

**THE PERCEIVED BENEFITS AND DIFFICULTIES STUDENTS WHO
PARTICIPATE IN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES EXPERIENCE**

by

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CERTIFICATION OF THESIS/PROJECT CAPSTONE WORK


We, the undersigned, certify that this project entitled The Perceived Benefits and Difficulties Students who participate in Extracurricular Activities Experience by Zachary Ortolano, is acceptable in form and content and demonstrates a satisfactory knowledge of the field covered by this project.



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Abstract

In early 2016, I conducted a study to examine how students felt they were impacted by their participation in extracurricular activities. An initial survey was conducted to examine what extracurricular activities students were participating in, from which 10 female students and 8 male students were purposefully selected to be interviewed. These 18 students were asked to describe their motivations for participation, positive and negative impacts from participation, post-secondary goals, and the impact of their participation on those post secondary goals. The study found that students felt that their participation in extracurricular activities had a positive impact on their grade point averages, school attendance and was helping them achieve their post-secondary goals. These findings support the conclusion that participation in extracurricular activities has a mostly positive impact on students, and that their participation is a contributing factor to those positive effects.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

In today's world, most jobs require more than just a high school diploma. While some jobs require a special skill or vocational training, many require a college education, whether that is an Associate's, Bachelor's, or Master's degree. By 2020, 35% of job openings will require a Bachelor's degree, while 30% will require an Associate's degree (Carnevale, Smith & Strohl, 2013). As more and more jobs require a college degree, being accepted into colleges to attain that degree is becoming more competitive. According to Peterson's (2016) "The number of talented high school seniors applying to college in the United States has continued to rise each year. Over the next few years, the total number of high school graduates is projected to rise by 10 percent, as is the subsequent number of students applying to college-and that means thousands more applicants in the college admissions process" (p. 1).

While attaining high grades is the most common strategy to get accepted into college, sometimes it is not enough to get into the college a student may want, or need, to attend to accomplish their goals. Students are seeking an edge in high school to make themselves more appealing to those colleges, and often look to extracurricular activities for that edge. According to CollegeBoard.com (2015) "Admission officers know that what potential students do with their time outside of school reveals important personal dimensions that statistics can't show" (p. 1). Colleges are looking for dedication, leadership, balance of various types of activities, true involvement and specialization when it comes to a student's participation in extracurricular activities according to Peterson's (2013). Jeff Brenzel (2015), the Dean of Undergraduate Admissions at Yale University, stated, "The important thing is: are you getting something out of it? Are you enjoying it? Are you learning how to do it better? Has it taken you some places that you wouldn't otherwise have gone? If so, you're fine..." (p. 1).

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In terms of the more traditional strategy of getting accepted into college with good grades, extracurricular activities have also been shown to have a positive impact (Feldman & Matjasko, 2005). Many adults may fear that with students spending time on extracurricular activities, it may take away from their studies, and have a negative impact on their academics. According to Fredricks (2011), "...participation at 10th grade were positively associated with math achievement test scores, grades and educational expectation at 12th grade" (p. 295). While it is understandable for some to have that concern about participation in extracurricular activities to have a negative effect on a student's academic achievements, the opposite has been shown. Participation in extracurricular activities has shown a multitude of positive effects on high school students in preparation for the post-secondary education. Below is a brief discussion of the research on the positive effects that participation in extracurricular activities has shown

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One of those positive effects is on the dropout rate of high school students. High school dropouts have a 12% unemployment rate, which is higher than the national average (Breslow, 2012). Feldman and Majasko (2005) found that students who participate in extracurricular activities are less likely to drop out of high school. They stated "...participation in at least one extracurricular activity was associated with reduced rates of early dropout among high-risk boys and girls" (p. 182). Mahoney (2014) noted that participation in extracurricular activities has an effect on a student's social structure which is the reason for this lower dropout rate. "Although an associated reduction in dropout is apparent by focusing on the individual's engagement alone, understanding the composition and features of his/her social network clarify the relation" (p. 151). In summary, participation in extracurricular activities, and the relationships formed from their participation, helps keep students in school to complete their graduation.

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Higher Grade Point Average (GPA)

Participation in extracurricular activities has also shown a positive impact on students' Grade Point Averages. Even when it comes to extracurricular activities that were run outside of school, there was a positive impact on students' grades (Marsh & Kleitman, 2002). One major concern about participation in extracurricular activities in the literature is regarding the amount of time that they consume. With all the high, rigorous demands of education in today's classrooms, it is easy to understand why people may suggest that students should just focus on their studies. According to Fredricks (2011), there is a certain threshold at which extracurricular activities begin to have a benefit for student. Students who participated in one to five extracurricular activities, taking up one to 14 hours a week, had higher scores in math, and overall grade point averages (GPAs). After five activities and/or 14 hours a week, math scores and GPAs started to drop. However, even if a student participated in 8 activities, or spent 20 hours on these activities, they still had better results when compared to their non-participating counterparts. This shows that participation in extracurricular activities, no matter to what extent a student participates, can help improve a student's Grade Point Average.

Increased Desire to Attend College

A large part of getting into a college is the desire to get into college. Research by Fredricks (2011) supports those students who do the right number of extracurricular activities, as described in the paragraph above, have higher educational expectations for themselves, such as attending college. Fredricks argues "...participation in high school extracurricular contexts may give youth the opportunity to develop interpersonal competence and set goals, which in turn can increase educational attainment" (p. 304). Marsh and Kleitman (2002) found that even students who participated in structured activities that were not associated with the school had higher

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educational aspirations for themselves when compared with students who did not participate in any extracurricular activities. Marsh and Kleitman added “For other academic outcomes (e.g. educational aspirations, number of university applications), the effects of both total school-based participation and out-of-school structured activities were significantly positive” (p. 489). As with lowering dropout rate, participation in extracurricular activities and the relationships formed from their participation helps improve a student’s academic goals, a desire to attend college.

While the research shows that participation in extracurricular activities has a positive impact on students’ academic achievements, what is missing is how students feel about this impact. Adults in schools can use this data to try to persuade students to participate in extracurricular activities, but if students do not think their participation will be the cause of those impacts, it is not important. My research aims to determine if students feel that their participation causes these impacts, or if there would be no change.

Purpose of Research

The reason I am doing this study is because of my involvement in extracurricular activities as both a student and a leader. When I was a student I was involved in multiple sports, including football, basketball, cheerleading, and track. I was also involved in student government and the JROTC program at my high school. My involvement in these activities, in my opinion, helped drive me to become the person I am today. My involvement in extracurricular activities taught me many skills, such as leadership, perseverance, and teamwork, which I would not have learned in the classroom alone. Those skills helped me a great deal in high school, helped me being accepted into college, and furthermore, helped me become the person that I am today. However, my participation from 8th grade through high school graduation was for the pure enjoyment of the activities, and the friendships that came with participation. I know that I did

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not participate in extracurricular activities with the mindset of helping me being accepted into the college of my choice.

I am always encouraging students to become involved in extracurricular activities. I'm famous for telling my students and athletes that colleges are looking for students who are involved in at least two extracurricular activities. In my experiences as a teacher and coach, I have seen mixed results with the effects of extracurricular activities and students. For some of the student-athletes that I have worked with, it is night and day contrast between their performance during season and out of season. In season they are studious, and have great behavior; out of season, they don't seem to care about their grades and have terrible behavior. Other student-athletes always seem to struggle to keep up their grades and stay out of academic trouble no matter if it's in season or out of season. These previous student-athletes seem to be in the minority, as most of the student-athletes I have worked with tend to always have good grades and maintain good behavior. This also tends to hold true for students that I have worked with who participate in other extracurricular activities, with the majority always being able to maintain good behavior and grades. Of course, there are the students that I have worked with that do not participate in any extracurricular activities. While the majority of students still fall into the category that maintains good grades and behavior, but this amount seems to be less than the students who participate in extracurricular activities.

Another big difference I notice between students who participate in extracurricular activities and those who don't is aspirations to complete high school, and their aspirations post high school. From my personal experience working with high school athletes and from my experiences with friends, only a few high school dropouts go on to attend college, and none of them have earned a college degree. The students and friends that have participated in

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extracurricular activities have always seemed to tend to have a higher high school graduation rate, when compared with those who choose to not to participate. Through conversations with student-athletes I've worked with, and students who do other extracurricular activities, most tend to have clearer and higher aspirations for after high school. They tend to know what they want to do, and how they are going to do it, unlike students who are not involved any extracurricular activities. The one area where I notice an exception to this is with middle school students who are only involved in athletics: that portion of students tend to only have an "I'm going to be a pro-athlete" mindset, with no real idea of how to accomplish that goal. This may be due to a lack of maturity which causes a lack of an educational plan to achieve their goals.

The purpose of my study is to see why students are participating in extracurricular activities. While there is evidence that students who participate in extracurricular activities tend to have higher grades and higher educational aspirations, are the students doing the activities for these reasons, or do these things just happen because of the involvement in these activities? Are they doing these activities for the enjoyment of the activities, like I did, or with the intention of helping get them into college, or reach other post-secondary goals?

For my research, I conducted an initial survey to find out what extracurricular activities students are participating in. From this initial survey, I meaningfully selected 18 students based on the types of extracurricular activities that they participated in. I interviewed these 18 students to get a deeper understanding of why they participated in extracurricular activities, how it affected them, and their goals of participation.

The questions that will drive this project for me are:

- What are motivations for participation in extracurricular activities?

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- What are the benefits and/or difficulties associated with participation in extracurricular activities?
- How are students using extracurricular activities to help achieve post-secondary goals?

In the next chapter, I will take a deeper look at the research as it pertains to the effects of the impact of extracurricular activities on student achievement. I will examine the effects on dropout rate, Grade Point Averages and desire to attend college.

