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# Student Participation in School Sponsored Extra-curricular Activities at the Elementary School Level and the Impact of Student Engagement

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STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL SPONSORED

EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AT THE

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEVEL AND THE IMPACT OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Kirsten D. Myers

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Psychology

May 2019

# Dissertation Approval

       This is to certify that the thesis presented to us by _____

on the _____ day of _____, 20\_\_\_, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

the degree of Doctor of Psychology, has been examined and is acceptable in both scholarship and

literary quality.

       Committee Members' Signatures:

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Abstract

Getting students involved in their day to day educational processes is often challenging and, in some schools, systems appear almost unrealistic. Students in school do not often see the value of or make the connection with the importance of education. Students see movie stars such as Jennifer Lawrence drop out of school at fourteen, singers, rappers and others in the entertainment industry who are successful and make millions without an education. The potential of a YouTube posting, turning someone into a star looms in their imaginations and they think it could happen to them. Students today are even more enticed by technology and the possibilities. In communities throughout the United States, school does not offer a sense of belonging, of personal expression or of freedom to experiment with acceptance. Competing with so much external stimuli, schools face an uphill battle with improving student engagement. In some communities throughout the United States, students feel that the schools do not provide for them a sense of belonging, the opportunity for personal expression or the freedom to experiment with self-proclaimed ideas or preparation for future goals. Getting students engaged early in their educational careers could possibly make all the difference as they navigate middle and high school. Appleton, 2009, noted that student engagement involves both observable and internal engagement. Observable engagement involves things one sees in the academic setting in the classroom such as participating in the class, identified as academic functioning, and behavioral engagement such as attendance and behavior. Internal engagement encompasses both the cognitive and the affective. The cognitive engagement includes the relevance of school work and personal goals; the affective

engagement identifies the students' sense of belonging and school connectedness.

Positive student engagement could change the trajectory of a student's outlook on school,

on education and on life.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

**Statement of the Problem**

In today's society with non-educational leaders' and government's involvement in the school system, the main focus has been on accountability for teaching students what they need to know in order to be successful in today's world.  Unfortunately, for many bureaucrats and policymakers with no educational background, the only measure for accountability has been to increase high stakes testing in the school environment.  With high stakes testing comes many changes within the school walls, most importantly stifling of teacher's autonomy and creativity.  For many students and teachers, learning has become unfulfilling; the goal post is the major PARCC- Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers assessment that is given annually.  To make sure teachers and students are on pace with meeting the end of the year goal, there are more assessments given such as progress monitoring and quarterly benchmark assessments.  With the added pressure of teachers' jobs being on the line, many of our students develop high levels of anxiety and worries that should not be shouldered at such a young age. A study by the Council of the Great City Schools, which represents urban education, found in a 2015 study that the average student between pre-kindergarten to twelfth grade takes an average of 112 mandated standardized tests.

Students are not enjoying their educational processes and are not feeling motivated or fulfilled.  Sarason (1996) noted that students, both in the urban and the suburban communities, although bright, have been turned off by school.  Outside the school walls students are observed being engaged, active and motivated but not so inside

school.  This has led them to become increasingly more and more disengaged with the

academic school setting.  Students are not feeling motivated or fulfilled and have become

increasingly  more and more disengaged with the academic school setting.  To put it

simply, school is not fun or relevant to them anymore.  Students today do not appreciate

the adult pressures they face on a daily basis, having no reprieve of school related

pleasures such as hands on projects and activities.  School systems begin at an early age

to instill "Stepford" like qualities beginning in kindergarten, where students are no longer

having naps or enjoying the pleasures of exploration and creativity while they learn.  The

school day schedule is paced out to the minute, which does not allow for much deviation

in curriculum.  Because more and more students being turned off by school, they are not

doing their best academically and are exerting only the minimal amount of effort.

Students feel teachers do not understand them or support them, which is understandable

due to the duties that are mandated by the school systems.  Students are not able to

develop real lasting relationships with their teachers, which diminishes their engagement

even further.  If attention is not changed, relative to finding ways to improve student

engagement, school systems will continue the cycle of dissatisfaction with academics and

educational attainment.  The National Center for Education Statistics noted improvement

in the overall dropout rate to 16% in 2015.  However, dropout rates among blacks and

Latinos remain high at 24% and 29%, respectively.  The reality is that the joy of learning

for learning sake has been sucked out of the American educational system.  Although

there are greater demands on the schools than in previous generations, schools must find

creative ways to support students' interest.  Through school based extra-curricular

activities students would be able to have a safe outlet to express themselves physically

and creatively, nurturing the parts of themselves that have been neglected throughout the school day.  By engaging students in activities they are interested in after school, students will feel a sense of community, of purpose and connectedness that will help them flourish holistically.  Focusing on the whole student not only helps the individuals to thrive as good citizens, but also this student engagement prepares them to practice their interpersonal skills, find a sense of belonging and purpose, but most importantly, get them engaged in their own academic progress.  Student engagement, as defined by Finn et al. (1993), noted a feeling of belonging in the school by the student and adopting its aims.  Once externally motivated about one activity, the skills learned will be able to transfer over into the academic setting and increase academic involvement, which leads to everyone's ultimate goal of helping students compete as citizens in the global market/economy.  Student engagement increases self-awareness, purpose and true intrinsic value.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to determine whether or not a school sponsored, extra-curricular after school activity is related to improvements in student engagement; the hope is that such improvements will lead to positive changes in the classroom setting, in academics and in increases in students' sense of belonging.  Positive student engagement increases the student's sense of self as a stakeholder, not only in his or her academic journey, but also in school environment.  Through school sponsored, extra-curricular after school activities, particularly those that are team efforts, students develop greater skills in the areas of persistence, perseverance and resiliency through their daily practices.

As team mates, they learn how to work together, encourage each other, practice and take

constructive criticism as they cheer or display empathy toward each other.  All these

skills are transferrable to the classroom setting as they learn patience to apply skills while

learning.

**Overview**

Student engagement has evolved drastically since Travis Hirschi used the concept

to explain the causes of juvenile delinquency.  It still remains among the leading theories

to address students at-risk of dropping out at the high school level.  Student engagement

continues to be researched in an attempt to understand its vast potential for students of all

ages in the academic setting.  The knowledge of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems

helps to understand the interactions between children's development and environment.

Student engagement is also intertwined in the bioecological development of children as

they navigate their way from the care of their parents to daycare and transition throughout

their school careers and their lives.

Students learn how to understand and matriculate through the complexities that

school, peer relationships and academics bring.  Student engagement provides

opportunities to motivate students and teach them intrinsically to motivate themselves for

lasting, positive changes, which is often contrary to what school systems instill.  PBIS,

behavior charts and weekly treasure boxes are tools that schools use to motivate students

extrinsically into good behavior, better academics and better interpersonal relationships.

Positive student engagement has also been a tool for minority students, diverse students

and culturally under represented students to feel part of the larger culture in the school

environment.  Through student engagement, students feel a greater sense of connection as they develop positive relationships with teachers and peers, creating a positive self-identity as they tackle their academics.  Afterschool and school based extra-curricular programs is one way of improving student engagement.  Making a space available for students to make connections with teachers, faculty and staff in a non-threatening environment allows for true interpersonal connections.  Through these activities students feel comfortable enough in the school setting to take risks in the classroom setting, with academics and beyond.

The research on student engagement has largely been done at the middle and high school levels.  The theory of student engagement has been used at the upper grade levels as an interventional approach to reducing students at risk for dropping out.  However, with all the benefits of student engagement and its ability to span all ages of development, student engagement could be perceived as a potential preventative approach.  Being able to identify the construct that is most important in providing resiliency and retention at an earlier age may be the answer not only to the drop out concerns, but also to potential academic growth and development.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE


**Evolution of Student Engagement**

Every day throughout the United States, students from grades kindergarten to twelfth grade attend school.  American students spend the majority of their days within the confines of the school environment, learning and participating in the educational process, with the hope of becoming literate and of being able to contribute to society at large.  For many students, school is perceived as irrelevant, boring and non- meaningful.  Teachers, parents and researchers have researched for years to identify a technique or way to get students more engaged.  School participation is often mandatory; however, engagement is often an enigma that is hard to solve.  The average disengaged student is not disruptive, but in most cases is compliant and participatory; however, the level of inquiry, passion and critical thinking is missing.  For many students there is not enough pleasure and engagement to sustain them through high school.  Data from the National Center of Education Statistics in 2015 showed that there were 38, 491 youth between the ages of 16-25.  Of those students 2,254 youth between the ages of 16- 25 had not earned a high school diploma and had dropped out.  Although the dropout numbers in the United States have improved, there still is a huge disparity between White students (965) when compared with  Black (356) and Hispanic (771) students, compared with the overall percentage in the population that make up minority students.  Student Engagement is perceived as the theoretical model when studying the dropout phenomenon.  Engagement is vital in school completion and graduation in order to be able to display sufficient social

and academic skills whether in the work world or in the college-bound world

(Christenson et al., 2008; Finn, 2006).  For the past ten years, educational systems and

our society have been trying to identify ways of improving student achievement.

Governmental legislation such as No Child Left Behind, Every Student Succeeds Act and

even Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) have been federal laws, put in place to

advance and improve all student achievement.  The federal government, the states and the

cities have often attempted to try to improve student achievement, wasting thousands of

dollars.  Through high stakes testing such as the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness

for College and Careers (PARCC), benchmark testing and progress monitoring, students

have become increasingly more stressed and anxious.  High stakes testing not only

determines whether or not some professionals retain their jobs, but it also drives the

curriculum and instruction that the students are given.  With depression and anxiety at an

all-time high, students do not display a zest or passion for learning.  Because resources

have been reduced and school systems focus on ways of improving reading, writing and

mathematics, many school systems have had to cut such classes as music and art and

have reduced recess times.  And students have become bored and disengaged with the

educational process.  Sarason (1996) noted that students in both the urban and the

suburban communities, although bright, have been turned off by school and have not

turned on.  Although observed as engaged, active and motivated outside the school walls,

students do not appear to be bringing the same motivation into the learning environment.

This has led them to become increasingly more disengaged with the academic school

setting.  They are not feeling motivated or fulfilled and have become increasingly more

dissatisfied with the educational process and the academic school setting.

In today's schools, educators are not merely responsible for academics but also for teaching the whole child. When one thinks about educating the child one thinks about educating the whole child, socially, emotionally and academically. Socially, educators want students to be able to have good interpersonal relationships and communicate effectively with peers and adults. Emotionally, the aim is to educate them to be resilient; to be able to handle and cope with failure, but also to be able to handle and manage success, which includes having good self-esteem and a sense of self. This includes having an emotional/motivational drive to continue no matter what. And last, but not least, to be proficient and competent academically, and to be productive citizens whether it be continuing higher levels of education, vocational training, being an entrepreneur or an athlete.

Generally speaking, student engagement refers to the student being actively involved in the classroom setting, participating in learning, and being involved in the tasks and activities presented. The concept of student engagement has evolved tremendously; the term first appeared in the book, *Causes for Delinquency* by Hirschi (1969). He theorized in his social bond theory that the lack of social attachments has led to delinquent behavior. Low engagement with norms and social values has led to determining delinquent behavior and crime. Kizmaz (2006) surmised that the increase in student engagement would decrease crime and violent behavior. There are many factors that lead to at-risk failure in school for students, such as socioeconomics, language barriers, race and lack of academic persistence. Through research, behavior and effect have been identified as necessary components for high rates of student engagement, which is a predictor of students' academic performances (Christenson, 2008). Finn

(1993) defined student engagement as adopting a school's aim and the student feeling as if he or she belongs. Newmann (1992) elaborated on the idea of student engagement, stating that it occurred when, "Students make a psychological investment in learning. They try hard to learn what school offers. They take pride not simply in earning the formal indicators of success (grades), but in understanding the material and incorporating or internalizing it in their lives." Using Hirschi's social bond theory, Cernkovich and Giordano (1992) identified school engagement as engagement with school personnel, taking responsibility at school and joining school activities as the three categories that makeup student engagement. As the theory of student engagement evolved, two aspects of student engagement emerged, the behavioral and the affective. Willms (2003) rationalized the behavioral aspects; these are identified by academic participation and attendance as well as all the other activities that may be related to school life. The affective aspect identified the student's senses of belonging, his or her self- identity as it relates to academic outcomes and his or her sense of value as related to education. According to Jimerson (2003), there are three distinctly unique characteristics that makeup student engagement, which included the first two mentioned previously: behavioral and affective. However, a third aspect was added, the cognitive. Accordingly, the cognitive aspect involved how the student perceives him or herself as it relates to school and peers, as well as one's own beliefs and perceptions. The affective aspect took into account one's feelings about school, peers and teachers. The behavioral aspect involves the observable performances and behaviors one observes in the school setting such as a student participating in classwork, attendance and engaging in tasks. Appleton (1992) went a step further in identifying four subtypes, composed of cognitive,

academic, behavioral and affective constructs, making student engagement a

multidimensional construct.  Academics and behavior are considered observable

engagement, and the cognitive and affective are considered internal engagement.


