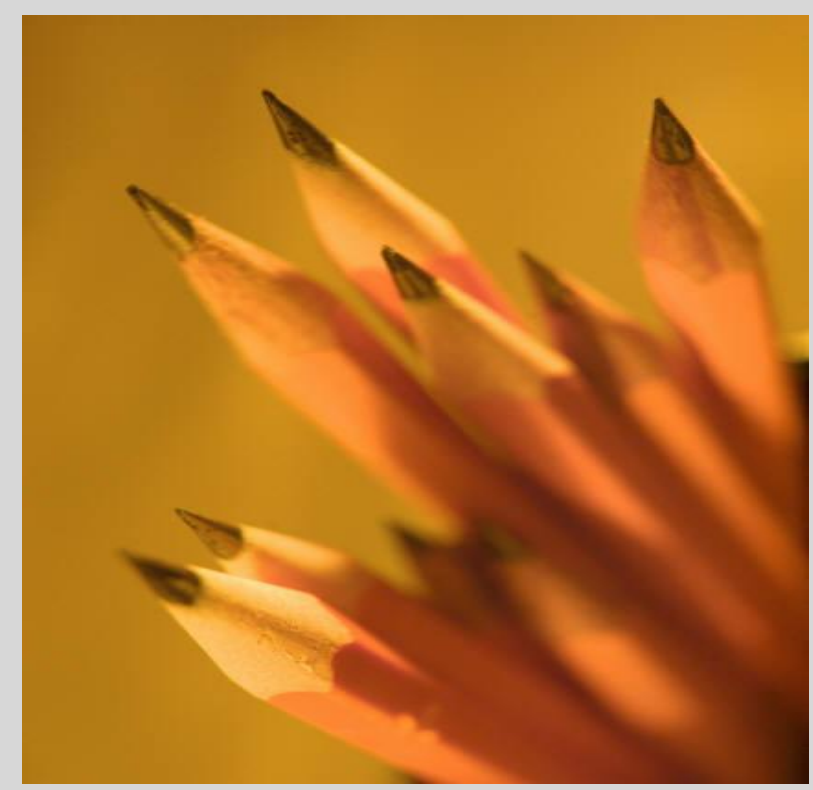




High School: Increasing Participation in Extracurricular Activities



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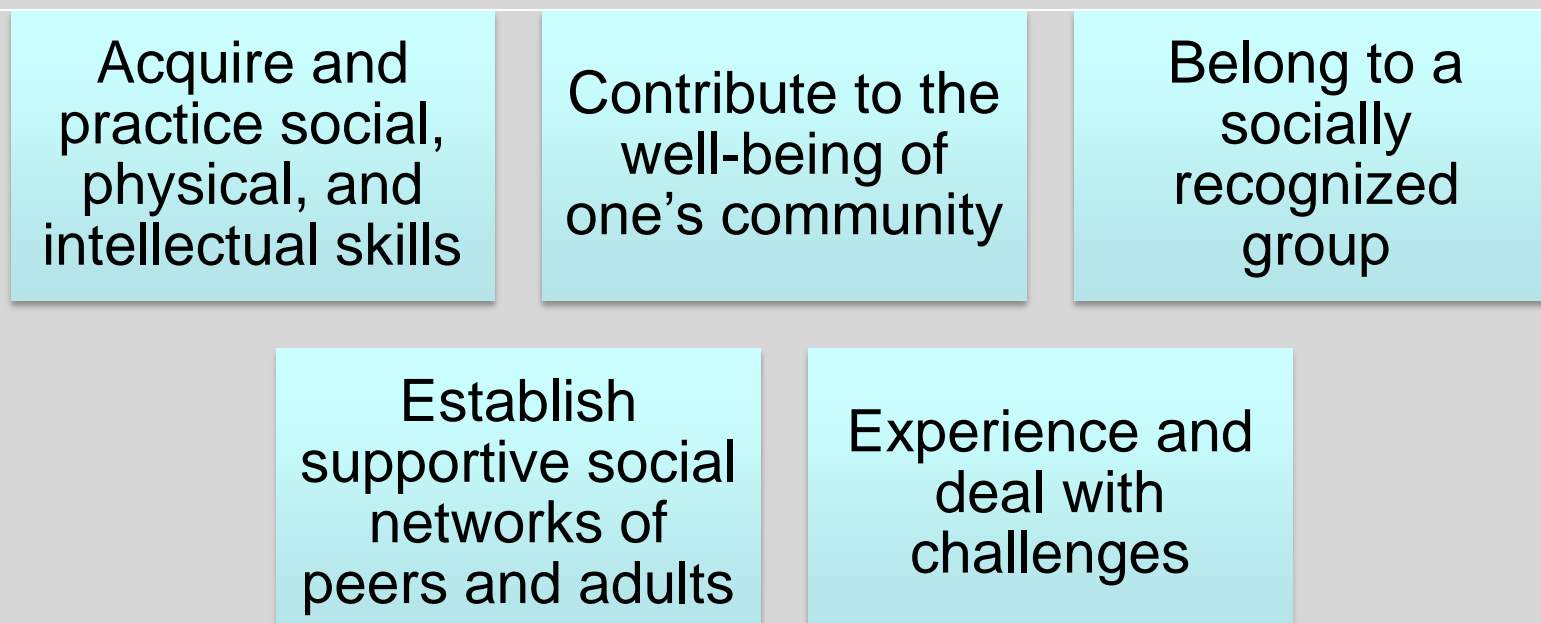
Introduction

