

Cheer On: Students' Perceptions of Extracurricular Participation  
and Parental Involvement

by

Emily M. Faber

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Dr. Barbara Flom

The Graduate School  
University of Wisconsin-Stout

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**The Graduate School  
University of Wisconsin-Stout  
Menomonie, WI**

**Author:** Faber, Emily M.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to find insight from students about their feelings of involvement in extracurricular activities and parent participation. The focus is three research questions, which explore what benefits students feel they receive for participating in extracurricular activities, whether students participate in more activities if supported by parents, and how students feel about parent involvement. Discussed in the literature review are the benefits of extracurricular activities, benefits of parental involvement in school, and benefits of parental involvement in student extracurricular activities.

An original survey, produced by the researcher, was distributed in the spring of 2008 to a senior class in a rural Midwestern school. Results from the survey showed that students were able to identify various benefits of being extracurricular activities and having their parents around to support them. Although limited by a homogeneous sample, this study provides a piece of

information which can be used for further investigation and helpful insight for educators in making connections between home and school.

The Graduate School  
University of Wisconsin Stout  
Menomonie, WI  
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
.....	
ABSTRACT.....	ii
Chapter I: Introduction.....	1
<i>Statement of the Problem</i> .....	3
<i>Purpose of the Study</i> .....	4
<i>Research Questions</i> .....	4
<i>Definition of Terms</i> .....	4
<i>Assumptions and Limitations</i> .....	5
Chapter II: Literature Review.....	6
Chapter III: Methodology.....	13
<i>Subject Selection and Description</i> .....	13
<i>Instrumentation</i> .....	14
<i>Data Collection Procedures</i> .....	14
<i>Data Analysis</i> .....	14
<i>Limitations</i> .....	15
Chapter IV: Results.....	16
<i>Item Analysis</i> .....	16
<i>Summary</i> .....	19
Chapter V: Discussion.....	21
<i>Summary &amp; Limitations</i> .....	21
<i>Conclusions</i> .....	22
<i>Recommendations</i> .....	23
References.....	25

Appendix A: Extracurricular Survey ..... 28

Appendix B: Consent Form ..... 30

## Chapter I: Introduction

One of my fondest memories of high school is participating in band and choir. At every concert as we assembled out to perform, the first thing I would do is look for my family who was always out there cheering me on. Sometimes they would embarrass me by yelling my name, but most of all it was a boost of confidence and pride to show them what I could do. This encouragement and support may have been the biggest influences on being quite actively involved in high school with volleyball, cheerleading, various music groups, forensics, and student government. Does this same positive parental involvement influence other high school students in participating in extracurricular activities? This study explores the importance of extracurricular activities and parental involvement in the lives of high school students.

Today, students have a wide variety and numerous opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities, more so than ever before (Richter, 2002). As male students are needed less to help out with family responsibilities, more time is devoted to being involved with activities like football, basketball, and baseball. Each season brings new sports. This extra time also opens them up to explore various interests in things like music groups, art and drama clubs. Female opportunities have exploded in the last three decades. New leagues of hockey and soccer are forming and girls across the country are making the football and wrestling teams. With all these new experiences, students get to challenge themselves in exciting ways. Guest and Schneider (2003, p. 89) described adolescents' participation in extracurricular activities as often associated with positive behavioral outcomes, which implies that activities directly shape adolescents' development. Various studies, to be addressed in the literature review, show the

relationship built between extracurricular activities and important outcomes such as academic achievement and future aspirations. The bottom line focuses on the needs of high school students. This is an experimental transition period, which facilitates the first steps into adulthood. Defining moments litter the hallways of our schools as students gain insight into who they are and what they want to become. These building block experiences influence the decisions they will make, which will set up the rest of their lives. A key ingredient in these building blocks is parent encouragement. One of the best ways parents can support their students is by becoming involved in their educational experience.

Effective parent involvement should match the needs of the school and community (Barrera & Warner, 2006), but more importantly of their children (Brooks, 2000). As children's needs may vary, so will the parent involvement, accordingly. Buttery and Anderson (1999) described a number of levels of involvement which can help students achieve success. Some parents are needed to stand in the crowd and display good sportsmanship during the game, while others may raise funds to help operate clubs' or organizations' activities. Still others may take more of a representative role through membership in the PTA or school board. The needs of students can vary throughout the school year and can make involvement a tricky continuum along which parents can be found at various points.

