

What to tell principals, school boards, parents, and other skeptics about
The Power of Co-Curricular Activities

1. An exhaustive social research base on the effects of secondary student involvement in student activities exists has been published in some of the premier peer-reviewed journals in the fields of education, sociology, political science, etc.
2. At least 95 percent of these studies confirm that participation in co-curricular activities has a staggering number of positive effects, including
 - a. 2 percent increase in standardized test scores (Davila and Mora 2007);
 - b. .024 increase in GPA (4 point scale) for every hour of participation per week (Marsh and Kleitman 2002)
 - c. Increased rates of present volunteering and future likelihood of voting, volunteering, and other forms of political activity;
 - d. Decreased rates of dropping out, alcohol and drug use, sexual activity, criminal activity, and suicide.
 - e. Increased future job prestige and earnings.
3. All of the effects described above are statistically significant and independent of other covariates. In plain English: if two children are *exactly* the same in every way, except that one participated extensively in secondary school, the participant is more likely to have each of the positive outcomes described above.
4. The positive effects of participation are greater in students with previously low GPAs and/or high levels of discipline problems, women, and racial and ethnic minorities.
5. For these positive effects to take place, participation must include a significant but not unrealistic time commitment, engage a student's interests, and make decisions with real effects on students' lives
6. Any adult serious about raising student test scores or other measures of achievement, promoting civic virtue, or cutting down on deviant behavior should seek to increase, not decrease, the time students spend in properly structured co-curricular activities.
7. Other scholars have produced versions of this document before. The relative importance of co-curricular activities has diminished because, as a community, we have not used this data to further our cause.

I will discuss these results in greater depth each and every time I can be of service. For an excellent summary of the entire literature, please see:

Feldman, Amy F. and Jennifer L. Matjasko. 2005. "The Role of School-Based Activities in Adolescent Development: A Comprehensive Review and Future Direction." *Review of Educational Research*: 75:2.

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