What are Extracurricular Activities?

Extracurricular activities can be described broadly as anything a student does that is not a course within the high school. In school extracurricular activities include many options for students to find something they enjoy and are passionate about. The Fine Arts include theater, music, dance, painting, photography, creative writing and other creative endeavors as well as the chorus, band (marching, jazz, pep...), and orchestra as possible activities for students. There are "School Clubs" such as Chess club, math club, mock trial, debate and many others. Student government, student council, prom committee are also forms of extracurricular activities in which students can choose to participate. Athletics including both team sports such as football, baseball, hockey, track, basketball, gymnastics, dance, lacrosse, swimming, soccer, cheerleading and individual sports like wrestling, tennis, and golf are all examples of extracurricular activities available to high school students. "Adolescents are more likely to participate in sports than in any other type of school-based extracurricular activity" (Darling, 2005, p. 57). Activities outside of the school, such as Boy/Girl scouts, 4-H, and community volunteering are also considered extracurricular activities.

Increasing Participation in Extracurricular Activities

"Increasing the participation in extracurricular activities at the High school level has so many positive affects on students. Developmentalists argue that organized activities are a good use of the adolescents' time because such activities provide opportunity to:



(Eccles, 2003, p. 866)

Through participation in athletics students become more physically active and sports in general support a healthy lifestyle. Participating in Theatre or a Play can provide students with confidence to perform in front of an audience. Playing an instrument in the band or orchestra can teach students the value of practice and how to work well with others. Being a part of a club such as Journalism, Business, or Student Government shows students how to collaborate and also sheds light on the real world application of the things they learn in the classroom. Extracurricular activities also give students an opportunity to find out who they are and what they are passionate about. It gives students a mentor or coach who can guide them and push them to reach their goals. The passion that is cultivated through these activities leads to hard work and dedication, which increases student's self-confidence.

One Goal Plan

Teachers give students the freedom to create extra credit assignments within current courses, which relate to the extracurricular activities in which each student participates.

Alternative Options for Reaching Our Goal

1. Providing elective credits to students who participate in extracurricular activities is one possibility for increasing participation. This plan would allow students to choose activities in place of other elective courses during the course of the school year. This option may take away from the academics of students by not allowing them to experience different elective courses and makes activities actual courses.
2. Teaming students of different academic levels together in a mentorship program along with bringing in high profile motivational speakers to spark interest in all activities.
3. Perform a needs analysis survey at the school to determine which extracurricular activities students would like to be a part of and which ones no longer need to be offered. This way the school is better meeting the needs of its students and more students will participate.

