Impact of Extracurricular Activities on Students

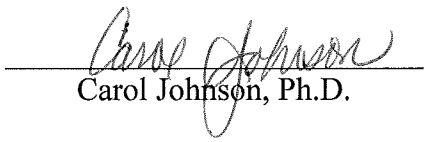
by

Nikki Wilson

A Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the
Master of Science Degree
in

School Counseling

Approved: 2 Semester Credits



Carol Johnson, Ph.D.

The Graduate School

University of Wisconsin-Stout

May, 2009

The Graduate School
University of Wisconsin-Stout
Menomonie, WI

Author: **Wilson, Nikki L.**

Title: ***Impact of Extracurricular Activities on Students***

Graduate Degree/ Major: MS School Counseling

Research Adviser: **Carol Johnson, Ph.D.**

Month/Year: **May, 2009**

Number of Pages: **39**

Style Manual Used: **American Psychological Association, 5th edition**

ABSTRACT

Students who participate in extracurricular activities generally benefit from the many opportunities afforded them. Benefits of participating in extracurricular activities included having better grades, having higher standardized test scores and higher educational attainment, attending school more regularly, and having higher a higher self-concept . Participants in out-of-school activities often learned skills such as teamwork and leadership while decreasing the likelihood of alcohol use and illicit drug use and related problem behaviors. Those who participate in out-of-school activities often have higher grade point averages, a decrease in absenteeism, and an increased connectedness to the school.

Students who are over-scheduled in too many activities find that the benefits of participating in out-of-school activities may actually decrease. Overscheduled children may be tired, irritable and show little interest in participation. Over scheduling too many physical activities may result in some students pushing themselves too far with the potential of having a serious sports-related injury as students may need time for relaxation and recovery from intense athletic training.

Extracurricular activities often cost money to participate in some type of arranged "pay-to-play" fee. Whether it is paying the school activity fee or paying for private lessons or trying to further develop skills at summer camps, some families just are not economically able to be involved with out-of-school activities. Caring adults should consider working with the community to help reduce financial barriers to participation in healthy extracurricular options for students to develop team building, skill development and opportunities for leadership. When balanced with academic learning, extracurricular activities may help students raise self-esteem, develop school spirit and connect with the adults in the community in a positive manner creating a good situation for all.

The Graduate School

University of Wisconsin Stout

Menomonie, WI

Acknowledgments

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize my family and friends for putting up with me for the last year of graduate school and I would like to thank them for all of the time they spent listening to me discussing topics, brainstorming ideas, and writing the thesis as it was greatly appreciated. I would also like to extend a special thank you to my fiancé, who was there every step of the way as he kept encouraging and pushing me even when I didn't want to be pushed.

I would like to offer a special thank you to my father who continued to be my emotional rock when I felt that I just couldn't keep on going. I would not be the where I am today nor would I be the person I am becoming if it were not for him. Lastly, I would like to thank my advisor for helping me through this entire process of thesis development, writing and editing.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

.....Page

ABSTRACT..... ii

Chapter I: Introduction..... 1

Statement of the Problem..... 7

Research Questions..... 8

Definition of Terms..... 8

Assumptions..... 8

Limitations..... 9

Chapter II: Literature Review..... 10

Introduction..... 10

Benefits of Participation..... 10

Social Skills and Social Networks..... 12

Academic Achievement..... 14

Role Models..... 15

Potential Negative Impact of Participation..... 16

Promoting Extracurricular Activities in Schools..... 20

Effects of Youth Development..... 24

Chapter III: Summary, Discussion and Recommendations..... 27

Introduction..... 27

Summary..... 27

Discussion..... 28

Recommendations for School Counselors 29

Recommendations for Future Research 30

References 32

Chapter I: Introduction

More than half of American teenagers attending school participate in some sort of organized activities (Gardner, Roth & Brooks-Gunn at el., Mahoney, Harris, & Eccles, 2006). Organized activities may include clubs, athletic opportunities, dance line or cheer teams, Scouts, drama or theater, youth groups, student council, and club sports. There is substantial interest in how teenagers are spending their leisure time outside the school day, and what types of activities are important to their development. There are studies that support either being involved, being over-involved, or not being involved at all in extracurricular activities and how participation can impact what becomes of teens in the future based on participation in activities outside the school day.

According to Eccles (2003), children and adolescents in the United States spend more than half of their waking hours in leisure activities. Along with interest in how leisure time is being spent, researchers are wondering why there are high levels of disinterest, underachievement, disengagement, and increased amount of time teens spend unsupervised by adults. Participation in activities has been linked to social and academic success, yet over-participation may be too stressful for young adults as it may consume too much of their free time. There are pros and cons to both sides of the activity participation discussion.

There are different opinions of what is considered an extra-curricular activity. A few examples of activities outside the school day may include pro-social activities such as dances, team sports, and performing arts, while in-school involvement activities may

include intramurals, and academic clubs. Different levels of activity involvement and participation may positively impact future success for those who participate. Research also indicated that both the type of extracurricular programs and level of participation may impact the individuals' development (Eccles, 2003).