As important as parent involvement is, at the high school level research shows it tends to drop (Simon, 2001) and parents are less likely to participate (Bloomstran, 2002). Some parents say they are uninvolved because they were never asked or that they may embarrass their child by being at school (Rahman, 2001). The argument for independence

can be justified but also achieved by different means while still benefiting from spending time during the final years of living at home. As Bloomstran (2002) described parent-student interaction, it can create a common ground to work on a project together. This gives parents and children a chance to see each other in a different light. Shared weaknesses, strengths, and interests between parents and children can be discovered which are mutually beneficial.

#### *Statement of the Problem*

Previous studies on extracurricular activities and parent involvement have explored the many facets at the elementary and middle school levels. Yet, little has been done specifically with high school, just extended application that what is good for one must be good for the other. Richter (2002) identified in his study that students who were in higher grades of middle school reflected a greater awareness of extracurricular benefits. If an eighth grade student can see some benefits from extracurricular activities, what can twelfth graders see? Expanding this idea further, can twelfth grade students see the benefits of parent involvement? Opening the eyes of both parents and students can create a circle of support, a circle of parents encouraging their children's endeavors while students embracing parent interaction.

This research study explored the perceptions of students at the high school level on the benefits of extracurricular activities and parental involvement in their academic experience. Data were collected and analyzed to promote a better understanding emerge of the parent and child interaction in the educational setting.

### *Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this investigation was to determine the effects of active parental support on high school students' participation in extracurricular activities. Data collection occurred through surveys given to an entire senior class at an area high school during the spring of 2008. By surveying the senior class, an overall progression of participation in extracurricular, along with the parental role during a student's high school experience was obtained.

### *Research Questions*

The researcher decided to focus on three relevant questions to address for the purpose of this paper, which are:

What benefits do students feel they receive for participating in extracurricular activities?

Do students participate in more activities if supported by parents?

How do students feel about parent involvement?

### *Definition of Terms*

Terms in this paper that need to be defined are those with multiple definitions and interpretations depending on particular situations. They are listed in alphabetical order and not of importance or as they appear in the paper.

*Extracurricular activities* – These include additional activities not included in the school curriculum. For this study, the researcher modified Donald DeMoulin's categorization (2002) and developed these four groups: Athletics (football, basketball, track, wrestling, swimming, cheerleading, and dance), Arts (band, chorus, and art club), Service/ Leadership Organizations (FFA, FBLA, FHA, student counsel, class officer,

honors society), and Academic Opportunities (forensics, debate team, history and math club).

*Parental involvement* – “Parents’ work with school and with their children to benefit their children’s educational outcomes and future success” (Hill et al., 2004, p. 1491) including activities such as volunteering at school and attending performance events of extracurricular activities.

#### *Assumptions and Limitations of the Study*

A few assumptions and limitations may have influenced the results of this study. The researcher assumed that students were honest when filling out the survey and understood the questions, which appeared on the survey. Another assumption was the developed survey provided the information needed for the study even though the survey has no proven validity or reliability.

The researcher also recognizes the sample of information collected by the survey does not reflect the population. Sample bias may have occurred: those who volunteered to participate may have been more active members of the senior class, making them more willing to participate in the survey about extracurricular activities. The findings cannot be generalized because of the limited representation of various ethnic and racial backgrounds and because the information collected was specific to a small region of rural Wisconsin.

## Chapter II: Literature Review

A thorough review of literature on extracurricular activities and parent involvement needs to begin with the very basics of these topics. Since both have a variety of interpretations to students, parents, and communities, background information is a necessity. For organizational purposes, this review is broken into three sections: benefits of extracurricular activities, benefits of parental involvement, and benefits of parental involvement in student extracurricular activities. The first two sections will describe what each term means and discuss previous studies which focused on the topic. The final section follows up with the benefits of parent involvement in extracurricular activities for students.

### *Benefits of Extracurricular Activities*

This discussion begins with extracurricular activities, which can include co-curricular activities. These activities can be simply divided into athletics and non-athletics or with great detail into several categories such as athletics, fine arts, service/student government, newspaper/yearbook, drama, and vocational clubs (Broh, 2002; Richter, 2002). Although each study examined extracurricular activities by labeling them in their own unique categories, each included the most common activities found throughout the country. The division of categories was directly related to the various activities available within the community where the study occurred. Just like the importance of defining extracurricular activities in this study, each study needed categories to better identify how the survey was built and interpreted.

The study published by Guest and Schneider (2003) began with relating adolescents' participation in extracurricular activities with positive behavioral outcomes.