**Bioecological Development of Student Engagement**

The importance of student engagement has been depicted in the research as a

solution to reducing delinquency and dropouts, as well as to reducing criminal behavior

in the community.  Lack of engagement in school has huge consequences, particularly for

teenagers; it results in crime, dropping out, substance abuse and teen pregnancy

(Thompson, 2005, Caraway, 2003, Finn &Rock, 1997).  The powerful relationships of

positive student engagement continue to provide possibilities for improving students'

educational journeys.  The importance of having all students engaged in their educational

journeys has resonated with parents, teachers, families and researchers (Appleton,

Christenson, Furlong, 2008).  Research has shown that student engagement is an

important outcome for academic achievement.  Crossan, Field, Gallacher, Merrill (2003)

noted that academic success was promoted by student engagement.  Furthermore, there

was a positive correlation between behavioral and emotional engagement and academic

achievement (King, 2015) as well as with cognitive engagement and academic

achievement (Pietarinen, Soini, Pyhalto, 2014).  Although most research on student

engagement has focused on the adolescent years of schooling, it is important to note the

importance of student engagement throughout the child's informative and developmental

years.

Bronfenbrenner and Morris' (1998) bioecological theory of human development explains the function of development as a process of individuals interacting with and within their environments.  For many, early childhood, children daycares, pre-schools and early childhood programs are an integral part of their daily lives.  Research has mainly focused on ways of increasing student engagement during their later years in school; however, student engagement is an important part of children's early childhood development.  Early childhood spans the developmental ages of birth to six years old.  Early childhood programs are a critical component in getting children school-ready to meet the greater demands.  Most, if not all early childhood programs focus on the three components/constructs that makeup student engagement.  Prior research has mentioned the constructs of student engagement, which comprises behavioral engagement; these look like participation in classroom activities such as morning meetings, circle time and center activities.  These activities not only display a physical presence but also include active participation in and involvement in learning, attention, effort and persistence because little ones are driven by curiosity and inquiry.  Early childhood programs also incorporate into their curriculum a component of cognitive engagement, during which children are exposed to complex ideas, learn to master and comprehend difficult skills while engaging in age-appropriate ideas.  For many, learning to work together at daycare or at other centers, exposes them to visually recreating themes and verbally retelling stories; this not only challenges them linguistically but also artistically, as they gain confidence in speaking and sharing with others.  For some, the most important part of student engagement is emotional engagement; children begin to learn how to control their emotional responses to the ever-changing environment presented in the classroom.  Not

only does the early childhood child have to compete with other children for the attention

of an adult, but they also have to begin to understand emotions never experienced before.

The classroom environment exposes them to everything from excitement to boredom and

all the emotions in between.  Students, through activities and experiences, learn how to

regulate and monitor their own emotional needs, and eventually, learn how and when to

express certain behaviors either verbally or nonverbally.  As children develop and

navigate through early childhood programs, student engagement is an important aspect

for the student to begin to learn the skill necessary to be successful later on in his or her

educational journey.  During certain developmental milestones, children change not only

physically, but also master developmental tasks accordingly.  Early childhood is defined

as birth to six years old, when children are learning rapidly, not only by exposure to their

environment, but also by linguistic acquisition, socialization and physical tasks.  One

major developmental task during this developmental period is peer play (Newman,

Newman, 2009).  Coolahan et al. (2000) identified peer play as an antecedent to long-

term success in school.  Through early childhood programs children begin to learn

routines and classroom rules, as well as what meaningful friendships are.  They begin to

understand the appropriate way to engage and participate in a group and how to interact

when exposed to new experiences.  Successful early childhood programs promote school

readiness while balancing the child's brain development with positive student-teacher

interactions, exposing them to strategic learning experiences (Barnett, 1995; Biermam et

al., 2008; Currie, 2001).  Research has noted that programs such as Head Start facilitate

behavioral, cognitive and socioemotional competencies; these continue to have an

influence later in their academic achievement and well beyond (Barnett, 1995; Fantuzzo

and McWayne, 2002; Luo, Hughes, Liew and Kwok, 2009).  A huge emphasis has been

placed on behavioral engagement, which is one of the constructs of student engagement

when it comes to success beginning in early childhood education.  Behavioral concerns

are often perceived as an indicator for students at-risk academically and for long-term

academic performance (Coolahan et al. 2000; Fantuzzo and McWayne, 2002).   Linking

developmental tasks with student engagement seems only natural as students maturate

through the bioecological systems, interacting and learning from their environment.  It is

within the early childhood stage of development that cognitive engagement, exposes

children to learn how to regulate their emotions and modulate their efforts.  Self-

regulation is a cognitive task learned within this time period, along with the ability to

follow directions, to establish routines and to exhibit knowledge learned on demand.

Simple problem-solving skills come into play along with visualizing and learning new

concepts.  Learning how to regulate and manage tasks requires persistence, attention,

focus and memory skills in order to be successful.  It is during this period the child is

learning about him/herself and how he or she navigates the environment, the

accomplishments and the challenges. The child is learning how, where and who he or she

can an influence in the environment through his or her interactions.  As noted earlier by

Bierman et al. (2008), academic achievement and school readiness is influenced greatly

by emotional engagement.  It is important to focus on the child's emotional well-being as

he or she participates in early childhood programs.  For little ones, parents have been the

only nurturing adult in their lives prior to attending these programs.  Although most

children have achieved a sense of trust and secure emotional attachments from their home

environments, establishing new bonds are often difficult.  Responsive and caring teachers

are able to facilitate and establish positive interactions with children where they feel

comfortable and reassured.  Not only can teachers nurture students but they also are an

important part in getting children to develop an interest in school and learning (Bierman

et al., 2008).  Research has shown that not only positive interactions with teachers, but

also the development of competent social skills and the generation of a child's sense of

belonging has been shown to reduce aggressive and off-task behaviors (Ramey, Ramey,

2004).  As students maturate through their developmental stages and acquire new skills

and tasks, student engagement is a continuum at each developmental stage.    Developing

brains acquire new academic skills, which can be strengthened and reinforced through

constructs that comprise student engagement.  Engaged students are more likely to reach

their developmental potential successfully, assisted by early childhood programs, coupled

with the right nurturing environment and developmental tasks.

          Middle childhood, which spans the ages of six to twelve, is often a time of self-

exploration, growing independence and management of various relationships.  During

this time period students are pushed and challenged academically not only towards

mastery of subject matter but also towards the beginning of independent thinking.  They

begin to relate to information presented from their own personal, contextualized views

and experiences, and not necessarily from their parents' or teachers' perspectives.

During this stage of development, they also have to contend with their bodies maturing

physically and the challenges that they face during this ever-changing time period.

Middle childhood is a time when students are engaged not only in the classroom setting

but also begin to be more involved in extra-curricular activities as well.  Marks (2000)

noted that student engagement is at the highest during the middle childhood, while

students still attend elementary schools.  During the higher elementary school grade

levels, students have begun to manage and cooperate in group activities without the stress

associated with previously learning this skill.  Being proficient in group dynamics,

facilitated initially in the classroom setting, has allowed for many to begin participating

in group activities presented to them after school.  Behavioral engagement during the

middle childhood years has been defined by Luo et al. (2009) and Finn (1989), as

responding to rules and instruction, initiating action and being attentive in the class.

Looking through a bioecological lens, behavioral engagement will either continue to

grow in a positive way or will be hindered, depending on the success or failure of tasks

presented to the student in the classroom and his or her ability to cope (Christenson,

Reschly, Wylie, 2012).  As positive behavior engagement continues to grow during this

time, students are more willing to expand their interests to the degree they begin to invest

time into afterschool activities, such as sports, music lessons and drama.  Cognitive

engagement continues to grow, developing a greater awareness as students grow in their

sense of internal self-control.  Bierman (2008) identified the fact self-regulation and

emotional control have a huge influence on engagement in the classroom setting,

particularly with the student's ability to stay on task, control attention and participate in

classroom activities.  Gaining command of cognitive engagement allows students not

only to navigate group situations, but also to begin to differentiate between the various

parts of student engagement and knowledge concerning the appropriate times to use

particular skills of each component that makes up student engagement.  Developmentally,

middle childhood is also a time when self-evaluation, self- perception of competencies

and intrinsic motivation emerge, along with concrete operational reasoning skills

(Newman and Newman, 2009). Having a positive self-perception and a reliance on good

self-efficacy skills have not only been linked to future academic participation, but also to

academic achievement (Appleton et al. 2008). Cognitive engagement during the middle

childhood is reflective of the growing independence and autonomy as students reflect on

their own knowledge and beliefs about themselves and activities presented to them.

Emotional engagement, as previously mentioned, has vast implications for school

readiness and academic achievement. During this time period students are interacting

with multiple adults as well as with other students. It is during these interactions that

Ramey and Ramey (2004) noted that positive encounters assist with building warm and

responsive surroundings, which promote learning. Simply put, at this age relationships

with adults matter and can have lasting effects on the students' learning and environment.

Through these relationships students not only develop a sense of belonging, but also feel

comfortable enough to take risks and rise to the challenges that classrooms present them.

Bierman (2008) noted that teachers in particular can help to grow students' interest in

school and in learning activities. Often times it is interactions with adults other than

one's parents that assist with developing the student's emotional maturity. During this

time period the developmental emphasis is on relationships. Relationships with peers and

with teachers play a huge part with the development of their social skills. It has been

found that by having positive interactions with various people across multiple contexts

and environments work to reinforce both student engagement and positive development

(Skinner et al., 2008). The reverse has also been found, as noted by Ladd (2008).

Negative and stressful interactions not only with teachers but also with peers have a

negative influence on academics and classroom participation. Peers also play a huge part

in having a sense of belonging, in class involvement, in behavior and in improving the

quality of school life with peer validation (Ladd et al., 2008).