Chapter 2 - Review of the Literature

In the previous chapter, I discussed problems facing students as they enter their post-secondary educational lives. Skills learned, and grades that students achieve, in high school can have a great impact on their future. Participation in extracurricular activities can have a positive impact on these areas, and be helpful to students in the future. In this chapter I will be taking a look at the relevant research pertaining to the effects of participation in extracurricular activities. I will be further discussing the research on areas that I discussed in Chapter 1: lowering dropout rate, higher Grade Point Averages (GPAs), and increased desire to attend college.

Lowering Dropout Rate

Completing high school is imperative in today's world for success in many fields of work. Participation in extracurricular activities has been shown to have a positive impact on the dropout rates of students. McNeal (1995) conducted a study that started in 1980, using 735 regular public high schools from all over the United States and 14,249 students. Students participated in a baseline study in 1980, and a follow-up study in 1982. The students were split into two main groups, those who participated in extracurricular activities and those who didn't. The participating group was split into four types of activities: athletics, fine arts, academic clubs and vocational clubs. In his research he found that students who participated in athletics were 1.7 times less likely to drop out of high school, students who participated in fine arts activities were 1.2 times less likely to drop out of high school, and students who participated in academic activities were 1.15 times less likely to drop out when compared to those students who did not participate in extracurricular activities. McNeal took his research one step further and looked at students who were "prototypical" students for dropping out of high school based on race, socioeconomic status, previous academic achievement and other conditions. "..., being a

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language minority, being older than one's peers, having a lower socioeconomic status, residing in a single-parent household, having low test scores or being in the lowest quartile of academic ability, and being in the vocational track are all associated with the increased likelihood of dropping out" (p. 72). He concluded that these prototypical dropout students who participated in athletics were 40% less likely to drop out of high school, 15% less likely to drop out of high school if they participated in fine arts activities, and 12% less likely to drop out from participation in academic activities. In conclusion, students who participate in extracurricular activities are more likely to graduate from high school.

Further research examined the ways in which extracurricular activities lowers the dropout rate for students. Feldman and Matjasko (2005) conducted a broad literature search on adolescent extracurricular participation, using several sources. From all the literature that they collected, they narrowed their selections down to include only ones involving school based activities, after which they further narrowed down their research to studies that were done in the United States, studies that were of a quantitative nature, and those studies in which participation was used as an independent variable predicting adolescent functioning. Research that they conducted showed that "participation in 1 to 4 hours of extracurricular activities per week was related to a reduced likelihood of dropping out" (p 182). They also discovered that participation in extracurricular activities had a positive impact on dropout rates among "at-risk" students. It was concluded that the friendships that were made from participation led to a lower student dropout rate, not the actual participation in the activities itself. These relationships kept the students engaged in their school and prevented them from dropping out. The positive relationships that students make due to their participation in extracurricular activities is the main cause of a lower student dropout rate.

Higher Grade Point Average (GPA)

While graduating from high school is important, having high grades in high school is also imperative to future success. Silliker and Quirk (1997) conducted research looking at in-season versus out-of-season academic performances of high school male and female soccer players in western New York. There were a total of 123 students included in the study, 59 male and 64 female, who were split up among all four grade levels (9-12). Both male and female students had higher GPAs in-season, 86.3, versus out-of-season, 85.7, with male students being more positively affected during the season, with an increase in GPA of 0.9, than female students, with an increase in GPA of 0.2. "...participants had significantly higher GPAs in-season than out-of-season" (p. 290). This study also showed that while there was a drop in GPA out-of-season, these students maintained a high GPA throughout the entire year.

While the previous study examined in season to out of season influence on GPAs, Kleitman and Marsh (2002) did a study examining the effects of participation over a high school career. Their study was based on NELS: 88, which was a longitudinal study sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics. They limited their research to those students who graduated on time, and did not dropout or transfer schools. This study was originally conducted in 1988 when the students were in the 8th grade. There were three follow up studies, one in 1990, or 10th grade, 1992, or 12th grade, and one in 1994, two years after graduation. The study showed further that participation in school based extracurricular activities had more of an impact on grades than out-of-school based activities. "...total in-school extracurricular activities had more significantly positive effects (16) than out-of-school structured activities (8)..." (p. 489). When looking at how much time students spent on extracurricular activities, there was a high correlation between more time spent on the activities and time spent on academic work when the

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study looked at the students in 1992 as 12th graders. In general, this study showed that participation in extracurricular activities was associated with higher grades, particularly school based activities.

While other research shows that extracurricular activities have a positive impact on student achievement, it is also important to look at each specific type of activity. Eccles, Barber, Stone and Hunt (2003) did a similar study, but examined closer the types of activities that students were participating in. They took a look at the Michigan Study of Adolescent Life Transitions, which is a longitudinal study that began with 6th graders from 10 different districts in Michigan in 1983. When these students were in the 10th grade they completed a survey on the extracurricular activities they were involved in which was split into five different categories: pro-social activities: community service; performance activities: band, drama, etc; team sports; school involvement: student government, pep club, etc; academic clubs: math club, tutoring, etc. When these students were in the 12th grade, their cumulative GPA was taken. For every category of extracurricular activities, students had a higher cumulative GPA in 12th grade compared to those students who did not participate in extracurricular activities. While the study looked at different types of extracurricular activities, it found that participation had a positive impact no matter the type of activity a student chose.

While previously stated research examined the comparison on male and female students, that research was limited to only one sport, soccer. The research conducted by Feldman and Matjasko (2005), which was discussed in the previous section showing the effects of extracurricular activities and lowering dropout rates, also found good results for higher GPAs. While early research that they found reported mixed results on the link between participation in extracurricular activities and academic achievement, more current research has supported a link

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between the two. Studies that focused on gender differences showed similar results of higher GPAs for both males and females (Broh, 2002; Cronsnoe, 2001; Eccles & Barber, 1999; Gerber, 1996; Hanson & Kraus, 1998; Mahoney & Cairns, 1997; Mahoney, Cairns & Farmer, 2003; Marsh, 1992; Marsh & Kleitman, 2003; McHale, Crouter, & Tucker, 2001; McNeal, 1998; Melnick, Vanfossen, & Sabo, 1992b; Spreitzer, 1994). Specifically, for female students, sports participation was associated with a higher GPA (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Feltz & Weiss, 1984; Perry-Burney & Takyi, 2002). For male students, research supported that participation in sports was linked to higher grades in Math and English and more time spent on homework (Broh, 2002).

One aspect of participation in extracurricular activities, is the amount of time it takes up. Fredricks (2012) conducted research using the Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002, which looked at students who were in the 10th grade in 2002, and again as 12th graders in 2004. In 2002 and 2004, students completed questionnaires about what types of extracurricular activities they participated in and to what level they participated in those activities. Four academic results were looked at, one of which was the students GPA in the 12th grade. The purpose of the study was to examine if too much participation hurt students academically. This study showed that students who participated in 1-5 different types of extracurricular activities had increasing GPAs with the more activities that they participated in. “However, at the very high levels of participation 5-7 or more activities, 14 or more hours) the academic well-being of these youth declined” (p. 303). The study also showed that students who participated for 1-14 hours a week also had an increasing GPA. After five different activities, and more than 14 hours of participation a week, there was a decline in GPA and every other academic aspect examined in this study. This study

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shows that there is a tipping point on how much a student should participate before it starts to negatively impact a student's GPA.

Increased Desire to Attend College

While completing high school is very important, attaining a post secondary education is also very important. Many students do not have the desire to go further with their education. Students who participate in extracurricular activities have shown to have an increased desire to go onto that next level of education. The research by Kleitman and Marsh (2002) that was discussed earlier showing a positive relationship between extracurricular activity participation and higher GPAs, also showed a positive relationship between participation and having higher educational aspirations for themselves including attending college. Their study looked at participation in both school based activities and out of school activities. When they took a closer look at those students who only participated in school based extracurricular activities, they found that there was a relationship in how much time was spent on the activities and the number of college applications a student filled out. "Higher levels of total participation in such activities were associated with higher grade-twelve outcomes: ..., number of university applications, ..." (p. 488). Therefore saying the more activities, and the more time spent participating in those activities meant that students would apply to more colleges.

Similar results were found by Fredricks (2012). Her research asked 12th graders on a scale of 1 to 8, how far they felt they would go in their education, 1 being less than high school graduation and 8 being obtaining a PhD. Like the results that were stated earlier when talking about the amount of participation and a student's GPA, students who participated between 1-5 different types of activities, and spent 1-14 hours a week on those activities had higher educational aspirations associated with the higher number of activities and hours. After five

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activities and 14 hours, students did show a decline in their educational aspirations. Therefore students need to have a balance of how many activities they are participating in.

Feldman and Matjasko (2005) found research that also supports participation in extracurricular activities and having the desire to attend college. Specifically they found that participation in sports was directly linked with the desire to attend college for both male and females. “In the case of both male and female students, athletic participation was positively related to plans to attend college” (p. 178). Males specifically showed this when they participated in football and basketball.

While having the desire to attend college is one thing, actually attending college is another. Eccles, Barber, Stone and Hunt (2003) did not research the question of desire to attend college, but rather looked at participation in extracurricular activities and if those students actually did attend college. All five categories of types of participation, which were discussed earlier, showed that those students had or were attending college by the age of 21. Participation in pro-social activities, team sports and performing arts activities specifically showed to have a higher graduation rate from college by the age of 25 by the students who participated in them. Therefore, student who participated in extracurricular activities in high school were more likely to go on and earn a college degree.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this literature review suggests that participation in extracurricular activities has positive impacts on students. It has shown that students who participate in extracurricular activities are more likely to graduate from high school instead of dropping out, are more likely to be more successful in high school when taking a look at their GPA, and they will more likely have a desire to obtain a higher level of education. While the research shows that if a student

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participates in extracurricular activities that student is more likely to have a higher GPA, graduate from high school, and want to attend college, the purpose of my research is to look at the question of whether students feel that their participation in those extracurricular activities and those results has a cause and effect relationship. For example, does a student who participates in extracurricular activities and has a good GPA feel that if they stopped participating that their GPA would go down? Does a student feel that if they had never participated in extracurricular activities they would not graduate from high school, or have a desire to go to college? Another purpose of my research will be to examine why students choose the extracurricular activities that they are participating in, and if they are using those activities to achieve their post-secondary goals.