According to Gardner et al. (2008), theory and research on positive youth development emphasizes the transition of human development, and suggest that cultivating positive, supportive relationships with people and social institutions encourages healthy development. Considering this perspective, organized activities, such as extra-curricular activities, can encourage healthy development because of the support and opportunities that are present compared to less positive after school options for teens. Students who participate in structured activities are more likely to respect diversity, play by the rules, and contribute as a member of a team whether it is sports, scouting or clubs.

So what exactly are the developmental benefits and consequences of being associated with extracurricular participation? This topic continues to be of interest, partly because of high levels of alienation and boredom reported by students in school, developmental increases in underachievement and school disengagement, and evidence of increases in the amount of time adolescence spend unsupervised by adults (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006). Researchers continue to explore the positive and negative impacts.

Fredricks and Eccles (2006) found that activity participation can be linked to positive academic outcomes, including improved grades, test scores, more school engagement, and increased educational aspirations. While on the other hand, Eccles and Barber (1999) have noted possible negative consequences of some types of

extracurricular activities. If a coach is degrading to the team, or if members of the club exclude others, or just over-involvement with every spare minute scheduled in multiple activities, students may find there are negative consequences for participation. Either way, it is important to know why students should get involved in positive activities and how to avoid the negative impact of over-participation.

Along with understanding the benefits of being involved in extra-curricular activities, students and parents may wish to consider how to balance academics and activities to have a positive impact on adolescents. Also, is participation in extracurricular activities a predictor of what will be accomplished after high school?

According to Gardner, Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2008), participation in organized activities during high school is positively associated with educational, civic, and to some extent, occupational success in young adulthood. Morrissey (2005) stated that there is an established link between adolescents' extracurricular activities and educational attainment as adults in occupational choice and income. Morrissey also noted a reduction in delinquency and less engagement in risky behaviors. These factors explain why students should balance their lives with academics and activities as participating in these well-rounded activities may impact their success in the future.

Out-of-school (OTS) time can be critical for the development of competencies that will carry into adulthood (Little 2005). Yet, if students do not participate, they may not reap the benefits that extracurricular activities or out-of-school programs offer. The study by Gardner, Roth, and Brooks-Gunn (2008) also indicated that it is important to

look at the intensity and level of involvement the student has with the activity. Level of participation may make a difference in how much a student is affected by being involved.

For example, longer periods of participation facilitate the kind of positive interpersonal relationships that are thought to encourage positive youth development. A cycle of greater participation will continue if students, parents, and the community as a whole can see the benefits from the programs in which the students are participating. However, if the student has little or no free time to do homework, the activities may be too time-intensive for positive benefits in the classroom.

When stating some of the benefits of participating in extracurricular activities, some believe that this leads to positive youth development. What exactly is positive youth development? Morrissey (2005) describes positive youth development as encompassing five constructs: (1) competence in academic, social, and vocational areas; (2) confidence; (3) connection to family, community, and peers; (4) character; and (5) caring and compassion (cited in Roth, 2000). These are also known as the *Five Cs* of positive attributes for youth.

By engaging in extracurricular activities, students may be required to maintain good grades in order to meet eligibility to participate in sports or cheerleading. Eligibility may motivate students to do their best academically in order to participate in the activity. Competing in a speech contest, may help a student gain confidence, and being involved in a youth group or scouting organization may help the student develop character and connect with the community. Finally, community service or volunteering might help a student project a caring and compassion attitude toward others. It is

important to understand exactly how each activity is impacting a student and what type of positive development is taking place.

More then ever, schools are facing many financial challenges. Every year it seems that schools are having a harder time making ends meet. Many schools are overwhelmed with having to make budget cuts and deciding where they can minimize expenses while making sure they are providing the students with the best possible education. School boards and administrators have the tough job of deciding what will stay and what will go. Many times, the extracurricular activities are on the chopping blocks that impact not only the student participant, but the teacher as a sponsor or a coach. Keeping these activities takes funding and some schools do not have the resources to employ coaches, purchase equipment, and maintain the necessities to enable these activities to continue.

Some schools have activity fees that the students must pay to be involved. What will those students do who cannot afford to be a part of certain activities that cost quite a bit extra for equipment or participation? This is another situation impacted by the economy that is impacting both the family budget and the school budget. Some students may only have the opportunity to be involved in sponsored activities through school. Limited transportation to and from meetings, practices or rehearsal is also a financial challenge to the family budget, as bus transportation may not be readily available. To participate in an outside sport, club or organization may cost much more and students may not be able to participate at all. Having activities at school may decrease the travel expenses compared to those that are held with other organizations and having to travel

greater distances. Also, this may affect student's connectedness to his or her school, as if they cannot participate, they may feel left out or isolated.

