

PARTICIPANTS IN ACTIVITY PROGRAMS DO BETTER IN CLASSROOM

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By Don Showalter

Several years ago, I read with interest the results of a survey by Scott Kibby from Cedar Rapids (Iowa) Jefferson High School regarding the correlation between grade-point averages and involvement in high school activity programs. This information motivated me to discover what impact activities had on grades in our school – Mid-Prairie High School in Wellman, Iowa.

I had a good idea about the correlation of activities and performances in the classroom but wanted to provide some proof to my theory that students involved in activities; fine arts activities in band, chorus and drama; Future Farmers of America (FFA); and speech. I took the cumulative grade points through the third quarter of last school year for all students and determined the students' participation in no activities, one activity, two activities and three or more activities. I then averaged the grade-point average of each student with the number of activities that they participated in during this year. The three-year results are broken down by classification in school as well.

Obviously, the results confirmed my belief that students who are involved in activity programs do much better in the classroom. Additionally, our survey indicated that the grades improved with each additional activity in which the student was involved.

For the most part, the grade-point averages of those involved in activity programs improved each of the past three years, and within each year of school, student's performances in the classroom improved.

This past year (2007-08) was particularly noteworthy for those students involved in three or more activities. Ninth-graders registered a 3.60 GPA, followed by 3.59 for sophomores, 3.50 for juniors and an astounding 3.86 for seniors. The 3.86 figure was more than double the average GPA for seniors involved in no activities last year (1.90).

Perhaps the most extraordinary of all the figures in the survey was the vast disparity in the numbers of those involved in no activities and those who participated in at least one activity. This past year, the average GPA for those involved in no activities was 2.02, compared to 3.17 for those in one activity, 3.52 for those in two activities and 3.62 for those in three or more activities. In other words, those involved in activities were "A" and "B" students while those not involved in activities were low "C" or high "D" students.

There are a number of reasons why students involved in activities do better academically:

- Students are better "connected" to school when involved in activities. These students have pride in their school and their performance in the classroom as well as on the athletic field or stage.
- Students are put in other situations where they are with and taught by caring, supporting educators. These coaches and sponsors make good "connections" with the students. They

monitor attendance, behavior and grades for each participant in their activity. They are mentors who help students with personal skills as well as academic issues.

- Activities teach a strong work ethic and many personal skills like responsibility to the team. Activities teach students to set goals and the process by which they can be obtained. These students make a connection to the school. The fact that these students are around caring and hard-working coaches is vital to academic success.

There is much discussion on the state and national levels about increasing educational standards and improving student performance. There seems to be all sorts of programs and ideas on how to increase the performance of students in the classroom. Why not require students to be in a minimum of one activity each year? This may be somewhat of a radical thought, but I have so much faith in the power of activities that I think we would see increased performance in our students.

Average GPAs	9th Grade	10th Grade	11th Grade	12th Grade	Total
GPA for students who are in NO activities	(05-06) 2.14	2.22	2.1	2.33	2.14
	(06-07) 2.06	2.12	2.18	2.04	2.1
	(07-08) 2.02	2	2.14	1.9	2.02
GPA for students who are in ONE activity	(05-06) 3.10	3.12	3.23	3.13	3.18
	(06-07) 3.15	3.21	3.14	3.33	3.23
	(07-08) 3.00	3.22	3.3	3.2	3.17
GPA for students who are in TWO activities	(05-06) 3.30	3.33	3.4	3.23	3.33
	(06-07) 3.33	3.34	3.4	3.45	3.41
	(07-08) 3.40	3.44	3.5	3.6	3.52
GPA for students who are in THREE activities	(05-06) 3.42	3.4	3.67	3.33	3.45
	(06-07) 3.52	3.45	3.5	3.75	3.55
	(07-08) 3.60	3.59	3.5	3.86	3.62

Don Showalter is the athletic director and boys basketball coach at Mid-Prairie High School in Wellman, Iowa, a dual position he has held for the past 24 years. Showalter is a member of the High School Today Publications Committee and just recently concluded 12 years on the Publications Committee of the NFHS Coaches' Quarterly, including the last seven years as chair.