In the next chapter I will discuss in detail how I completed my research to examine the questions stated above. I will examine how students were selected for interviews, and how their answers were used to make conclusions.

Chapter 3 - Methods

In the previous chapter, I reviewed the literature concerning the effects on students who participated in extracurricular activities. The literature showed that there were mostly positive effects on those who participated in extracurricular activities. Students were more likely to graduate high school, have a higher GPA, and more likely to have a desire to attend college. In the following chapter, I will detail the procedures for my study. My research did not take a look at the actual impacts of extracurricular activities, but rather looked at the perceived effects of participation in extracurricular activities. Do students feel that the positive effects are happening because of their participation, or do they feel that they would have the same results if they did not participate?

I want to know if students feel that participation in different extracurricular activities has had a positive impact or negative impact on the outcomes they have in school. Do students feel that they would still have the same GPA and attendance rate if they did not participate in extracurricular activities, or would their GPA and attendance rate increase or decrease? I will also be looking at the reason students participate, and what they hope to accomplish from participation. Are they participating for the enjoyment of the activity, or are they hoping that it will help build their resume as they prepare for their post-secondary life. These are the questions that drive my inquiry in this project.

Research Frameworks:

The research interests identified above call for a project designed in the principles of qualitative research. According to Sofaer (1999), qualitative methods provide more description of events and help enhance the understanding of why something happens. Qualitative methods also help discover patterns to help “move inquiry toward more meaningful explanations” (p

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1102). While most studies show that there are correlations between participation in extracurricular activities and a high GPA, good attendance in school and high post-secondary aspirations, I will be hoping to find if these are the reasons that students participate in different extracurricular activities.

The qualitative framework that I will mainly be focusing on is phenomenology. Phenomenology was developed by Edmund Husserl so that individuals could give an explanation to events that occur in everyday life. Its goal is to explore how an individual describes the causes and effects of different events that they have experienced. (Reeves, Albert, Kuper, & Hodges, 2008). This is different from most research that I have looked at on the topic of participation, as most of it tends to just look at the results, rather than conducting interviews with the participants and asking them about their experiences.

Research Setting

I conducted my research at a medium sized, rural high school in Southern Maryland. We will refer to the school as Maryland High School (MHS). MHS has 1,574 students. 790, or 50.1%, of those students are male, and 784, or 49.9%, are female. 77% of the students at this school identify as African-American, 11% identify as Caucasian, 5% identify as Hispanic, while 4% identify as mixed race. 431, or 27.4% of the students qualify for Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS). My research was done specifically with Juniors at the school, which made up 391 of the student population. 203, or 51.9%, of the students were male, and 188, or 48.1%, of the students were female. 297, or 76%, of those students identify as African American, 49, or 12.5%, of those students identify as Caucasian, 26, or 6.6%, identify as Hispanic, while 19, or 4% identify as mixed race.

Extracurricular Activities Impact

The study specifically was looking at students who were involved in extracurricular activities that were sponsored by the school. In total, the high school offers 62 extracurricular activities. These activities are listed below, and split into 5 different categories.

Athletics	Academic Clubs	Community Service Clubs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cross Country (Boys and Girls) - Soccer (Boys and Girls) - Field Hockey (Girls) - Football (Boys) - Golf (Boys and Girls) - Volleyball (Girls) - Basketball (Boys and Girls) - Wrestling (Boys) - Indoor Track (Boys and Girls) - Swimming (Boys and Girls) - Baseball (Boys) - Softball (Girls) - Lacrosse (Boys and Girls) - Tennis Boys and Girls) - Track and Field (Boys and Girls) - Cricket Club (Boys and Girls) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It's Academic - Math Team - MESA - Student Government Association (SGA) - Model U.N. - Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) - Greenhouse Club - Mock Trial - Newspaper - Spanish Club - Yearbook - Literary Club - Peer Tutoring - TV Club 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National Honors Society (NHS) - Cancer Society - Environmental Club - Key Club - Recycling Club - Letterman's Club
Fine Arts Club		Behavior Clubs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anime Club - Art Appreciation Club - Band - Chorus - Dance Team - Fashion Club - Graphic Novel Club - Poetry Club - Strictly Hip-Hop - Drama Club 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) - Higher Planes - NJROTC

Of the MHS student population, 992 students, or 63%, participate in some form of extracurricular activities at the school. In the Junior class, 264 students, or 67.5% of the students participate in extracurricular activities. It is believed that more students would participate, both

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in the Junior class and school as a whole, but are not eligible due to the requirements set forth by the school district. To be eligible, students must maintain a 2.25 GPA the quarter before, with no failing grades. They also can not miss more than 4.5 days of school in the previous quarter.

Sampling Procedures

Instead of doing random sampling, I opted for purposeful sampling to better suit my research. For the study, students must meet the following criteria:

1. Subjects must have participated, or plan on participating, in at least one extracurricular activity at any point during their Junior year of high school.
2. Subjects include both male and female participants
3. Subjects will include students from every category of types of extracurricular activity
4. Subjects can have participated in more than one activity in one category, or activities in different categories.

An initial survey (See Appendix A) was handed out to 150 students who met the above criteria. This initial survey asked students what extracurricular activities that they participated in, or were planning on participating in, that year. The initial survey was returned by 37 students. Here are the categories that those students fell into.

Table 1:

Category	Female	Male	Total
Only participated in Athletics	1	6	7
Only participated in Behavior Clubs	1	2	3
Only participated in Fine Arts Clubs	3	0	3
Only participated in Academic Clubs	1	1	2
Only participated in Community Service Clubs	1	0	1

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Participated in more than one type of Extracurricular Activity	12	9	21
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I next examined the category of students who participated in more than one type of extracurricular activities, to see what types of activities those students were participating in. The results are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2

Type of Activity	Female	Male	Total
Athletics	11	8	19
Behavior Clubs	0	1	1
Fine Arts Clubs	5	3	8
Academic Clubs	10	6	16
Community Service Clubs	7	6	13

I then added in my results from students who participated in only one type of extracurricular activity to see how many students were at least participating in each type of extracurricular activity. The results are displayed in Table 3:

Table 3

Type of Activity	Female	Male	Total
Athletics	12	14	26
Behavior Clubs	1	2	3
Fine Arts Clubs	8	3	11
Academic Clubs	11	7	18
Community Service Clubs	8	6	14

Next, I examined the exact extracurricular activities that students said they were involved in instead of just the type of activities they were involved in. The list of the activities that students said they participated in are displayed in Table 4:

Extracurricular Activities Impact

Table 4

Extracurricular Activity	Female Participants	Male Participants	Total Participants
Basketball	4	7	11
Cheerleading	1	1	2
Volleyball	3	0	3
Softball	3	0	3
Soccer	2	3	5
Track	3	6	9
Football	0	5	5
Tennis	2	1	3
Baseball	0	5	5
Indoor Track	0	1	1
Swim Team	0	1	1
Cross Country	1	2	3
Wrestling	0	3	3
Student Government Association	7	2	9
Yearbook	2	1	3
Peer Tutoring	3	0	3
Future Business Leaders of America	1	0	1
Future Teachers	0	1	1
Newspaper	0	2	2
Spanish Club	2	1	3
TV Club	0	1	1
Model U.N.	0	1	1
Chorus	2	0	2
Band	3	1	4
Art Appreciation Club	1	0	1
Dance Team	1	1	2
Drama	0	1	1
National Honors Society	6	3	9
Key Club	5	3	8
Letterman's Club	0	1	1
NJROTC	1	2	3

Extracurricular Activities Impact

After I examined the initial surveys, I chose 18 students to meet specific criteria. I wanted to have both male and female students who only participated in each type of extracurricular activity listed earlier in the chapter, and five male and five female students who participated in more than one type of extracurricular activities. I was able to find 18 student to meet the criteria I desired. For the interviews I selected:

Participated in Athletics Only	Participated in Fine Arts Clubs Only	Participated in Behavior Clubs Only
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Julie-A 16 year old female student who is Hispanic. She participated in Track and Cross Country - Shawn-A 17 year old male student who is African American. He participated in Wrestling and Baseball 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Holly-A 17 year old female student who is Caucasian. She participated in Band 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jennifer-A 17 year old female student who is African America. She participated in NJROTC - Paul-A 17 year old male student who is African America. He participated in NJROTC
Participated in Academic Clubs Only	Participated in Community Service Clubs Only	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Heidi-A 17 year old female student who is African American. She participated in Peer Tutoring - Brian-A 17 year old male student who is African American. He participated in the school newspaper and TV Club 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stacy-A 16 year old female student who is mixed race. She participated in Key Club 	
Students who Participated in More than one Type of Extracurricular Activity		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sarah-17 year old female student who is African American. She participated in Tennis, Key Club, National Honors Society, Peer Tutoring, yearbook and Chorus - Brenda-A 17 year old female student who is African American. She participated in Indoor and Outdoor Track, Letterman's Club, SGA and NHS - Megan-A 17 year old female student who is Caucasian. She participated in Basketball and SGA - Amanda-A 16 year old female student who is mixed race. She participated in Key Club, Tennis and Spanish Club - Ashley-A 17 year old female student who is African American. She participated in Basketball, Volleyball, Softball, NHS, SGA, Spanish Club and Key Club - Corey-A 17 year old male student who is Caucasian. He participated in Cross Country, 		

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Wrestling and Yearbook

- Zach-A 16 year old male student who is mixed race. He participated in Letterman's Club, Spanish Club, Soccer, Basketball and Baseball
- Patrick-A 17 year old male student who is African American. He participated in Football, Wrestling, Track and Key Club
- Kevin-A 17 year old male student who is African American. He participated in SGA, Cross Country, Basketball, Track, NHS and Key Club
- Chris-A 17 year old male student who is African American who participated in Model U.N., Drama Club and NHS

No students qualified for the categories of male student who only participated in Fine Arts Clubs nor Male student who only participated in Community service clubs

Data Collection Procedures

Conducting interviews is the only way to conduct a phenomenological study. As Mikene, Gaizauskaite and Valaviciene (2013) commented "Qualitative interviews provide in-depth, contextualized, open-ended responses from research participants about their views, opinions, feelings knowledge and experiences" (p. 51). The interviews that I conducted had a few different purposes (see Appendix B). First, I found out what types of extracurricular activities the students participate in, and why they participate in those activities. My second goal was to find out what effects, both positive and negative, students feel participation has had on them as students. My last goal was to discover if and how students are using extracurricular activities to achieve their post-secondary goals.