There are many variables to consider when offering extracurricular activities to students. Challenges that communities and schools with limited opportunities are facing often include violence, bullying, and a rising dropout rate. These issues are present in many schools and could possibly be reduced with more participation in activities that help a student bond and identify with the school community. Adolescents need to feel a connection to the school and recognize the importance of staying in school. Some students choose to go on to post-secondary education. Others may enjoy the social aspect of school, and yet there are still others that take part in the many activities that schools have to offer. All of these are examples of why students decide to stay in school, but what keeps adolescence safe from school violence or from bullying?

Many students choose to not come to school because of the ridicule or harassment from other students. For those who get bullied, they may feel that they have no one they can turn to in these situations. If a student has a teammates or a friend who is involved in extracurricular activities, or if they can turn to a coach or a faculty member who is the supervisor of the activity, then they may have some supportive allies to help them through tough situations. This emphasizes the need for belonging to a group and reinforces the feeling of connectedness to the school for those who are a part of extracurricular activities.

When talking about students who are dropping out of school, it is not a secret that they do not always have a connection with the school. There seems to be financial or

academic barriers when adolescents want to be involved in some type of activity. Usually, to be involved in any school extracurricular activity there are stipulations such as minimal grade point averages, no discipline referrals, and regular attendance in school. For example, Reeves (2008) states that there is a strong association between student involvement in extracurricular activities and improved attendance, behavior, and academic performance.

Statement of Problem

The purpose of this study is to document how being involved in extra-curricular activities can influence development in academics, social skills, and high school completion. Over half of a student's time is spent being involved in some sort of structured activity. It is important for teachers, counselors, and parents to know the overall impact of participating and being involved in out-of-school activities. Determining the long-lasting effects of extracurricular activities may help parents and students understand how participation can impact students' development now and in the future. Armed with this information, families can make wiser choices for creating balance in academics and activities in an adolescent's life.

In addition to understanding the effects of being involved in these activities, it is important to know how these activities are influencing educational and career pathways beyond high school. Having this knowledge may allow counselors and other educators to promote participation and to support and encourage student involvement. Review of literature involving student participation in extra-curricular activities will take place in spring 2009.

Research Questions

There are four research questions this study will attempt to answer. They are:

1. What are the main effects for participating in extra-curricular activities?
2. How many students are participating in activities?
3. In what activities are the students choosing?
4. How can schools minimize the barriers to participation in activities to be more inclusive of all students?

Definitions of Terms

There are terms that are used throughout the literature review that need to be defined for clarity of understanding. These terms are:

Extracurricular Activities – organized student activities connected with school and usually carrying no academic credit.

Out-of-School (OTS) Programs- activities and programs that meet before or after school or over summer vacations such as camps.

Structured Extracurricular Activities – highly structured activities that emphasize skill building, in which the skill attained increases in complexity under the guidance of competent adult leaders.

Assumptions

It is assumed that there are many options for extracurricular activities and opportunities for out of school programs; however, in some communities students may have fewer opportunities than others. With that in mind, the literature reviewed will cover the assumption that the student has some opportunities for choice of activities. It is

further assumed that students benefit from even poor programs with less than adequate coaching or facilities, with the focus on the team spirit, adult connection and leadership opportunities not limited to higher funding or greater opportunity.

The final assumption is that if students are over-extended, injured or participate in too many activities that it may negatively impact social adjustment, academic success and attendance. It is assumed that the goal is to create balance for good life-style choices.

Limitations

This review of literature is limited to the study of extracurricular activities offered outside the school day. While aware of the many assets of holding a part-time job, this study will be limited to extracurricular leisure activities and will not focused on the work schedules and work-related employment of students. Another limitation to this study would be that although there may be much research on the topic, due to limited time and funding, the study may miss some of the important research due to limited access or availability. The literature was reviewed in the spring of 2009.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter will provide discussion and examples of some of the positive effects in youth development based on participating in extracurricular activities. In addition, this chapter will also highlight some of the negative effects that may also take place in adolescent development due to injury, limited opportunity or over-scheduled participation. Furthermore, this chapter will include what schools can do to encourage students to participate in extracurricular activities in hopes of reducing absenteeism, bullying, and high drop out rates. Lastly, this chapter will describe how extracurricular activities can effect personal, social and academic development in a positive manner.

Benefits of Participation

When looking at the variety of out-of-school options students may choose, it is important to consider how connecting with an activity might benefit them. It has been suggested by Eccles (2003), that participation in voluntary, school-based, extracurricular activities increase school participation and achievement (cited in Mahoney et al., in press). This happens because it facilitates: a) the acquisition of interpersonal skills and positive social norms, b) membership in pro-social peer groups, and c) stronger emotional and social connections to one's school. It then stands to reason that participation may contribute to an increase of wellness in mental health, improved students' engagement in school and achievement, strengthen their long-term educational outcomes and find that participation may decrease problem behaviors.

One study in particular discussed how being involved in physical extracurricular activities that may actually improve self-perceptions. It is important to understand that participation in extracurricular physical activities may influence the mental well-being of young people by reducing stress, keeping fit and feeling overall better about their appearances (Daley & Leahy, 2003). Those who were involved in these activities reported significantly higher self-perceptions compared to those who did not participate.

