuries that used to be reserved for much older athletes (Ulrich, 2008). But Brenner says strains, pulls and stress fractures are only the most visible manifestation of why early sport specialization is a bad idea-the adolescents he treats are often psychologically burned out on their sport as well. He also believes that burnout is difficult to spot (Ulrich, 2008).

For the past decade, athletic administrators have watched and winced as sports specialization has wrecked havoc on educational athletics. With more and more sports medicine specialists calling for a halt to sport specialization, college coaches publicly state that they are looking for multi-sport athletes as they recruit, and high school coaches realize that one-sport athletes do not make the best players (Ulrich, 2008). The tide appears to be turning. Athletic directors are starting a new charge against sport specialization. Coaches who emphasize off-season conditioning can also keep an athlete from electing to play another sport. Some athletic directors mentioned expecting coaches to be educators and their first job is to teach life lessons, not win games (Ulrich, 2008). One director stated that if she found a coach who is fantastic

otherwise but does not buy into their multi-sport philosophy, she keeps looking. Different athletic directors interviewed had many different ideas on how to recognize these athletes such as giving awards at banquets, placing plaques on the walls of the schools for three sport athletes, and creating many more ideas for recognizing these athletes (Ulrich, 2008).

Getting coaches and athletes on board is possible, but parents are a much tougher situation. They want what they think is best for their son or daughter and can not always see the big picture. It takes a lot of confidence to go against the trend, and that confidence comes from having the facts available as coaches explain why being in more than one sport is in the best interest of the child (Ulrich, 2008). Parents need to see the facts discussing overuse and burnout and understand that multi-sport athletes can be even more successful athletically than those who specialize. It is thought that the earlier a child specializes, the earlier he/she peaks. Athletes get a lot of athletic development by doing several different sports when they are young. Developing overall conditioning, balance and coordination through multiple sports ultimately makes a far better athlete than only

using the body one way (Ulrich, 2008).

Numerous college coaches stated that by the time they work with individuals who specialize, they are burned out and bored. One doctor explained that young athletes who perform the motions of their sport over and over without a break – often before they have perfected the proper mechanics – are at risk for injuries to bones, muscles and tendons (Ulrich, 2008). Research indicates that half of all injuries seen by pediatric sports medicine doctors today are related to overuse. Each sport has particular injuries that are seen repeatedly in athletes who play year round. One doctor explained that he sees many athletes who play their sport year around, and they end up leaving their sport a lot earlier than those who play multiple sports (Ulrich, 2008).

There are huge benefits of multi-sport participation. One big selling point is that athletes who play multiple sports get to experience different roles on different teams. They may be the star in one sport and a reserve in another. When they get to college and suddenly they are not the stars, they already know how to handle it which makes them a better teammate (Ulrich, 2008). These learning experiences often pay off far beyond the athletic arena.

When they are out in the job world, they have experienced being a leader but also are able to take direction when they are not in a leadership role. Experiencing coaches with different styles also helps athletes grow. Learning to work hard for different types of coaches will benefit them later in life (Ulrich, 2008). One athletic director in Virginia kept track of honor roll numbers. At his school, 45 percent of one sport athletes made the honor roll. Fifty-nine percent of two-sport athletes made the honor role, and 81 percent of three-sport athletes made the honor roll. With numbers like this, it seems to be an easy sell for his community (Ulrich, 2008). In the end, dialogue among all parties – administrators, coaches, athletes and parents – is the key to reversing the trend of sport specialization. There is no question that middle school and high school athletes benefit from playing multiple sports; the challenge continues to be getting that message across to athletes and parents in a convincing way (Ulrich, 2008).

In a town where the Bell and Cannon games rank alongside the Super Bowl, the emotional impact of high school sports is something most people know well. But the Pueblo City School Board of Education heard about some of the other benefits of sports and other activities that pay

off in higher grades, better attendance and lower dropout rates (Norton, 2007). Kevin Romero, the district's activities director, described for the board some of the payoffs from non-classroom experiences. Obviously athletic programs cost the district a lot of money; and much of that is recovered through ticket sales, concessions soda contracts and sponsorships. However, the district cannot provide for all the needs of students on its own and has partnered with the YMCA therefore allowing many more students to participate in athletics (Norton, 2007).

The real payoff is seen on the academic side. Student athletes consistently score higher than the general student population. On the CSAP tests, of those involved in sports, 74 percent had proficient scores compared with 59 percent for the district overall (Norton, 2007). On the ACT test, athletes' scores were also consistently higher. Attendance levels were another area where student athletes, motivated by school activities, were more likely to show up for class, 175 days on average compared with 167 days for students who do not participate in any activities (Norton, 2007). Romero stressed that it is not just sports that keep young people motivated to stay in school and do better academically. He pointed to the new Mock Trial teams that

competed in regional competition in Colorado Springs. Romero said that next year in 2008, the YMCA's youth in government program would work with the district to recruit more team members (Norton, 2007).

As we have seen, high school athletics benefit student-athletes in a variety of ways: physically, socially, mentally, and academically. A lot of the athletes will fail to get the support at home needed to participate in extracurricular activities (Yancey, 2007). These are the students who rarely have anyone in the stands to watch them compete or who have to get a coach or teacher to escort them on senior night because no one from their home will come to the game or activity (Yancey, 2007).

It is important to get students involved in different extracurricular activities. According to the 1995 report on Adolescent Time Use by the Department of Health and Human Services, students who spend no time in extracurricular activities are

- 57% more likely to have dropped out of school by the time they became seniors.
- 49% more likely to have used drugs.
- 37% more likely to have become teen parents.
- 35% more likely to have smoked cigarettes.

- 27% more likely to have been arrested than those who spend one to four hours per week in extracurricular activities (Yancey, 2007).

Sports are great extracurricular activities because of all the benefits that help combat the danger of obesity that plagues America today. Athletics are also of benefit to the overall school environment and school system:

- Sports can help schools meet AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) by cutting down the number of students who are absent. These programs give children a chance to make new friends, be involved in a positive atmosphere, feel a sense of accomplishment and reduce their likelihood of skipping school. It also forces students to remain eligible to play their activity (Yancey, 2007).
- Teachers who attend sporting events can relate better with the student-athlete. It helps them form a relationship outside of the regular classroom, which in turn can help out with the discipline in the classroom. Students come to school from diverse backgrounds and teachers must understand the students as people, not just bodies in chairs. If educators do not have some knowledge of children's

> lives outside of the realms of paper and pencil and outside of school, they cannot know their strengths. There is an old saying that in order to teach you, I must know you (Yancey, 2007).

In Pelham, Georgia, a teacher staff group was created to attend and help work various athletic events, as well as to encourage the students to participate in extracurricular activities and excel in the classroom. The group was called TEAAM, an acronym for:

Teachers
Encouraging
Athletes through
Academics and
Motivation

The athletes reportedly enjoyed the school personnel attending the games and encouraging classroom relationship with the students. When the students see that the staff cares about them and takes interest in them, they will likely respond positively to them in the classroom. This is a "win – win" situation for the school (Yancey, 2007).

Negative Impact

Most of the findings support the idea that athletics do have a positive impact on academics. However, there are

a few studies that disagree. Otto (as cited in Marsh, 1992) believes that athletic participation is valuable in many aspects, but its effect on academic achievement cannot be proven as being favorable or unfavorable. Any favorable relationship between participation and academic achievement may be due to the selection of courses by the athletes (Marsh, 1992). He felt the athletes might select easier courses than the non-athletes, thus increasing the grade point averages of the athletes. Another reason for any such increase could be due to eligibility requirements for participation that may prevent some from participation because they could not meet the set requirements (Marsh, 1992).