My interviews were structured to begin, giving the students open-ended questions. As the students began to give their answers, the interview became more unstructured as I gave more follow-up questions probing the students for more specific answers. I probed with follow up questions so that the answers the students gave remained open ended and qualitative, but may seem closer to quantitative responses. The more specific answers will help provide justification for my results (Sofaer, 1999).

Data Analysis Procedures

From the answers that the students give me during the interviews, I searched for specific statements that reoccur from one student to another. I then used these to help me create different themes and categories to place students in. For example, I looked at responses that female participants gave me compared to those that male students gave me. I examined the responses of students from different categories of activities, for example students who participate in behavioral clubs compared to the responses given by students who participate in the other four categories. I also looked for similarities and differences in responses for students who participate in only one of the five different categories, and from students who participate in activities in multiple categories-for example a student who only participated in sports versus a student who participates in a sport and an academic club. Lastly, I examined the different responses from students who only participate in one extracurricular activity compared to those who participate in two or more.

Conclusions

I hope to be able to identify different relationships from the comparisons discussed previously. In the study described above I looked at the perceived effects that participation has on students GPA and attendance. Through this data collection and analysis strategy, I hope to be able to provide a better understanding of the effects of participation in extracurricular has a student's GPA and school attendance, and also hope to be able to provide information on how students attempt to use extracurricular activities to help achieve post-secondary goals, if at all. In the next chapter I discuss my results from this study.

Chapter 4 - Results

In order to explore the connection between extracurricular activities and school achievement, I asked the 18 students described in Chapter 3 a series of 9 questions (see Appendix B). The topics discussed in these interview sessions asked the students about motivations, the effects of, and the goals of, participation in extracurricular activities. From their answers, I generalized some of their specific statements to make connections between students. In the following chapter I will discuss the results of each question by looking at male students who participated in more than one type of extracurricular activity, male students who only participated in one type of extracurricular activity, female students who participated in more than one type of extracurricular activity and female students who only participated in one type of extracurricular activity.

What motivated you to get involved in these extracurricular activities?

First, I asked my research participants to give me the reasons for their participation in extracurricular activities. Students indicated motivations that were both internal and external. The specific statements that students mentioned in the interviews are listed below in Table 5:

Table 5 Motivations

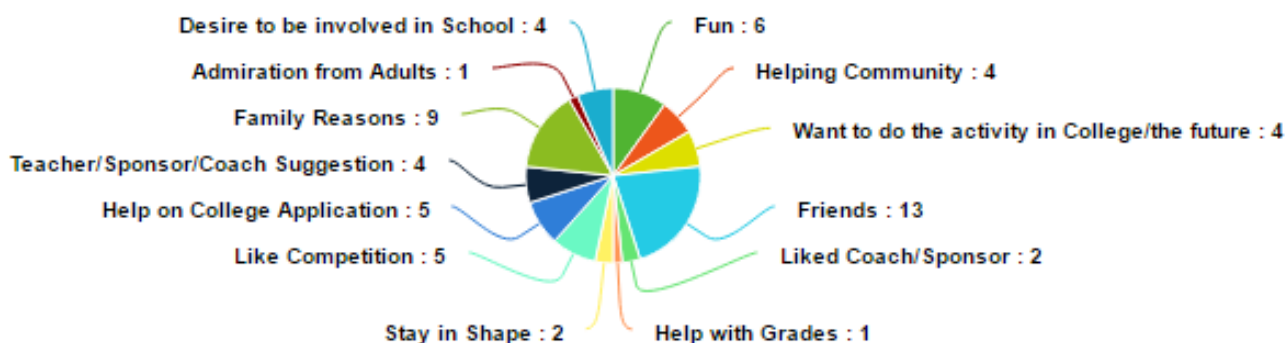
General Reason	Males More than one type of activity	Males one type of activity	Females More than one type of activity	Females one type of activity
Fun	3	0	1	2
Helping Community	1	0	1	2
Want to do the activity in College/the future	1	2	0	1
Friends	5	2	6	0
Liked Coach/Sponsor	1	1	0	0
Help with Grades	1	0	0	0
Stay in Shape	1	0	0	1

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Like Competition	2	1	1	1
Help on College Application	1	0	3	1
Teacher/Sponsor/Coach Suggestion	2	0	1	1
Family Reasons	2	1	3	3
Admiration from adults	0	0	0	1
Desire to be involved in school	0	0	3	1

In Figure 1, I show the total results for the motivations that students gave me.

Figure 1 Motivations



The most popular answers for this question were in regards to friendships and family reasons. “I joined drama club this year because a lot of my friends had participated over the past two years. They kind of talked me into it, but it has been a lot of fun” said Kevin. “A couple of my best friends and I are joining the (tennis) team this year” said Sarah. Julie talked about her family as the reason for her involvement. “My parents had a rule that I had to be involved in something” she stated. “Also, my brother was a big motivator for me. He ran with much success when he was in school, and had a lot of fun doing it, so I wanted to try to be like him.” There was no difference in the top answer when looking at male students and female students. The top answer for male students was friends motivated them to participate, and friends and family reasons were tied for the number one answer for the female students. Students who

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participated in more than one type of extracurricular activity stated that friends was their reason for participation, while students who only participated in one type of extracurricular activity stated family reasons as their number one motivation.

What is your hopeful outcome for participating in these extracurricular activities?

The students and I discussed the goals that they had from their participation in extracurricular activities. Some answers were short term in nature, while other answers were more long term. The answers that the students gave me are listed below in Table 6.

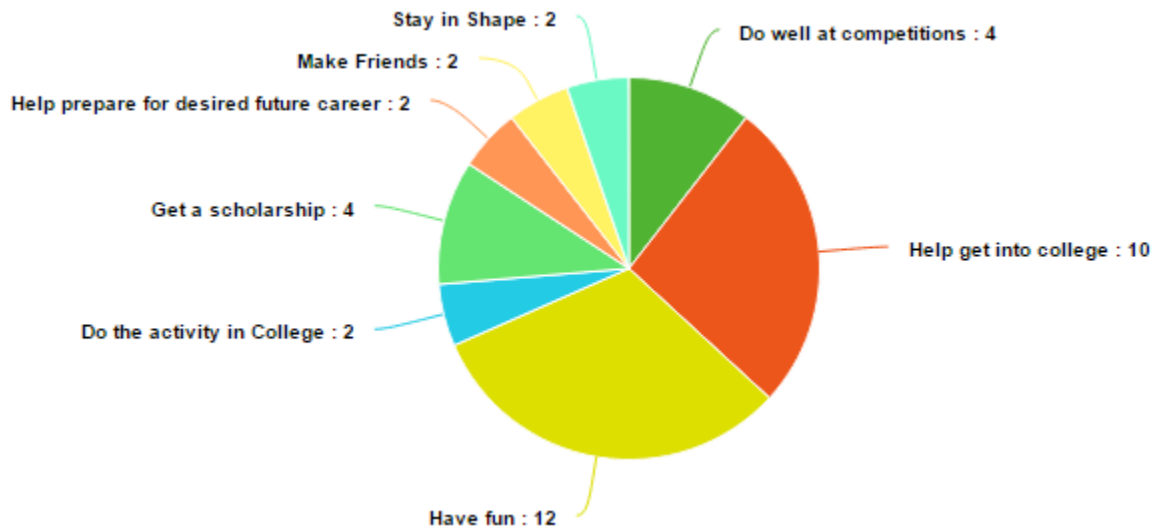
Table 6 Goals from participations

General Reason	Males More than one type of activity	Males one type of activity	Females More than one type of activity	Females one type of activity
Do well at competitions	2	1	0	1
Help get into college	3	0	3	4
Have fun	4	3	4	1
Do the activity in College	2	0	0	0
Get a scholarship	1	0	2	1
Help prepare for desired future career	0	1	0	1
Make Friends	0	1	1	0
Stay in Shape	0	0	1	1

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Figure 2 shows the total answers for hopeful outcomes that students gave me.

Figure 2 Goals from participation



The most popular answer for this question was “having fun.” This held true when comparing male students with female students, and also when comparing those who participated in more than one type of extracurricular activity with those who only participated in one type of extracurricular activity. “I really enjoy all the clubs and sports that I do, and that’s why I joined them” stated Megan.

Ten of the students also stated “help get into college”, making it the second most popular response. “I hope NHS helps me with my college applications” stated Chris. “I want to win the upcoming state’s competition, but I know that participating it will look good on my college resume” said Holly.

What are some benefits you’ve experience because of participation in these extracurricular activities?

I next asked the students what were the benefits that they experienced from their participation. Students talked about benefits in school, current and future. They also talked about some personal skills that they had learned from their participation in extracurricular activities. Table 7 below shows the answers that students told me.