As children develop into adolescents, which spans the ages of twelve to eighteen,

they continue to grow not only developmentally but also continue to develop physically

and intellectually as well.  Academics continue to challenge one's intellectual capacity as

well as stimulate educational prowess and complex skills.  Having learned and solidified

rules that govern not only the school environment but also society at large, students are

treated increasingly as if they are miniature adults, taking on more responsibilities and

juggling the complexities of life.  Teachers and parents are less directive as students find

their own internal motivation to continue on the educational journey.  This is the period

when student engagement declines, as the students transition from middle school to high

school (Eccles et al. 1999). Students not only have to navigate school life but often, home

life, work life, extra-curricular activities and dating.  Newman and Newman (2009)

identified this time period as one of having a psychological sense of self that is

autonomous, moving away from their parents 'control while they experience a greater

exposure to environments other than home life.  Keating (2004) noted that

metacognitively this is the period when adolescence is able to integrate several situations

and hypothesize, instead of focusing on one issue at a time.  Adolescents display a greater

understanding of information, cognitively, and with a greater sense of self are able to

focus and demonstrate deliberate actions.  Behavioral engagement during this time period

continues to reflect on relationships. Adding to the familial, peer and outside activities

where relationships have been developed, platonic and romantic relationships have been

added to the development of student engagement.  Families continue to play an

influential role, as noted by Shumow and Miller (2001); for example, parental assistance with homework has resulted in positive measures of student engagement.  Meaningful teacher and student relationships continue to make a positive impact in the school setting as well as in academic achievement.  Skills needed and learned to solidify positive cognitive engagement will transform into abstract thinking, positive self-perception and intrinsic motivation.  Lepper, Corpus and Iyengar (2005) have identified the fact that the United States educational system embraces and fosters extrinsic motivation in the learning environment.  However, as students transition into adolescence external rewards become less a factor as students use their interest, curiosity and preference to be challenged to provide intrinsic rewards and motivation.  Goodenow and Grady (1993) have identified that the greatest predictor in academic motivation in adolescence was not peer academic values, but in having a sense of school belonging.  Emotionally, as students transition from middle school to high school, their emotional engagement decreases (Eccles et al., 1993).  This may be due in part to the shifts in roles of the teacher.  Teachers provide less guidance and nurturing in order to develop what they perceive as lessons towards greater independence and autonomy for students.  McNeely, Nonnemaker and Blum (2002) identified the fact that students who had higher grades displayed a higher level of school connectedness.  It suggests that mastery and competency in academic skills led not only to greater senses of self emotionally, but also to a greater display of student engagement.  As with everyone else, students want to be in an environment that is affirming, allowing for expression and also allowing them to be praised for their skill levels.

The link between developmental tasks and student engagement is significant because both are needed to assist the child's progress in becoming an independent adult. As children transition through the three developmental stages:  early childhood, middle childhood and adolescences, they become competent and skillful in developmental tasks associated with the various stages.  All of the components that makeup student engagement:  the academic, the behavioral, and the affective and cognitive, assist to support the areas in which the students are participating.  As the child grows he or she also masters various skills embedded in student engagement to support not only his or her academic abilities, but also the emotional and social skills leading to a well-rounded individual.  One cannot forget about the environment which asserts a significant influence in the bioecological theory of human development.  Students are supported in their homes and in school environments as they learn to master the skills associated with student engagement, along with performing appropriately with developmental tasks that are necessary at each stage of development.  Through interactions with parents, teachers, and peers, the children continue to obtain information that will improve not only their developmental skills but also allow for practice of their skills surrounding student engagement.  In reciprocal fashion, skills learned surrounding student engagement such as self-regulation, classroom participation, and positive relationships act as reinforces for developmental skills and tasks learned.  As children transition through the developmental stages it is important to note that both developmental tasks and student engagement tasks build upon each other to produce confident, self-aware, motivated, engaged students.

**Student Engagement Early Prevention Approach**

Much of the research done on student engagement has been completed at the college and high school levels. Armanbault (2009) confirmed the importance of having students engaged in a study on high school dropouts. Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lasko and Fernandez (1989), identified a sense of belonging with peers and adults, which they called "membership" as one component in their dropout prevention model. Student engagement has been identified as a positive approach to reduce dropout rates in high schools as well as to reduce juvenile delinquency rates. Although there are many factors that influence students to drop out, one realizes that students do not automatically enroll in high school and decide to quit. School dropout is a slow, ongoing process that gradually unfolds, beginning with the student's participation in elementary school. All the research on student engagement has driven intervention towards at-risk students in high school. This study is important because it identifies student engagement as a preventative approach, beginning at the elementary school level. The ability to be able to get students engaged and involved in school at the elementary level has the potential to have lasting and, possibly, carry- over effects. Student engagement not only builds resilience and improve academics, but it also builds interpersonal relationships with a connectedness, not only with the school, but with peers and teachers as well. Today's schools are faced with enormous challenges and obstacles, besides limited resources. School populations and classrooms are larger, more diverse, ethnically as well as in student abilities, academically, and in motivation for learning. Schools additionally face the challenge of high numbers of students with mental health problems, along with student who lack the social, emotional competencies to learn successfully without being

disruptive (Greenberg, 2003).  Increasing student engagement throughout elementary school is potentially one way of increasing students' continued participation and involvement in their educational setting throughout their school careers, thus reducing negative aspects mentioned previously, along with reducing delinquency and residual effects that dropouts may face, such as underemployment.

As with many things, early prevention is often the best and most cost-effective way of dealing with a foreseeable problem.  Getting students engaged in the school community earlier increases the likelihood that they not only attend more frequently, but also participate and perform at a higher level academically.  Engaged students tend to be more persistent, put forth effort, challenge themselves, enjoy learning and are able to self-regulate their behavior towards their goals (Klem and Connell, 2004).  Additionally, student engagement is correlated with positive outcomes not only in learning but also with positive social, emotional and academic outcomes as well.  Working with elementary students to develop their student engagement, focusing on the cognitive, academic, behavioral and affective aspects, insures that students could have more opportunities not only to practice skills needed to improve on these areas, but would also have many opportunities at the elementary school level to make those interpersonal connections with teachers and peers.  In the school setting they would be challenged behaviorally as well as cognitively and have ample opportunities to persist and focus on regulating behaviors towards their goals.  It is at the elementary school level that parents appear also to be more connected and engaged in the school community.  Elementary school students are not only highly influenced by their families, but also by peers and by the school communities.  Strengthening these connections through student engagement

not only strengthens the students' connectedness and sense of belonging with the school but with parents as well.  Parents are also encouraged to connect and interact with the school through various activities such as extra-curricular activities, school plays and athletic events.

**Motivation and Engagement**

Many teachers have fostered a sense of community, rewarding students extrinsically for getting involved in their class work and school community.   Based on B.F. Skinner's research, Pink (2009), Motivation 2.0, hypothesizes the theory of rewarding students for engagement one wants to see and providing negative reinforcement for behaviors one does not want to see.  Although extrinsic rewards appear to work immediately, they do not have the lasting influence or effect one needs to assist with building on students' educational knowledge or capacities.  As students matriculate through school, beginning in pre-school, many teachers hope that the extrinsic motivators will suddenly turn into intrinsic motivation to get students engaged and involved in their own educational learning and process.  Unfortunately, for many students intrinsic motivation is really never learned or mastered and student engagement is never fully achieved.  A study conducted in the early 70's by Lepper, Greene and Nisbett (1973), revealed that students were actually less likely to be interested or engaged in an activity they previously enjoyed when they knew they were going to be rewarded for participating, versus those students who had received no reward for participating. They continued to be fully engaged, interested and participative at the same level in the same activity.  Getting students motivated is a huge part of student engagement.  Many

teachers and staff do not realize the power they possess with getting their students

engaged in the school community.  Although there are many constraints placed upon

teachers regarding curriculum and instruction, both Pink (2009) and Appleton (2008),

identified the idea of allowing students to be autonomous in how they completed the

tasks given, not only improves motivation but engagement as well.  One may dare add,

allowing students to complete tasks with a sense of autonomy, in their own way also

allows for resiliency, problem solving and flexibility; they are motivated to complete

tasks that may present with setbacks as they use skills to problem solve towards success.

For a student to be engaged, he or she has to be motivated to do so.  Maehr and Meyer

(1997) defined motivation as, "the direction and intensity of one's energy".  Brooks

(1994) elaborated and linked it to "underlying psychological processes such as autonomy,

belonging or connectedness, and competence and is perceived to answer the question of

why for a given behavior."  If motivation is the energy, then engagement is the active

participation or involvement of the student and the activity.  Beginning in elementary

school, developing these skills of autonomy, motivation, and resiliency, lead to improved

engagement in the school setting.  The Check and Connect theory of engagement by

Appleton et al. (2006), focuses on students' sense of belonging and connectedness to

school along with promoting skills such as motivation, resiliency and problem solving to

motivate students to be engaged continuously with their schools.  The Check and Connect

theory encompass four subtypes of engagement: academic, cognitive, behavioral and

affective, which touch every aspect of a student's life.  It is in these various subtypes that

relationships are developed, not only with peers but also with adults at school and with

supportive family members.  Focusing on improving engagement at the earlier years of

education only makes sense because students are already learning not only how to master

the curriculum, but also how to manage emotions, behaviors, social skills and

interpersonal relationships.  Elementary school teachers are also in a better position to

assist with student engagement because they know from pre-school onward that they

have to teach students initially to verbalize requests for assistance from adults.  And as

the language develops and students mature, elementary school teachers have the

responsibility of gently nurturing and guiding them into being more independent

individuals, with the ultimate goal of the students being self-sufficient, capable

individuals, not only in the classroom but also outside the classroom.  It is during these

time periods when fostering the skills that lead to student engagement may be most

beneficial.  As previously mentioned, student engagement has been identified as a way of

reducing dropout rates as well as juvenile crime and the collateral effects that come with

it.  But what about increasing student engagement with ethnic minority groups?

**Ethnic & Cultural Identity and Student Engagement**

In public school systems across the United States the student population has

changed drastically from the inception of public-school education by Horace Mann.  The

student population has become increasing more diverse ethnically and racially; however,

the school system has not changed much to meet the needs of the diverse population.

Connell, Spencer and Aber (1994) partially identified poor student engagement with poor

achievement of African-Americans.  Steele (1997) has also attributed underachievement

of Native Americans, African-Americans and Latinos, in part, to poor student

engagement in schools.  Often there is a disconnect between the mainstream culture and

other ethnic cultures which fails to understand and demonstrate cultural sensitivity.  This

same mainstream culture drives our school systems and is often at odds with the ethnicity

of children they seek to educate.  One may not be able to quantify or pin point the effects

that mainstream culture has on beliefs and practices of various ethnic groups, including

how it may interfere with their learning and engagement in schools.  There are often

cultural differences between the mainstream culture at school and the cultural norms

established in the home that can be not only confusing for the young students to navigate,

but also culturally difficult for students to understand.  Students from ethnic backgrounds

may also have the perception that their own cultural practices are being devalued in the

school.  This, coupled with perceived or actual experiences of discrimination within the

school walls, have an impact on ethnic students' engagement.  Ogbu (1992) noted that

students whose perception is that they were discriminated against or treated unfairly by

the teacher, will not try hard in the class.  This not only influences the student

academically, but also affects their engagement in the school setting.  Many studies have

disproven the belief that ethnic minorities must assimilate or "act white" to engage

positively in the classroom and school setting.  One study by Chavous and associates

(2003), found that ethnic minority students with strong ethnic ties and sense of identity

were more likely to be engaged than those with weak ethnic cultural identities.  In other

studies, Smalls ( 2007), found that ethnic minority youth do not have to give up their

ethnic identities to do well and engage in school.  In fact, Smalls and associates (2007)

identified African American students who felt they had a shared common experience with

other minority groups who had been oppressed, were more likely to engage openly in the

school setting with peers and more were persistent in their academic endeavors.  Getting

minority students to participate in extra-curricular after school activities is one way of

getting students actively engaged in their school environment and in nurturing a sense of

belonging and connectedness with both peers and adults.

**Engagement in Afterschool and School Based Extra-Curricular Programs**

Most assume part of the reason that students enjoy school is due to peer

interaction and socializing with friends.  Although this could be an added benefit during

the academic hours and assist with increasing students' sense of belonging, making

friends and establishing personal relationships with peers is not always easy.  Most of the

research on student engagement and belonging has been done at the middle and high

school levels; however, LaFontant (2010) noted that belonging and school connectedness

matter much earlier in the elementary years.  One could make the assumption that having

a sense of belonging and school connectedness would promote better academic outcomes.

