

# BENEFITS OF HIGH SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

*The following excerpts are taken from "The Case for High School Activities" published by the National Federation of State High School Associations.*

At a cost of only one to 3 percent (or less in many cases) of an overall school's budget, high school activity programs are one of the best bargains around.

**ACTIVITIES SUPPORT THE ACADEMIC MISSION OF SCHOOLS.** They are not a diversion, but rather an extension of a good educational program. **Students who participate in activity programs tend to have higher grade-point averages, better attendance records, lower dropout rates and fewer discipline problems than students generally.**

**ACTIVITIES ARE INHERENTLY EDUCATIONAL.** Activity programs provide valuable lessons for many practical situations. **Through participation in activity programs, students learn teamwork, sportsmanship, winning and losing, the rewards of hard work, self-discipline, build self-confidence, and develop skills to handle competitive situations.** These are qualities the public expects schools to produce in students so they become responsible adults and productive citizens.

**ACTIVITIES FOSTER SUCCESS IN LATER LIFE.** Participation in high school activities is often a predictor of later success - in college, a career, and becoming a contributing member of society.

A 1989, nationwide study by the Women's Sport Foundation indicated that **athletes do better in the classroom, are more involved in school activity programs, and stay involved in the community after graduation.** The study, based on an analysis of data collected by the U.S. Department of Education's High School and Beyond Study, indicated that **girls receive as many benefits from sports as boys.** Sports involvement was significantly related to a lower dropout rate in some school settings and **minority athletes are more socially involved than non-athletes.**

Research conducted by Skip Dane of Hardiness Research, Casper, Wyoming in 1991 revealed the following about participation in high school sports: (1) **By a 2-to-1 ratio, boys who participate in sports do better in school do not drop out and have a better chance to get through college.** (2) **The ratio for girls who participate in sports and do well in school is 3-to-1.** (3) **About 92 percent of sports participants do not use drugs.** (4) School athletes are more self-assured. (5) **Sports participants take average and above average classes.** (6) Sports participants receive above-average grades and do above average on skills tests. (7) Student-athletes appear to have more parental involvement than other students.

## SURVEY OF HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

In 1985, the National Federation of State High School Associations sponsored a national survey of high school principals in all 50 states. The results showed:

- \* 95 percent believed that **participation in activities teaches valuable lessons** to students that cannot be learned in a regular class routine.
- \* 99 percent agree that **participation in activities promotes citizenship**.
- \* 95 percent agreed that **activity programs contribute to the development of “school spirit”** among the student body.
- \* 76 percent said they believe the demand made on students’ time by activities is not excessive.
- \* **72 percent said there is strong support for school activity programs from parents and the community at-large.**

## OTHER RESEARCH

A 1992 study by the Colorado High School Activities Association and the Colorado Department of Education revealed that Colorado **high school students who participate in some form of interscholastic activity have “significantly higher” grade-point averages and better attendance**. The survey showed that the larger the school, the more pronounced the differences in participant and nonparticipant test scores and attendance results.

A 1992 survey by the New Mexico Activities Association indicated that more than 60 percent of the state’s principals found the **GPA’s of at-risk students improved by being active in interscholastic activities**.

In 1984, the Texas Education Agency studied the incidence of course failure between activity participants and nonparticipants in a sampling of 46,140 pupils from 100 randomly selected high school. **Forty-six percent of the uninvolved students failed one or more classes, while only 23 percent of the participant group failed a class**.

**In a 1981 study by the Iowa High School Athletic Association, students not active in sports had a 2.39 grade point average (4.0 scale.) Those active in one sport had a 2.61 GPA, and those active in two sports 2.82.**

A survey of more than 300 schools conducted by the Minnesota State High School League in 1983 showed the average student had a 2.68 GPA (4.0 scale), student-athletes had a 2.84 average and fine-arts students averaged 2.98. The average student was absent 8.76 days a year, athletes were absent 7.44 days and fine art’s participants were absent only 6.94 days a year.