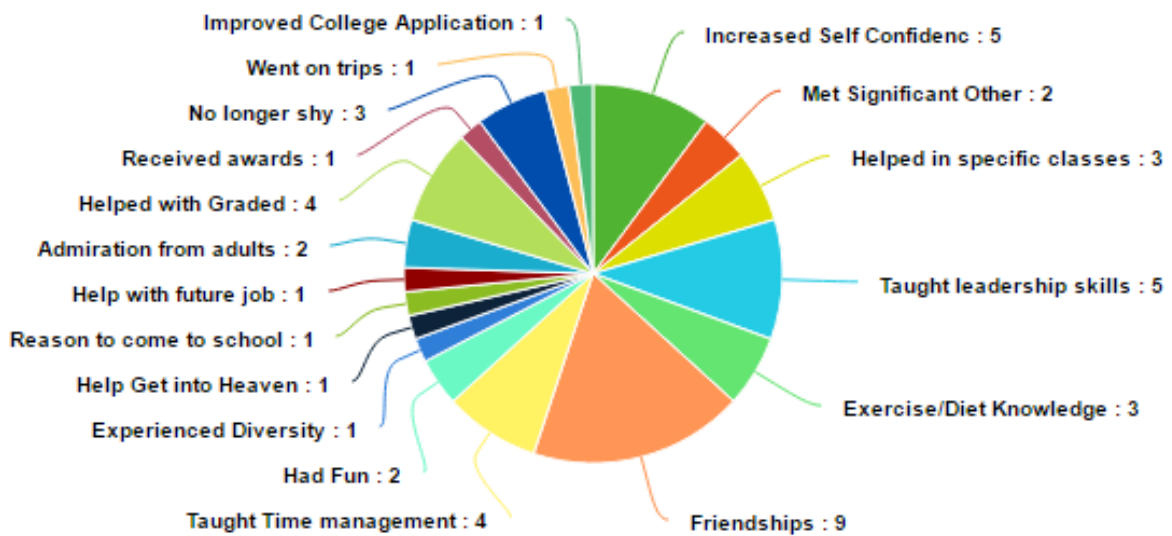
Table 7 Benefits

General Reason	Males More than one type of activity	Males one type of activity	Females More than one type of activity	Females one type of activity
Increased Self Confidence	2	0	1	2
Met Significant Other	2	0	0	0
Helped in specific classes	1	1	0	1
Taught leadership skills	2	0	2	1
Exercise/Diet Knowledge	2	0	1	0
Friendships	4	0	4	1
Taught time management	1	0	2	1
Had fun	1	0	1	0
Experienced Diversity	1	0	0	0
Help Get into Heaven	1	0	0	0
Reason To come to school	0	1	0	0
Help with future job	0	1	0	0
Admiration from teachers	0	1	1	0
Helped with Grades	0	2	0	2
Received Awards	0	0	0	1
No longer shy	0	0	2	1
Went on Trips	0	0	0	1
Improved college applications	0	0	1	0

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In Figure 3, I show the total results for student answers to benefits they experienced.

Figure 3 Benefits



“Friendships” was given as an answer by nine of the students. “I feel like I made more friends that I wouldn’t have made otherwise” claimed Zach. Brenda stated that she is “...deemed popular with different social groups...” due to her participation. When comparing male students to female students, friendships was the top answer for both groups. It was also the most popular answer for students who participated in more than one type of activity. However, compared to students who only participated in one type of activity, their most popular response was that it helped with grades. “...it helped boost my GPA” stated Paul.

What are some difficulties you’ve experience because of participation in extracurricular activities?

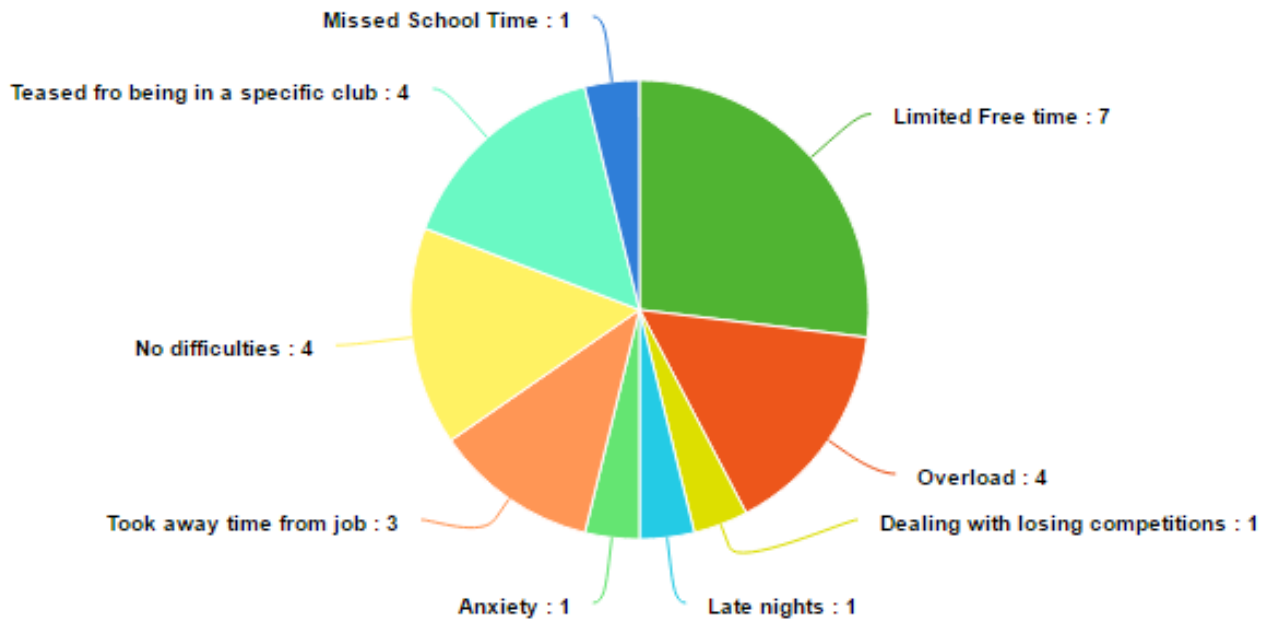
I also wanted to look at the other side of participation in extracurricular activities, so I asked the students what difficulties they had experienced. The students did not give as many different responses as they had given in response to the previous question. Their responses are listed below in Table 8.

Table 8 Difficulties

General Reason	Males More than one type of activity	Males one type of activity	Females More than one type of activity	Females one type of activity
Limited Free Time	4	0	2	1
Overload	2	0	2	0
Dealing with losing competitions	1	0	0	0
Late nights	1	0	0	0
Anxiety	1	0	0	0
Took away time from job	1	0	2	0
No Difficulties	0	2	0	2
Teased for being in a specific club	0	1	0	3
Missed School Time	0	0	1	0

The totals to the responses for difficulties experienced are displayed in Figure 4.

Figure 4 Difficulties



The most popular answer given to this question was “Limited free time”. Zach stated that “Longer nights and less sleep at times. Less time to goof around and relax,” in response to the

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question. “I don’t have time to go out with friends because I have to practice every day,” said Holly. Less free time was the most popular answer for both male and female students when compared to each other. Female students also had being teased tied as their most popular answer. “I get teased for gender stereotypes as a female interested in a military career,” said Jennifer. Students who participated in more than one type of extracurricular activity claimed less free time as their biggest difficulty, while the majority of students who participated in only one type of extracurricular activity specifically stated that they had no difficulties from their participation in extracurricular activities. “I really haven’t had any difficulties from participating in (my club). I would be reaching for an answer if I gave one,” stated Paul.

Do you feel that participation in these extracurricular activities have helped, hurt or had no effect on your Grade Point Average? Why?

This was one of the most important questions that I asked. While research shows that students who participate in extracurricular activities have higher GPAs, I wanted to see if the students felt that their GPAs were affected by their participation. The results of that question are given below in Table. 9.

Table 9 GPA

	Males More than one type of activity	Males one type of activity	Females More than one type of activity	Females one type of activity	Total
Positive effect	5	2	3	3	13
Negative effect	0	1	0	0	1
No effect	0	0	2	2	4

I then asked the students their reason for the response that they gave. There was only one student who said that their participation hurt their GPA. The reason given for that was that it took time away from schoolwork. The reasons for positive effects are given in Table 10 and Figure 5. The reasons that students gave for no effect are given in Table 11 and Figure 6.

Table 10 Reasons for Positive Effects

General Reason	Males More than one type of activity	Males one type of activity	Females More than one type of activity	Females one type of activity
Learned how to do research	1	0	0	0
Needed a certain GPA to stay eligible	3	0	1	3
Work ethic from sport transferred to schoolwork	1	0	1	0
Coach helped	0	1	0	0
Activity made me care about my grades	0	1	0	0
Was an easy class	0	1	0	0
Music helped with Math	0	0	1	0
Extra support from teachers	0	0	1	0

Figure 5-Reasons for Positive Effects

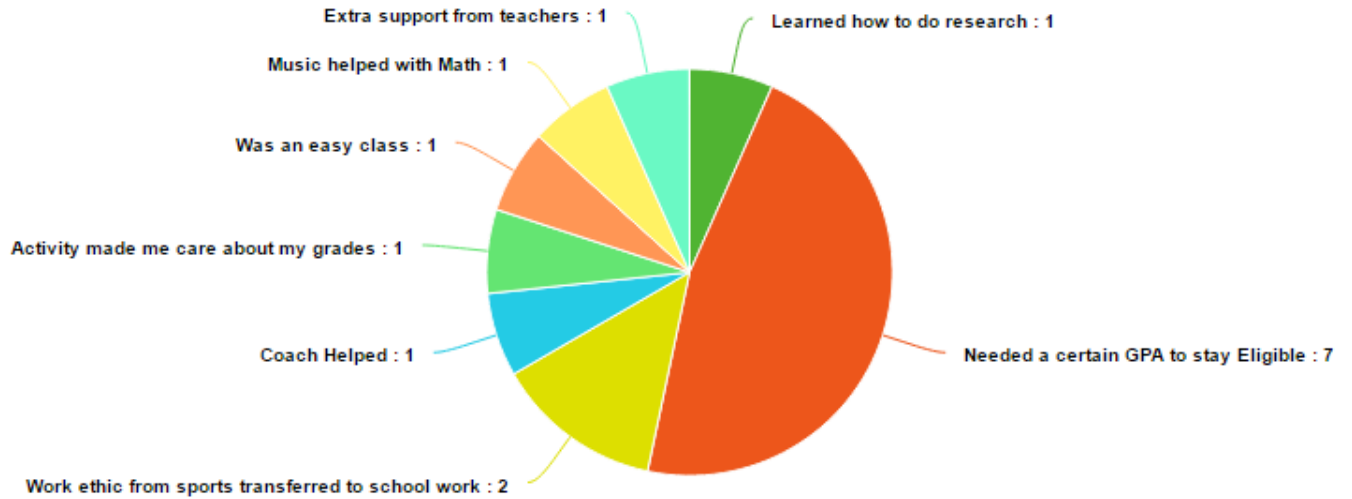


Table 11 Reasons for No Effect

General Reason	Males More than one type of activity	Males one type of activity	Females More than one type of activity	Females one type of activity
Spent same amount of time/effort on school work before starting activity	0	0	1	1
Grades have always been important	0	0	0	1
Just think it had no effect	0	0	0	1

Figure 6 Reasons for No Effect



The only student who said that his participation had a negative effect on his GPA was Brian, who only participated in one type of extracurricular activity. “I think that my participation in extracurricular activities has hurt my GPA slightly. I know that sometimes I’m more concerned with the responsibilities for (my club) than my class work” stated Brian.