Advantages of Participation in Extracurricular Activities

- Physical activity – increase in activity through sports as well as other activities
- Confidence – increased confidence through success
- Team work – working with your teammates to reach a goal
- Value of hard work – extracurricular activities show that hard work and dedication pay off
- Social development – meeting friends with similar interests and working together
- Learning opportunities – through activities come great learning opportunities
- College applications – college admissions consider participation and leadership roles when looking at prospective students
- Life balance – opportunity to get away from stresses of school and parents
- Independence – students choose which activities they want to participate
- Increase the teacher/pupil relationship – closer working relationship with teachers/coaches
- Leadership opportunity – being a captain or leader within your activity gives students a chance to become great leaders at a young age
- Protects youth from risks of unsupervised free time
- Increased academic performance

Disadvantages of Participation in Extracurricular Activities

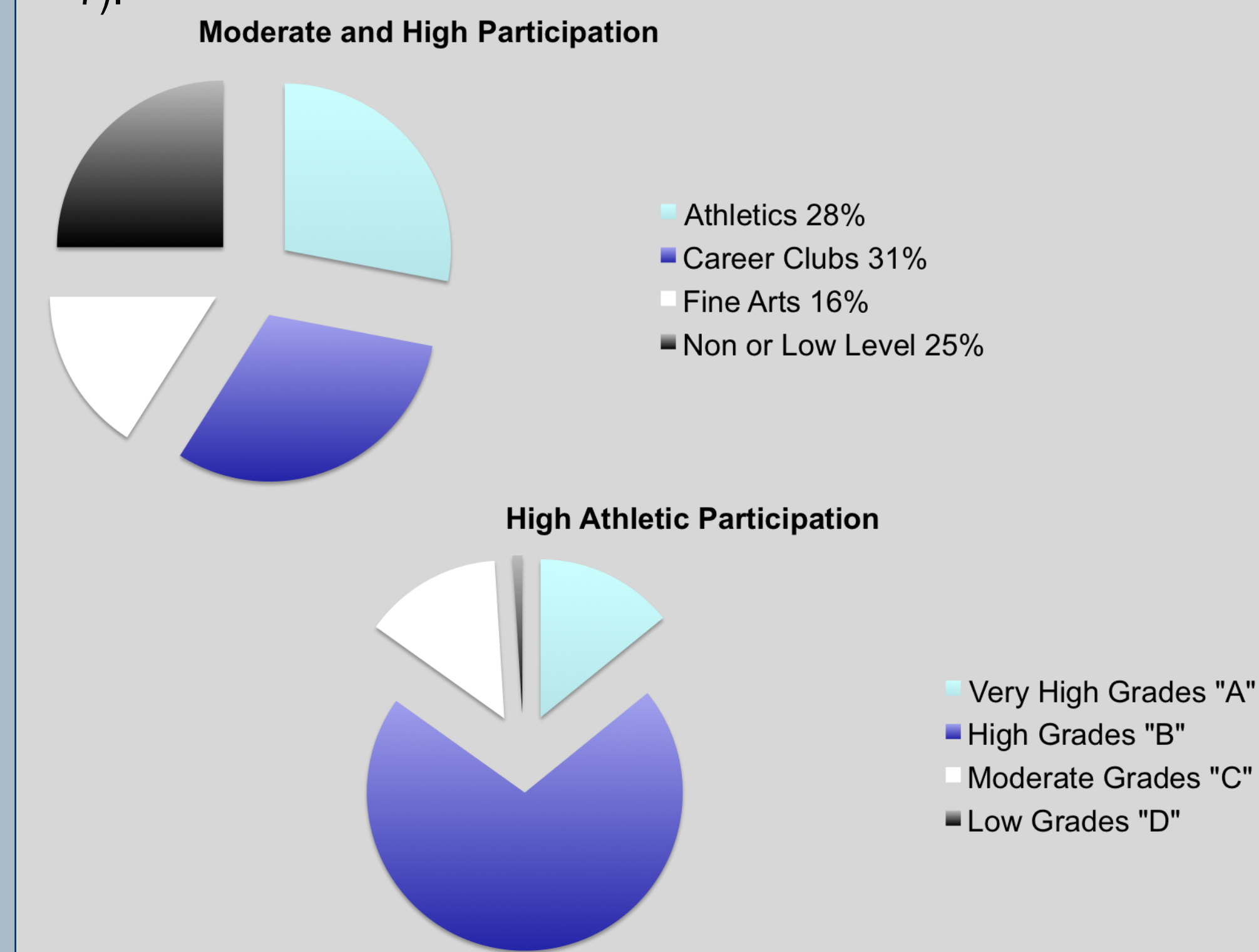
- Time – increase in time spent by both guardians and students
- Money – the costs of participation can vary and can sometimes be great
- Transportation – students who use public or school provided transportation may be deterred from participating
- Pressure – the added pressures competing in sports and performing in the arts can sometimes be overwhelming
- Overwork – pushing students to do so much mentally and physically
- Take away from studies – time spent on extracurricular activities is time that could be used to focus on course work