According to Robert Thomas, Jr. in 1989, participating in high school athletics tends to keep student-athletes in school, leads them to participate in other extracurricular activities and makes them feel more popular than non-athletes; however, it has virtually no immediate effect on academic achievement for most minority-group students, and it has even less impact on their later success in college and the work force (Thomas, 1989). In a study titled "Minority in Sports," a sample of 30,000 high school sophomores in 1980 were tracked for six years. The study

found no evidence that athletic participation was a detriment to getting good grades for any of the groups (Thomas, 1989). But it also found that participating in sports produced higher grades for only three of the groups – rural Hispanic females, suburban black males and rural white males – while enhancing scores on standardized achievements tests only for rural Hispanic women, urban black men and suburban white men (Thomas, 1989).

Turning to life after high school, the study found that while participating in athletics spurred rural Hispanic women, urban and rural Hispanic men and every white group except urban women to attend four-year college, there was no similar impact on any of the six black groups. As for those who did not attend college but entered the work force directly after high school, the study shows no statistically significant association between athletic participation and job status or employment expectation for any group except black urban women (Thomas, 1989). According to the study, while 59 percent of the black urban female non-athletes who did not go to college held what were considered high-status jobs, only 5 percent of the black urban female athletes held such jobs. And while 50 percent of the group's non-athletes had high job

expectations, only 19 percent of the athletes had such expectations (Thomas, 1989).

The report found that athletes in all of the groups experienced an enhanced sense of popularity and increased participation in other extracurricular activities (Thomas, 1989). Participation in athletics lowered the dropout rate in seven of the groups and had no effect on the others. The research was conducted by Don Sabo, Associate Professor of Sociology at D'Youville College in Buffalo: Merill Melnick, Associate Professor in the Physical Education Department: and Beth Vanfossen, a Professor of Sociology and Director of Women's Studies (Thomas, 1989).

Brehon Harrison, a high school student in Virginia, believes that extracurricular activities are important. She believes they give students time to do things they really like or have talent in. Sports participation also looks good on college essays and applications (Harrison, 1997). Like most schools, Churchland High offers many extracurricular activities. Harrison is involved in a couple of clubs and although she enjoys them, they take up considerable amounts of her time, especially with her school work and the stories and columns she writes as a teen correspondent to the local paper (Harrison, 1997). She

believes students must know how to prioritize their time. If they cannot prioritize, they will end up cramming their days with too much work, causing great amounts of stress. Noticing high stress levels is difficult, but she believes family and friends always notice (Harrison, 1997). Marilyn Drerey, a guidance counselor at her school, said, "If the students see that their work is suffering, they should stop with some of the extracurricular activities and get their grades back on track. There is no set number for extracurricular activities; it depends on the individual on knowing his/her home life and it depends on the individual schedules." (Harrison, 1997).

Basically what Mrs. Drerey is saying is that students have to know their limits. It is great to join these extracurricular activities, but everyone must look at the big picture. If grades are droppings and children are not spending enough time with their families, they must be able to strike a good balance. She doesn't believe students have to give up everything but need to find a good even mix (Harrison, 1997).

When Judy Codding became principal of Pasadena High School in 1988, she quickly saw that sports ran the school. Competitive athletics consumed large chunks of the school

budget at the large California school; she spent more on football helmets than on science labs (Toppo, 2003). Students cut out early for practices, and so did teachers, many swapping chalkboards and grade books for clipboards and whistles. She explained that she had to change the entire master schedule to accommodate the sports program. Codding put her foot down and declared: No games or practices could begin before the last bell rang. Students couldn't even board a bus for an away game until school was out (Toppo, 2003).

One author, Etta Kralovec, believes that community groups, clubs and businesses should finance and run teens' sports and arts programs so schools can concentrate on core academics. She believes that when it comes to schools, less is more (Toppo, 2003). She said, "This is about communities needing to rethink their expectations for public schools, and sort of a plea to let schools do what they need to do" (Toppo, 2003, p.5). Kralovec maintains that sports and the arts are essential to raising healthy, well-educated students, however, she doesn't believe that these activities belong as part of the school day; in her opinion, they should be offered before or after school. She actually thinks that activities are a vitally important

part of every child's growing up, but she says businesses and community groups should take over high school teams, much as athletic clubs in Europe organize sports teams or as Little League Baseball runs leagues for younger children in this country (Toppo, 2003). Businesses could really make the case they are giving back to the community in her opinion (Toppo, 2003).

Though educators for decades have proposed trimming nonacademic programs from the school day, it may be more accepted in today's world with the nation's push to higher achievement in basic academics. Of the nation's 12 million public high school students, more that 10 million participate in extracurricular activities sponsored by schools (Toppo, 2003). It was noted, though, that although athletics may seem expensive they account for only about 1 percent of a large school district's budget. Academics do not have to suffer in the name of athletics. Effective school districts put stress on achievement, be it academic or athletics. They must work together (Toppo, 2003).

Cultural Differences

Athletics affect many cultures differently. Mellnick, Sabo, and Vanfossen (1992) studied the educational effects of athletic participation on black males and females and

Hispanic males and females living in urban, suburban, or rural areas. Research determined that black male and female athletes were more involved in different activities than non-athletes in the suburban schools (Mellnicket al. 1992). However, the Hispanic male and female athletes did not do as well being involved in these activities. "Athletic participation was also significantly and positively related to extracurricular involvement for the rural black females, rural Hispanic males, and marginally for rural Hispanic females" (Mellnick, et al. 1992, p.301).

Sports participation actually had no effect on grade point averages for most students in this particular study. Only black males who attended suburban schools and Hispanic females who attended rural schools showed a significant difference in their academics (Melnick, et al. 1992).

According to the study, sports participation was a social, but not an academic, resource for many minority youth in the 1980s. This study also indicated that student athletes were more concerned about being popular and being involved with outside activities than the student who did not participate in any extra activities, due to the values they received from their families and their communities (Mellnick, et al. 1992).

A study conducted at the University of California at Riverside indicates that some students never graduate because they are not involved in extra-curricular activities (US Fed News, 2008). It was noted that the kinds of programs most likely to be cut during state budget cuts may be the actual glue that keep students in school. Census statistics indicate nearly half a million students drop out of school each year, and Mexican origin youth are especially susceptible not to completing school on time (US Fed News, 2008). This study shows that student engagement behaviors – including participation in extracurricular activities – contribute to the formation of friendship networks which arc toward educational attainment; the same behavioral influences can help others who drop out of school. The study shows that socioeconomic disadvantages detract from student engagement among Mexican American students (US Fed News, 2008).

Low-income Mexican American adolescents may be less able to do their homework or participate in activities because they must hold down a job or baby-sit after school hours (US Fed News, 2008). Students who seem disengaged usually have friends who are dropouts; studies show if students have dropout friends, it significantly increases

their chances of dropping out of school. It was noted that disengagement and withdrawal from school could begin as early as elementary school. It was noted that students need to have opportunities available in a broad range of school-related activities (US Fed News, 2008). Drama and the arts, sports, even the academic decathlon are engagement behaviors that help kids develop school-oriented peer networks and facilitate their ability to navigate home and school environments seamlessly. It was also stated that engagement activities structure opportunities to meet other school-oriented students in and around schools and should therefore not fall victim to tight educational budgets or more narrowly defined educational reform agendas (US Fed News, 2008).