However, one does not know for sure which actually makes the impact.  It could be that

being academically engaged influences a sense of belonging and increases school

connectedness.  Battiistisch and associates (1995) identified, particularly in schools

serving low SES populations, that the stronger the association with students enjoying

their class community not only reduced work avoidance, but also increased math scores

because the families of the students enjoyed a greater sense of community and school

engagement.  For ethnically diverse populations, a sense of belonging improved

academic engagement (Goodenow, 1993).  Having a sense of belonging appears to be

extremely important because one learns not only how to navigate school but also career

and life in general.  A sense of belonging allows one the comfort of knowing that he or

she can attempt and can try in a safe space, knowing that others will be encouraging and supportive.  Sometimes the sense of belonging and connectedness may evolve in the classroom during transition periods, such as time in hallways, lunch and recess but often it happens afterschool.  Afterschool activities or school sponsored extra-curricular activities are ways in which students get to become a part of the school community. Although many students participate in afterschool activities because a friend has an interest, afterschool activities are one way of broadening one's friendship base. Typically, afterschool activities are open to students from various backgrounds and interests, which facilitate meeting other students typically not in one's immediate social circle.  Students get to broaden their friendship circle, become more tolerant and learn through activities facilitated afterschool.

School sponsored afterschool and extra-curricular activities have had a great impact on communities across the United States.  The average student comes from a household where one or both parents often have to work full time jobs.  Afterschool programs have been safe places for students after the school hours have ended, and a way of providing a peace of mind to many working parents.  Through afterschool programs and school sponsored extra-curricular activities, students are able not only to be exposed to new opportunities but also to learn skills that are essential in becoming good citizens. Through afterschool programs and extra-curricular activities students learn how to improve social skills, use their imaginations, problem-solve, listen to differing viewpoints and become a tight community where they can express themselves.  One study noted that students who participate in quality afterschool programs reduced the number of misconducts, aggressive and behavioral problems among disadvantage students (Vandell,

2007).  In a study by Fordham University (2005), researchers found that participants

showed improvements in learning skills, social skills, task motivation; they also showed

reduced frustration, assertiveness, and reduced anxiety when participating in a YWCA

afterschool program.  These two examples are among the many that have proven the

benefits of quality afterschool programs and what they accomplish.  Lerner (2005) noted

the aim for afterschool programs is to "promote positive youth development through

productive, positive interpersonal interactions and engaging enriching activities."

Afterschool programs and school sponsored extra-curricular activities are seen as ways to

bridge the emotional and instructional supports of the day and extend it to a preferred

activity outside the classroom.  Being part of a club, group or team provides the

additional emotional support that assist to foster a sense of belonging and connectedness

in the school setting.  Team activities particularly assist to teach students, especially at

the elementary school level, to take constructive criticism from coaches and team mates,

learn how to problem solve, and foster a sense of community where team mates rely on

each other.  Team sports at the elementary level also give players a sense of

accomplishment and work ethic to keep trying, keep practicing, keep improving and

never give up.

        In order for schools to develop well rounded individuals, school leaders need to

focus on a healthy school climate and environment that will support not only the

academic development, but also social and emotional development (Scales, Benson, et

al., 2006).  School sponsored extra-curricular activities is a way of fostering positive

youth development and interactions not only with peers but teachers as well.  Through

these school sponsored extra-curricular activities students develop meaningful

relationships with teachers and peers through a preferred activity that is fun and

enjoyable. Here, students not only learn a new skill or talent but also learn to self-

regulate, communicate effectively and engage in group activities. During afterschool

activities students are able to feel safe and comfortable enough to develop age

appropriate socio-emotional and psychological functioning. Eccles and Gootman (2002)

identified the fact that through adult and student interactions, students learn new

competencies through skill building activities; this gives students access to take on

leadership roles. It is during afterschool activities that students get a chance to explore

their interests whether it be sports, arts or intellectual clubs and they gravitate towards

likeminded peers and adults from various cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. The

benefits of participating in an extra-curricular activity have been associated with positive

social, psychological and academic outcomes that are seen not only short term, but also in

the long term (Eccles and Templeton, 2002). Students who have participated consistently

in extra-curricular activities, according to Bloomfield and Barber (2009), show an

increase in student engagement as well as an increase in interpersonal skills. Middle and

high schools throughout the United States provide opportunities for students to be part of

extra-curricular or afterschool activities. These programs provide safe, adult supervision

and direction. Using data from the National Education Longitudinal Study, Marsh and

Kleitman (2003) identified students who participated in a sports activity for six years

were more socially connected, displayed higher self-esteem and applied to universities.

But there were also long-term effects such as enrollment and completion of college and

better job autonomy, when compared with non-athletes. Although there are definitively

benefits when participating in a sport and being part of a team, the benefits of

participation in extra-curricular activities do not just end with sports.  Regardless of

whether one participates in a sport or non-sport activity such as yearbook, science club,

etc., the benefits to students who engage in these activities are the same. A study done by

Bloomfield and Barber (2009) discovered the fact that students who participated in sports

or non-sport extra-curricular activities was associated with high self-worth, academic and

social self-concept.  However, the association was even higher when students not only

participated in a sports activity but also a non-sports activity.  School sponsored extra-

curricular activities is one way of creating a healthy environment to reach students

holistically: socially, emotionally and academically while they learn new competencies,

leadership skills and become more engaged in the school environment.  Students'

perceptions of a positive school climate has been associated with positive academic

engagement.  Benner and colleagues' (2008), study on ninth graders identified a greater

sense of belonging in the school environment was associated with academic performance

and engagement. Another study, by Hughes and colleagues (2016), found that eighth

grade students who were involved in extra-curricular activities displayed higher positive

school behaviors such as doing well academically and participating, and had fewer

behavior problems such as skipping class when compared with their peers who were not

engaged in extra-curricular activities.  By ninth grade, the same students had developed a

greater sense of belonging, of school engagement and had higher grades.  Although the

study was unable to determine whether or not the extra-curricular activities or the

prosocial relationships established during these extra-curricular activities enhanced all the

positive outcomes such as a sense of belonging, greater sense of self, engagement,

prosocial and positive academic outcomes.  Being a part of something, in this case extra-curricular activities, increased a sense of belonging in the school environment.

For minority students, having positive experiences with peers and teachers through the extra-curricular setting not only increased a sense of belonging in the school environment but also gave students a sense of identity (Brown and Evans, 2002). Developing lasting relationships appears to be the central theme throughout various research regarding minority students who participate in extra-curricular activities in the school setting.  Delgado (2016) identified, in a study of Latino seventh and eighth graders, that a sense of belonging appeared to be linked with the number of friendships one had, which in turned was associated or linked with positive grades.  Eccles and Migley (1989), noted that middle school is the time when the climate and setting foster positive connections with peers that promoted academic motivation.  Latino students are not the only ones to benefit from participating in extra-curricular activities.  In another study of African American sixth to ninth grade students, Dotterer (2007) identified that a connection to school increased as the students participated more in their extra-curricular activities.  The research on participation in extra-curricular activities has been positively correlated with positive school engagement, better academic outcomes such as grades and test scores, as well as a better sense of belonging and a better sense of self.  All students can benefit from participating in an extra-curricular activity after school.  However, for some students, particularly from low SES, the ability to participate is stifled by transportation, a parent's ability to pick them up and/or cost.  When students from low SES do participate, the positive outcomes and effects are even greater for these students who participate (Covay and Carbonaro, 2010).

Although most of the research has been done on students in middle school and high school, providing opportunities for students at the elementary level could only facilitate positive outcomes. Participation in school based extra-curricular activities allows the student the opportunity to develop appropriate social skills, problems-solving skills and the ability to communicate positively with peers and adults. An earlier start in participation would only provide value to the student's life emotionally, psychologically, cognitively and physically. Students who participated in extra-curricular activities consistently in kindergarten and first grade showed higher scores on standardized assessments, according to the NICHD (2004). In another study by Petit (1997), students who participated in extra-curricular activities one to three hours a week had higher prosocial skills and displayed fewer externalizing behaviors. One reason for such positive outcomes is the ability that extra-curricular activities have for students to develop age appropriate skills and competencies through age appropriate activities that are meaningful, challenging and require feedback from an adult, requiring them to sustain attention as they engage (Fredericks and Eccles, 2006). Students who begin extra-curricular activities earlier in their school careers are better adjusted. One study of students who participated in extra-curricular activities earlier in elementary school were better adjusted by third grade, and were better emotionally adjusted by fifth grade (Vandell and Shumow, (1999).

**Benefits of Team Sports**

Children throughout the United States participate in team sports activities. Parents see neighborhood team opportunities provided by schools, recreational centers,

churches and organizations as a way of getting their children extra physical activity,

opportunities to meet others in the community and a chance for their children to learn

sportsmanship.  Being a part of a team provides opportunities for children to develop

social skills, develop empathy and work as a team for a common purpose or goal.  It is

through practice that children develop the understanding of hard work, repetition,

patience and drills which lead to a better player and ultimately a better team.  But being

part of a team also has health benefits, both physically and mentally.  Because depression

and anxiety has risen in children, participation in sports has been identified as one way of

reducing symptoms (McHale, 2005).  Wipfli (2008), has identified exercise as a catalyst

in reducing anxiety.  Both children and teens display signs of social anxiety by avoiding

social situations.  Participating in sports and being part of a team offer students a chance

to practice their social skills, thereby reducing any social anxiety they may face.  Sheilds

and Bredemeier (2007), noted that children also get to participate in character education

through sports; learning is done through rules, modeling from peers and from adults

while they play.  Participating in a sport provides valuable life skills that can be used on

the field, but can also transfer over into everyday life such as interacting with others,

following and respecting rules, cooperating with others and understanding one's own

strengths and limitations (Smith, 2003).  Participating and being part of a team has added

benefits beyond the physical and the building of character.  At the elementary school

level, Slutzky and Simpkins (2009), noted participation on team sports activities

increased students' self-esteem.  McGee et al. (2006), found an association between

students who participate in sports and having greater attachments to peers, parents and

school.  Eccles and Barber (2003), identified several benefits associated to extra-

curricular activities, but with team sports in particular; there were positive educational

outcomes such as liking school, better grades and future college attendance.


**Relevance of Study**

Positive student engagement has been linked with many positive outcomes for

students of all ages in the academic setting.  Most research has been done at the middle,

high school and college level; however, the assumption of this author is that the same

positive effects would impact students at the elementary level.  Appleton's (2009) model

of student engagement comprises these four constructs: academic, behavioral, affective

and cognitive; competence in all of these areas are skills that a student needs to be

successful and to remain in school.  Focusing on student engagement earlier in their

school careers is not only necessary but also essential. As children develop and navigate

through early childhood, elementary, middle and high school, student engagement is an

important aspect, a requisite, so that the student may learn the skills necessary to be

successful throughout their educational journey.  The link between developmental tasks

and student engagement is significant because both are needed assist the child to become

competent.  As children transition through the three developmental stages:  early

childhood, middle childhood and adolescences, becoming competent and skillful in

developmental, academic, socio-emotional and engagement tasks associated with the

various stages, school sponsored afterschool and extra-curricular activities is an area

where students can be comfortable, become more engaged and part of the school

community.  Through afterschool programs and school sponsored extra-curricular

activities students are able, not only to be exposed to new opportunities, but also to learn

and practice skills that are essential in becoming good citizens.  Through afterschool

programs and extra-curricular activities, students learn how to improve interpersonal

skills, critical thinking skills, use their imaginations, receive critical feed-back, listen to

differing viewpoints and become a tight community where they can express themselves.

One study noted that students who participate in quality afterschool programs reduced the

number of misconducts, and aggressive and behavioral problems among disadvantaged

students (Vandell, 2007).  This study is important because it identifies student

engagement as a preventative approach, beginning at the elementary school level.  The

ability to be able to get students engaged and involved in school at the elementary level

has the potential to have lasting and possibly carry over effects.  Getting students

involved in school sponsored extra-curricular activities earlier has the ability to get

students engaged and involved in a positive manner.  Student engagement not only builds

resilience and improve academics, but it also builds interpersonal relationships with a

connectedness not only with the school but peers and teachers as well.  Today's schools

are faced with enormous challenges and obstacles, including having limited resources.