For the 13 students who said their participation had a positive effect on their GPA, “needing a certain GPA to stay eligible” was the most popular answer. This was true when comparing male students with female students and when comparing students who participate in more than one type of extracurricular activity with students who only participate in one type of extracurricular activity. “It absolutely helped my GPA. I had to maintain a decent GPA in order to participate in athletics. I had a lot of support from teachers because I was a student-athlete. They offered their time during study hall sessions whenever needed,” stated Julie. The four students who said that their participation had no effect on their GPA were all female students. Two of these students participated in more than one type of extracurricular activity, and the other

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two participated in only one type of extracurricular activity. The most popular answer for this group of students was that they spent the same amount of time and effort on their studies as before they started participating in their activity. “I do just as much homework and studying as I did before joining,” stated Heidi.

Do you feel that participation in these extracurricular activities have helped, hurt or had no effect on your school attendance? Why?

This was another one of the most important questions that I asked. Like the previous question, research shows that students who participate in extracurricular activities have better attendance in school. I asked the students what type of effect participation in extracurricular activities had on their school attendance. Their answers are displayed below in Table 12.

Table 12 Attendance

	Males More than one type of activity	Males one type of activity	Females More than one type of activity	Females one type of activity	Total
Positive effect	3	1	3	1	8
Negative effect	0	1	0	0	1
No effect	2	1	2	4	9

Only one student stated that their participation in extracurricular activities had a negative impact. The reason that student gave was that they skipped school if they were not ready for an event happening in their club. The reasons given by students who said participation in extracurricular activities had a positive effect on their attendance are given in Table 13 and Figure 7. The reasons given by students who said participation in extracurricular activities had no effect on their attendance are given in Table 14 and Figure 8.

Table 13 Reason for Positive Effect

General Reason	Males More than one type of activity	Males one type of activity	Females More than one type of activity	Females one type of activity
Must be in school to participate	2	0	2	1
Extracurricular activities were a source of motivation to come to school	1	1	1	0

Figure 7 Reason for Positive Effect

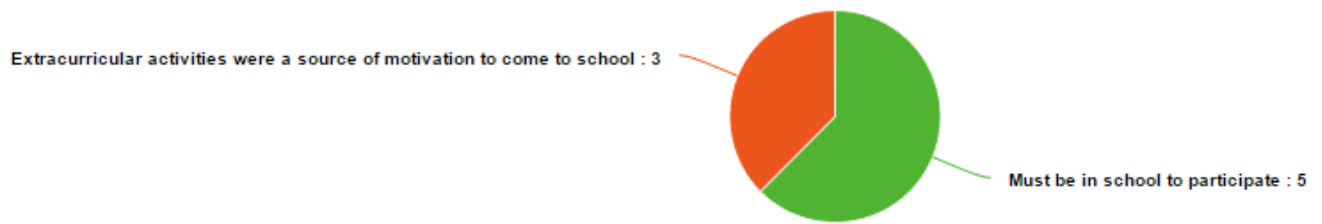
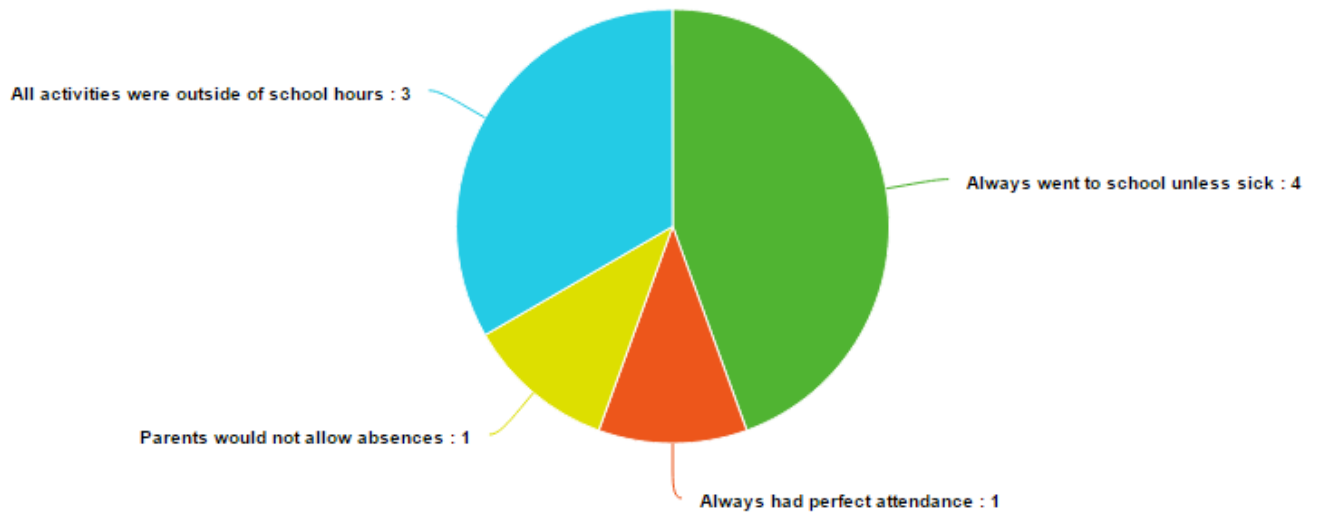


Table 14 Reason for No Effect

General Reason	Males More than one type of activity	Males one type of activity	Females More than one type of activity	Females one type of activity
Always went to school unless sick	1	0	1	2
Always had perfect attendance	1	0	0	0
Parents would not allow absences	0	1	0	0
All activities were outside of school hours	0	0	1	2

Figure 8 Reason for No Effect



Again, only one student, Paul, who participated in only one type of extracurricular activity, said that his participation had a negative effect. “If I’m not ready for an event, I don’t come to school. It doesn’t happen often, but a few times a year,” stated this student. Eight students said that their participation had a positive effect on their attendance. When comparing male students with female students and comparing students who participated in one type of extracurricular activity with those who participated in more than one type of extracurricular activity, having to be in school in order to participate in the activity was at least tied for the top answer for every group. “It helped my attendance. If I’m not at school I can’t participate in practices or meets and I’m not willing to miss either if at all possible,” remarked Julie. Patrick said “If I miss too much school, I’m not eligible to participate, so it has definitely helped my attendance.”

Nine of the students said that participation in extracurricular activities had no effect on their school attendance. The results were varied for males, females, students who participated in more than one type of extracurricular activity and students who only participated in one type of extracurricular activity. Two or three different answers were tied for first in every group. The

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most popular answer from all nine students was that they always went to school unless they were sick. “I don’t think it has had any impact on my attendance. I have always come to school regardless of what is going on. I only skip on that days that I am very, very sick,” said Holly.

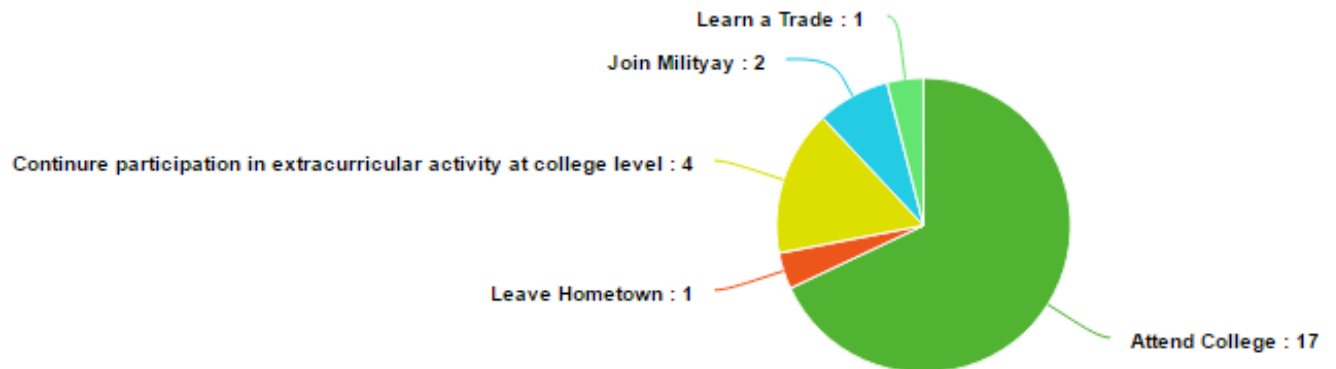
What are your goals within two years after high school?

Next I discussed post-secondary goals with students. I asked them to think two and half to three years from now on where they would like to be and what they would like to be doing. Some students gave multiple things that they would like to be doing consecutively, while others gave options, in instances where their first plan didn’t work out. The answers that the students gave me are displayed below in Table 15 below and figure 9.

