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The Effects of Extracurricular Activity and Physical Activity on Academic Success: A Literature Review

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EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES & ACADEMICS

- Positive effects
  - Studies found that extracurricular activity contributes to academic success in the following ways:
    - Providing balance (a balanced life, generally speaking helps maintain optimal efficiency)
    - Promoting self confidence (achieving personal goals leads to confidence that carries over into the academic realm)
    - Sense of contribution and duty (students desire to represent the school well)
    - Sense of belonging (students are more likely to succeed when they feel they fit in)
- Negative effects
  - Similarly, extracurricular activity can detract from academic success in these ways:
    - Overload (excessive amounts of activity can demand so much time that the student is unable to keep up in academics)
    - Skewed identity (excessive activity can also lead students to define themselves primarily by such activities while placing little focus on their main roles as students)

INTRODUCTION

- Due to the ever-increasing importance of education, it is important to understand how to foster an environment conducive to academic success.
- Extracurricular activity is one of many factors that influences the academic environment.
- This review examines literature published since 2010 concerning extracurricular activity’s effect on academic success.
- Seeing that sports make up such a large portion of the extracurricular spectrum, the review also examines studies analyzing the effects of physical activity on academic performance.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY & ACADEMICS

- Most studies published examined the direct relationship between physical activity and academic success
  - Outcomes of these studies were fairly evenly split between positive and negative.
  - These studies seemed to lack a layer of depth, indicating a more complex relationship between the two variables than simply a direct correlation.
  - Such complexity suggests the need to examine the relationship based on confounding variables.
    - A few studies looked at confounding variables:
      - Age (physical activity tends to have no correlation with physical activity among middle school students)
      - Intensity of activity (higher intensity activity seems to correlate with better academic performance)
      - Type of activity (activities promoting cardiorespiratory capacity and motor abilities have been shown to increase academic performance, while muscular strength activities yield no such correlation)
  - Much more research is needed in this area.

CONCLUSIONS

- Extracurricular activity seems to do more benefit than harm, provided that students don’t allow them to run their lives.
- Extensive research is necessary examining confounding variables affecting the relationship between physical activity and academic success.
- Future research should include a more holistic approach to the relationship between extracurricular activity and academics. It is the combination of many different factors that make up a child’s academic success.
- The use of objective measures, rather than self report (especially in the case of physical activity), would help to solidify research.