In a study of sports participation and self-esteem as it relates to race and gender, Tracy and Erkut (2002) found that sports participation has many benefits but has a very positive influence on self-esteem in Caucasian and African American adolescents. These researchers concluded that participation in sports provides adolescents with a greater sense of physical well-being and school attachment (Tracy and Erkut, 2002). African American boys who participate in sports had the highest level of self-esteem with school

attachment being high and sense of physical well-being being moderately high. African American girls came in second with moderately high self-esteem with low physical well-being and school attachment (Tracy and Erkut, 2002). Researchers concluded that African American girls get their self-esteem from sources outside of those studied. Caucasian boys exhibited high levels of school attachment and the highest levels of physical well-being of all four groups resulting in moderately high self-esteem. And lastly, Caucasian girls had the lowest levels of self-esteem and sense of physical well-being (Tracy & Erkut, 2002).

A study in the Hindustan Times in July of 2007 has found that extracurricular activities helps in lowering the high school dropout rate, raising grades and brightening a student's chances of graduating from high school and attending college (US Fed, 2008).

Dr. Jason Smith, the lead researcher from the University of Alabama in Huntsville, analyzed data from the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) of over 12,000 high school students to understand the scope of child poverty in America (Smith, 2007). The study found of the graduation rates of all races, including whites, blacks and

Hispanics, participating in co-curricular activities were all measurably higher than non-participants. The desire to play a sport, or to be involved in the school play or to participate in a particular school club with one's friends may motivate a student to stay in school in able to continue those activities (Smith, 2007).

These extracurricular activities play a vital role in integrating students into their school, keeping them enrolled as opposed to dropping out of school. Smith believes that these programs for children in high poverty schools have many benefits. He believes that when policymakers are making tough decisions about programs, they must understand the importance of being involved in these extracurricular activities (Smith, 2007).

College Impact

On August 1, 1986, the controversial Proposition 48 took effect, and high school students were required to have a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 or higher to be eligible for Division 1, college level athletic activities (Humphries, 1988). Humphries believed that the educational slump at the time affected all students and that athletes should not be the only ones who received additional motivation to do well in school. He said everyone should

assume responsibility for improvements (Humphries, 1988).

One study compared several aspects of sports and their effect on students at the college level. In this particular study conducted in 1992 by Roger Foltz, the female athletes had higher performance academically than the male athletes. Athletes who participated in non-revenue sports actually had higher performance than those who participated in the college's revenue sports (Foltz, 1992).

There are many articles that discuss the stereotypes that student athletes are not capable of performing high academically. There is information that also indicates that college coaches might apply so much pressure on these college students that it may hinder them academically (Lee, 1998). Some articles indicate that athletes are less prepared for the academics of college than the non-athletes. There are also articles that conclude that athletes are actually more prepared to handle the stress of performing academically in college than the non-athletes are (Lee, 1998).

The NCAA uses the grade point averages only from core courses to decide eligibility for incoming freshman. Some high schools have expressed concern that the NCAA was trying to design their curriculum (Lee, 1998). This

obviously has caused many problems because some courses have different titles at different high schools (Lee, 1998).

One study in 1997 believed that NCAA regulations were not stringent enough. Once high school athletes get to college, there is evidence that proves that they do not perform as well. A recent study reports that athletes earn fewer bachelor's degrees; they take longer to earn a B.A., their grades are lower, and their curricula is less demanding (Using Cooperative Learning..., 1997).

Health Aspect

Looking at the health aspect of participation, the Surgeon General has called for an expansion of school-based extracurricular sports programs to address the obesity epidemic (Cohen, 2007). However, little is known about the availability of and participation in high school extracurricular sports and how participation in these sports is related to health-risk behaviors. The Los Angeles County public high schools were surveyed in 2002 to determine the number of extracurricular sports programs offered and the percentage of students participating in those programs (Cohen, 2007). Community data on rates of arrests, births and sexually transmitted diseases (STD'S)

among youth were used to examine associations between risk behaviors and participation in sports programs. The results showed that the average school offered 14 sports programs, and the average participation rate was 39% for boys and 30% for girls (Cohen, 2007). Smaller schools and schools with higher percentages of disadvantaged students offered fewer programs. The schools offering 13 or fewer programs had 14% of its student's participating, while the schools offering 16 or more programs had 31% of its students participating in sports. Controlling for area-level demographics, juvenile arrest rates and teen birth rates were lower in areas where schools offered more extracurricular sports (Cohen, 2007).

There is no doubt that extracurricular activities play a positive role in children's development, helping to shape them into well-rounded individuals. Enriching activities motivate kids to learn and grow as their natural curiosity and interests find fulfillment (Barhyte, 2005). According to the U.S. Department of Education, involvement in these activities improves children's quality of life. But as stated in the article, too much of anything can do much more harm than good. Some children's schedules are so full they have little time to be carefree and just be children.

It is imperative that children have down time in their days, time where there are no schedules and no trying to keep up with the neighbors (Barhyte, 2005).

Most adults remember days when they were younger with unstructured time and they had a lot of fun. Just because adult's lives are very frantic with work and other obligations, there is no reason to make our children march to the same drum. Down time can be very positive and serve as stress reducers for adults and children (Barhyte, 2005).

Ellen Smith, a licensed clinical social worker and life and business coach in New York, agrees that children need unstructured play in the current fast paced society (Barhyte, 2005). Unstructured play fosters creativity and the ability to entertain oneself, skills that flourish with free time. It also seems to empower kids to be independent thinkers (Barhyte, 2005).

David Elkind, a professor, believes school-aged children need the opportunity to play their own games, make up rules, and abide by their own timetable. We should regard play as an important aspect of childhood and encourage children to explore, invent and create through play experiences (Barhyte, 2005). Today, unstructured play is under siege as the push for achievement reigns. In the

rush to offer children an edge, parents are denying our children the opportunity to use their imaginations in unstructured play. It was noted that extracurricular activities in moderation are advantageous to development of children only if they are enjoying them. Extracurricular activities can be a character builder, and if approached in the correct manner, can promote cooperative skills and help socially as children become friends (Barhyte, 2005).

It has been documented by research that there is a direct correlation between extracurricular activities and academic success. Thirteen year olds and younger students seem more programmed today than ever before (Barhyte, 2005). Children's lives have become much more structured in today's fast paced society. Research shows that parents' lives are more hectic, so in turn this hectic lifestyle is passed on to their children. It was said that over 70 percent of children's time is spent packed with classes, homework and all the extracurricular activities (Barhyte, 2005). It is very rare when children have time to organize games, hunt for treasures in the backyard, or work on saving the world. Many educators are afraid that today's children are really missing out. Parents need to know when enough is enough (Barhyte, 2005).

Parents may fail to notice when a child's plate is getting too full. Parents need to decide, when choosing these activities, if their child would be missing out if they did not participate in the activity (Barhyte, 2005). Parents need to listen to their children; and if they are complaining and seem unhappy, it is time to step back and reevaluate their schedule. Every child is different; some thrive on a schedule while others will be stressed if too busy. Before signing a child up for an activity, the parent should talk to the child and make sure the child really wants to be involved and let him/her know the sacrifices that will have to be made. Obviously, the child's age will help determine involvement as well (Barhyte, 2005).

