

# Educational Leadership

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## The Learning Leader / The Extracurricular Advantage

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To create the most positive classroom environment possible, education leaders must consider not only what happens inside the classroom, but also everything that affects students throughout the day.

Extracurricular experiences are an important ingredient in this recipe.

Various researchers have noted a strong association between student involvement in extracurricular activities and improved attendance, behavior, and academic performance (Black, 2002; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Fujita, 2006; Holloway, 2002). But these findings don't address the chicken-and-egg 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? One high school's experience suggests that a concerted effort to increase extracurricular offerings and participation can contribute to schoolwide academic improvement.

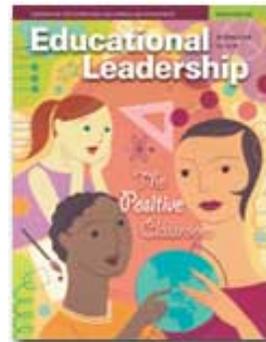
### What's Happening at Woodstock?

Woodstock High School in Woodstock, Illinois, serves almost 2,000 students, more than 20 percent of whom are ethnic minorities and more than 25 percent of whom are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. When I spoke with Principal Corey Tafoya in June 2008, I learned that the school has recently achieved dramatic improvements in student achievement on almost every count.

Ninth grade failure rates in math, science, social studies, English, and physical education are all down substantially, with math failures down almost 40 percent in a single year. The school is producing more National Merit honorees than ever before and, in the past five years, has doubled the number of students taking and passing advanced placement exams, even as the percentages of low-income students, minority students, and English language learners have increased. The graduation rate, at 88 percent, is the highest in 10 years. Discipline has also improved; fighting incidents have dropped to one-half the number of the previous year.

As Tafoya points out,

It's about expectations and relationships. There really were no changes in discipline policies and procedures except that we added in-school suspension with in-school



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tutoring. The biggest impact on improved student behavior has been our improved relationships among teachers, administrators, and students. We learn the name of every student, and we really care about them.

Of course, we should be careful about claiming a single cause for a particular improvement—one of the most important lessons in analyzing education research is that life is multivariate. Broad-based improvements like those at Woodstock undoubtedly result from the confluence of many factors, including hard-working teachers and administrators, a supportive community, a strong curriculum, and good assessment. But Woodstock had all of those things in the past. One clear, measurable change that took place simultaneously with Woodstock's improved outcomes was a dramatic increase—more than 400 percent in five years—in student participation in extracurricular activities, including athletics, academics, ethnic identity clubs, cultural groups, and many others. When asked about his strategies for increasing student involvement in extracurricular activities, Tafoya told me,

If we have six or seven students interested in something, we'll start a new club. We want students to find a reason to get up and come to school. Whatever trips their trigger is what our teachers and administration are willing to do.

Parents and teachers might fear that when students become too busy with nonacademic activities, they will lose their focus on schoolwork. The data from Woodstock suggest the opposite. When the school analyzed the numbers, it found that students who took part in three or four extracurricular activities during the year had dramatically better grades than those who participated in no extra-curricular activities (although increasing the number of extracurricular activities above four did not appear to produce any consistent additional advantage).

Woodstock's experience suggests that when a school makes a commitment to increase extracurricular participation, the entire school community benefits. I have witnessed similar phenomena at the middle school and elementary school levels, when principals and teachers create clubs, sports, and activities for students and then witness improvements in behavior, attendance, and academic performance. The peer pressure associated with extracurricular activities may be one reason for the improvement. "Hey, don't cut school—we *need* you on the team!" may be more powerful than the threat, "Hey, if you cut school, you're going to get a low grade!"

## **Policy and Practice Challenges**

Although we cannot conclude from the data that extracurricular activities alone *caused* these improvements, we can say with virtual certainty that when we help a student move from no participation in extracurricular activities to engagement in three or four such activities, it does not harm academic performance. In fact, we can make a strong case that the positive peer and adult relationships, organization, discipline, expectations, and other positive influences associated with extracurricular activities are likely to improve performance. Expanding extracurricular activities carries little or no risk and has the potential for substantial gain.

Budgets are tight, and extracurricular activities cost money. But think of what each course failure and course repetition costs your school, and consider what each dropout costs the entire

community. Now compare those costs to the minimal investment required to create a new club, activity, or team—or to add more students to the clubs, teams, and activities that your school already offers.