School populations and classrooms are larger, more diverse ethnically, as well as in

academic abilities and motivation for learning.  Schools additionally face the challenge of

high number of students with mental health problems and student who lack the social,

emotional competencies to learn successfully without being disruptive (Greenberg,

2003).  Increasing student engagement throughout elementary school is potentially one

way of addressing these challenges mentioned previously.  Increasing student

involvement in extra-curricular activities also increases continued participation and

involvement in their educational setting throughout their school careers, reducing not

only delinquency but also all of the other negative aspects that drops outs face, such as underemployment. As with many things, early prevention is often the best and most efficient way of dealing with a potential barrier. Getting students engaged in the school community earlier increases the likelihood that they not only attend more frequently, but also that they participate and perform at a higher level academically. Engaged students tend to be more persistent, put forth effort, challenge themselves, enjoy learning and are able to self-regulate their behavior towards their goals (Klem and Connell, 2004). Therefore, it is critical that students become involved in afterschool and school sponsored extra-curricular activities at the elementary school level in order to foster a sense of connectedness not only with the school but also with adults and peers. Participating in a school sponsored extra-curricular activity provides students the opportunity to participate in something they enjoy while they strengthen a sense of self, of belonging and enjoyment in the school community. Therefore, the current study is designed to identify the importance of getting students involved and engaged in school at an earlier age through participation in afterschool and school sponsored extra-curricular activities, which in turn will have a greater impact on students' academics, on a behavioral, cognitive and affective level. Positive student engagement through extra-curricular activities has the potential to have lasting effects observed in the classroom, school environment and beyond.

**Hypotheses**

To determine through the faculty and staff that teach and engage with students during the academic day whether or not students who participate in school sponsored extra-curricular activities cultivate any intrinsic value in terms of relationships, not only with peers but also with staff and, in addition, how they engage, participate and navigate the school community. The study will be done by gathering responses from the teachers and staff who are actively immersed in teaching academic content to members of an elementary school basketball team. The basketball team was chosen because it is a team activity that requires a certain collaboration and exchanges between the players as they work together for the good of the whole entire team. Players learn how to identify their own personal strengths and weaknesses, as well as each other's as they learn how to support each other, not only in basketball but also in the school environment. This current study hypothesizes that students who participate in school sponsored extra-curricular activities display positive student engagement, achievement and school connectedness.

**Summary**

Too many students tend to reject school at an early age. Students find it difficult to relate or to identify with the teachers, curriculum or subject matter. With the additional stress of having to undergo multiple series of testing, many students do not consider coming to school an enjoyable experience. This study hopes to find other avenues to get students actively involved in their learning by fulfilling a need that is often overlooked in the school setting. By engaging students in their interests through extra-

curricular afterschool activities, the passion and enjoyment of the activities will carry

over to other aspects of their lives.  By getting students engaged through a team activity,

the discipline, focus and interpersonal skills involved in the activity will carry over into

the classroom setting.  Using Appleton's model of student engagement, students will

display both internal engagement and observable engagement.  They will become

intrinsically motivated to pursue success in other areas of their lives such as behavior,

academics, school connectedness and a sense of belong.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

**Overview**

This study seeks to determine whether or not student participation in preferred

activities offered after school add an additional benefit to teachers and students during the

academic school day when students are faced with tasks that are not particularly

preferred.  This research study utilized teachers and staff members to determine if

students who participated in extra-curricular afterschool activities increased their student

engagement.


**Participants**

The study took place in an urban elementary school, where 90% of the students

receive free and reduced lunches.  There were five hundred and twenty students who

attended the school, from grades pre-school through fifth grade.  The school is located in

a community where the affluent and the working poor live.  The participants were

teachers, coaches, behavioral support staff (Social Worker, Dean of Students, In School

Suspension Coordinator) and Assistant Principal, who were in constant contact with the

students on the team.  The subjects were members of the basketball team consisting of a

total of14 students (both regular education and special education students), who tried out

and made the elementary school basketball team.  The students ranged from the third to

fifth grades.  There were 12 boys and 2 girls on the team.  The socio-economic status of

the group ranged from lower (60%) to middle (40%) class.  The ethnic breakdown of the

team was 90% African-American, 5% Caucasian and 5% Multi-racial.  All teachers,

support staff and coaches agreed to complete surveys.  The basketball team practiced

after school with the coaches five days a week prior to the actual season beginning.

Practice consisted of an hour and thirty minutes of homework sessions, when they

completed their homework and received assistance as needed from teachers/coaches.

This was followed by a nutritious snack/meal provided by the school system and then an

hour and twenty-five minutes of practice with the coaches.  When the official season

began, players continued the schedule previously noted, with the exception of game day

which was once a week.  On game day the players were provided a nutritious lunch

catered by volunteer teachers during lunch period.  The players would leave school

twenty minutes early to be transported by bus to the place where the scheduled away

game was to be held.

**Apparatus and Materials**

        This study relied on survey questions constructed and developed by the researcher

in order to access teachers', coaches', behavioral support staff and assistant principals'

thoughts and opinions about various aspects of the students' lives with regard to the

school community and any improvement in the school environment due to their

participation in an extra-curricular activity.  The questions were a mixture of closed

ended and open-ended questions which were developed to elicit, thoughts and feelings

about students' participation in the school environment, school connectedness,

collaboration, self-awareness in academic setting and investment in school.  In addition to

survey responses there was a review of basketball team members' attendance records,

benchmark and progress monitoring data, as well as homework completion logs.

**Procedure**

The basketball team was chosen for the study because it is a closed group activity. The number of participants remained the same throughout practice and basketball season. This was also the newest extra-curricular activity program at the school. Other after school activities' participation was inconsistent and extremely transitional in the number of students that remained after school for the activities. Being on the basketball team took initiative on the part of the students because they wanted to be a part of the team, so they tried out. The players also were not influenced by outside forces such as their teachers or caregivers because a safe space was needed until their parents got home from work. The study began towards the middle of the season, after the team would have gone through all their training, had learned how to be cohesive and were acclimated to the routine of study, practice and execution through playing. Initially, a brief meeting was held with all of the teachers and staff members involved with grades third through fifth to ask for participation in filling out surveys; instructions and surveys were handed out in folders. The coaches assisted by placing copies of the basketball roster in each folder, which assisted in reducing bias for this researcher. The researcher requested staff to fill out surveys on students they teach and are currently involved in basketball. Then the researcher answered questions posed by the teachers and staff members.

The participants received paper copies of the survey constructed by the researcher. The teaching staff was requested to return the completed surveys in a two-week time period or sooner. After the surveys were returned, the responses were transcribed for the researcher to coding, according to the identified characteristics,

identifying common themes and trends related to student engagement.  The researcher

also reviewed students' attendance records, homework completion records and progress

monitoring data to identify any possible trends that may be associated with an increase in

student engagement.  The attendance records were pulled from the school attendance

database system.  The attendance database system recorded only absences and not

tardiness.  For homework completion records, the researcher collected completed

homework logs from teachers for the two months that were being compared.  With regard

to progress monitoring, reading progress data were pulled from the reading database.

Only completed BOY and MOY data were reviewed.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Surveys were completed by eighteen teachers, staff members and coaches that

provide instruction throughout the school week.  Staff members are divided into three

categories: special education teachers, core curriculum teachers and social-emotional

support staff.  The gender of staff members consisted of nine males and nine females.  In

all, a total of 135 surveys were completed for this study (see Appendix A).  Respondents

were asked to complete both multiple choice questions as well as open ended questions.


**Multiple Choice Responses**

For the multiple choice items, response choices ranged from "*not at all,*"

"*somewhat,*" to "*a lot*".  In addition, they could indicate, "*I don't know*."  The numbers

of responses were then totaled according to response category and tabulated into

percentages for easier comparison.  Table 1 displays the results of all 135 surveys divided

by the four domains that make up Student Engagement (Academic, Cognitive,

Behavioral, and Affective).  Appendix B shows data that are broken down by each

closed-ended question presented in the survey.

Table 1

*Number of Respondents and Percentages by Student Engagement Domain*

| | Number of Respondents | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Academic Domain | | |
| Not at all | 12 | 9% |
| Somewhat | 43 | 32% |
| A Lot | 39 | 29% |
| I don't know | 41 | 30% |
| Cognitive Domain | | |
| Not at all | 10 | 7% |
| Somewhat | 51 | 38% |
| A Lot | 51 | 38% |
| I don't know | 23 | 17% |
| Behavioral Domain | | |
| Not at all | 34 | 25% |
| Somewhat | 47 | 35% |
| A Lot | 46 | 34% |
| I don't know | 8 | 6% |
| Affective Domain | | |
| Not at all | 9 | 7% |
| Somewhat | 50 | 37% |
| A Lot | 58 | 43% |
| I don't know | 18 | 13% |

**Open-Ended Results**

In addition, there were open-ended questions requesting participants to provide an example of how participation has affected the student in the areas of academic performance, cognitive functioning, behavior and affect.  The respondents were able to write and convey their thoughts and ideas on what they felt about the impact of the activity on the student in those four domains.  Within each domain, broad themes and descriptors were identified from the written responses.  Table 2 provides a sample of the response written by respondents.   Examples of specific responses are provided in Appendix C.

Table 2

*Themes and Subthemes Associated with Each Student Engagement Domain*

_____

Academic Performance

       Themes                      Empowered, Persistence, Participation

       Descriptors              Taking more self-pride in work
                              More focused and engaged
                              Increase participation in during reading group
                              Taking school work more seriously

Cognitive Functioning

       Themes                      Self-Awareness, Goal Setting, Self-Driven

       Descriptors              Increased problem solving
                              Strives for success
                              Competitive and strives to be top student
                              Realizes the importance of academics

Behaviors

       Themes                      Community, Responsibility, Positive Emotional
                              Regulation

       Descriptors              More positive
                              Respectful to peers when altercations arise
                              Gets along better with peers
                              Understanding importance of taking responsibility

Affect

       Themes                      Empathetic, Self-Confident, Problem Solver

       Descriptors              More confident in self and abilities
                              Very supportive and protective of classmates
                              Increase level of care around peers and adults
                              Taking a role in solving situations

_____

**Attendance Records**

A review of attendance records for all fourteen students was done by this

researcher through the attendance database system.  This researcher reviewed a month

before try-outs and basketball season started and one month during the basketball season.

The months of October and January were chosen because they had the same number of

days, same number of days in school and the same number of holidays.  The number of

absences were recorded for the whole team.  Tardiness was not recorded in the database

system.

Table 3

*Attendance: Total Absences*

| Total Number of Players | Pre-Season (October) | During the Season (January) |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| 14 | 13 | 10 |

**Homework Logs**

Students homework logs were chosen by teachers who had complete homework

logs and consistently provided homework to their students.  The teachers provided

homework four days a week.  The months of October (pre-season) and January (during

season) were chosen, as previously stated, due to having the same number of days, days

in school and holidays.  Table 4 shows the number of students and whether or not they reduced turning in their homework, maintained or increased turning in their homework during the basketball season.

Table 4

*Change in Homework Completion from Before to During Basketball Season*

| | Number of Students |
|---|---|
| Reduced | 2 |
| Maintained | 4 |
| Increased | 2 |

**Progress Monitoring Data**

Eight students were randomly chosen to review progress monitoring data on mclass Text Reading Comprehension (TRC).  The beginning of the year (BOY) progress monitoring took place in September and the middle of the year; (MOY) progress monitoring took place in February.  Table 6 shows the number of students and whether or not they had made no progress or any progress by moving up by letter levels.

Table 5

*Sampling of TRC progress comparing BOY and MOY data*

|                       | Number of Students |
| --------------------- | ------------------ |
| No Progress           | 2                  |
| Moved One Letter      | 3                  |
| Moved Two Letters     | 2                  |
| Moved Three Letters   | 1                  |

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Accumulating research suggest that there are positive outcomes and benefits of student engagement, particularly at the high school level and with regard to students at-risk. However, there are relatively few articles focused on student engagement at the elementary level where students begin their educational careers. Providing opportunities for student engagement at the elementary school levels seems like a natural step in getting students to enjoy, engage and ultimately become lifelong learners. Current research and previous research (LaFontant, 2010) has identified that providing opportunities through school based extra-curricular activities assists in developing interpersonal relationships with staff members and peers and has led to a sense of belonging and school connectedness. Through positive relationships and a sense of belonging, students would be more receptive to the challenges that academics may present. Providing positive student engagement could act as a preventive measure to dealing with at-risk students and student drop out. The purpose of this study was to examine whether or not participation in a school sponsored extra-curricular activity could improve elementary aged students' school engagement, achievement, and school connectedness.