Daley and Leahy (2003) did a study involving 126 randomly selected children who were 8 or 9 years old, who participated in physical extracurricular activities. All of these participants were involved in some form of physical extracurricular activity organized by the school at least once per week either during lunchtime or after school hours. The second group consisted of 63 additional children who did not participate in physical activities. Those who had regular physical activity perceived themselves in a positive manner. What the researchers found was a positive association between participation in various forms of physical activity and positive self-perception (Daley & Leahy, 2003).

It might also be suggested that participation can give adolescents confidence about their physical and perhaps social selves. Another important part of an adolescent's identity is social competence, and many report that socialization and friendships are important in their lives. When adolescents are in extracurricular activities, they often have greater opportunity to interact with others, develop friendships, and to develop social confidence. Also, participation might be interpreted as a sign of maturity and as a self-affirming behavior. The research showed that those who participated seemed to have

a developed sense of commitment and obligation. In conclusion, it was shown that those who participated in extracurricular physical activities had a higher self-perception than those who were not participants (Daley & Leahy, 2003).

Another article discussed the benefits of youth participation in extracurricular activities and the impact on academic success. According to Brown (n.d.), student participants in extracurricular activities had better grades, had higher standardized test scores, higher educational attainment, attended school more regularly, and had higher self-concepts. In addition, young people who participate also have been found to be less likely to use substances such as drugs and alcohol, less likely to dropout of school, misbehave at school, and commit delinquent acts (Brown, n.d.).

Youth who participate in activities can learn important skills, such as teamwork or leadership skills, and these skills may help them in other parts of their lives. When furthering their education, those who participated in activities are more likely to make friends easily, adjust to a new environment, and show leadership based on prior experience in extracurricular activities. By being involved, students decrease the likelihood that they will be involved with problem behaviors. For example, research indicated that youth who are involved in pro-social activities from 2-8 p.m. are less likely to commit or be a victim of a crime (Brown, n.d.).

Social Skills and Social Networks

Participation in structured extracurricular activities promotes not only academic achievement but also personal/social development. For example, Logan and Scarborough (2008) told the story about a student impacted through participation in activities.

David is a student I was working with who seemed to have all the cards stacked against him. He had a difficult home life with little involvement from the grandmother who was raising him. He was chronically picked on because of the way he spoke and looked. He was a special education student who needed a lot of academic and social support from the adults in the school. He frequently cried in school because he didn't have any friends. The teachers worked with him in the classroom to impact his academics and he participated in a weekly social skills group. David told me that every year had bee like this for him. He was in my office almost every day for the first three months of school. One day, I was talking with our teacher who worked with the academically gifted students and was the club leader for our "Outdoor Adventurers" club. She said, "I have a student in my club who is such a wonderful leader! He helps me set up for the club. He keeps the other students on task. I want to talk to his teachers about him." I asked who it was. "David," she said. She had no idea of the struggles David was having in school. I realized I was not seeing David in my office as frequently as I had been. His teachers reported to me that he seemed to be making better relationships with peers. When I talked with David and asked him where he felt best, he answered, "In my club." (p. 6)

Students have unique opportunities to develop their social skills and their social identities. According to Olson (2008), participation in a school's music program lessened students' feelings of alienation, promoted individual growth, and provide a common bond between home and school. It can provide adolescents with a social network and a support

system that is associated with their school (cited in Darling, Caldwell, & Smith et al., in Feldman & Matjasko, 2005).

Another example of a helpful extracurricular activity is participation in athletics. Student athletes interact with peers, work for the best interest of the team, and learn to follow instructions of the team leader. This type of interaction may contribute to the student athlete's development of self-identity (cited in Darling, Caldwell, & Smith at el., Marsh & Kleitman, 2005). A student's identification and involvement with school sports creates a social network for these student athletes that emphasizes the value of the school, academics, and continuing their education after high school (Smith, 2008).

Participation in sports may also provide students with unique development opportunities that positively impact the student's social self-concept. This may lead to a higher academic expectations and therefore better academic outcomes for student athletes (Smith, 2008). Adolescent students who do not have opportunities to identify with a particular group or who are affiliated with delinquent social groups are more likely to suffer negative repercussions including: dropout, suicide, substance abuse, or discipline problems (Smith, 2008).

Academic Achievement

There has always been debate whether participation in extracurricular activities has a positive correlation with academic success. According to Reeves (2008), students who took part in three or four extracurricular activities during the academic year had dramatically better grades than those who participated in no extracurricular activities at all. Darling, Caldwell, and Smith (2005) suggested that participation in athletics is

related to the following positive academic related outcomes including higher grade point average, fewer disciplinary referrals, lower absentee rates, decrease in dropout rates, stronger commitment to the school, liking school better, being in the academic tract in coursework, taking more demanding coursework, more likely to attend college full time and graduate, holding higher aspirations for attending college, applying to more universities and colleges, and had better occupational status 15-years after high school.