This study examined the association of different activities, achievement, and ambition. Data collection was done during a five-year longitudinal study in Chicago. Results concluded, correlations between “non-sports extracurricular activities, achievement, and ambition are consistently positive” and “activities like student government, drama, and journalism are associated with achieving higher grades and aspiring to high levels of education” (Guest & Schneider, 2003, p. 108). However, sports participation was interestingly more complicated. Although still a positive effect occurred, the level was inconsistent and found to be associated with economic status of the school district. In the example given by Guest and Schneider, in low to middle class schools, sports were linked with the positive outcomes of achieving aspirations of higher education. The study found that upper class schools connected sports with a lack of seriousness and achievement to higher education for participating students. The study concluded that the value of extracurricular activities can be identified by the positive correlation with achievement and other intangible skills like discipline and teamwork. Yet, long-term ambition seemed more likely shaped by family background and community norms, which suggested a place for parental involvement in extracurricular activities.

A second study done by Broh (2002) also looked at the benefits of extracurricular activities addressed through three different models. The developmental model explained that sports develop character and socialize students to achieve academic success. The leading-crowd hypothesis reported the increasing social status obtained by sports participation in turn increases academic performance. And finally, the social capital model looked more at the all around benefits of extracurricular activities and remained the focus of the study. This study introduced a “network-analytic approach” which stated

activities engaged students in important social ties that benefit educational outcomes. An example given in the study focused on the “familial and extra familial social interaction,” which strengthened social ties with students, parents, and teachers (Broh, 2002, p. 73). This interaction acted as a social control that encouraged student compliance with school norms and expectations, which foster academic success. Broh (2002, p. 87) concluded, “extracurricular activities enhance students’ achievement” explaining that “structure, adult supervision, and parental involvement are all characteristics of the activities that promote development and social capital.” Here again the study reported an important place for parents.

Richter (2002), a UW-Stout graduate, stated in his thesis that extracurricular activities provided students with the opportunity for the development of skills, cooperation, teamwork, and fulfillment through the prospect of achievement and participation outside of the classroom. Richter focused on middle school students and their perceptions of the benefits of extracurricular activities. When surveyed, middle school student identified interest, peer interaction, challenge, the chance to be a part of something, and winning as the top reasons for participation in extracurricular activities. Interestingly, parental encouragement also appeared high on their list of reasons. Richter also noted that the perceptions of students progressed as the grade level increased, which suggests a need to look at high school students. Once again parental involvement appeared as an influential factor in participating in extracurricular activities.

Other benefits of extracurricular participation are ambition, leadership skills (Richter, 2002), discipline, and dedication (Guest & Schneider, 2003). These values promote positive self-esteem and confidence. Students involved in physical activities

benefit from healthy lifestyle habits, which are important through adulthood. Humanities activities broaden students' understanding of themselves and others by allowing self-expression and deeper awareness of other perspectives (Brooks, 2000). Extracurricular participation provides these perspectives through more adult and student interactions (Bloomstran, 2002). More adults who are caring, positive influences in students' lives reinforce model behavior.

### *Benefits of Parental Involvement*

Parent involvement is not a new idea or fad that just emerged in the last few decades. Parent involvement throughout the years has existed at the elementary school level. Parents volunteer for career day, fieldtrips, and snacks on a regular basis. "They are an integral part of the elementary experience" (Bloomstran, 2002, p. 34). This interaction between teacher, parent, and student keeps the lines of communication open and enhances academic achievement. However, as students progress into middle and high school, parental involvement diminishes (Bloomstran, 2002). Nevertheless, parents are still an influential part of students' lives regardless of grade level. This involvement can include a variety of activities such as: booster clubs (Bloomstran, 2002), organizers of school events, tutors, and attending students' performances and/or sporting events (Barrera & Warner, 2006). Directly or indirectly, parents can support and help schools in children's learning in many ways.

A review of parental involvement looked at its relationship with student behavior, achievement, and aspirations (Hill, et al., 2004). Hill et al. surveyed parents, teachers, and students to get a full perspective of all perceptions. Results showed parent involvement in middle school led to fewer behavior problems and higher aspirations later on. A powerful

fact from the study reported students' perceptions of parent involvement as more positive than perceptions of parents and teachers. It is students' perceptions and successes that are the reasons for these studies.

