

When **X** = Student Activities, Performance Follows



The Research Proves It!

For a long time, student activities have been the subject of a curious chicken-or-egg style debate: Do student activities improve student performance, or do better-performing students participate in student activities? The implications of this debate have left stakeholders scrambling for answers.

Let X = Student Activities, a new program developed by the Alliance for Student Activities in partnership with the National Association of Secondary School Principals, proves that the answer to both of these questions is an emphatic yes. A wealth of rigorous, peer-reviewed research indicates that activities are the spark that ignites measurable improvement in student performance. The results are even more pronounced among students with previously low GPA's or discipline concerns. Through Let X = Student Activities, the Alliance is committed to providing stakeholders with the information, the tools, and the motivation needed to ensure that student activities become an indispensable part of every educational reform equation.

The studies cited here represent only a fraction of the more than one hundred studies that prove whatever your desired outcome, participation in student activities benefits students of all academic levels and backgrounds.*

*Feldman, A. & Matjasko, J. (2005). The role of school-based extracurricular activities in adolescent development: a comprehensive review and future directions. *Review of Educational Research, 75*, 159-210.

Student activities boost academic performance.

Participation in student activities is linked to higher math and English grades (Broh 2002); improved grades, coursework selection, and homework completion (Marsh & Kleitman 2003); better performance on math, reading, and science tests (Gerber 1996); improved classroom preparation and higher achievement in math and science (Jordan & Nettles 2000); higher scores on geography, history, math, reading, and science tests (Schreiber & Chambers 2002); and increased likelihood of applying to college and the submission of an increased number of college applications (Marsh & Kleitman 2003).

Broh, B.A. (2002). Linking extracurricular programming to academic achievement: Who benefits and why? *Sociology of Education, 75*, 69–91.

Gerber, S. (1996). Extracurricular activities and academic achievement. *Journal of Research and Development in Education, 30*, 42–50.

Jordan, W.J., & Nettles, S.M. (2000). How students invest their time outside of school: Effects on school-related outcomes. *Social Psychology of Education, 3*, 217–243.

Marsh, H., & Kleitman, S. (2003). School athletic participation: Mostly gain with little pain. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 25*, 205–229.

Schreiber, J.B., & Chambers, E.A. (2002). After-school pursuits, ethnicity, and achievement for 8th- and 10th-grade students. *Journal of Educational Research, 96*, 90–100.

Student activities reduce dropout risks.

Participation in at least one student activity decreases the likelihood that a student will drop out of school (Mahoney 2000; Zill et al. 1995). The positive effect of participation in relation to the dropout rate is strongest among at-risk students (Mahoney & Cairns 1997) and minorities (Davalos et al. 1999; Melnick et al. 1992b).

Davalos, D.B., Chavez, E.L., & Guardiola, R.J. (1999). The effects of extracurricular activity, ethnic identification, and perception of school on student dropout rates. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 21*, 61–77.

Mahoney, J.L. (2000). School extracurricular activity participation as a moderator in the development of antisocial patterns. *Child Development, 71*, 502–516.

Mahoney, J.L., & Cairns, R.B. (1997). Do extracurricular activities protect against early school dropout? *Developmental Psychology, 33*, 241–253.

Melnick, M.J., Sabo, D.F., & Vanfossen, B.E. (1992b). Effects of interscholastic athletic participation on the social, educational, and career mobility of Hispanic girls and boys. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 27*, 57–73.

Zill, N., Nord, C.W., & Loomis, L.S. (1995). *Adolescent time use, risky behavior, and outcomes: An analysis of national data*. Rockville, MD: Westat. 📍



Student activities lead to college and career success.

Students who participate in student activities are more likely to want to attend college and submit more college applications (Marsh and Kleitman 2003). Participants in middle and high school student activities are more likely to enroll in college (Marsh and Kleitman 2003), stay enrolled (Barber et al. 2001; Mahoney et al. 2003), get better grades (Zaff et al. 2003), graduate (Barber et al. 2001), and pursue graduate school education (Marsh and Kleitman 2003).

Barber, B.L., Eccles, J.S., & Stone, M.R. (2001). Whatever happened to the jock, the brain, and the princess? Young adult pathways linked to adolescent activity involvement and social identity. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 16*, 429–455.