These positive effects are not just from participating in athletics but also from joining other activities as well. Olson (2008) found that students enrolled in fine arts activities had significantly lower absentee rates than those students who did not participate at all. Also, it was determined that dropouts were involved in fewer extracurricular activities than were those who stayed in school (cited in Olson at el., Bowman & Matthews, 2008). Involvement in extracurricular activities is consistently and positively correlated with good school attendance, and good attendance is often correlated with a higher grade point average (Olson, 2008).

Role Models

Another positive impact of participation in extracurricular activities is the possibility of a student acquiring some type of supportive relationship, mentor or role model with an adult. When children identify with a helpful coach or talented director, the children get to know them better by being involved. Students have the opportunity to have genuine interaction, constructive feedback and support from an adult role model while developing positive relationships outside of their immediate families. This type of participation may help to develop mutual trust, respect and commitment in relationships

(cited in Smith at el., Feldman & Matjasko, 2005). Most students benefit from supporting and caring relationships with teachers and other adults. The presence of "other adult relationships" is recognized as a developmental asset linked to facilitating academic and life success (Logan & Scarborough 2008).

Potential Negative Impact of Participation

When considering how extracurricular activities impact students, mention should be made regarding potential negative impact of participation in out-of-school activities. Reeves (2008) determined that parents and teachers might fear students may lose their focus on academics when they become too busy with out-of-school activities. Attending too many rehearsals, practices, and meetings may cut into homework time. When students get overscheduled, they might be spreading themselves too thin, which may lead to spending less time studying and preparing for class.

Another down side to participation might occur when the parents push their children to be involved in nearly every activity available. Using activities to provide day-care is not recommended, yet some parents schedule their child in piano lessons, soccer, youth group, scouts and dance class so there is an activity each night of the week. This may not only impact the child's academic success, but may even effect the dedication shown to each activity as the child may not be there by choice.

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

Parents can be part of the problem if they push their children to be involved in too many activities or by forcing children to participate when they do not want to be involved. This can lead students to be afraid to quit for fear of disappointing the parent, or the other extreme of students quitting everything in defiance of the controlling parent. Balance in activities of the adolescent's choice is recommended.

Gilman (2004) found that those who participated in athletics were almost twice as likely to remain in school as students who did not participate; however, it was also determined that participation in sports teams corresponded with greater rates of alcohol consumption and illicit drug use. It needs to be noted that these outcomes can depend on the quality of coaching, a person's peer group, and the cultural meaning of the activity within the school and community (Gilman, 2004).

Another study by Gilman (2004) asked students to identify themselves as a specific character from the movie "The Breakfast Club." The choices Gilman offered for characters from that movie were the Princess, the Jock, the Brain, the Basket Case, and the Criminal. Those who labeled themselves as "Jocks," participated in more athletics and had a higher GPA, higher self-esteem, and the lowest social isolation. Yet, as in previous studies, athletes were more likely to use alcohol compared to the other groups (Gilman, 2004).

Another potentially negative aspect of extracurricular activities for consideration is the unfair advantage for those of a higher economic status. Student athletes are disproportionately of a higher socioeconomic status (Smith, 2008). Participants in athletic programs need to have transportation to and from practice sessions, equipment, and pay-

to-play athletic fees. Performing arts activities such as band may cost a lot of money to purchase musical instruments or have private lessons. This could be a problem for many of the students and families with limited income for extracurricular activities.

Socioeconomic status may limit the possibility of some students being able to compete as some top athletes have private lessons, attend summer sports camps or play in club sports year round. It is hard for the average-income student to compete with the athlete who has had additional training, top-notch equipment, and enjoys the opportunity to play sports year-round. This economic disadvantage can bring disappointment and frustration to the student, or even prohibit some from even trying the sport in the first place.

Another example of how finances may limit opportunities to participate in out-of-school activities is for those students who need to work to help support their families. Allar (2008) determined that for some students, finances are an issue. When students say, "I need to work to help give money to my family" it clearly shows how economic status can contribute to whether students are able to participate or not. Even though they may wish to play, students may not be able to as the family economic status limits their opportunities.

Another potential negative impact of participation in extracurricular activities is injuries. Some athletes can have life-long injuries that occur when they are participating in sports. Sometimes athletes push their bodies to a breaking-point and over-work themselves at a young age when their bodies are still developing. Also, the coaches can expect a lot from their players and they can push too far as well. When this happens the

body does not always get a chance to rest or heal itself. This can increase the chance of a player getting seriously injured. Even with good equipment, well-trained coaches and thorough warm-ups, there is always the margin of error for accidents to happen. Families without medical insurance may choose not to participate in sports as it is too much of a financial risk to play sports.

A final negative effect from participating in out-of-school activities is having a poor quality coach as a role model or mentor. Poor coaches are found in nearly every community who lack training or do not understand adolescent growth and development, or do not enforce good rules of sportsmanship. Poor coaching can lead to students quit or experience negative feeling toward the activity, the team-members involved, or the coach. Coaches that cut players from a team, or play favorites, or practice unethical behavior could cause students to get involved in other negative activities because they have had a bad experience with the team.