**Teacher and Support Staff Impressions**

Teachers and support staff involved with students on the basketball team also interacted with students throughout the school week. Their impressions were solicited

both with closed and open-ended questions in four domains that define student

engagement, using Appleton's Model (2009) of student engagement: Affective,

Cognitive, Behavioral, and Academic.

**Affective Domain**

Examination of the affective domain highlights the fact that it is the domain that

was most positively influenced by students' participating in an afterschool extra-

curricular activity.  The affective domain encompasses students having a sense of

belonging in the school environment, feeling connected not only with peers but with

adults as well and having a sense of identification with the school.  Previous research

from Hirschi (1969) has identified the idea that the initial step in getting students engaged

begins with the relational aspects that encompasses the affective domain.  One such step

might be finding a preferred interest such as a hobby, sport, craft or academic knowledge

that draws students to participate and engage in the school environment that is outside of

the academic classroom.  This would assist in getting both students and staff to

participate in an activity that not only cultivates student's interest but also develops

relationships between students and staff and peers.  When looking at the  "a lot"

responses, and looking deeper into the questions that comprise the affective component,

the teachers and support staff noted a number of positive responses. Among these were:

changes with students being able to verbalize their feelings and emotions when frustrated

or upset (51%); connecting with staff members (50%); displaying a sense of connection

with the school environment (49%); feeling comfortable enough to express themselves

and displaying more empathy towards peers (41%).  Eighty percent of responses noted

positive change in the affective domain when combining "a lot" and "somewhat"

responses; only twenty percent indicated "not at all" and "I don't know" combined.

In responding to open ended questions, they were allowed to express whatever

they felt was relevant and what they wanted this researcher to know with regard to the

students who participated on the basketball team in relationship to their actions, attitudes

and behavior in the four domains that comprise student engagement.  The open-ended

portion of the survey was broken down into four sections or themes:  Academic

Performance, Cognitive Functioning, Behavior and Affect; several subthemes emerged

from the respondents' responses.  Open-ended responses, themes and subthemes

identified positive changes that teachers were able to observe.  By participating in extra-

curricular after school activities, students were able to develop a sense of belonging.

Eccles and Midgley (1989) identified the fact that when students have a sense of

belonging and connectedness with school and with peers, it fosters academic motivation.

Under the subtheme of empathy, responses reflected students being more supportive of

one another, showing an increased level of care for classmates and for teachers as well as

being more concerned with collaborating with one another.  In the area of self-

confidence, responses identified students' appearing more relaxed and confident in the

classroom, taking pride in becoming a better students and being more vocal in the

classroom in a positive way.   And finally, under the subtheme problem solver, teachers

were able to identify situations in which the students acted like meditators, assisted with

de-escalating situations and made attempts to improve peers' and teachers' moods.  There

were many positive interpersonal attributes noted by the open-ended responses that

would lead to a better climate in the classroom, better relationships with peers and with teachers while displaying self-confidence, empathy and problem solving.

**Cognitive Domain**

Student participation in afterschool extra-curricular basketball had the second greatest impact on the Cognitive Domain, which embraces the idea of the students' own success in school, developing personal goals, having a sense of autonomy, understanding the value of learning and relevance of school work.  The greatest change was noted in the classroom setting where respondents identified students appearing to strive for success in the classroom (45%).  Teachers and staff members noted that students appeared to have more confidence in the classroom setting (44%), followed by teachers' perception of the students wanting and attempting to please the instructor during class activities (38%).  The least amount of positive change was noted with students appearing to take on leadership skills (10%) followed by a sense of investment in their school work (8%).  One hundred and two (76%) responses noted positive changes when combining both "a lot" and "somewhat" in the Cognitive Domain.

Open-ended responses in the area of Cognitive Functioning endorsed such themes as self-awareness.  Responses noted students tried harder to do better, caring about what they did in the classroom academically and taking more initiative to be a better student.  Goal setting was also a prominent subtheme; responses reflected students striving for success, student wanting to be among the top students in class and wanting to accomplish expectations and personal goals.  Another quality identified by responses was the student being self-driven.  Teachers noted students becoming more independent in thinking out problems, making every effort to comprehend and understand and wanting to do well and

motivated to do their best.  Overall responses revealed students who have a certain level

of motivation, who want to learn and appeared invested in the process of learning along

with the teachers.


Larson (2000) identified cognitive engagement as a necessary component not only

for developmental benefits but also for the students continued participation.  Shernoff and

Vandell (2007) went a step further by noting that cognitive engagement was a

combination of just the right amount of concentration and challenge for the student to

want to continue participation.


**Behavioral Domain**

Responses placed the Behavioral Domain in third, with regard to impacting

students on the basketball team; 46 (34%) respondents marked "a lot."  The Behavioral

Domain is defined by observable actions students take in the classroom such as improved

behavior, participating in class and school activities and attendance.  Ninety-three (69%)

was the combined responses with "a lot" and "somewhat" combined when looking at the

overall Behavioral Domain results.  These included questions such as: whether students

had improved behavior in the classroom, attitude towards peers and classmates changed

for the better, increased positive interactions with peers, improved attendance and

involvement in altercations leading to behavioral referrals.  Students displayed the

greatest positive change, with 70% indicating "not at all" in response to whether or not

students had been involved in altercations that led to behavioral referrals.  Students

appeared to reduce behavioral altercations such as physical fights and arguments which

explains the 52% "a lot" identified by teachers and staff with regard to students

displaying an increase in positive interaction with peers.  In the classroom setting,

teachers and staff members expressed by 43% that attitudes towards peers and classmates

had changed for the better.  An area where there was no growth or change was identified

with attendance where 22% endorsed "not at all."

Community, responsibility and positive emotional regulation were subthemes that

stood out in the open-responses for behavior.  Under community responses, interacting

better with peers during small group activities, displaying positive attitude towards peers

and teachers as well trying to assist others when needed were responses that resonated

with making the classroom environment a better community.  Responsibility was noted in

areas such as, maturity level growing, taking responsibility for actions, not catching an

attitude when being re-directed and finally always willing to assist where needed.  With

regard to positive emotional regulation, comments indicated improved behavior, being

proactive and requesting breaks when overwhelmed or angry and being more responsive

when faced with difficulties or upset.  Comparing the closed ended questions on behavior

with the open responses, it appears that behavior had not changed greatly (as noted by

open-ended responses).  However, when one takes a closer look at the teachers'

perceptions it reveals positive changes particularly in the area of emotional control and

being able to take responsibility for one's actions which has an overall positive effect on

community.

**Academic Domain**

The Academic Domain appeared to be impacted the least by students participating

in extra-curricular afterschool basketball with 82 (61%) of respondents endorsing "a lot"

and "somewhat", combined.  The Academic Domain addresses students' observable

activities in the classroom setting.  Looking at tasks in the classroom that makes one

successful such as completing of assignments, time on tasks, engaging in classroom

activities, teachers noted increased confidence with students; 44% responded with "a lot."

The increased confidence appeared to transfer over into the students increased ability to

interact and engage appropriately during small group instruction; 34% selected "a lot."

Increased time on task and appearing to put forth greater effort each achieved 33%.

Respondents identified 10% with "not at all" for increasing time on task and 9% noted

"not at all" for put forth a greater effort with understanding material presented.  An

increase in homework completion achieved 10% for "not at all" and the respondents

overwhelmingly identified, "I don't know" at 56%.  This large percentage may be due in

part to special education teachers and support staff not assigning homework to their

students compared with instructional staff who do.

Under Academic Performance three subthemes kept resurfacing; these were the

students feeling empowered, displaying persistence and participating/participation.  A

few examples of responses, identified in succeeding sentences, exhibit students feeling

empowered in the classroom.  Teachers identified the students as being more vocal and

starting to be self-assured, thinking things through when faced with perceived difficulties

both academically and behaviorally and being eager to participate in whole group

discussions.  Responses such as increased level of engagement towards academics,

increased awareness of growth needed and gained, as well as working hard to grasp

difficult concepts validated persistence.  In the area of participation, respondents

observed increased participation during reading groups and in "read out loud" situations,

students remaining focused and attending to work when others attempt to distract, and

coming in the morning to obtain additional help and completing daily work.

However, this study did not necessarily see the academic motivation translate into better

grades or homework completion.  Academic motivation was observed by the teachers in

the classroom with students being able to communicate feelings in a calm way, students

being more receptive to feedback, being more confident in their responses and more

vocal.  Overall, teachers did not necessarily see changes when given closed-ended

questions; however, they had a slightly different perspective when given the opportunity

to be more reflective in the open-ended questions.  Teachers observed academic

behaviors with students being more open and responsive, which is necessary when

learning something new and given new challenges in the classroom.

**Additional Results for Engagement**

     **Attendance**.  Attendance has been identified as one way of knowing whether or

not a student's behavior has improved under the Behavioral domain of student

engagement.  It is obviously an observable action and implies that a student has

improved his or her attendance because of something positive he or she was experiencing

during the school hours.  Table 3 showed a slight improvement in attendance but nothing

that would be considered significant when comparing the team member's attendance

prior to the beginning of the basketball season and during the basketball season.  When

looking at close-ended responses around whether or not a student's attendance has

improved, responses are divided equally among the respondents.  However, open-ended

responses give a different perception of significantly improved attendance, which

improved the overall community and environment in the classroom.  Behavior responses

noted students being more engaged, participating, fewer altercations and positive

interactions with peers.  However, unlike previous research, it is through positive student

engagement that the affective domain is the first to improve, followed by the behavioral

domain, which leads to better cognitive functioning and then to positive academic

outcomes.  This study suggest that the affective domain is the first area to be positively

influenced in the basketball players' lives, then the cognitive functioning when they

experience success in school, value learning and proceed to develop personal goals,

followed by the behavioral domain and then academic performance.

**Homework Logs.**  When looking at homework logs (Table 4) prior to basketball

season and comparing them with homework logs during the season, four students

displayed no change with their homework completion; two students improved their

completion, and two students actually declined.  Participating in a school based extra-

curricular activity had no influence on improving homework completion.  This is

completely the opposite of what was expected.  The expectation was that homework

completion would actually increase, due to the fact that a two-hour study period was

built into part of their basketball practice.  It is interesting to note that several open-

ended responses identified improved self-confidence as a reason why work completion

and homework had not been turned in.

**Progress Monitoring Data.**  Another area viewed to determine whether or not

positive student engagement correlated into positive achievement was to look at progress

monitoring data.  Although one knows that there are many factors that impact growth in

reading, such as instruction, student motivation, abilities and engagement, the Text

Reading Comprehension (TRC) progress monitoring data were used; these are displayed

in Table 5.  With the exception of two students who made no progress, the remaining six

students made positive growth.  One is not able to say that participating in a school

sponsored extra-curricular activity facilitated the growth or the lack of progress.

However, one positive outcome that could be noted is that there were no regressions.


**Implications**

        Results from the current study suggest that improving interpersonal relationships

by providing opportunities for students and teachers to engage in activities they enjoy

has an observable impact on students' lives in the affective domain, in a short period of

time.  Unlike previous research it may take longer for students to display the impact that

student engagement may have on the behavioral domain.   Reeves (2008) noted that the

biggest improvement in behavior was observed in the improvement of relationships

between administration, teachers and staff with students.  These behaviors were reflected

under the affective domain of the study.