Contact Information

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Survey

In 1985 a study was done of over 500 high school seniors in the state of Texas to determine if more involvement in extracurricular activities is linked to academic achievement (McNamara, 1985, p. 7).



Action Plan

Students will develop independent assignments, which relate to their extracurricular activities. First, the assignment or project will be about something that is of interest to the student so it should increase their interest. Second, by giving the students freedom to create their own project we are empowering them to learn on their own and think outside the box. And third, students will receive feedback and advice from the teachers on the progress of their work. The independent assignments will not be mandatory but will help students to improve their overall grade and apply the knowledge that learned in the classroom to real life situations and activities they relate to and have interest in. The assignments will also give students a chance to develop a closer working relationship with their teachers.

Extra Credit Assignments Examples

A junior in high school who participates in football and is taking an English Literature course during the same term could write a research paper on anything relating to football i.e. a player, a team, or the rules of the game.

A senior in high school is in a physics course during the spring when she is participating in softball. She could conduct a study or experiment on how and what a pitcher does that enables the ball move after she releases it from her hand.

A sophomore in high school is a member of the school orchestra who plays the violin. During this term the student is taking a Social Studies course on US history. They student could do a short presentation to the class about great violinists in the history of the US.

A junior in high school speech class is also a member of the chess club. As an extra credit assignment he or she could give a speech and present the class with an introductory lesson to the game of chess.

Expected Outcomes of Goal

- An overall increase of participation in extracurricular activities
- Students finding activities to be a part of within the school or outside the school
- Enhanced bond to the school or "school pride"
- More peer and teacher knowledge of the activities which students are involved in and spend time on
- Students involved in activities will earn better grades and more importantly learn about something they have an interest.
- Opportunities for students to meet and associate with students they may not normally
- Lower level of student class absences
- Reduction in student dropout rate
- Reduction in the use of drugs and alcohol among students

"Recent studies have documented the association of participation in school-based extracurricular activities with higher levels of academic commitment and better academic performance, lower rates of high school dropout, and lower levels of delinquency and arrests." (Darling, 2005, p. 53-54)

Impacts of Plan

- No additional staffing needed
- No additional costs will be incurred
- Class schedules will remain the same
- Additional time teachers need explaining the extra credit assignment option.
- Teachers will need time to review, provide feedback, and grade the assignments
- Students will be expected to complete the assignments outside of class time

The one goal plan of increasing participation in extracurricular activities will have a positive ripple effect on issues throughout the entire school.

Question

Does involvement in extracurricular activities actually improve outcomes for individual students or do better students simply tend to get involved in more extracurricular activities (Reeves 2008, p. 1)?

Sources

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