Coaches may be emotionally too hard on their teams which could hurt player morale. It may not just be the athletes who suffer at the expense of adult leaders who lack ethics, morals or poor choices, as there are other poor-quality supervisors in other areas too. Students who suffer at the hands of coach-bullies may have a low self-esteem as a result of being told they aren't good enough to participate, and upon hearing negative comments about what they are doing wrong. All of this depends on each individual situation, and how the students respond to the type of coaching being practiced. Even though it is important to be aware of the negative side-effects of some poorly run programs, the positive benefits outweigh the negative.

Promoting Extracurricular Activities in Schools

A comprehensive, inclusive and developmental model for school counseling may help to remove barriers to student success. This model fosters the development of student competency in broad areas of lifelong learning, personal effectiveness, and life roles (Silliker, 1997). The literature reviewed supported participation in extracurricular activities as one way to promote healthy developmental options. Extracurricular activities that are too time-consuming can be perceived as an interference with academic success, and because pressures from parents and the students themselves, this can be used as an excuse to avoid extracurricular activities. Counselors may wish to advocate for balance in academics and activities.

There are many reasons why the role of a school counselor is important for integrating both academics and extracurricular activities. Silliker (1997) explained that counselors are typically aware of, and monitor, both academic performance and extracurricular activities. Also, they need to be aware of the components of guidance, which included: guidance curriculum, individual planning, responsive services, and system support. Extracurricular activity participation enables students to master new skills, and explore different roles outside of the classroom setting (Silliker, 1997).

The American School Counseling Association (ASCA) National Model emphasizes the mission to promote academic achievement, career planning, and personal/social development for all students. It serves as a guide for states, districts, and individual schools in designing, developing, implementing and evaluating a counseling program. According to Silliker (1997), the goal of comprehensive, developmental school

counseling programs is to advocate for all students. School counselors may encourage a balance across all of the domains to have healthy human development.

It is important for school counselors to understand the importance of involvement in extracurricular activities, because students can benefit from playing. Some programs even offer scholarships for participation in extracurricular activities and leadership development throughout high school. Scholarships may enable students to go on to further their education and open opportunities that they may not have had previously. Therefore, it is important to provide policy makers and administrators with accurate information about the value of extracurricular activities.

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

Another idea that may be useful for school counselors to encourage is the promotion of individual strengths. Students usually choose activities depending on their

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

Interaction with competent adults is another suggestion that is presented in Gilman's article. It was stated that resilience and identity can be enhanced through interactions with competent non-parent adult figures that can instill knowledge and skills, provide opportunities to challenge youth, and serve as role models (Gilman, 2004). When this positive interaction is ongoing in extracurricular activities, students may have goals and values that are then internalized. As these students have interactions with competent adult figures, it may lead to achievement of goals, development and improvement of skills, and enhanced social and leadership opportunities (Gilman, 2004).

Gilman (2004) further stated that getting an adolescent involved in any activity may not garner success if these factors are not considered: (a) the perceived social status of the activity, (b) intrinsic interest in the activity, (c) the quality of the adolescent's social network, and (d) the non-parent adult who is part of the activity. It is important to

consider that as school personnel, counselors should encourage the students to explore their options for activities to find the best fit.

The key components of structured extracurricular activities include facilitating intrinsic motivation, empowering the individual, and finding life satisfaction through voluntary choice. Once a student has identified an activity, it is important to evaluate whether the activity will potentially benefit or hinder development for that student. In conclusion Gilman (2004) stated that the counselor can influence participation in extracurricular activities for students who might benefit from them most. By removing barriers so more students have access to activities, more students may benefit from appropriate extracurricular activities.

Brown (n.d.) stated that some of the signs of a good extracurricular program are that participants feel like they are part of a group or something special, and they have the opportunity to develop relationships with adults and pro-social peers. The program should have goals that encourage youth and staff to achieve great things, while encouraging young people to take on leadership roles. The program should be appropriate for the age group, and the program should involve parents and peers. However, the most important point overall of these is that the activity should be fun and attractive for youth (Brown, n.d.). Often the only way to determine if these needs are being met is to talk to the youth participants themselves. They should have a say in how a program is conducted and organized to determine if it is meeting their expectations.

Effects of Youth Development

In Eccles' (2003) study, the researcher found that participation in activities is related to indicators of healthy development. Eccles described five different types of extracurricular activities that students took part in which are: pro-social activities, team sports, performing arts, school-involvement activities, and academic clubs. Data were collected for approximately 1,800 sixth graders from 10 different school districts in Michigan. The longitudinal study followed the students periodically starting in sixth grade, seventh grade, tenth grade and twelfth grade, again at ages 21-22, and lastly when they were 25-26 years old.