Table 15 Post-secondary Goals

General Reason	Males More than one type of activity	Males one type of activity	Females More than one type of activity	Females one type of activity
Attend College	4	3	5	5
Leave hometown	1	0	0	0
Continue participation in extracurricular activity at collegiate level	2	0	2	0
Join military	1	1	0	0
Learn a trade	0	0	1	0

Figure 9 Post-secondary Goals



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All but one student said that attending college was a possible goal that they wanted to achieve, making it the most popular answer given. This was also the most popular answer for male students, female students, students who only participated in one type of extracurricular activity and students who participated in more than one type of extracurricular activity.

“Attending a four year college. I hope to go to college straight after high school, but I’m not quite sure where or what I want to major in yet,” remarked Heidi. Zach stated “I hope to be attending college, and hopefully playing baseball. I plan on studying to be a high school Social Studies teacher.”

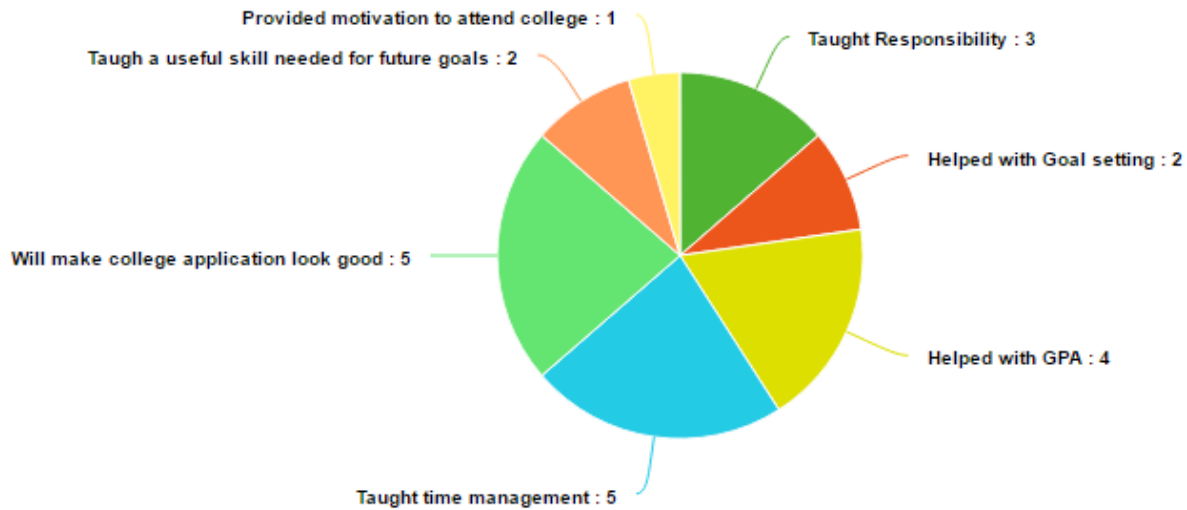
Has your past/current participation in extracurricular activities helped, hurt, or had no effect on reaching your goals for two years after high school? Why?

The second to last questions that I asked students, was also one of the most important questions for my study. I wanted to know if students felt because they participated in extracurricular activities if that were helping them achieve the goals they stated as answers to the previous question. All 18 students said that their participation has helped them in achieving their goals within two years after high school. The reasons that students gave for why it was helping them achieve their goals are displayed below in Table 16 and Figure 10 below.

Table 16 Effects on Goals

General Reason	Males More than one type of activity	Males one type of activity	Females More than one type of activity	Females one type of activity
Taught responsibility	2	0	0	1
Helped with Goal Setting	1	0	1	0
Helped with GPA	2	1	0	1
Taught time management	1	0	3	1
Will make college application look good	1	2	1	1
Taught a useful skill needed for future goals	0	1	0	1
Provided motivation to attend college	0	0	0	1

Figure 10 Effects on Goals



Tied for the most popular answer was “Helping on a college application” and “teaching time management”, with five students giving those responses. Corey said “I plan on putting extracurricular activities on my college resume’s, which will hopefully help me get in”. “I feel it has helped me. It has given me time management skills, in addition to helping show me what I would be interested in pursuing after high school,” said Amanda. “Helping on a college application” and “teaching time management” remained the top answers when examining the

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different sub groups. For male students and students who participated in only one type of activity, “helping college applications” emerged as the most frequent response, while female students and students who participated in more than one type of extracurricular activity stated that “teaching time management” was the primary effect on reaching their goals.

How will you, if at all, change your participation in extracurricular activities during your senior year to help reach those goals?

Finally, I wanted to see if students were going to continue using extracurricular activities to help them reach their goals. Eight of the 18 students said they would be making no changes to their extracurricular activities, including their level of involvement. Another five students said that they would be dropping an extracurricular activity. The reasons that they gave for dropping an activity are displayed below in Table 17.

Table 17 Reasons for Dropping Participation

General Reason	Males More than one type of activity	Males one type of activity	Females More than one type of activity	Females one type of activity	Total
Make time for work	1	0	0	0	1
No longer interested in activity	0	1	1	1	3
Focus on Academics	0	0	1	0	1

None of the remaining five students said they would be adding an extracurricular activity, but said they would be changing the level to which they participated in the activities they were already involved with. The ways students said they would be changing their level or participation are shown below in Table 18

Table 18 Reasons for Changing Participation

General Reason	Males More than one type of activity	Males one type of activity	Females More than one type of activity	Females one type of activity	Total
Train Harder	2	0	0	1	3
Become an officer	1	0	0	1	2

The results from the interviews were very revealing about the reasons that students participate, and the ways that they feel that they are affected by extracurricular activities. In the next chapter I will analyze the student responses, and talk about similarities between the responses of male and female students and students who participated in only one type of extracurricular activity compared with those who participated in more than one type of extracurricular activity. I will also talk about how the results of this study can be used to help schools understand the importance of extracurricular activity involvement.

Chapter 5 - Discussion

In the previous chapter, I listed my results from surveys and interviews with students in the 11th grade who participated in extracurricular activities. I surveyed them on the types of extracurricular activities they participated in and interviewed them to find the perceived effects that participation in those extracurricular activities had on them currently in school and their post-secondary goals.

The findings from this investigation show that students who participate in extracurricular activities are usually participating in more than one type of extracurricular activity. The data also show that the majority of students feel that their participation in extracurricular activities has helped improve their grade point averages, school attendance, and their ability to achieve their post-secondary goals. In this final chapter, I will discuss the significance of the findings from my study, address the limitations of the study and explore possible avenues for further investigation.

Implications

Extracurricular Activities

The data show that athletics is the most popular type of extracurricular activity. Two thirds of the students surveyed participated in at least one type of athletic extracurricular activity. Athletics being the most popular choice held true for both male and female students. This information is important because so often athletics gets a bad reputation in schools. Typically, participants are labeled with dumb jock stereotypes, and are viewed as lazy. The comments from these students clearly show that, because of their participation, they are achieving higher grades and have better attendance because of their participation. Participants from other extracurricular activities, such as fine arts or academic clubs, are not treated with such labeling and criticism.

Extracurricular Activities Impact

Participating in extracurricular activities, no matter what type, has a positive impact on students. Schools should be doing as much as they can to encourage students to participate in extracurricular activities, no matter what type of activity it is. Due to the popularity of athletics, that could be an easier type of activity to convince students to participate in.

This data corresponds with the results of previous scholarship. Research by McNeal (1995), and Feldman and Matjasko (2005), showed that students who participated in extracurricular activities had a lower dropout rate. My research showed that students who participated in extracurricular activities felt that their participation helped their school attendance. Silliker and Quirk (1997), Kleitman and Marsh (2002), Eccles, Barber, Stone and Hunt (2003), Feldman and Matjasko (2005) and Fredricks (2012), all found that students who participated in extracurricular activities had higher GPAs. My research did not look at actual GPAs of students, but showed that the majority of students felt that their participation in extracurricular activities helped improve their academic performance. Kleitman and Marsh (2002), Feldman and Matjasko (2005) and Fredricks (2012), all found that students who participate in extracurricular activities have a higher desire to attend college. My research not only showed that 17 out of 18 students, or 94%, want to attend college, but all of those students think that their participation in extracurricular activities is helping them achieve that, and other, post-secondary goal.

Male v. Female Students

When comparing the findings between male and female students, there were not many different answers. The most popular answer for both male and female students were the same for every question except for two of the questions. This finding is important to show that male and female participants should not be treated differently when talking to them about the

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influence of participation. While students who choose to participate in extracurricular activities all have different answers, it has been determined that you would be able to get a male student and female student to participate for the same reason. You could also expect that they would have similar experiences in terms of impact on high school and post-secondary goals. These results were similar to the results of Silliker and Quirk (1997), who found that there were very few differences between male and female soccer players. Their study showed that both male and female soccer players had higher grade point averages and fewer absences during soccer season than they did out of season. While some adults tend to treat male and female students differently, it is clear that they can, and should, be treated the same when it comes to extracurricular activities.

One type of Activity v. Multiple types of activity

When comparing students who participated in only one type of extracurricular activity to those who participated in more than one, the most popular answer were often the same, but they still had many different answers. These differences in answers provide some insight into the students who choose to participate in only one type of activity compared with those who participated in more than one type of activity. Students who participate in only one type of activity stated family as their biggest reason, while students who participate in more than one type stated friends as their biggest reason for participation. It was clear from my interactions with these students that majority of students who only participate in one type of activity tended to be shyer, and this reflected in their answers. It was also alarming that students who only participated in one type of activity were the only group of students who stated being teased as a difficulty that they experienced due to participation in extracurricular activities. While all the students benefited from their participation in extracurricular activities, I feel that, before

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encouraging a student to join, one should know their personality. If a student tends to be shy, then it might be more successful to push them towards one type of extracurricular activity.