Mahoney, J.L., Cairns, B.D., & Farmer, T.W. (2003). Promoting interpersonal competence and educational success through extracurricular activity participation. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 409–418*.

Marsh, H., & Kleitman, S. (2003). School athletic participation: Mostly gain with little pain. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 25*, 205–229.

Zaff, J., Moore, K., Papillo, A., & Williams, S. (2003). Implications of extracurricular activity participation during adolescence on positive outcomes. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 18*, 599–630.

Student activities set students up to make better choices and reduce high risk behaviors.

Young people who participate in student activities consume less tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana than non-participants (Cooley et al. 1995). Young women who participate in student activities delay the onset of sexual activity, have sexual relations less frequently and with fewer partners, use contraception more reliably, and have lower rates of pregnancy (Miller et al. 1998 & 1999). Participation in student activities reduces the rates of teen pregnancy (Zill et al. 1995).

Cooley, Y.E., Henriksen, L.W., Van Nelson, C., & Thompson, J.C., Jr. (1995). A study to determine the effect of extracurricular participation on student alcohol and drug use in secondary schools. *Journal of Alcohol and Drug Education, 40*, 71–87.

Miller, K.E., Sabo, D.F., Farrell, M.P., Barnes, G.M., & Melnick, M.J. (1998). Athletic participation and sexual behavior in adolescents: The different worlds of boys and girls. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 39*, 108–123.

Miller, K.E., Sabo, D.F., Farrell, M.P., Barnes, G.M., & Melnick, M.J. (1999). Sports, sexual behavior, contraceptive use, and pregnancy among female and male high school students: Testing cultural resource theory. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 16*, 366–387.

Zill, N., Nord, C.W., & Loomis, L.S. (1995). *Adolescent time use, risky behavior, and outcomes: An analysis of national data*. Rockville, MD: Westat.

Student activities build social and emotional skills.

Participation in student activities alleviates depression (Mahoney et al. 2002), especially among female students with low GPAs (Gore et al. 2001). Participation in student activities increases student self-confidence (Perry-Burney & Takyi 2002) and self-esteem, particularly among minority males (Tracy & Erkut 2002). Student activities may create the conditions in which students can learn a sense of autonomy, self-belief, and self-expression (Shelly 2011). Participants in student activities develop greater leadership skills than non-participants, which translates into a greater likelihood of moving into managerial positions, higher pay in later life, and greater career success in general (Dobosz and Beaty 1999; Kuhn and Weinberger 2005; National Federation for High School Activities 2004).

Dobosz, R.P., & Beaty, L.A. (1999). The relationship between athletic participation and high school student's leadership ability. *Adolescence, 34* (133), 215–220.

Gore, S., Farrell, F., & Gordon, L. (2001). Sports involvement as protection against depressed mood. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 11*, 119–130.

Kuhn, P., & Weinberger, C. (2005). Leadership skills and wages. *Journal of Labor Economics, 23* (3), 395–436.

Mahoney, J., & Bergman, L. (2002). Conceptual and methodological considerations in a developmental approach to the study of positive adaptation. *Applied Developmental Psychology, 23*, 195–217.

National Federation of State High School Associations. (2008). *The case for high school activities*. Retrieved February 15, 2009, from <http://www.nfhs.org>.

Perry-Burney, G. D., & Takyi, B. K. (2002). Self-esteem, academic achievement, and moral development among adolescent girls. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment, 5*(2), 15–28.

Shelly, Bryan. 2011. Bonding, bridging, and boundary breaking: the civic lessons of high school student activities. *Journal of Political Science Education, 7*: 295–311, 2011.

Tracy, A. L., & Erkut, S. (2002). Gender and race patterns in the pathways from sports participation to self-esteem. *Sociological Perspectives, 45*, 445–466.

According to Bryan Shelly, Ph.D., data strategist at the Cleveland Metropolitan School District and author of *Money, Mandates, and Local Control in American Public Education*, these studies employ rigid statistical controls. In other words, the results are independent of family, school, demographic, and other background characteristics. This means that student activities are the critical variable that makes the difference. This research proves that participation in student activities promotes student success in the classroom and on the test. Not only are student activities an integral part of every student achievement equation at the middle school and high school levels, but the studies show that activities also pave the way for achievement in college, career, and community.

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