The policy challenge is this: The students who would most benefit from extracurricular activities—those with zero participation, poor academic performance, inadequate attendance, or poor behavior—are most likely to be barred from such activities by school or district policies. Flunking math? You're off the team! Cut 10 classes? You're ineligible.

What would happen if, instead, we actively recruited struggling students for clubs, teams, and other activities? The next time your school is casting the spring play, scouting for debate team members, starting a new social action club, or recruiting members for a sports team, cast a wide net. The students you encourage might help your team, and your entire learning community, have a better year.

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The main motto of extracurricular activities is personality development. These are the activities which promote students to take up their study in a healthy manner. All-round development as well as intellectual development is not the domain of curriculum, these characteristics can be judiciously fulfilled by co-curricular activities. Extracurricular activities include bands, sports, the student newspaper, literary, acting & drama, music, cultural activities. Extracurricular Activity of Students. It helps in the proper channelization of physical health. Extra-curricular activities provide motivation for learning. Share on: Related Posts. Sorry, no posts were found. 14 thoughts on "Extracurricular Activity for Students, its Benefits & Advantages". Shienna Madayag. What are the benefits of extracurricular activities? Now that you understand what extracurriculars are and how they add to your college applications, let's break down the top 8 benefits of extracurricular activities for high school students. 1. Improved Academic Performance. On top of all of the benefits of extracurricular activities we already talked about, one of the greatest advantages extracurricular activities give you are "real world" skills. These skills include (but are not limited to): Goal setting. The lessons you'll learn from participating in meaningful extracurricular activities will help you with everything from getting a job, to applying to universities overseas, to just living your life. So go join a club, start an online class or volunteer. What are you waiting for? Another challenge in documenting extracurricular learning is the privacy issue and it can be seen for instance with the example of the FitBit we have talked about earlier. Some private companies are even starting to introduce the connected bracelet to their strategy in order to gather information on their clients such as the French Insurance company AXA. Also, the advantage of documentation being to share with people our activities, it allows us to gain employability skills and to attract interest from outsiders. For instance, by documenting about a personal project, people can decide to take part in or advise us at least. Bibliography. Need examples for high school extra curricular activities? We've compiled hundreds of examples here, from volunteering to theater. We've got you covered here in our guide of hundreds of examples of extracurricular activities. Read on to get some inspiration for how to spend your valuable free time during high school! What Is An Extracurricular Activity? An extracurricular activity can be almost anything that isn't required for high school credit or paid employment that you do while you're in high school. These activities will become very important later, such as when you are applying to colleges, because they help you develop your talents, interests, and passions. Learn about the benefits of involvement in extracurricular activities and explore resources for students, educators and parents interested in extracurricular activities. The Real Value of Participating in Extracurricular Activities. Although there is no conclusive evidence that participation in extracurricular activities leads to success in high school, it is evident that there is strong association between participation and success. Undoubtedly, each activity has its own advantages. Students should first think about what activities they are passionate about before they think about which ones might help them get into college or which ones all of their friends participate in. Picking an activity that will challenge you can be a good option as well.

The main motto of extracurricular activities is personality development. These are the activities which promote students to take up their study in a healthy manner. All-round development as well as intellectual development is not the domain of curriculum, these characteristics can be judiciously fulfilled by co-curricular activities. The classroom teaching-learning environment gets strengthened by extracurricular activities. No doubt, classroom teaching is of utmost importance, yet for aesthetic development, character enrichment, spiritual and physical growth, extracurricular activities are equally relevant. Extra-curricular activities provide motivation for learning.

Related Posts. Sorry, no posts were found. Extracurricular activities are an essential part of growing up. Our guide gives you a few ideas for involving your child in an activity. Outside the standard framework of any educational curriculum, there are endless opportunities for students to learn new skills and ignite new passions. Extracurricular activities are a vital element in any child's development, often building on lessons and learnings that begin during school hours. In this guide, we discuss the importance of extracurricular activities, including a list of ideas and some pointers for getting involved.

### 5 Important Benefits of Extracurricular Activity.

Undertaking extracurricular activities has far-ranging benefits that touch on many aspects of a child's development. The first advantage of extracurricular activities is the increase in sociability which is a crucial ability for personal development and an important criteria for job interviews. People's ability to make friends or to become a part of a group fuels self-confidence and creates a better atmosphere of liability among people. The second advantage of extra-curricular activities is learning new things. For instance, learning about cultural differences by becoming friends with people who are foreigners will create a better understanding of differences mutually. This also can be regarded as a perfect examination about their sociability. The third advantage of extra-curricular activities concerns better motivation for school.