Rahman (2001) also examined parent involvement and student success in a local context. In her thesis, Rahman surveyed parents about their perceptions of their involvement, own educational experience, and expectations for their children. The results showed no significant differences statistically. A side factor pointed out as a limitation took into account the rural Wisconsin community where the study was completed. Since this community was small and mostly homogenous, values and social norms were deeply rooted. As Bloomstran (2002, p. 39) stated, "it does take a village to raise a child, and that raising doesn't end with elementary school."

Other studies used parent involvement as the starting place, and determined the more parents were involved, the greater the student achievement and parents need to recognize the needs of their children (Brooks, 2000). Stormshak, Dishion, Light, and Yasui (2005) explored the use of interventions to help improve academic outcomes. Through the use of a family resource center, this intermediate resource provided ample communication to identify the needs of children, which once met decreased at-risk behaviors and increased academic success. Simon (2001) took a different approach and saw the school, families, and community as a partnership. Together they were accountable for supporting students' achievement by each playing a key role of involvement. Both studies advocated for encouraging parent involvement although used different approaches.

### *Benefits of Parental Involvement in Extracurricular Activities*

Parents' biggest advantage over anyone else in students' lives is the stable and continuous influence they provide (Mji & Mbinda, 2005). Parents influence values, attitudes, and behaviors of students, which happens during interactions between parent and child. Parental involvement at school and in extracurricular activities can facilitate a positive environment, which promotes student success. Perino (2000) identified a cycle that continues only with the influence of the other components. Perino found parental involvement influences student participation in extracurricular activities, which influences higher achievement, which influences parental involvement. As this cycle continues, students transition through high school having positive experiences with social interactions and successful academic achievement with future aspirations.

Falbo and Lein (2001) identified three parental actions which were most common for high school transitions: monitoring, evaluating, and intervening. Monitoring included observing their child's activities and listening to what is going on in their activities. Evaluating was described as comparing their child's experience with their own and older children. Intervening was actually playing a role in extracurricular activities. It was in this realm where parents modeled and sent the message of the importance of extracurricular participation. Shannon (2006) identified several categories of messages that parents say to their children. These message categories were that leisure provides relaxation, that different activities have different importance, that activities can be a means to an end, and that parents may send mixed messages about activities. Sharing these messages reveals parents' attitudes and values regarding extracurricular participation, which influences the activities children choose.

Beyond parental influence, students pick extracurricular activities based on personal enjoyment and skill, peer involvement, and benefits or challenges the activity presents. These factors influence social and personal development. Interactions facilitated during extracurricular participation provide practice with communication skills, teamwork, and goal setting (Broh, 2002). This opportunity for positive self-development is not the only important positive outcome of extracurricular participation. A sense of belonging is a significant outcome of extracurricular activities; belonging is a need of all students (Shannon, 2006; Richter, 2002). This need must be met to achieve success in the classroom.

Further study is needed to continue to add to the body of knowledge about the importance of parental involvement and extracurricular participation in students' achievement and development in high school. This gap in literature at the high school level can provide insight to leading students in the transition to higher education or to the world of work. A look at students' perceptions in a rural Wisconsin community is necessary to examine the connections between high school experience in extracurricular activities and parent involvement.

### Chapter III: Methodology

This chapter will include information about how the sample was selected, a description of the sample, and a description about the instrument used. In addition, data collection and data analysis procedures will be given. The chapter will conclude with the methodological limitations.

#### *Subject Selection and Description*

Selection began with approval from the IRB and the school administration to allow the study, and agreement from the classroom teachers to permit time for the survey. The researcher chose high school seniors for participants. The chosen school was a junior/senior high which enrolls 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders. It was located in a rural Midwestern community with a population of approximately 1,000 people. The ethnicity of the student body was predominately White (97.2%), with a small number of Hispanic (1%), Native American (<1%), and Black (<1%) populations. The average cost of living was 85% of the national average, which is just under Wisconsin's average of 88%.

All senior students were invited to participate. The senior students ranged from the ages of 17 to 19 years old and included males and females. Female population (45.5%) was smaller than males. Consent from parents and students was collected for all students who wished to participate. High school seniors were chosen because of their full experience of at least four years of high school. A total of 37 out of 60 students (62%) volunteered for participation in the survey.

#### *Instrumentation*

For this study the researcher created a survey (See Appendix A). Examples provided by other studies were used to produce questions and a format that best appealed

to high school seniors. Particularly, Randall Richter's (2002) SPARE Time Questionnaire influenced the type of questions and format used. Communication with Richter allowed for the adaptation of the questionnaire to address research questions.

