



HIGH SCHOOL ACTIVITIES: A COMMUNITY INVESTMENT IN AMERICA.



There's a modern miracle at work in high schools across the country.

Instructors and students arrive early and stay late, spending hours every week perfecting leadership and time management skills.

As a result of these programs, students choose healthy behaviors like refraining from smoking and drinking, getting good nutrition and exercising regularly.

Their grades and attendance show noticeable improvement, as do their standardized test scores, college admission rates, and chances of success in later life.

What's more, these programs are being run at an incredible value, and they serve an amazing 10 million students nationwide. That's about half the student body.

What are these programs? ... Extra study hall time? ... Assemblies with celebrity motivational speakers? ... Hardly ...

These programs are co-curricular activities — sports teams like basketball and soccer and fine arts programs such as theatre and debate. They are an integral and cost-effective part of secondary education.

These claims may surprise you, but during this presentation, you'll see why co-curricular activities are one of the best bargains in high school education. The investment is small, but the return is priceless.

Participation in high school activity programs provides several tangible rewards, including health benefits, enhanced academic success, learning life skills and achieving personal growth.

Let's look at the health benefits first ...

We've all heard the adage, "healthy body — healthy mind." That clearly is a benefit of participation in high school activity programs. It includes emotional well-being, as well as the obvious physical benefits.

Numerous studies have shown that high school co-curricular activity participants are less likely to smoke cigarettes, use drugs or become teen parents.

For example, a 2002 National Household Survey On Drug Abuse report showed that team sports participants were more likely than non-participants to disapprove of peers' use of cigarettes, alcohol or marijuana.

Good nutrition and physical exercise also are part of the equation. Students feel better



HIGH SCHOOL ACTIVITIES: A COMMUNITY INVESTMENT IN AMERICA.



physically, as well as about themselves.

According to a 1996 Surgeon General's Report, participating students develop themselves physically, control their weight and reduce fat, can prevent or delay development of high blood pressure, and can reduce feelings of depression and anxiety.

Academic success is the second primary benefit realized by high school activity program participants.

It's a well-known fact that student activities support the academic mission of our nation's high schools.

For example, studies have shown that participants do better in the classroom. A recent Colorado study demonstrates that its athletes maintained nearly a 3.1 grade-point average, while non-participants had a 2.44 grade-point average — a substantial 26-percent difference.

Other studies have shown that participating students will more likely stay in school. According to a recent NFHS study, 96 percent of high school dropouts were not involved in high school activities programs. In addition, 29 percent of the surveyed schools reported that they had absolutely no dropouts among their activity program participants. Activity program participation reduces the dropout rate by an impressive 40 percent.

Studies also show that activities participants have much higher attendance rates. For example, a recent North Carolina study shows that their athletes missed about 6½ days during a 180-day school year, while non-participating students missed 12½ days.

Learning values and life skills that will help students throughout their entire lives is yet another benefit of high school activity programs. Many successful individuals in all walks of life can attest to that fact.

For example, NBA standout Jalen Rose said:

“High school activities mean an opportunity to do other things associated with school. Participation gave me a sense of focus, a sense of direction. It taught me about teamwork, camaraderie, failure and success. It was another education on top of my book education.”

General Manager of the New York Knicks Isiah Thomas, had this to say:

“High school activities gave me a structured avenue to compete. They helped me become a better person because they taught me about relationships, respect and teamwork. Participation in high school activities has shown me that with a good structure, there can be success.”



HIGH SCHOOL ACTIVITIES: A COMMUNITY INVESTMENT IN AMERICA.



Stephanie McCarty, who played in the WNBA, said:

“Not only were high school athletics a great social outlet, but they also offered a release from the everyday pressures of high school. Participation in high school athletics teaches you a lot about life. It teaches you about self-discipline, teamwork, and managing your time with athletics and academics.”

Mark Herrmann, who was a standout high school, college and NFL quarterback, said this: “Playing high school sports formed the foundation of determining my work ethic, making sacrifices for the good of the team, and putting your personal agenda behind that of the team’s. That same sense of teamwork directly applies to your personal and professional lives as an adult.”

The lifelong lessons of good sportsmanship and citizenship are inherent components of high school activities. Student-athletes learn the meaning of sacrifice and teamwork, how to cooperate and overcome defeat, and how to win gracefully.

Participants also experience fewer behavioral problems and discipline referrals, have more self-discipline and possess more pro-social attitudes toward school.

Participation often is a predictor of success later in life. For example, the American College Testing Service looked at four factors for predicting success in life after college. The single yardstick that most effectively predicted success later in life was achievement in high school activities.

James Pressley, associate professor of education at East Carolina University, noted: “Participation levels vary by area, but usually 50 percent of the student body participates in at least one activity in today’s average high school. This is voluntary involvement and a commitment of 10 to 15 hours a week to learn something they want to know.”

According to a survey of highly-successful Fortune 500 executives, 95 percent of them played high school sports, 54 percent were in student government, 43 percent were in National Honor Society, 37 percent were in music, and 18 percent worked on a school publication.

In a recent survey of executive women, more than four out of five of them played sports while growing up. One such executive is Frances B. Emerson, senior vice president of corporate Communications at Mass Mutual, who said: “Importantly, they credit sports with teaching them skills that have advanced their ability in the workplace.”



HIGH SCHOOL ACTIVITIES: A COMMUNITY INVESTMENT IN AMERICA.



Janet Wyse, who is manager of advocacy programs at Oppenheimer Funds, stated: “There are lessons to be learned on a softball diamond or basketball court that are unavailable in a business lecture hall. It’s no coincidence that top businesswomen tend to have played sports.”

Today, more than 10 million boys and girls participate in high school activity programs — 6.7 million in athletic programs, and 3.3 million in fine arts programs.

And, let’s not forget how the community benefits — the spirit and pride engendered, the rapport established between adults and students, the increased parental involvement, and the camaraderie gained — all of these and more are byproducts of our high school activities programs.

School systems often feel they can’t afford activity programs. Nothing could be further from the truth. Out of the total school budget in a typical school system, only one to three percent of the total operating budget is needed to fund activity programs. The fact of the matter is no school can afford not to have them.

High school activity programs are designed to teach young people valuable life skills — not to create future stars for college and professional teams. These figures illustrate exactly how few high school students play at the college level.

It’s even more difficult to make it to the professional ranks, as these minuscule numbers clearly demonstrate.

If the primary purpose of high school activities is to develop future stars for college and professional athletic teams, it’s a terrible investment. But, that’s not our goal.

Instead, our goals are to promote health and well-being, to promote academic success, and help develop character and life skills. These are all benefits achieved through participation in high school activity programs — one of the best investments in our nation’s future.

**High school activities:
The investment is small, but the return is priceless.**

Please consider this when voting for our school budget!