If a child shows the following signs, it is time to reconsider their busy schedule:

- Does a child seem tired all the time?
- Does he/she experience sleeping or eating problems; either too much or too little?
- Is he/she irritable or agitated?
- Are there complaints about frequent head or stomach aches?
- Is schoolwork slipping?
- Is there an inability to complete homework on time?

These signs can be the hallmarks of a stress disorder. If these signs are present, the student really needs to cut back on his/her activities. The important aspect to remember is that children are only young once. Children should not be overloaded so that they can be happier and healthier as they grow and mature (Barhyte, 2005).

In a recent study looking at physical activity and grades for a Health magazine, it was found that eliminating physical education and other extracurricular activities from the curriculum to make room for academics may be bad for some students' grades (Nation's Health, 2008).

Using data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study with Kindergarten class of 1998 to 1999, researchers found a small but significant academic benefit in math and reading for girls also enrolled in higher amounts of physical education (Nation's Health, 2008). The same benefits, however, were not observed among boys during this study. Overall physical fitness among the students studied was much lower than national levels, researchers noted, with only about 12 percent of students meeting national guidelines. Previous research has shown that physically active youth are less likely to develop chronic diseases and obesity (Nation's Health, 2008).

Physical education should be promoted for its many benefits, and fear of negatively affecting academic achievement does not seem to be a legitimate reason for reducing or eliminating programs in physical education (Nation's Health, 2008). Schools should always strive to meet these national health objectives of daily physical education and should strive to offer students a good balanced program that always sets aside time for physical activity (Nation's Health, 2008).

SUMMARY

By reviewing the literature, it is obvious that student engagement in the classroom is related to participation in extracurricular activities, especially among students who come from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Fredericks & Eccles, 2006). Fredericks and Eccles believe students who are involved in extracurricular activities outside of their normal classroom routine are more engaged and perform better in the classroom. These extracurricular activities provide students with an opportunity to develop a positive support system among their peers and among the adults with whom they work (Fredericks & Eccles, 2006). These relationships are a key component in students' being actively engaged in the classroom setting. Schools need to

assist in this student engagement by offering a variety of activities for all students. Activities could include student clubs, sports, and volunteer activities that would be offered outside of the normal school day (Fredericks & Eccles, 2006). If financing and/or staffing these programs are problems, schools could seek out volunteers from the community and businesses. In some locations, colleges and universities will help to sponsor extra organizations and activities. Participation in extracurricular activities can be very beneficial to all students and to their academic, physical, social, and their emotion growth as they move through this difficult time in their lives (Fredericks & Eccles, 2006).

As noted, many positive aspects of participating in extracurricular activities are apparent. Athletics should work together with other parts of the curriculum to provide the ultimate learning experience. Programs have been established to assist students who are in extracurricular activities. The research seems to indicate that athletes actually perform better, possibly because of the standards that are set by their high schools or the states in which they participate. College standards, particularly those of the NCAA, have been studied and are controversial and are

said to be too lenient. With some more research and new standards set for high school and college levels, grade point averages should continue to climb, students will continue to excel inside and outside the classroom, and the term “dumb jock” will no longer be in our vocabulary. With students continuing to get involved in many activities, it is obvious that all aspects of their lives have the great potential to improve.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

This study involved high school students in various Southwest Missouri schools. The purpose of this study was to compare grade point averages and dropout rates between students who participated in extracurricular activities and those who chose not to participate in any extracurricular activity. This casual-comparative study investigates the connection between participating in these extracurricular activities and the variables of grade point averages and dropout rate. Data was collected from the students' records and state eligibility forms.

Purpose of this study

It is hypothesized that students who participate in extracurricular activities will achieve higher grade point averages than those students who do not participate in any activity.

It is hypothesized that students who participate in extracurricular activities will have lower dropout rates than those who do not participate in any activities.

It is hypothesized that there is no significant

difference in grade point averages between schools that are large – medium – or small in size.

It is also hypothesized that the more advanced a student is in school (example – Senior), the higher his/her grade point average will be.

Description of the Population

The population for this study was identified as all ninth through twelfth grade students in selected Southwest Missouri schools. Since there were many subjects in this study, all students' grade point averages were used, and all dropout rates were used.

Instrument

Letters with all needed instructions were sent out to all athletic directors in the southwest Missouri region. A follow up letter was sent one month later to all high school principals. The follow up letter was only sent to schools that had not returned the requested information. In some cases, phone calls were made to the schools urging them to send the needed information.

School records, including transcripts, state required eligibility rosters and past yearbooks were used in gathering the needed data for this study. Only students from the 2007-2008 school year were evaluated. A t-test was

used to correlate the information according to participation versus no participation. A t-test assesses whether the means of two groups are statistically different from each other. This analysis is appropriate whenever used to compare the means of two groups, in this case participation versus non-participation in extracurricular activities, and the role participation plays in dropout rates of high school students. The Alpha level was .05 with a df (degree of freedom) of the sum of both groups minus two.

Administrative Procedures

The researcher received permission to do this study from the high school activities directors and in some cases the high school principals. Student names remained anonymous for reasons of confidentiality. A list of all ninth thru twelfth grade students enrolled in school was obtained for the 2007-2008 school year. Grade point averages and dropout rates were collected using student records. Grade point averages and dropout rates were compared between students who participated in extracurricular activities and students who chose not to participate in any extracurricular activity in grades nine through twelve. The data was collected and analyzed for

each grade ninth thru twelfth. After all the data was collected, the results were analyzed.

Treatment of Data

The data gathered was entered into an excel spreadsheet for analysis. Each students GPA's, size of school, and grade in school were placed into the spreadsheet according to whether they participated in extracurricular activities or chose not to participate in any extracurricular activity. The grade point averages were separated according to the year in school and total from the entire high school. All the grade point averages were then calculated and averages were determined. Dropout rates were calculated by using total high school numbers but were not calculated by year in school.

The t-test analyzed the information taken from the data gathered using alpha .05 giving an accurate measurement of information retrieved from the twenty five participating schools. The percentages were calculated and compared. The findings were used to illustrate a significant difference in percentages between the two groups.

Summary

Many schools in Southwest Missouri and across the state

are looking at ways to cut their budgets. The information from this study will undoubtedly help administrators and school boards decide which programs should be included in the schools' budgets. Twenty-five schools participated in this study. Many schools wrote notes and indicated that they would like to see the results of this study. Most schools indicated that if the results were positive, they could use the figures to help motivate students to get involved and to help parents understand the importance of participation in extracurricular activities in school.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to compare the academic performance of high school students who participate in extracurricular activities to those students who choose not to participate in extracurricular activities. This study was conducted with 9-12 grade high school students located in Southwest Missouri. The study involved 25 high schools and over 5,000 students.

The activities that were studied are activities that are sanctioned by the Missouri State High School Activities Association (MSHSAA). These activities take place before and after school hours and students are not given a grade for their participation. Students' grade point averages (GPA's) and school dropout rates were analyzed and compared as related to both categories as well as size of school. Grade point average was also calculated on each year a student was in school. A t-test formulated the results from the 25 participating schools using alpha .05.

The hypotheses to be tested states:

1. There is a statistically significant higher grade point average (GPA) for students who participate in

extracurricular activities when compared to those who chose not to participate in any activity.

2. There is a statistically lower dropout rate for students who participate in extracurricular activities when compared to those students who do not participate in any activity.
3. There is no significant difference in grade point averages between schools that are large – medium – or small in size when comparing participants to non-participants.
4. The higher the grade level of the student, the higher the grade point average will be when comparing participants to non participants.