#### *Data Collection Procedures*

Once approval of district administration and affected teachers was obtained, the researcher attended every section of each senior English class on a day during the spring semester of 2008 to explain the study and invite participation. The class selected was English because every senior had to take an English class their senior year as a graduation requirement. After consent forms (See Appendix B) were signed and collected by parents and students who were willing to participate, the researcher returned to the class a week later to administer the ten-minute survey. A reminder introduction and purpose of the survey were given this included a reminder that participation was voluntary; the researcher handed out surveys to students to complete in a timely manner and returned once finished. The collection ended with a thank you and appreciation for their time. Students who not participate in the survey sat quietly and worked on other assignments while survey was conducted

#### *Data Analysis*

The researcher analyzed the data once information from the surveys was obtained. Frequency counts and percentages were used to compare information given by the surveys collected.

#### *Limitations*

Possible limitations for this study related to the survey and the participants. Since the researcher developed this survey specifically for this study, no testing of the

instrument was conducted. Therefore the survey has no proven validity or reliability. Sample bias is a another consideration: those who volunteered to participate may have been the more active members of the senior class, making them more willing to participate in a survey about extracurricular activities. The findings cannot be generalized because of the limited representation of various ethnic and racial backgrounds and because the information collected was specific to a small region of rural Wisconsin. Also, the environment in which the survey was administered had limited privacy, which may have skewed the answers given by the students.

## Chapter IV: Results

This chapter will discuss the results found from the Extracurricular Questionnaire. A detailed look at the responses for each question will be provided. This chapter will conclude by summarizing the results.

### *Participants*

A look at students' perceptions of extracurricular activities and parental involvement was accomplished by surveying a senior class in a rural Wisconsin public school. Of a class of 60 students, 37 students (62%), with parents' permission, voluntarily completed the survey produced for this research project. Participants were primarily White. They ranged in age from 17 to 19 years old. The participants were seniors in their English class during the spring semester of 2008.

### *Item Analysis*

The survey contained two parts: questions on the front side for those who did not participate in extracurricular activities and questions on the back side for those who did participate in extracurricular activities, which will follow the question results in the item analysis.

The first question asked which activities they have been involved with during high school. All 37 respondents checked at least one of the activities listed; 4 wrote in other activities that were not listed. Five of the students checked only one activity, either an academic club such as FFA or FCCLA, or an athletic sport. The highest number of activities checked by one respondent was 12 activities, which included a variety of activities from academic/clubs and sports. Of the respondents who checked two or more

activities, 25 (68%) reported to have been involved with both academic clubs and athletics, and 5 (13.5%) respondents checked only athletic activities.

The second question asked the students who did not check any activities if they were interested in any of the activities listed. Five respondents (13.5%) circled yes. However, these respondents had checked one of the activities in question one. The participants who answered that they were not involved in extracurricular activities and still marked at least one, provided answers congruent with currently no longer being involved in extracurricular activities. Answers seemed to provide reasons for not being involved, such as expressing no interest or being unable due to injury or lack of permission.

The third question asked the students who did not check any activities, “What could your parent, teachers, school or you have done for you to participate in some of these activities?” Four respondents (10.8%) answered this short answer question with the following answers: “none- chose to work,” “encourage me,” “don’t know,” and “parent could have agreed to me participating.”

The fourth question asked the students who did not check any activities, “What is the main reason that you have not participated on any organized activities?” Five respondents (13.5%) answered this short answer question with the following answers: “work,” “don’t like them,” “didn’t want to,” “have better things to do,” and “never felt the urge or commitment.”

The fifth question asked the students who did not check any activities, “If you have participated in activities in the past, why are you not now participating in activities?” The five respondents (13.5%) answered this short answer question with the

following answers: “knee issues,” “don’t wanna,” “activities are over,” “hated coach,” and “had to quit.”

The second side of the survey was intended for students to complete who had checked involvement in activities. The first question asked the students how many activities they had been involved in at one time. Choices given for answers for this question were 1-3, 4-6, or 7 or more. Of the 37 participants, 32 responded (86%) to this question. Responses were as follows: 16 (45%) checked 1-3; 10 (28%) checked 4-6; and 6 (17%) checked 7 or more.

The second question asked the students, “Comparing your previous high school years, are you now involved in more, less or the same number of activities?” Of the 37 participants, 35 (95%) responded. Eight (23%) respondents checked more, 16 (45.7%) checked the same and 11 (31.4%) checked fewer activities than their previous years.