First Eccles looked at pro-social activities, which are considered church attendance, youth groups, and volunteer and community service-type activities. They found that those who were involved in pro-social activities in tenth grade reported less involvement in risky behaviors at all levels of data collection. Youth involved in these activities reported lower rates of drinking alcohol, getting drunk, using drugs, and of skipping school than non-participants. According to Eccles (2003), involvement in pro-social activities predicted greater enjoyment of school, a higher grade-point average, and a greater likelihood of attending college full-time, graduating from college, and experiencing more total years of tertiary education.

Secondly, the Eccles study researched participation in team sports. Unlike pro-social activities, team sports predicted greater involvement of risky behaviors. Both genders indicated drinking and getting drunk more than non-athletes. Involvement in team sports was a promotive factor for academic outcomes (Eccles, 2003). These

participants also liked school better than non-participants. It was more likely that they attended college and graduated, had a higher than expected grade-point average, and more total years of tertiary education (Eccles, 2003).

Thirdly, this study discussed those who were involved in performing arts including school band, drama, and dance teams. Being involved in these activities resulted in greater enjoyment of school, higher grade-point average, greater likelihood of attending college full-time, and greater likelihood of graduating from college (Eccles, 2003).

The fourth extracurricular activity explored was school-involvement activities. These included student government, pep club, and cheerleading. This was positively linked to enjoying school, solid grade-point average, the likelihood of attending college, and total years of tertiary education.

Lastly, this study looked at the academic clubs that included clubs that were represented by debate teams, foreign language clubs, math, or chess club, science fair, or tutoring in academic subjects. What the researchers found was that participating in these clubs was related to higher educational success and potential for successful occupational outcomes. Also, participants enjoyed school more, had a better than expected grade-point average, more likely to attend college, and had more total years of tertiary education (Eccles, 2003).

In conclusion Eccles (2003) found that both the extracurricular programs and individual characteristics and leadership influenced the nature of the impact of participation on individuals' development. Knowing what activities adolescents are

involved in may indicate who the adolescent is hanging out with, and who the adult coaches and mentors are that they can turn to when in need. Often when an adolescent is involved in an activity this may directly effects who is in their peer group because of the amounts of time spent with one another. It is likely that participation in these kinds of activities influences the kinds of relationships adolescents form with adults as well as improving the perspective and connection of the school (Eccles, 2003). Overall, the development that occurs can contribute to an adolescents' identity and show the importance of contributing as a member of the school community.

Chapter III: Summary, Discussion and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter will include a summary of the literature presented in Chapter II. Also, there will be a discussion on the key points that were presented in the previous chapter. In addition, recommendations for school counselors to promote balanced participation in extracurricular activities will be offered. The chapter will conclude with recommendations for further research in this area.

Summary

There were many key points that were presented in Chapter II. The literature clearly highlighted benefits to participating in extracurricular activities. One example on a benefit is a positive association between participating in various forms of physical activities and positive self-perception (Daley & Leahy, 2003). Other benefits of participating in extracurricular activities included having better grades, having higher standardized test scores, higher educational attainment, attending school more regularly, and having higher self-concepts (Brown, n.d.). Participants in out-of-school activities can learn skills such as teamwork, leadership skills, and can decrease the likelihood of being involved with problem behaviors. The majority of the literature studied stated that those who participate in out-of-school activities often have higher grade point averages, a decrease in absenteeism, and an increased connectedness to the school.

Another key point that was found in the literature pertains to the negative effects that take place from being over-involved in extracurricular activities. The main idea from the literature indicated that some studies found that there was an increase in the

likelihood that those who participated may have greater rates of alcohol use and illicit drug use depending on the school climate.

Another concern from the literature was that extracurricular activities can lead to students being overscheduled. Some parents of these students can push the envelope too far and enroll their children in activities that kids do not want to be involved in. Overscheduled children may be tired, irritable and show little interest in participation. Over scheduling too many physical activities may result in some students pushing themselves too far with the potential of having a serious sports-related injury. At this critical age of physical development, students need time for relaxation and recovery from intense athletic training.

Extracurricular activities often cost money to participate in some sort of "pay-to-play" fee. Whether it is paying the school activity fee or paying for private lessons or trying to further develop skills at summer camps, some families just are not economically able to be involved with out-of-school activities. A good school counselor will work with the community to help reduce barriers to participation in healthy options for students to develop team building and enhance leadership skills.

Discussion

The literature reviewed indicated similar findings regarding the benefits or negative effects of participating in extracurricular activities. Recommendations were made to continue to fund and promote extracurricular activities in school districts and local communities. There were many different ways that the researchers showed how participating in these structured activities could enhance development in young people.

With childhood obesity on the rise, participation in physical activities is encouraged not only for body image, but for reducing stress and providing opportunities to work with other caring adults.

Many schools are facing difficult economic issues and budget cuts are being made in some communities. While some may think reducing or eliminating extracurricular activities may help the budget, it is not an easy decision as others believe that these budget reductions would be more detrimental for the students. Budgets are tight and extracurricular activities cost money. When comparing the expenses to the benefits of participating, many may agree that it is a minimal investment needed to create a new club, activity, or team that would benefit the students and the schools (Reeves, 2008).