Data Analysis

This chapter is organized to present the results of the data analysis from this casual comparative study. The data in this project were analyzed by using a paired comparison t test. The results are presented for the 25 Southwest Missouri Schools and the 5,096 students studied.

Table 1

Comparison of all students: participants vs. non-participants.

Total comparison	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**	**T-Value**	**P-value**
Participation	3.118776	0.693925923	23.678	0
Non-participation	2.606503	0.840364359	67	

Alpha = .05

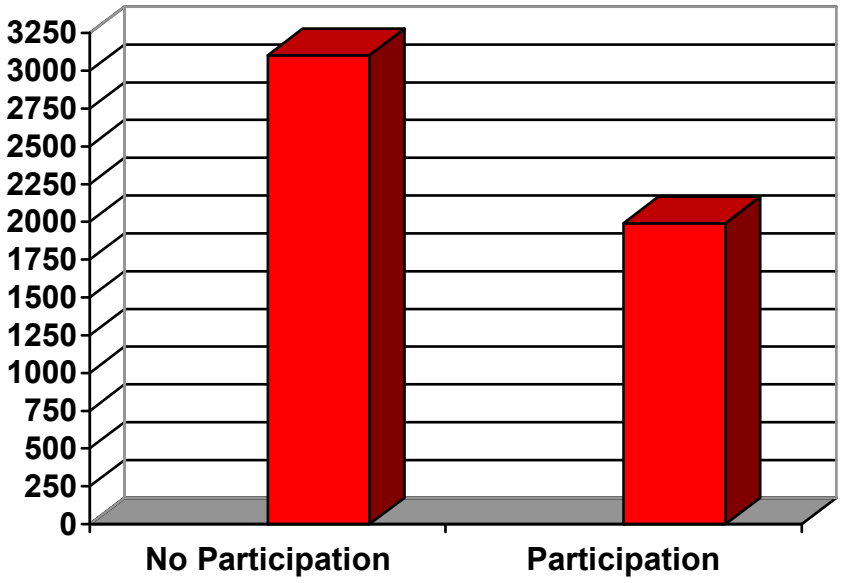
* There were 3,104 Non Participants and 1,992 Participants. The total students involved in the study = (5,096).

Conclusion: The mean GPA for participants is significantly higher than that of non-participation at a level of significance (α) of 0%. Students who participate in extracurricular activities have 0.5122 higher grade point average compared to students who do not participate in activities.

FIGURE 1 Total Participation in Study

Non Participants = 3,104 Students

Participants = 1,992 Students

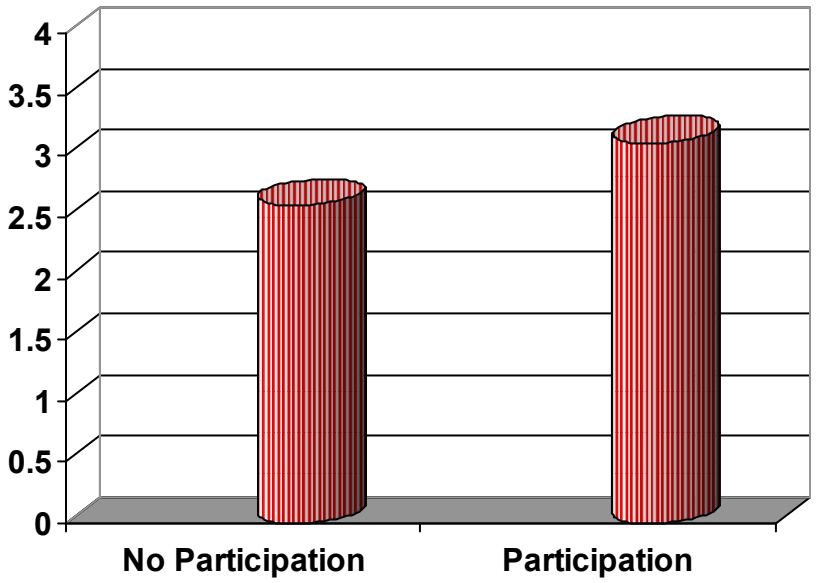


39 % of students participate in extracurricular activities

61% of students do not participate in any extracurricular activities

5,096 students and 25 schools are included in this study

FIGURE 2 Overall Grade Point Average



Non-Participants = **2.60 G.P.A.**

Participants = **3.11 G.P.A.**

Table 2 Dropout Rate Comparison

Dropout rate comparison	Percentage	**z-value**	**p-value**
Participation	0.50%	10.57	0
Non-participation	3.67%		

Alpha = .05

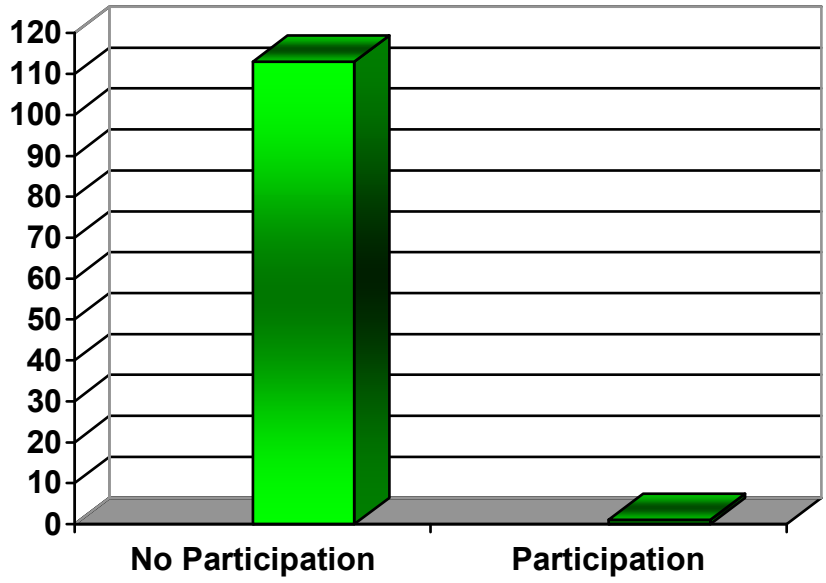
In this chart, a z-test is used to compare 2 percentages (p's).

Conclusion: The dropout rate for nonparticipating students is significantly higher than the dropout rate for participating students.

FIGURE 3 Dropout Rate (9-12)

Non Participants = 113 Students

Participants = 1 Student



Twenty-five schools reported their dropout rate for their participants in extracurricular activities and their non-participants. Total students involved in the study were 5,096.

Table 3

Comparison of students in 9th grade: participants vs. non-participants.

9th Grade comparison	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**	**T-value**	**P-value**
Participation	3.118358	0.685162584	15.08433	0
Non-participation	2.460883	0.927791749		

Alpha = .05

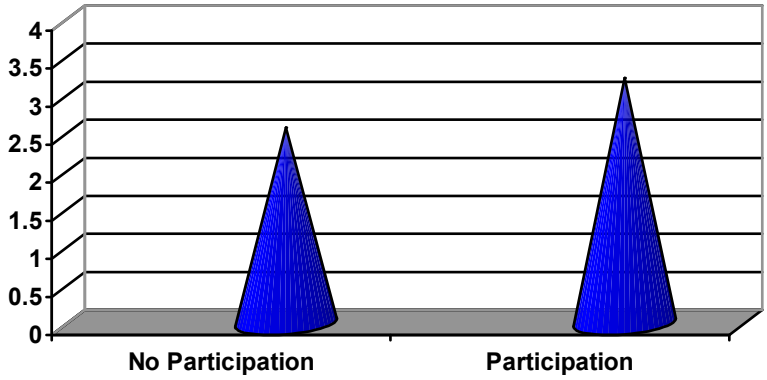
* There were 822 Non Participants and 539 Participants. The total 9th grade students involved in the study = (1,361).