Results of a 1987 survey of individuals at the executive vice president level or above in 75 **Fortune 500 companies** indicated that **95 percent of those corporate executives participated in sports during high school. In addition, 54 percent were involved in student government, 43 percent in the National Honor Society, 37 percent in music, 35 percent in scouts and 18 percent in the school’s publication.**

The American College Testing Service compared the value of four factors in predicting success after high school. **The one yardstick that could be used to predict later success in life was achievement in school activities. Not useful as predictors were high grades in high school, high grades in college or high ACT scores.**

The College Entrance Examination Board's Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) was examined in much the same way. It was found that having a high SAT score did not necessarily indicate success in a chosen career. **The best predictor of later success, the study showed, was a person's independent, self-sustained venture. Teens who were active in school activities, had hobbies or jobs, were found to be most likely to succeed.**

Besides higher grades, **participation in activities helps students have a better attitude**, according to a study conducted at the request of the Utah State Board of Education. In the study, students, parents, teachers and administrators agreed that being part of such activities serves not only as an incentive to do well in academic work, but it relieves tension and increases self-confidence.

*The following information is a reprint of "RESEARCH UPHOLDS VALUE OF PROGRAMS" by John R. Olsen, CAA, Madison, Wisconsin, Interscholastic Athletic Administration, Spring 1993.*

## **EFFECTS OF EXTRACURRICULAR PARTICIPATION ON VARIOUS ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**

School administrators, parents, and taxpayers generally support high school activity programs because of the positive effect these activities appear to have on students of both genders. However, in periods of economic austerity the expenditure of public tax funds for nonessential programs are occasionally challenged as wasteful and lacking in tangible cost benefits.

As balance to various criticisms, excerpts from ten research studies on various effects of high school activities' participation have been provided. These studies were conducted over a 25-year period in several geographic areas and demonstrate consistent themes of student growth and achievement.

High school sport programs are legitimate offerings for secondary school systems. Teachers feel students derive educational values from high school athletic experiences. Also cited was the **positive correlation between athletic participation, academic performance, and self-esteem** for 17,000 students. SOURCE: Braddock, Jomills H., II. "Race, Athletics, and Educational Attainment - Dispelling the Myths," Youth and Society, Volume 12, Number 3, March 1981, 335-349.

**Lack of participation in school activities is associated with a greater likelihood of involvement in delinquent behavior.** SOURCE: Dinitz, S. and B.A. Pfau-Vincent. "Self-Concept and Juvenile Delinquency," Youth and Society, December 1982, 133-158.

Nineteen thousand college students demonstrated **positive correlations between involvement in high school activity programs and measures of academic and intellectual performance**. SOURCE: Dvorak, Jack. "Comparisons of College Grades and ACT Scores Between Those With and Those Without High School Newspaper or Yearbook Experience." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, 1986, Norman, Oklahoma.

**Female college athletes who had been involved in high school sports had higher ACT scores and managed time better than non-athletes**. SOURCE: Feitz, D.L. and M. R. Weiss. "The Impact of Girls Interscholastic Sport Participation in Academic Orientation." Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, 1984, Volume 55, Number 4, 332-339.

**A positive correlation was demonstrated between high school activities' participation and SAT scores for entering freshmen**. SOURCE: Havranick, Mark, J. And G. Glosan. "Academic Success and Participation in High School Extracurricular Activities - Is There a Relationship?" Paper presented to the American Psychological Association, August 1986, Washington, D.C.

**Attachment to school and involvement in school activities provides a containment against delinquent behaviors**. SOURCE: Hirschi, T. Causes of Delinquency, Berkley, University of California Press, 1969.

The involvement of a majority of 3400 Illinois high school students in activity programs increased between the sophomore and senior year. **Direct positive relationships exist between involvement in activity programs and academic achievement**. SOURCE: Illinois Board of Education, Department of Planning and Research. Activities in Illinois High Schools, Champaign, November 1985.

Cited recent large population studies by the Center for Educational Statistics, the National Federation, and the Kansas State High School Activities Association. All point to **better academic performance, attendance, and attitudes among activity participants** than among nonparticipants. SOURCE: Jansen, Paul. "Making Magic: High School Sports Builds Leaders." Athletic Business, March 1992.

Increased potential for delinquency among adolescents who do not have positive outlets for their energy. SOURCE: Lawrence, Richard. "School Performance, Containment Theory, and Delinquent Behavior." Youth and Society, Volume 17, Number 1, September, 1985-86.

**Aspirations of African-American youth appear to be positively effected by participation in athletic activities**. SOURCE: Picou, J. Steven and E.W. Curry. "Athletic Success as a Facilitator of Adolescents' Mobility Orientations - A Black and White Comparison." 1974, Atlanta.

*For additional information about the educational benefits of participation in high school activities programs please feel free to contact Alan Beste, Wellness Coordinator, Iowa High School Athletic Association, PO Box 10, Boone, IA 50046. (515) 432-2011.*