Every year there are groups of students who may have benefited from the small-group connection, and potential for success that extracurricular activities would provide. Because of finances and transportation issues prohibiting their participation students may be missing out on opportunities that could enhance their future options (Logan & Scarborough, 2008). Even though schools are facing tough economic times, it was indicated in the literature reviewed that extracurricular activities are worth the money.

Recommendations for School Counselors

After reviewing the literature, there are a few recommendations for counselors to consider. First, it is important for school counselors to know the effects that student involvement in extracurricular activities can have on the student, school and learning environment. Schools that offer some sort of programs in their school for students who are at-risk may find extracurricular activities could be a preventive intervention.

Counselors could advocate for those students who might be over-scheduled, or at risk for injury or advocate for those who are participating in activities of little or no interest. School counselors could also work to reduce barriers to participation by seeking ways to assist in paying fees, attending camps, and keeping involved in school activities.

Counselors could work with students to determine a "best fit" for participation in activities that build on their interests and skill level. Community partnerships are encouraged as working together to find quality coaches, sponsors and funding for a variety of activities is beneficial to all involved. Schools that offer training for coaches, sponsors and leaders may minimize the harsh effects of poor leadership in extracurricular activities.

Recommendations for Future Research

For future studies, it would be worthy of consideration to look at diversity issues pertaining to participation in extracurricular activities. Can the same generalizations regarding the pros and cons of extracurricular activities be true for all ethnicities? Are there gender issues pertaining to outcomes for those who participated in sports or school related activities? Are students with disabilities encouraged to participate, and are options available for them in the schools and communities too? This may be an interesting follow-up to all of the studies that have taken place. As school counselors are becoming advocates for all students, it is important to make sure that all students are provided with equal access and opportunities for leadership and team spirit.

Schools could consider a longitudinal process of monitoring student participation to determine how it impacted the student's future careers and opportunities for further

education and scholarships. By following students after high school to determine if they had job success and had used their leadership skills developed through extracurricular activities, researchers may find that these activities provided social-networking opportunities for finding jobs. Further research could also focus on character development, leadership and respect to determine if schools are safer with a higher participation level and commitment to involvement.

Finally, more research is needed to determine what motivates students to find a reason to get up and come to school. Offering a variety of options at minimal cost and a variety of levels could engage the student in a positive experience which may result in a win-win for all involved.

References

Allar, B. (2008). Core principals. *Louisville Magazine,* 64-69.

Brown, R. (n.d.). *Extracurricular activity: How does participation encourage positive youth development?* (Fact Sheet 99-32). Retrieved November 15, 2008, from: www.unce.unr.edu/publications/files/cy/other/fs9932.pdf

Daley, A., & Leahy, J. (2003). Self-perceptions and participation in extracurricular physical activities. *The Physical Educator, 60*(2), 13-19.

Darling, N., Caldwell, L., & Smith, R. (2005). Participation in school-based extracurricular activities and adolescent adjustment. *Journal of Leisure Research, 37*(1), 51-76.

Eccles, J. (2003). Extracurricular activities and adolescent development. *Journal of Social Issues, 59*(4), 865-889.

Fredricks, J., & Eccles, J. (2006). Is extracurricular participation associated with beneficial outcomes? Concurrent and longitudinal relations. *Developmental Psychology, 42*(4), 698-713.

Fusco, D. R. (2008). School vs. afterschool: A study of equity in supporting children's development. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education, 22*(4), 391-404.

Gardner, M., Roth, J., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2008). Adolescents' participation in organized activities and developmental success 2 and 8 years after high school: Do sponsorship, duration, and intensity matter? *Developmental Psychology, 44*(3), 814-830.

Gilman, R. (2004). Structured extracurricular activities among adolescent findings and implications for school psychologists. *Psychology in the Schools, 41*(1), n.p.

Little, P. (2005). Engaging adolescents in out-of-school time programs: Learning what works. *The Prevention Researcher, 12*(2), 7-10.

Logan, W. L, & Scarborough, J. L. (2008). Connections through clubs: Collaboration and coordination of a school wide program. *Professional School Counseling. 12*(2), 157-161.

McNeal, R. (1999). Participation in high school extracurricular activities: Investigating school effects. *Social Science Quarterly, 80*(2), n.p.

Morrissey, K. (2005). The relationship between out-of-school activities and positive youth development: An investigation of the influences of communities and family. *Adolescence, 40*, 67-85.

Olson, C. A. (2008). Can music education help at-risk students? *Teaching Music, 16*(3), n.p.

Reeves, D. B. (2008). The extracurricular advantage. *Education Leadership*, 86-87.

Silliker, S. A. (1997). The effect of extracurricular activity participation on the academic performance of male and female high school students. *School Counselor, 44*(4), n.p.

Smith, S. L. (2008). Athletics & Academics. *Research Starters.*

Thompson, D. (2008). Extracurriculars that count. *Business Week Online.* Retrieved March 15, 2009, from: www.BuisnessWeekOnline.com