Conclusion: The mean GPA for 9th grade participants is significantly higher than that of 9th grade non-participants at a level of significance (α) of essentially 0%.

FIGURE 4 9th Grade (Grade Point Average)
(1,361 students)

Non-Participants = 822 students = **2.46 G.P.A.**

Participants = 539 students = **3.11 G.P.A.**



There were 25 schools surveyed and 1,361 students in the freshman class. Students who participated in extracurricular activities had a better grade point average by .65.

Table 4

Comparison of students in 10th grade: participants vs. non-participants.

10th Grade comparison	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**	**T-value**	**P-value**
Participation	3.018566	0.751106959	10.84865	0
Non-participation	2.550704	0.810304095		

Alpha = .05

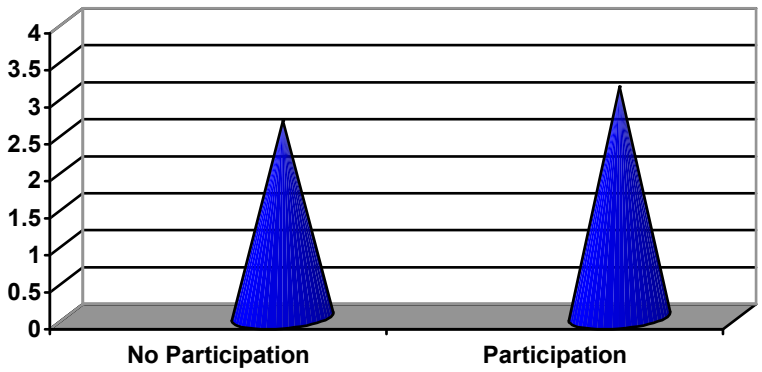
* There were 794 Non Participants and 539 Participants. The total 10th grade students involved in the study = (1,333).

Conclusion: The mean GPA for 10th grade participants is significantly higher than that of 10th grade non-participants at a level of significance (α) of essentially 0%.

FIGURE 5 10th Grade (Grade Point Average)
(1,333 students)

Non-Participants = 792 students = **2.55 G.P.A.**

Participants = 539 students = **3.01 G.P.A.**



There were 25 schools surveyed and 1,333 students in the sophomore class. Students who participated in extracurricular activities had a better grade point average by .46.

Table 5

Comparison of students in 11th grade: participants vs. non-participants.

11th Grade comparison	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**	**T-value**	**P-value**
Participation	3.181358	0.66536387	12.15547	0
Non-participation	2.67212	0.814043423		

Alpha = .05

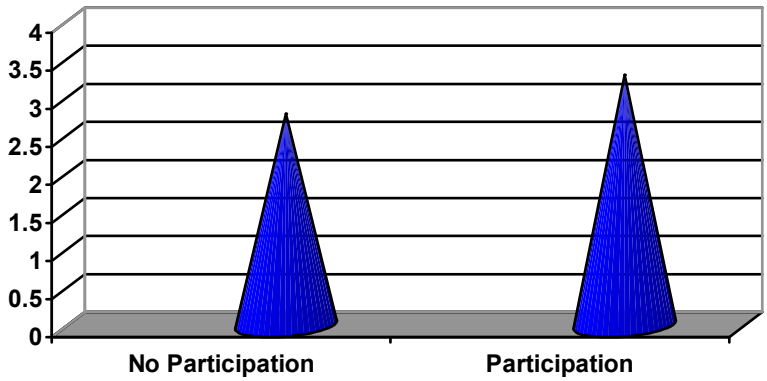
* There were 770 Non Participants and 486 Participants. The total 11th grade students involved in the study = (1,256).

Conclusion: The mean GPA for 11th grade participants is significantly higher than that of 11th grade non-participants at a level of significance (α) of essentially 0%.

FIGURE 6 11th Grade (Grade Point Average)
(1,256 students)

Non-Participants = 770 students = **2.67 G.P.A.**

Participants = 486 students = **3.18 G.P.A.**



There were 25 schools surveyed and 1,256 students in the junior class. Students who participated in extracurricular activities had a better grade point average by .51.

Table 6

Comparison of students in 12th grade: participants vs. non-participants.

12th Grade comparison	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**	**T-value**	**P-value**
Participation	3.190534	0.63438212	10.18616	0
Non-participation	2.760927	0.754585685		

Alpha = .05

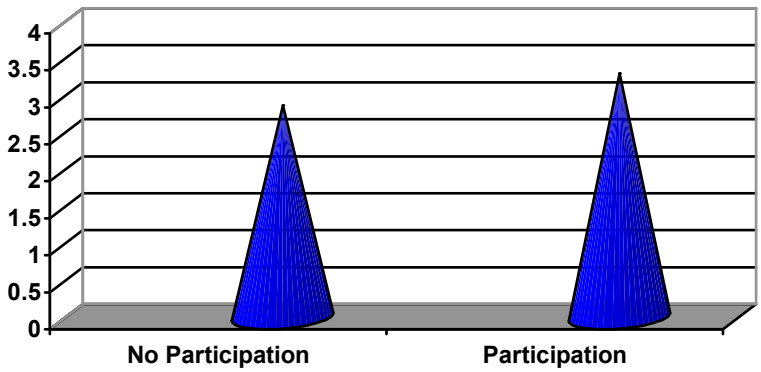
* There were 719 Non Participants and 428 Participants. The total 12th grade students involved in the study = (1,147).

Conclusion: The mean GPA for 12th grade participants is significantly higher than that of 12th grade non-participants at a level of significance (α) of essentially 0%.

FIGURE 7 12th Grade (Grade Point Average)
(1,147 students)

Non-Participants = 719 students = **2.76 G.P.A.**

Participants = 428 students = **3.19 G.P.A.**



There were 25 schools surveyed and 1,147 students in the senior class. Students who participated in extracurricular activities had a better grade point average by .43.

Table 7

Comparing the grade level of students as they progress through high school.

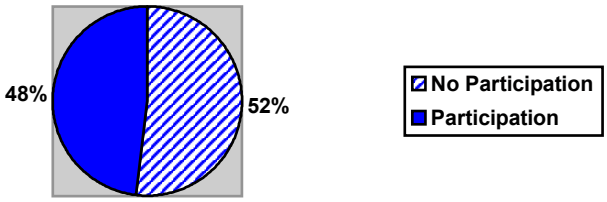
n	Grade GPA comparisons	Mean	Standard Deviation		T-Value	P-value
1380	9th Grade	2.716322	0.900250157	9 vs. 10	1.35505	0.08770049
1316	10th Grade	2.761171	0.817781371	10 vs. 11	3.32287	0.04454806
1271	11th Grade	2.86684	0.799647819	11 vs. 12	1.52159	0.06405630
1127	12th Grade	2.914771	0.742504197			

Alpha = .05

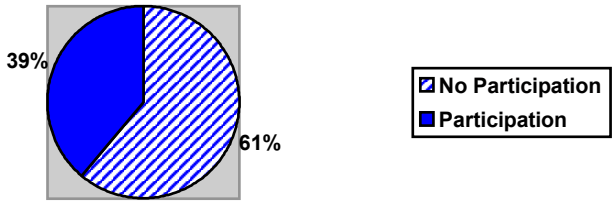
With a set alpha level at 5%, the only variable that seems to get significantly higher is from grade 10 to 11 (p-value .04%). From grade 9 to 10, the p-value is 8.7% so this is not significantly higher, and from grade 11 to 12, the p-value is 6.4%, which is not significantly higher at a 5% level. Of course one could certainly say that the 11th grade GPA is significantly higher than the 9th, and one could say that the 12th is significantly higher than the 9th and the 10th grade GPA's. Obviously the data shows that students' grade point averages will increase as they continue to move up each grade level. However, the t test reveals that there are mixed results in this case and depending on the grade comparison, the results could be positive or negative.