The third question asked the students what of these possible benefits were reasons they participated. Of the benefits listed, 34 (92%) participants responded “it’s fun.” Other benefits with majority of respondents checking were “hang out with friends” (78.4%), and “it’s healthy” (56.8%). Eighteen respondents (48.6%) saw “something for after school,” and 12 respondents (32%) saw “to get into college” as a benefit. Other responses written in were “love to be active,” “competitive,” and “get into shape.”

The fourth question asked the students in what ways are your parents/guardian involved with your extracurricular activities. Of the possible choices, 30 (81.1%) students responded “spectator.” Again, the majority responded, “provides assistance when asked” (51.4%), and fewer answered “discusses activities” (43%). Only 3 (8.1%) students

responded that their parent/guardian was a “member of parent club.” One respondent wrote-in the answer, “they’re not” in the other category.

The fifth question asked the students “Are you comfortable with the amount of involvement for your parent?” Of the 37 participants, 30 (81%) responded “yes” to this question and only 5 (13.5%) responded “no.” In accordance with the next question 4 out of the 5 that stated “no” wanted more involvement.

The sixth question asked the students, “Would you like your parent to be more involved?” Of the 37 participants, 22 (59.5%) responded to this question with “no” and 8 (21.6%) responded “yes.” Two (5.4%) other participants responded with the write-in “maybe.” Twenty of the 22 who said “no” did have parents involved at some level.

The final question asked the students what benefits they received from parent involvement. Of the 37 participants, 19 (51.4%) checked “feel closer with parent,” and 16 (43.2%) checked “better at activity” being the majority. Thirteen (35.1%) checked “future opportunities,” and 11 (29.7%) checked “better grades” to make the list of top four answers. Another 5 respondents to this question wrote-in “none” as an answer.

### *Summary*

Now with the results of the extracurricular survey, answers to the research questions can be identified. Those questions were: what benefits do students feel they receive for participating in extracurricular activities, do students participate in more activities if supported by parents, and how do students feel about parent involvement? Each question will be addressed separately.

Students seemed to identify with a number of benefits for participating in extracurricular activities. To have fun, hang out with friends, and health were the most popular answers recognized by students. Others acknowledged something to do after school and it assists in getting into college while a few wrote-in competitive and a hobby as benefits.

Participation of students with supportive parents compared to less supportive parents is hard to identify due to the wide range of answers. However, the one respondent who wrote-in “my biggest fans” as the answer to in what ways are your parents involved with your extracurricular activities also reported to participate in 7 different activities. On the other hand, the respondent who wrote-in “there not” for the same question reported to only be involved in 1 activity.

Students’ feelings on parent involvement too showed mixed responses. Only 5 respondents wrote-in “none” as benefits of parental involvement which leads to believe students value parent participation. Even the respondent who wrote in “there not” as a way of parent involvement, and reported being comfortable with that amount, still identified the benefits of parent involvement as “feel closer with parent” and “better grades.”

This survey has provided some insight as to the perceptions of high school seniors toward extracurricular activities and parent involvement. A majority can notice the various paybacks they receive for being active and having their parents around to support them.

## Chapter V: Discussion

This chapter will review the study. It will begin by discussing a summary and its limitations. It will also provide a conclusion that compares the study with the literature review and finally present recommendations for future research.

### *Summary & Limitations*

Student participation in extracurricular activities has proven valuable to students' educational experience. Parental involvement even at the high school level additionally shows similar benefits for students. This investigation gave insight to one particular senior class's experience during their high school career. The results gave valuable information about the importance of extracurricular and parent involvement from the students' point of view.

Those respondents who indicated being involved in activities did provide some insight as to their knowledge of the importance of extracurricular activities and parent involvement. Most could identify at least one the social benefits of being involved. Some, also, could recognize the value of the health benefits. The notion that extracurricular activities can help with college admission, however, was not largely acknowledged. Most expressed they were comfortable with their parents' involvement and felt no need for more parental involvement opportunities. Yet, many could comprehend that they do receive benefits from interaction with their parents. Feeling closer to a parent was a key advantage of involvement, which students seemed to embrace. Those five participants who reported no benefits of parent involvements tended not to feel comfortable with the amount of current involvement, nor did they want their parents to become more involved.

Limitations for this study related to the survey and the participants. Since the researcher developed this survey specifically for this study, no testing of the instrument was conducted. Therefore the survey has no proven validity or reliability. However, the survey answered the research questions, indicating face validity. Sample bias is another consideration. Those who volunteered to participate may have been the more active members of the senior class, making them more willing to participate in a survey about extracurricular activities. The small size of this school district usually coincides with a higher amount of participants in extracurricular activities, due to the lack of competition within the school. Also, the environment in which the survey was administered had limited privacy, which may have skewed the answers given by the students. A final limitation found during implementation was the misunderstanding of instructions by the students. Six students who checked activities of involvement continued to answer the questions specifically for students who had not checked any activities.