        Being able to get every student in a school connected with some activity or

interest could have even greater positive effect on student engagement, school

environment and potentially, on academics.  The challenge is for teachers and staff to

extend themselves and realize the importance of developing relationships.  Through

developing authentic relationships with students early and not just teaching the routines

and procedures, may, according to this study, have a greater impact on the affect and

cognitive construct.  Greater student engagement in the school setting earlier and with

every student would provide even greater opportunities for parents to get involved in the

school setting.  Through student engagement, students are actively involved in the school

environment.  When students come home expressing pleasure, a sense of

accomplishment and pride to parents, parents see the positive changes and want the

student to continue not only to be a part of it, but they, want to see what is happening in

the school itself.  This could lead to greater parental involvement, initially with extra-

curricular activities then expanding to involvement in their child's academics.  Through

positive interactions with parents, schools would be in position to provide workshops,

resources and training to engage parents.  Although it appears to be a huge challenge to

provide opportunities for every student to be engaged, there are creative ways schools

can provide student engagement through extra-curricular activities.  Sometimes thinking

outside the box such as adjusting a schedule, having a lunch time activity or club,

morning groups and getting additional resources through grants could make it possible to

reach every student.

Most of the studies on student engagement have been done at the high school and

college level.  The relevance of the study at the elementary level exposes the potential to

utilize extra-curricular school based activities as a way of improving student engagement

and getting students engaged at a younger age.  Through previous research findings

student engagement has the ability to reduce dropout rates and engage students-at risk at

the high school level.  Developing a sense of connection with teachers, staff members

and school, earlier may allow students to continue to develop a sense of belonging,

strengthen their academic motivation, improve cognitive functioning and interpersonal

relationship skills, at the same time, reducing symptoms of stress, anxiety and poor emotional regulation.  As found in the many other studies before this study, there is so much potential for students to stay and remain connected to the school and school environment throughout their school careers.

**Limitations**

There were several limitations to the study, beginning with the methodology used to synthesize the wealth of information presented in the survey.  A second individual reviewed open-ended responses to assist with constructing subthemes; however, this research from the beginning relied on one individual researcher to construct questions, develop design and review information presented.  Bias was kept to a minimum by reporting verbatim what individual respondents reported, quantifying responses into percentages, reviewing information from databases and reviewing complete teachers homework logs.  Another limitation could be identified in the extra-curricular activity that was chosen, which was the basketball team.  Sports teams historically maintain the same number of players on the team, allowing for team mates to become cohesive in practice and during games.  However, would same results occur if it were a non-sport extra-curricular activity such as the art club, bullying club or dance club in which the number of student participation vary from week to week?  Time was also a limitation in this study; the study took place in the middle of basketball season.  Although there were observed positive effects with students in the Affective and Cognitive Domains, could there have been additional positive movement in the areas of behavior and academic functioning if the basketball program or extra-curricular activity had been a yearlong activity?  Suggestions for future studies on student engagement at the elementary level

should focus on yearlong activities, both sports and non-sports, to determine if there

could be any positive effects on academic functioning and achievement when students

are engaged in and participate in extra-curricular afterschool activities.  It might also be

beneficial in identifying the timeframe when positive student engagement improves

academic functioning as it relates to grades, test scores and homework.

**Future Directions**

   Future research on student engagement should focus on the elementary school level

and ways in which this could be embedded in the curriculum.  Many school systems

utilize various social emotional curricula to which student engagement could be

connected or linked.  This researcher would like to get a better understanding of the

impact that participation in extra-curricular activities have on student engagement, and

with with longer studies.  The study might begin with facilitating a one-year study

initially, followed by longitudinal study from kindergarten until the students matriculate

out of elementary school.  Longer studies would provide greater knowledge of whether or

not participation in extra-curricular activities have any lasting changes on student

engagement in all four constructs, but most importantly does it have any positive

academic changes.

**Conclusion**

        This study relied on teachers and staff observations and perceptions of students

who participate in school sponsored extra-curricular basketball and its impact on student

engagement. Through their responses one was able to determine that there was a positive

effect, observable in the classroom setting, on students engaging in and participating in

extra-curricular activities. This was also determined in the individual students as they

exhibited more self-confidence in the way they participated in the classroom, interacted

with peers and engaged throughout the environment. The positive perception goes a long

way, not only for the students in the classroom environment, but also for the teachers as

they seek to continue to make interpersonal connections as students become more

reflective and able to verbalize their feelings in an appropriate manner. Student

engagement builds on relationships within the school setting with teachers, peers and

others providing a continued sense of belonging and accomplishment. It is suggested that

research continue in the field of student engagement because it continues to reveal

positive potential in all areas for both students, staff and academics.

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Appendices

Appendix A

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Please answer each question to the best of your ability about _____ (student name)

**ACADEMIC: time on task, homework completion, engaging in class activities**

| | | Not At All | Somewhat | A Lot | I don't know |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Has student increased his homework completion? | 0 | 1 | 2 | na |
| 2. | Has student's participation in class increased? | 0 | 1 | 2 | na |
| 3. | Has student's attitude improved towards school work? | 0 | 1 | 2 | na |
| 4. | Has the student increased his time of task in the classroom setting? | 0 | 1 | 2 | na |
| 5. | Has the student increased his ability to interact and engage in small group instruction appropriately? | 0 | 1 | 2 | na |
| 6. | Has student appeared to put forth greater effort to understand material? | 0 | 1 | 2 | na |

**COGNITIVE: perceived relevance of schoolwork, personal goals, autonomy, value of learning, success in school**

| | | Not At All | Somewhat | A Lot | I don't know |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7. | Does the student appear to display more confidence? | 0 | 1 | 2 | na |
| 8. | Does the student display leadership skills? | 0 | 1 | 2 | na |
| 9. | Has student displayed a sense of investment in their school work? | 0 | 1 | 2 | na |
| 10. | Does the student appear to value the classroom experience? | 0 | 1 | 2 | na |
| 11. | Does the student appear to strive for success in the classroom? | 0 | 1 | 2 | na |
| 12. | Has the student set personal goals? | 0 | 1 | 2 | na |
| 13. | How does the student attempt to please the instructor during class activities? | 0 | 1 | 2 | na |

**BEHAVIORAL: attendance, suspension, participating in school activities, being on time**

| | | Not At All | Somewhat | A Lot | I don't know |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 14. | Has student's attendance improved? | 0 | 1 | 2 | na |
| 15. | Has student's behavior improved in the classroom? | 0 | 1 | 2 | na |
| 16. | Has student's attitude towards peers and classmates changed for the better? | 0 | 1 | 2 | na |
| 17. | Has student displayed an increase in positive interactions with peers? | 0 | 1 | 2 | na |
| 18. | Has the student been involved in any altercations leading to behavioral referrals? | 0 | 1 | 2 | na |

**AFFECTIVE: Identification with school, sense of belonging, school connectedness**

| | Not At All | Somewhat | A Lot | I don't know |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 19. Does the student appear to be more self-aware of others and their needs? | 0 | 1 | 2 | na |
| 20. Has the student connected with a staff member? | 0 | 1 | 2 | na |
| 21. Does the student feel comfortable expressing him/herself? | 0 | 1 | 2 | na |
| 22. Has the student exhibited a sense of connection (displayed ownership) with the school environment? | 0 | 1 | 2 | na |
| 23. Has student displayed more empathy towards peers? | 0 | 1 | 2 | na |
| 24. Does the student appear to be able to verbalize their feelings and emotions when frustrated or upset? | 0 | 1 | 2 | na |
| 25. Does the student appear to be receptive to critical feedback? | 0 | 1 | 2 | na |
| 26. Has the student sought advice from a staff person? | 0 | 1 | 2 | na |
| 27. Is the student involved in other school sponsored activities? | 0 | 1 | 2 | na |
| 28. Has the student displayed more respectful behaviors towards peers? | 0 | 1 | 2 | na |

29. Can you give an example of how participation has affected this student's:

- Academic performance

- Cognitive functioning

- Behavior

- Affect

30. In what way do you think participation has impacted this student?

Appendix B

Survey Responses by Question (number of respondents and percentages)


## ACADEMIC:  Time on tasks, homework completion, engaging in class activities


Has student increased his/her homework completion?

| Not at all | 13 | (10%) |
| Somewhat | 20 | (15%) |
| A Lot | 26 | (19%) |
| I don't know | 76 | (56%) |

Has student's participation in class increased?

| Not at all | 11 | (8%) |
| Somewhat | 53 | (40%) |
| A Lot | 39 | (28%) |
| I don't know | 32 | (24%) |

Has student's attitude improved towards school work?

| Not at all | 14 | (10%) |
| Somewhat | 50 | (37%) |
| A Lot | 39 | (29%) |
| I don't know | 32 | (24%) |

Has student increased his or her time on task in the classroom setting?

| Not at all | 13 | (10%) |
| Somewhat | 42 | (31%) |
| A Lot | 45 | (33%) |
| I don't know | 35 | (26%) |

Has the student increased his/her ability to interact and engage in small group instruction appropriately?

| Not at all | 9 | (7%) |
| Somewhat | 45 | (33%) |

A Lot                          46  (34%)

I don't know                   35  (26%)

Has student appeared to put forth greater effort to understand material?

Not at all                     12   (9%)

Somewhat                       46   (34%)

A Lot                          45  (33%)

I don't know                   32  (24%)


**<u>COGNITIVE:  Perceived relevance of schoolwork, personal goals, autonomy, value of learning, success in school</u>**


Does the student appear to have more confidence?

Not at all                     7    (5%)

Somewhat                       51   (38%)

A Lot                          59   (44%)

I don't know                   18   (13%)

Does the student display leadership skills?

Not at all                     13   (10%)

Somewhat                       55   (41%)

A Lot                          49   (36%)

I don't know                   18   (13%)

Has student displayed a sense of investment in his or her school work?

Not at all                     12   (9%)

Somewhat                       59   (44%)

A Lot                          49  (34%)

I don't know                   18  (13%)

Does the student appear to value the classroom experience?

Not at all                     11   (8%)

Somewhat                       54   (40%)

A Lot                          49    (36%)

I don't know                   21    (16%)

Does the student appear to strive for success in the classroom?

Not at all                     8     (6%)

Somewhat                       46    (34%)

A Lot                          61    (45%)

I don't know                   20    (15%)

Has the student set personal goals?

Not at all                     9     (7%)

Somewhat                       50    (37%)

A Lot                          40    (29%)

I don't know                   36    (27%)

Does the student attempt to please the instructor during class activities?

Not at all                     11    (8%)

Somewhat                       46    (34%)

A Lot                          51    (38%)

I don't know                   27    (20%)


**Behavioral:  Attendance, suspension, participating in school activities, being on time**

Has student's attendance improved?

Not at all                     30    (22%)

Somewhat                       41    (30%)

A Lot                          40    (30%)

I don't know                   24    (18%)

Has student's behavior improved in the classroom?

Not at all                     13    (10%)

Somewhat                       58    (43%)

A Lot                          57   (42%)

I don't know                   7    (5%)

Has student's attitude towards peers and classmates changed for the better?

Not at all                     18   (13%)

Somewhat                       56   (42%)

A Lot                          58   (43%)

I don't know                   3    (2%)

Has student displayed an increase in positive interactions with peers?

Not at all                     12 (9%)

Somewhat                       50 (37%)

A Lot                          70 (52%)

I don't know                   3    (2%)

Has the student been involved in any altercations leading to behavioral referrals?

Not at all                     94   (70%)

Somewhat                       31   (23%)

A Lot                          3    (2%)

I don't know                   7    (5%)


**AFFECTIVE:  Identification with school, sense of belonging, school connectedness**


Does the student appear to be more self-aware of others and their needs?

Not at all                     8    (6%)

Somewhat                       66   (49%)

A Lot                          46   (34%)

I don't know                   15   (11%)

Has the student connected with a staff member?

Not at all                     8    (6%)

Somewhat                       35 (26%)

A Lot                          68 (50%)

I don't know                   24 (18%)

Does the student feel comfortable expressing him/herself?

Not at all                     7    (5%)

Somewhat                       53 (39%)

A Lot                          62 (46%)

I don't know                   13 (10%)

Has the student exhibited a sense of connection (displayed ownership) with the school environment?

Not at all                     5    (4%)

Somewhat                       45   (33%)

A Lot                          66   (49%)

I don't know                   19   (14%)

Has the student displayed more empathy towards peers?