FIGURE 8 Participation in extracurricular activities

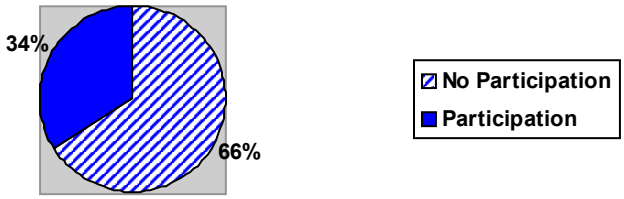
Small Schools: 0-149 H.S. Students = 11 schools



Medium Schools: 150-299 H.S. Students = 9 schools



Large Schools: 300-550 H.S. Students = 5 schools



According to this figure small schools had the most students participating in extracurricular activities with

48% participation. Medium size schools had 39% of their students participating in extracurricular activities and the large schools that were studies only had 34% of their students involved in at least one extracurricular activity. According to this study the larger the school the less participation in extracurricular activities.

Table 8

Comparison of students within small schools: participants vs. non-participants.

Small School	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**	**T-Value**	**P-value**
Participation	3.130513462	0.682423698	12.96325	0
Non-participation	2.547374101	0.790614958		

Alpha = .05

There were 567 Non Participants and 521 Participants in the small size schools. Forty-eight percent of the students participated in extracurricular activities.

Conclusion: The mean GPA for participants in small schools is significantly higher than that of non-participants in small schools at a level of significance (α) of essentially 0%.

Table 9

Comparison of students within medium sized schools: participants vs. non-participants.

Medium School	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**	**T-Value**	**P-value**
Participation	3.137506772	0.684808203	15.73442	0
Non-participation	2.639632877	0.830074878		

Alpha = .05

There were 1,218 Non Participants and 791 Participants in the medium size schools. Thirty-nine percent of the students participated in extracurricular activities. Conclusion: The mean GPA for participants in medium sized schools is significantly higher than that of non-participants in medium sized schools at a level of significance (α) of essentially 0%.

Table 10

Comparison of students within large schools: participants vs. non-participants.

Large School	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**	**T-Value**	**P-value**
Participation	3.081807818	0.716005429	12.38369	0
Non-participation	2.591903592	0.878052051		

Alpha = .05

There were 1,319 Non Participants and 680 Participants in the large size schools. Thirty-four percent of the students participated in extracurricular activities.

Conclusion: The mean GPA for participants in large schools is significantly higher than that of non-participants in large schools at a level of significance (α) of essentially 0%.

Table 11

Size of the school and the effect on grade point averages

GPA comparisons by size	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**		**T-Value**	**P-value**
Large	2.771808612	0.855311152	L vs. M	2.076812	0.018909446
Medium	2.827547934	0.814684931	L vs. S	1.791901	0.036574418
Small	2.829188662	0.795326945	M vs. S	0.055605	0.477828298

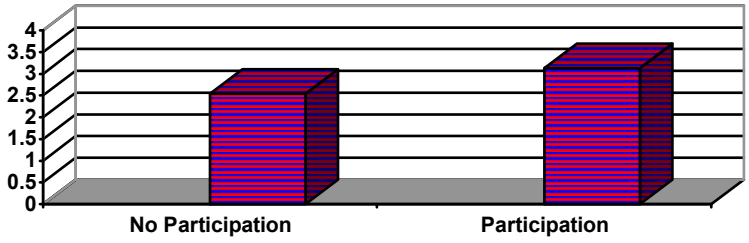
Alpha = .05

Looking at the p-values (alpha), it appears with the alpha level at 5%, there is no significant difference in GPA between medium school students and small school students. But the GPA of large school students is significantly lower than the GPA of medium school students (alpha = 1.9%), and the GPA of large school students is also significantly lower than the GPA of small school students (alpha = 3.7%). There are mixed results in this comparison.

FIGURE 9 Size of Schools
Grade Point Averages (GPA's)

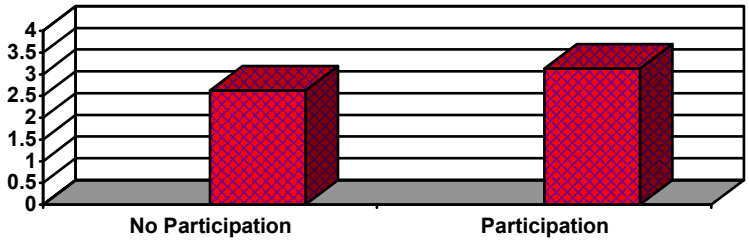
Small Schools

Non-Participants = 567 students = **2.54 G.P.A.**
Participants = 521 students = **3.13 G.P.A.**



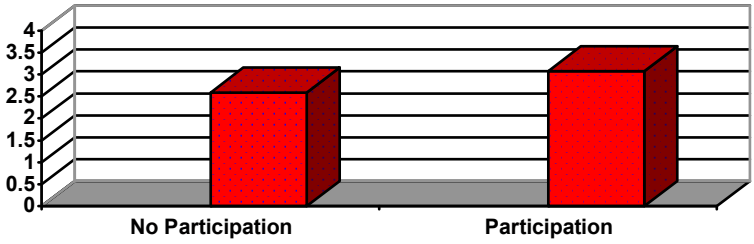
Medium Schools

Non-Participants = 1,218 students = **2.63 G.P.A.**
Participants = 791 students = **3.13 G.P.A.**



Large Schools

Non-Participants = 1,319 students = **2.59 G.P.A.**
Participants = 680 students = **3.08 G.P.A.**



Summary

Data for the analysis was collected from over 5,000 students in twenty-five Southwest Missouri school districts. The data was analyzed using t-tests with an alpha of .05. The categories for data analysis were the following:

1. Comparison of grade point averages of all students who participated in extracurricular activities versus those who did not participate.
2. Comparison of grade point averages of 9th grade participants versus non-participants.
3. Comparison of grade point averages of 10th grade participants versus non-participants.
4. Comparison of grade point averages of 11th grade participants versus non-participants.
5. Comparison of grade point averages of 12th grade participants versus non-participants.
6. Comparison of students' grade point averages within small schools.
7. Comparison of students' grade point averages within medium schools.

8. Comparison of students' grade point averages within large schools.
9. Comparing the grade point average of students as they progress through high school.
10. Comparison of the size of school and the effect it may have on the grade point averages of students who participate in activities and those who do not participate in activities.
11. Comparison of students' dropout rates of students who participate in activities and those who do not participate in activities.

When the data was analyzed for grade point averages of the students as divided up in individual grades, there was a level of significance at essentially zero. Basically in all cases, the mean for the participants in each grade is significantly higher than the non-participants.