### *Conclusions*

The results of this study coincide with the research that began this project. The benefits of extracurricular activities and parent involvement can be identified by students at the high school level. Richter (2002) identified the middle school students' perceptions of the benefits of extracurricular activities as interest, peer interaction, and the chance to be a part of something. The high school students in this study clearly identified each of those listed by Richter, and they included the health and competitive benefits also. As Bloomstran identified, parental involvement may diminish as students enter high school, but parents still play an influential role in student's life. The high school students in this study provide evidence that parents can affect their children's experience in

extracurricular activities. Students acknowledge the closer relationship gained from parental involvement, and most were comfortable with the interactions resulting from parent involvement.

The influence parents have on extracurricular activities as discussed in the research by Mji and Mbinda (2005) also emerged in this study. As one respondent implied, if parents would have encouraged more participation, then more involvement in activities would have occurred. In Perino's (2000) cycle of parent involvement, extracurricular participation and higher achievement, the study also shows respondents with positive parental involvement linked to more student involvement. The rural community furthermore supported extracurricular participation, which Perino identified as beneficial to adolescences.

### *Recommendations*

A message for educators and future researchers is necessary to continue the understanding of the importance of extracurricular activities and parental involvement. Student involvement in extracurricular activities is a key piece of growing up. Students acquire skills which are needed in and outside the classroom to be successful. The most influential individuals in students' lives are parents; educators need to encourage their involvement and support of students' endeavors. From the perspective of a guidance counselor, great opportunities can be implemented to support parent involvement such as parent/student informational meetings, educational seminars, and open houses to make connections with school staff, parents and students. Counselors can also play a facilitative role to include parents in more activities sponsored by the school and assist teachers and coaches in finding opportunities to include parents in extracurricular activities.

As this study provides a small piece of information about student perspectives at the high school level, more research can enhance this data and follow up with parent perspectives and students at varying levels, not just the senior students. Possibly a longitudinal study could be conducted to show perspective change over time. Other research that focuses on other geographical areas or widens the population to include a greater variance in race or ethnicity could provide more useful information. Nevertheless, information on this subject is abundant and could help educators enhance students' educational experience.

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## Appendix A: Extracurricular Survey

This research has been approved by the UW-Stout IRB as required by the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46.

## Extracurricular Questionnaire

As part of a research project on extracurricular activities, your responses to the following questions are requested. Please answer each question about the activities you are involved in, the reasons you do or do not participate in activities, and the items about the benefits or problems that you have experienced from being a part of the activities.

Your completion of the survey assumes your consent to participate in this study.

DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME ON QUESTIONNAIRE!!

1) I have been involved in the following activities during my high school career:

<input type="checkbox"/> Band	<input type="checkbox"/> FFA	<input type="checkbox"/> Soccer	<input type="checkbox"/> Track
<input type="checkbox"/> Choir	<input type="checkbox"/> FCCLA	<input type="checkbox"/> Football	<input type="checkbox"/> Wrestling
<input type="checkbox"/> Orchestra	<input type="checkbox"/> Year Book	<input type="checkbox"/> Volleyball	<input type="checkbox"/> Baseball
<input type="checkbox"/> Men's Choir	<input type="checkbox"/> Student Council	<input type="checkbox"/> Basketball	<input type="checkbox"/> Hockey
<input type="checkbox"/> Jazz Ensemble	<input type="checkbox"/> Spanish Club	<input type="checkbox"/> Cross Country	<input type="checkbox"/> Tennis
<input type="checkbox"/> Dance	<input type="checkbox"/> Forensics	<input type="checkbox"/> Cheerleading	<input type="checkbox"/> Softball
<input type="checkbox"/> Science Club	<input type="checkbox"/> School Play	<input type="checkbox"/> Swimming	<input type="checkbox"/> Honor Society

Others, please specify:

If you checked any of the above activities skip to question #7 (back side).

- 3) If you were not involved in activities listed, were you interested in any of these activities?    YES    NO
- 4) What could your parents, teachers, school, or you have done for you to participate in some of these organized activities?
- 5) What is the main reason that you have not participated in any organized activities?
- 6) If you have participated in activities in the past, why are you not now participating in activities?