Trying to convince them to do more than one type, might scare them off the idea of doing any type of extracurricular activity.

While my suggestion is to get to know one's students before pushing them into more than one type of extracurricular activity, from a study by Fredricks (2011), it could be suggested to always push students to do more than one extracurricular activity. Her study found that the more activities that students participated in, up to five activities, the greater effects it had on students. The more activities a student did, the higher their grade point average was and the higher their expectations were for themselves.

Limitations

While this study of the extracurricular activities of the 11th grade students produced some valuable insights that public schools should address, there were also some limitations to the significance of the data produced. One of the obvious limitations on my study was that I was unable to find students to fit two of my categories: a male who only participates in fine arts clubs and a male who only participates in community service clubs. This lowered my number of students who only participated in one type of extracurricular activity, so there was an uneven comparison to those students who participated in more than one type of extracurricular activity. This also had the same effect when comparing male students with female students.

The other limitation was that this information only came from one school, in one district. Because of these limitations, all of the subjects come from the same environment. They lived in similar neighborhoods, had similar friends, and had the same opportunities given to them for which extracurricular activities to participate in. There is no way to tell that if in a different

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environment, if subjects would have participated in different extracurricular activities, or had different responses.

Future Investigation

While this study produced some valuable data, it could be further expanded upon in future studies. Future studies should look to ask students from multiple schools in both rural and urban school settings. This study could also be extended to apply to students in public schools as compared with those who attend private schools. Also, this study could be expanded into taking place over multiple years. Scholars could begin by asking students these questions in the 9th grade, and then again in the 10th and 11th grades. It could be taken one step further, and investigate students when they are in college and ask them to look back on their high school experiences with extracurricular activities to see if they still feel the same.

Conclusions

From the results of my study, it can be said that participation in extracurricular activities not only has a mostly positive effect on students, but that it is also possibly a contributing factor to these positive effects. While half of the students felt that their participation did not help improve their school attendance, an impressive 44% of students felt that it did have positive impact on their attendance. The majority of students, 72%, felt that their participation helped improve their GPAs. The most impressive finding was that 100% of students felt that their participation was helping them reach their short term, post-secondary goals. While every student felt that way, it was not apparent that students necessarily had a plan as to how to use that activity to reach that goal, other than having it help improve a college resume.

Parents, guidance counselors, teachers, administration, coaches and sponsors are regularly trying to get students involved in extracurricular activities. From my study, it is

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evident that in order to get a student to participate in an activity, it is imperative to find out the various activities in which that students' friends are participating. 72% of students that were interviewed stated friends as a reason for their participation in an activity. Using this information, adults can help get more students involved in extracurricular activities, and more students can receive the benefits caused by participation in extracurricular activities. In today's world where getting into college is so imperative to future success for many careers, participation in extracurricular activities can help give students the needed edge to be accepted into the college of their choice. While my study showed that extracurricular activities are helping students achieve their short term post-secondary goals, I believe that participation will also help students achieve long term goals, and help students become the future selves they want to become.

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Appendix A

Initial Survey:

Student Name: _____

Student ID Number: _____

Student Gender: _____

Student Grade: _____

Student email address: _____

Parent email address: _____

Please list any and all extracurricular activities that you have participated/plan on participating in. These can be activities that you participate in during regular school hours or after school. Please only list activities that are associated with the school. Students will be selected on the types of activities they participate in to give the researcher a wide variety of activities that students participate in.

Appendix B

The Effects of Participation in Extracurricular Activities Interview Questions

1. What extracurricular activities have you done/are you going to do this year? Please list how long you have participated in each activity.
2. What motivated you to get involved in these extracurricular activities?
3. What is your hopeful outcome for participating in these extracurricular activities?
4. What are some benefits you've experienced because of participation in these extracurricular activities?
5. What are some difficulties you've experienced because of participation in these extracurricular activities?
6. Do you feel that participation in these extracurricular activities has helped, hurt, or had no effect on your GPA? Why do you feel it has had that effect, or why do you feel it has had no effect?
7. Do you feel that participation in these extracurricular activities has helped, hurt, or had no effect on your school attendance? Why do you feel it has had that effect, or why do you feel it has had no effect?
8. What are your goals within 2 years after high school?
9. Has your past/current participation in extracurricular helped, hurt, or had no effect on reaching those goals? Why do you feel it has had that effect, or why do you feel it has had no effect?
10. How will you, if at all, change your participation in extracurricular activities during your senior year to help reach those goals? Why will you make those change, or why will you not make any changes?

Appendix C

Dear Potential Participant, and Parent/Guardians:

I am a student in the Curriculum and Instruction Department at the State University of New York at Fredonia (SUNY Fredonia). In preparation for my final thesis project, I am gathering data on the experiences of students who have participated, or will be participating, in extracurricular activities during their junior year of high school (11th grade). I would like to invite you to participate in an interview that will address questions on the effects of participation in extracurricular activities. The interview will take 30-60 minutes, with a possible follow up interview taking 10-20 minutes. Your participation is strictly voluntary and you can withdraw from the project at any time. Additionally, no form of compensation will be available. Your confidentiality during the project will be ensured at all times.

If you wish to participate in the study, please read through the informed consent information that is attached after this letter. If you, and your parent/guardian, are still comfortable, please sign and return the packet. You will also need to complete the last page of this packet, giving some personal information about which extracurricular activities you have participated in.

A total of 20 students, 10 male and 10 female, will be chosen to complete the interview. Completion of the permission slip and last page of this packet does not guarantee that you will be selected to complete the interview. Thank you for taking to read over this information and any consideration in participation.

Sincerely,

Zach Ortolano
Principle Investigator

Appendix D

Informed Consent

Protocol Title: The Perceived Benefits and Difficulties Students who participate in Extracurricular Activities Experience

Please read this consent document carefully before you decide to participate in this study.

Purpose of the research study:

To study the reasons for participation in extracurricular activities, and effects that participation has on the students. The investigator of this study plans to conduct interviews with individual students in the 11th grade to gain insight on the effects of, and goals they hope to achieve from, participation in extracurricular activities. .

What you will be asked to do in the study:

Answer open ended questions in an interview, and possible follow up questions for clarification of your responses.

Time Required:

Time required to complete the interview will be different for each participant. It is expected that the interview will take 30-60 minutes to complete, and possible follow up interview will take 10-20 minutes.

Compensation:

There is no compensation for participating in the study.

Confidentiality:

Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by the law.

Voluntary participation:

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for not participating.

Right to withdraw from the study:

You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

Potential Benefits and Risks:

This investigation will add to research of the effects on students who participate in extracurricular activities. The research will give a student point of view of the benefits and difficulties that they experience due to their participation, and how they view extracurricular activities as a way of helping them achieve post-secondary goals. Following this investigation, participants, teachers and coaches at Westlake will be allowed to read the research and discover perceived effects on students who participate in

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extracurricular activities, and how they use extracurricular activities to help achieve post-secondary goals. Only interview responses relevant to the research question will be used in the final research paper. No specific student, teacher, coach or sponsor names will be used or made reference to in the final paper.

Whom to contact if you have questions about the study:

Zach Ortolano, Math Teacher, Benjamin Stoddert Middle School
Email: zortolano@ccboe.com

Whom to contact about your rights as a research participant in the study:

Dr. Judith Horowitz
Associate Provost for Graduate Studies, Sponsored Research and Faculty Development
Maytum Hall 805
Judith.horowitz@fredonia.edu
(716) 673-4708

I have read the procedure outlined above. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study and have received a copy of this description.

Participants signature

Date

I have read the procedure outlined above. I voluntarily agree to let my child participate in this study and have received a copy of this description.

Guardian of Participants signature

Date

Principal investigator signature

Date

Appendix E

COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM) COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS REPORT*

* NOTE: Scores on this Requirements Report reflect quiz completions at the time all requirements for the course were met. See list below for details. See separate Transcript Report for more recent quiz scores, including those on optional (supplemental) course elements.

- **Name:** Zachary Ortolano (ID: 1682927)
- **Email:** orto9134@fredonia.edu
- **Institution Affiliation:** SUNY - College at Fredonia (ID: 273)
- **Institution Unit:** Curriculum and Instruction
- **Phone:** 716-640-1595

- **Curriculum Group:** Human Research
- **Course Learner Group:** Group 1.
- **Stage:** Stage 2 - Refresher Course

- **Report ID:** 7233965
- **Completion Date:** 10/02/2015
- **Expiration Date:** 10/01/2017
- **Minimum Passing:** 80
- **Reported Score*:** 100

REQUIRED AND ELECTIVE MODULES ONLY

REQUIRED AND ELECTIVE MODULES ONLY	DATE COMPLETED
SBE Refresher 1 – Defining Research with Human Subjects (ID: 15029)	10/02/15
SBE Refresher 1 – Privacy and Confidentiality (ID: 15035)	10/02/15
SBE Refresher 1 – Assessing Risk (ID: 15034)	10/02/15
SBE Refresher 1 – Research with Children (ID: 15036)	10/02/15
SBE Refresher 1 – International Research (ID: 15028)	10/02/15
Biomed Refresher 1 - Instructions (ID: 960)	10/02/15
SBE Refresher 1 – History and Ethical Principles (ID: 936)	10/02/15
SBE Refresher 1 – Federal Regulations for Protecting Research Subjects (ID: 937)	10/02/15
SBE Refresher 1 – Informed Consent (ID: 938)	10/02/15
SBE Refresher 1 – Research with Prisoners (ID: 939)	10/02/15
SBE Refresher 1 – Research in Educational Settings (ID: 940)	10/02/15
SBE Refresher 1 – Instructions (ID: 943)	10/02/15

For this Report to be valid, the learner identified above must have had a valid affiliation with the CITI Program subscribing institution identified above or have been a paid Independent Learner.

CITI Program
 Email: citisupport@miami.edu
 Phone: 305-243-7970
 Web: <https://www.citiprogram.org>