There was essentially zero significance in the mean for participants versus non-participants in all three (small, medium, large) sizes of schools. As stated earlier, there were no difference between medium size school students and small size school students. The average grade point averages of students in large school is lower than

the medium size school students GPA's, and the large school students' GPA is also lower than the small school students' GPA's.

Finally as all students grow older and move up from grade 9 through grade 12, their mean GPA's continue to improve. Although the grades get higher as the t-test showed, it cannot be determined that grades get significantly higher as the student advance each grade level except in the case from 10^{th} to 11^{th} grade. Students dropout rate was significantly lower for students who participated in extracurricular activities compared to students' who chose not to participate.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine if a correlation exists between participation in extracurricular activities and students' grade point averages and dropout rates. The following hypotheses were tested in this study – (1) There is a statistically significant higher G.P.A. of students who participate in extracurricular activities than those who chose not to participate in any activity. (2) There is a statistically lower dropout rate of students who participate in extracurricular activities than those who do not participate in any activity. (3) There is no significant difference in grade point average between schools that are large-medium or small in size when comparing participants to non-participants. (4) The higher the grade level of the student, the higher the grade point average will be when comparing participants to non-participants.

The student samples were chosen by the response sent back from participating schools. All 9-12 students from 25 participating schools were used. Each student's grade point

average, dropout status, grade level and size of school were entered into an Excel database.

Conclusion

On the data presented in this paper, the following conclusions are offered:

1. The research and t-test showed that students who were participants in extracurricular activities accumulated a higher mean grade point average than those students who did not participate in any MSHSAA activities. Therefore, it was found that there is a statistical difference in favor of participants of extracurricular activities when compared to non-participants in the area of grade point average. The hypothesis is accepted.
2. The research and t-test showed that there was a statistically lower dropout rate of students who were involved in extracurricular activities. Therefore, it was found that if a student participates in extracurricular activities, his/her chances of graduating from high school is significantly better. The hypothesis is accepted.

3. The research and t-tests showed the size of school a student attends has mixed results when comparing the students' grade point averages. The only significant difference would be when comparing GPA's at medium and small size schools to GPA's at large schools. There is no significant difference between large schools and small or medium size schools. Therefore this hypothesis has mixed results.
4. The research and t-test indicated that the students' grade level in school had mixed results when comparing students' grade point averages. Although the mean grade point average continues to grow as they progress in school, the only significant rise is from the 10^{th} to the 11^{th} grade. Students mean grade point averages will rise as they continue their education. The hypothesis has mixed results.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the data researched, the following recommendation are offered:

1. A variety of extracurricular activities should be offered to students. Schools should seek to increase the number of these activities for the benefit of all

students so they may find an activity that appeals to them.

2. School administration and faculty should promote participation in extracurricular activities.
3. A survey of students' beliefs would be beneficial to determine in what activities they would be interested in participating.
4. The results of this study were limited to 25 schools located in Southwest Missouri. There may be a higher or lower statistical mean difference if the study used more schools and encompassed different parts of the state or country.
5. The study for this research was limited to a one-year grading period. If research was done for consecutive years, it could become more valid.
6. If the study included extra activities that were governed by MSHSAA, the results may have differed.
7. More research is needed to determine if participation in MSHSAA activities and non-MSHSAA activities would have the same GPA results.

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APPENDIX - A

2007-2008 School Year

Schools Participating in Study

9-12 Students	School
60	School A
64	School B
74	School C
82	School D
86	School E
91	School F
101	School G
115	School H
126	School I
141	School J
148	School K

- Small schools used in this study

157	School L
167	School M
198	School N
212	School O
216	School P
239	School Q

265	School R
273	School S
282	School T

- Medium schools used in this study

310	School U
314	School V
342	School W
511	School X
522	School Y

- Large schools used in this study

TOTAL = 5,096 Students 25 Schools

APPENDIX – B

10-4-08

Athletic Directors,

As a former Athletic Director and coach I know you are very busy, however I'm working on my Doctoral Dissertation and with your help I believe I can provide you with some much-needed information. I am only surveying **Southwest Missouri schools**. I would like you or your secretary to run a copy of your students GPA's (07-08) and highlight the grade point average of the individual who participated in MSHSAA Extra Curricular Activities. Also run a list of (07-08) dropouts and please again highlight only the dropouts who participated in Extra Curricular Activities, or simply write drop by their number. For confidentiality reasons, I obviously will not use any student's names in the study, just #'s. Please do not send names if at all possible. I am interested in **GPA's, gender, and dropouts** of students participating in activities and students who do not. I will also be comparing size of school and the student's participation etc. At the conclusion of my study I will send you the results so you can use the information with parents and athletes in your school. I have enclosed an envelope for your convenience. Thank you in advance for your help. If you have any questions please contact me at school or on my personal cell phone 417-830-8283. Thanks again!

Sincerely,

Tim Boatwright
Halfway Superintendent

* This is a comparison of grade point averages and drop out rates of students who participate in extracurricular activities and students who do not participate.

Missouri State High School Activities Association

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Fred Binggeli, Assistant Executive Director
Davine Davis, Assistant Executive Director
Kevin Garner, Assistant Executive Director
Tim Thompson, Assistant Executive Director
Craig Long, Chief Financial Officer
Jason West, Communications Director
Janie Barck, Administrative Assistant

VIA FACSIMILE

November 17, 2008

Mr. Tim Boatwright, Superintendent
Halfway R-III School District
2150 Highway 32
Half way, MO 65663

Dear Mr. Boatwright:

I am writing this letter in regard to your request for research pertaining to the comparison of grade point average and drop out rates of students who participate in extra curricular activities. Currently, there is no research in the Missouri State High School Activities Association offices that would supply help for you in this study. However, I would be greatly interested in any research that you can compile on this topic. If you would need help with contact information, such as email addresses, I would be happy to provide that information to you. I feel that any data gathered by your study would be of interest to all member schools of MSHSAA.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 573-875-4880 or kerwin@mshsaa.org.

Respectfully,

Dr. Kerwin Urhahn
MSHSAA Executive Director

KU:kl

(Kathy/correspondence/Nov-08)

VITA

Tim Boatwright was born and raised in Excelsior Springs, Missouri. He is the son of Frank and Janice Boatwright also from Excelsior Springs. He is a third generation educator who after high school followed his brother Bob to Central Missouri State University in Warrensburg, Missouri, where he graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Education Degree. He holds a Master of Science in Education Degree from Missouri State University in Springfield, Missouri, and an Educational Specialist Degree in Superintendency from Lindenwood University in St. Charles, Missouri. He also achieved a Doctoral Degree in Educational Leadership from Lindenwood University in 2009.

Tim's professional career has been spent as a professional educator, coach and administrator, all in the southwest Missouri area. He began his career in 1988 in Wheatland, Missouri, as a teacher and coach; after six years in Wheatland, he moved to Buffalo, Missouri. While in Buffalo, he worked as a teacher, coach, athletic director and principal for twelve years in the Dallas Co. R-I School system. In 2006, he accepted a job as

superintendent in nearby Halfway, Missouri, and has held that position for the past three years.

Outside of his educational occupation, he enjoys spending time with his family. Tim was married to Kim in 1991, and they currently have 3 children: Blake, Brock and Brenna. In 2004, they lost their beautiful seven-year-old daughter Bailey when their family was hit head on by a drunk driver. The Boatwright family resides on seven acres in rural Dallas County, Missouri.