**Thank You!**

7) How many activities have you been involved in at one time?

\_\_\_\_\_ 1-3      \_\_\_\_\_ 4-6      \_\_\_\_\_ 7 or more

8) Comparing your previous high school years are you now involved in:

\_\_\_\_\_ more activities      \_\_\_\_\_ the same number      \_\_\_\_\_ fewer activities

9) What of these possible benefits are reasons you participate?

\_\_\_\_\_ it's healthy      \_\_\_\_\_ it's fun  
 \_\_\_\_\_ hang out with friends      \_\_\_\_\_ to get into college  
 \_\_\_\_\_ something for after school      other: \_\_\_\_\_

14) In what ways are your parents/guardian involved with your extracurricular activities?

\_\_\_\_\_ spectator      \_\_\_\_\_ member of parent club  
 \_\_\_\_\_ drives you to practice      \_\_\_\_\_ provides assistance when asked  
 \_\_\_\_\_ discusses activities      \_\_\_\_\_ coaches/ teaches

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

15) Are you comfortable with the amount of involvement for your parent?

YES      NO

16) Would you like your parent to be more involved?      YES      NO

17) What benefits do you receive from parent involvement?

\_\_\_\_\_ feel closer with parent      \_\_\_\_\_ better grades  
 \_\_\_\_\_ better at activity      \_\_\_\_\_ closer with coach/ teacher  
 \_\_\_\_\_ future opportunities

other: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank You!!

## Appendix B: Consent Form

**Consent to Participate In UW-Stout Approved Research**

**Title: Cheer On: Students' perceptions of extracurricular participation and parental involvement**

**Investigator:**

*Emily Faber, graduate student at UW- Stout, Menomonie, WI  
715-308-0201, faberem@uwstout.edu*

**Research Sponsor:**

*Dr. Barbara Flom, thesis advisor  
UW-Stout,  
715-232-1343, flomb@uwstout.edu*

**Description:**

High school students have rarely been surveyed about their involvement in extracurricular activities. This survey asks high school seniors about their participation in extracurriculars and their opinion about the benefits of parent involvement. One researcher found students in eighth grade could identify the benefits of extracurricular activities. Now, I would like to see what students in twelfth grade are aware of as extracurricular benefits. Expanding this idea further, can twelfth grade students see the benefits of parent involvement? I hope to open the eyes of both parents and students to create a circle of support. A circle of: parents encouraging their children's endeavors while students embracing parent interaction.

**Risks and Benefits:**

With any activity, there are possible risks and benefits of participation. The risks in participating in this survey are very minimal; one possible risk could include students being uncomfortable thinking about extracurricular activities if they have had an unfortunate experience.

Benefits of this survey will include a better understanding for educators of the importance of extracurricular activities and parent involvement. Also, it allows students to speak out about their extracurricular experiences, positive or negative.

**Special Populations:**

This survey requires your parent's consent due to the fact you are considered a minor. Without your parent's consent, you will not be able to participate.

**Time Commitment:**

This survey will be completed during regular school hours and will only take a few minutes of your time.

**Confidentiality:**

Your name will not be included on any documents. You cannot be identified from any of the information on this survey. This informed consent form will be kept separate from any of the other documents completed with this project

**Right to Withdraw:**

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate without any adverse consequences. Should you choose to participate and later wish to withdraw from the study, you may discontinue participation at any time without any consequences.

**IRB Approval:**

This study has been reviewed and approved by The University of Wisconsin-Stout's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has determined that this study meets the ethical obligations required by federal law and University policies. If you have questions or concerns regarding this study please contact the Investigator or Advisor. If you have any questions, concerns, or reports regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the IRB Administrator.

**Investigator:** Emily Faber,  
715-308-0201, [faberem@uwstout.edu](mailto:faberem@uwstout.edu)

**IRB Administrator**  
Sue Foxwell, Director, Research  
Services  
152 Vocational Rehabilitation Bldg.  
Menomonie, WI 54751  
715-232-2477  
[foxwells@uwstout.edu](mailto:foxwells@uwstout.edu)

**Advisor:** Dr. Barbara Flom, Associate Professor  
UW-Stout  
715-232-1343, [flomb@uwstout.edu](mailto:flomb@uwstout.edu)

**Statement of Consent:**

Parents, if you want your child to participate in this survey, **Cheer On: Students' perceptions of extracurricular participation and parental involvement**, please sign and return this form by April 11, 2008.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature..... Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of parent or guardian:..... Date