Not at all                     10   (7%)

Somewhat                       54   (40%)

A Lot                          55   (41%

I don't know                   16   (12%)

Does the student appear to be able to verbalize his or her feelings and emotions when frustrated or upset?

Not at all                     11   (8%)

Somewhat                       46   (34%)

A Lot                          69   (51%)

I don't know                   9    (7%)

Does the student appear to be receptive to critical feedback?

Not at all                     5    (4%)

Somewhat                       69   (51%)

A Lot                          53   (39%)

I don't know                   8    (6%)

Has the student sought advice from a staff person?

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Not at all | 8 | (6%) |
| Somewhat | 34 | (25%) |
| A Lot | 62 | (46%) |
| I don't know | 31 | (23%) |

Is the student involved in other school sponsored activities?

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Not at all | 18 | (13%) |
| Somewhat | 36 | (27%) |
| A Lot | 45 | (33%) |
| I don't know | 36 | (27%) |

Has the student displayed more respectful behaviors towards peers?

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Not at all | 10 | (7%) |
| Somewhat | 58 | (43%) |
| A Lot | 59 | (44%) |
| I don't know | 8 | (6%) |

Appendix C

Sample of responses to open-ended questions. The open-ended portion of the survey was

broken down into four sections or themes: Academic Performance, Cognitive

Functioning, Behavior and Affect where several subthemes emerged from the

respondents' responses.

**Academic Performance**

Academic Performance three subthemes kept resurfacing which were the students feeling

empowered, displaying persistence and participating/participation. A few examples of

responses below exhibit students feeling empowered in the classroom:

- Student will ask for assistance, which didn't happen previously.
- Student is taking more self-pride in their work.
- Student is more vocal in the classroom and starting to come out.(be self-assured)
- Student thinks things through when faced with perceived difficulties both academically and behaviorally.
- Student is eager to participate in whole group discussions and give oral responses frequently, which is new.
- Student is more focused and stays on tasks.

Persistence was validated through such responses as:

- More focused and engaged with discussions and in classroom.
- Increased level of engagement towards academics
- Not resistant any more when presented with something new. Not afraid to try new things.
- Taking school work more seriously.
- Increased self-awareness of growth needed and gained.
- Student has made steady improvement.
- Student has a strong desire to learn.
- Student works hard, even if he/she has difficulty grasping concepts.

Respondents noticed changes in participation by:

- Student now comes to school early and on time rather than after attendance has been taken.
- Student has increased participation during reading groups and has read out loud.
- Student gets work done in a timely manner.
- Student comes in the morning for help and completes work daily.
- Student has increased in remaining focused and attending to work when others are attempting to distract him.
- Increased engagement towards school work.

## Cognitive Functioning

In the area of Cognitive Functioning respondents endorsed three subthemes of the students displaying more self-awareness, setting goals and being more self-driven. In the area of Self-Awareness respondents noted:

- Student tries harder to be better.
- Taking more initiative to be a better student.
- Taking more initiative in performing tasks.
- Not afraid to speak up when objecting to something someone may have said or done from both adults and peers.
- Starting to understand the importance of an education for them.
- Knows when he or she needs to remove from distractions to complete work. Previously would remain and be the only one who didn't finish assignments.
- Student realizes the importance of academics in relationship to basketball.
- Student cares about what he or she is doing in the classroom, doesn't play around as much.

In the area of Goal Setting responses noted:

- Student is competitive and strives to be among the top students in class.
- Wants to get scores between 80%-100%.
- Student strives to be successful.
- Student sometimes has trouble processing new information but seems determined to understand and get it done.
- Student is becoming more confident in voicing own opinion during class discussions. He/She is becoming a model student.
- Student is becoming better-rounded.
- Student is trying to take school work seriously.
- Wants to accomplish expectations and personal goals.

Qualities that have been identified by respondents of the students being self-driven are

noted by:

- Asking more questions to understand the material in the classroom.
- Student has reduced avoidance of work.
- Student has increased ability to problem-solve not only with classwork but when interacting with peers as well.
- Student has become less reliant on following others and more confident in own decisions.
- Makes every effort to comprehend and understand what he or she is learning.
- Has become more independent in thinking out problems and solving them.
- Makes effort to remember homework and important dates.
- Wants to do well and is motivated to do their best.


## Behavior

Under the Behavioral theme such subthemes as community, responsibility and positive

emotional regulation that could encompass responses from respondents stood out.  In the

area of Community responses identified:

- Interacts with peers better during small group activities.
- Students strive to do their best in class because they realize that class mates are watching them now that they've become more popular.
- Thinks about problem and solves them to help with better interaction with peers.
- Displays positive attitude towards peers and adults.
- Appears more positive about everything.
- Respectful and honest in the classroom.
- Tries to help others that may not be catching on as quickly.
- Makes an effort to seek assistance before a situation escalates in the classroom.

In the area of responsibility responses endorsed:

- Very active in class, always willing to assist where needed in all areas.
- Takes classwork seriously because he or she knows that the basketball team relies on him or her.
- Maturity level has improved, takes things more seriously.
- Less concerned about winning a fight or argument and more self-aware about what he or she says and does to end bad situations in a positive way.
- More respectful to peers when altercations arise.

- Maturity level has improved, understanding the importance of taking responsibility for actions.
- Doesn't catch an attitude when being re-directed.
- More receptive to redirection and usually will make the necessary corrections.
- Has become model student and will assist with solving problems of others before it escalates into something more.  Classmates listen to him/her because he or she is a model student, a leader.

Respondents identified these characteristics for positive emotional regulation as:

- Student will request breaks when overwhelmed or angry.
- Negative behaviors have decreased.
- Student is more responsive when faced with difficulties or is upset.
- Student is able to bounce back quicker after frustrations.
- Seems less impulsive and disruptive.
- Doesn't get upset as much when answers are wrong.
- Behavior has improved greatly.
- Able to use strategies learned to reduce emotional outburst.
- Student appears much calmer.
- Student is able to talk through feelings when upset.
- Expresses frustration in a mature way.
- Was often angry, now seems more positive.


## **Affect**

Under the Affect theme being empathetic, displaying self-confidence and being a

problem solver where subthemes that were uncovered.  In the area of Empathy students:

- Students became very supportive and protective of classmates.
- Acts like they are a part of a team in the classroom.
- Tries to get everyone on board with tasks that teacher gives in the classroom.
- More respectful of peers, staff including substitute teachers.
- Acts as spokesperson for others when they feel peer needs assistance.
- Helps peers talk problems out so it doesn't escalate into a fight.
- Increased level of care toward peers and adults.
- Has changed social circle so they won't get involved in bickering and altercations.
- Less concerned with getting laughs for popularity and attention and more concerned about how joining hurts others.

Responses noted students involved on the basketball team displayed increased self-

confidence by:

- More confidence in self and what they can accomplish in class.
- Has always been popular but seems more genuine to all students.
- More vocal in the classroom in a positive way.
- More relaxed and confident in class.
- Appears more excited about school.
- Able to communicate feelings in a calm way.
- Better communication with teachers.
- Appears more outgoing
- Appears more positive about everything.
- Takes pride more pride in becoming a better student and friend to peers.

Under the subtheme of Problem Solver, respondents identified:

- Student acts as meditator when conflict arises in class.
- Always displays a positive outlook to diffuse conflict with peers.
- Attempts to de-escalate situation by making peers involved laugh.
- Seems to act as protector to teacher and acts to extinguish anything perceived which may upset learning environment.
- Attempts to improve peers' and teachers' moods.
- Is a good listener when peers discuss issues or problems they may be facing.

Appendix D

All open-ended responses by domain:

**<u>ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE</u>**

Not afraid to try new things

Consistent, great student

Taking more self-pride in work

Always engaged in class

Well rounded

More focused and engage in classroom also with discussion

Steady improvement

More engaged in class

Taking school work more seriously

Student above average but have to stay on student to complete all assignments

Increased self-awareness of growth needed and gained

Increase engagement towards academics

Increase in attending to course work

Increased level of engagement

More focused

Will ask for assistance

Gets work done in a timely manner

Increase participation during reading group and read out loud

Comes to school on time

Stays on tasks

Understands and responds to verbal directions

More vocal

Completes work daily

Thinks things through

Increase homework completion

Eager to give oral responses frequently

Strong desire to learn

Grasps concepts quickly

Works hard

## **COGNITIVE FUNCTIONING**

He/She tries harder to be better

Always engaged in class

Engaged with discussions and activities

Well rounded

Takes more initiative in performing tasks

Trying to take school work seriously

Asking more questions

Talking and participating in discussions

Starting to understand the importance of an education

Taking more initiative to be a better student

Average

Reduction of avoidance of work

Seems more confident

Less reliant on following others with more confidence and popularity

Still follows rather than making own decisions

Not afraid to speak up when objecting to tasks

Off tasks

Increased problem solver

Sometimes trouble processing new information but tries his/her best to get it done

Student able to think out problems and solve them

Able to interpret and discussion new information presented in class

Doesn't hesitate to ask when assistance is needed

Comprehends and understands what he is learning

Removes himself from others to concentrate and complete assignments

Makes effort to remember homework and important dates

Knowledgeable

Wants to get scores between 80%-100%

Strives for success

Wants to succeed

Cares about what he or she is doing

Realized the importance of academics in relationship to basketball

Competitive and strives to be among the top students in class

**BEHAVIOR**

More positive about everything

Always has a positive behavior

Positive about everything

Positive about everything

Outgoing

Respectful

Good behavior consistently

Maturity level has improved, takes things more seriously

Maturity level has improved, understanding the importance of taking

responsibility for actions.

Interacts with peers better when in small group activities

More respectful

Respectful to peers when altercations arise

Positive attitude towards peers and adults

Behavior average

Less angry

Great attitude

Less concerned about winning a fight or argument and more self-aware

Behavior has improved

Respectful and honest

Highly improved

Calmer

Talkative

Think about problems and solve them to help with better interaction with peers

Not catching attitude with being re-directed

Lots of energy ///Makes effort to seek assistance before a situation escalates

Model student

Very active always willing to assist in all areas

Negative behaviors have decreased

Fewer infractions

Behavior became worse with gaining of confidence

Comes to school earlier for class

More responsive

More independent

Ask for breaks when overwhelmed or angry

Receptive to redirection and usually makes necessary corrections

Less playful

Less impulsive and disruptive

Seems to be picking with other students

Get along better with peers

Eager to start activity

Increased participation

Gets upset when he or she gets wrong answer

Able to bounce back after frustration.

**AFFECT**

More outgoing

Positive about everything

Being a part of team

Expressing frustration in a mature way

Taking a more mature route in handling situations

Confident is slowly but surely starting to build up

Takes things more seriously

Maturing and being able to express opinions better

Better relationship and communication with teachers

Wants to come to school

Taking more pride in becoming a better student and peer

More confidence

Increased level of care around his peers and adults

Consistently a problem solver on the playground

Student wants to be honest and fair

Less and less conflict with peers

Increase maturity

Less concerned with hurting others for laughs or self-gain

More respectful towards peers, staff including substitute teachers

More confidence in self and what he/she is able to do

Eased transition of coming to a new school

More vocal in class

Has always been popular but seems more genuine to all students

Quiet

Less involved in bickering in the class

Positive outlook

Happy

Attention seeker

Sensitive

Moods improved

More focused

More relaxed and confident

Enthusiastic to learn

Was often angry; seems more positive

Very confident

More excited about school

Able to communicate his/her feelings in a calm way

Very supportive and protective of male classmates

Wants to participate

Tries to get everyone on board

Wants to accomplish expectations and personal goals

Able to utilize skills and techniques taught efficiently

Talk problems out

Has a sense of belonging because he/she knows he/she plays a prominent role on

team and is needed for team success

Helps others who need assistance

More aware how classmates treat student and as a result has changed group

student interacts with at lunch and recess.

More aware of the importance of academics

Displaying more positive interactions with peers

Supportive of peers