Positive Effects Of Athletics On Academic Performance

Participation in organized sports is not only beneficial to one's health, but it can also develop many positive character traits that athletes can use in every aspect of their lives. Being part of an organized school team, practicing several times per week and representing the school competitively will also promote self-esteem, self-concept and social capital within the student and develop a strong level of school connectedness (Bradley & Conway, 2016). It is characteristics like these that are built and reinforced through athletic participation, along with motivation, perseverance, self-control, coping, and creativity that are thought to emphasize success in an academic setting.

Knifsend and Graham (2012) also examined the relationship between after school activity involvement and the development of a sense of belonging at school and academic engagement. The investigation analyzed the participants in 11th grade and then again in 12th grade. It was determined that students who participate in extracurricular activities throughout the academic year develop both higher academic commitment and a stronger sense of belonging at school. Youths that are educationally involved are also less likely to drop out and more likely to complete their high school education (Knifsend & Graham, 2012).

With many academic eligibility requirements in place for student athletes, it can be assumed that most athletes would outperform the majority of their non-athlete peers in the classroom. In a 2012 study, Lumpkin and Favor compared the academic results between athletes and non-athletes in grades 9-12. Various data was collected, including students' grade point averages (GPAs), graduation and dropout rates, and state assessment 12 results and ACT scores. All data that was obtained was examined allowing differences to be recognized between athletes and non-athletes. This study concluded that athletes outperformed non-athletes in several academic areas including GPA, state assessments, and the mathematics and science portions of the ACT (Lumpkin & Favor, 2012).

When examining standardized test scores further, Chen, Mason, Middleton, and Salazar (2013) compared ACT and SAT scores of athletes versus non-athletes. There were almost 200 student-athletes who voluntarily took part in this study. Participants filled out an 11-question behavioral survey, in addition to providing their student identification number. This number allowed access to each student's ACT scores, SAT scores, and grade point averages which were then matched to their completed surveys. While the results of this study showed no significant variation in test scores between athletes and non-athletes, they did demonstrate that student athletes spent more time studying then non athletes (Chen et al., 2013). In addition, no correlation was found between time spent on athletic participation and diminished academic performance.

In another study from 2017, Dyer, Kristjansson, Mann, Smith, and Allegrante (2017) examined the connection linking sport participation and academic performance among a sample of 3000 high school students. The results clearly present a positive connection between supervised sport participation and academic achievement among high school aged students (Dyer et al., 2017).

Trudeau and Shepard (2008) also conducted a study to reflect on and report the relationship between academic achievement and a few factors associated with school-based physical activities, including school sports. The results demonstrated that students were allotted up to one added hour daily on extracurricular activity, such as a school-based sport, without participation negatively affecting their academic performance. Additionally, it was found that participation in an extracurricular activity that includes physical activity (school sport) results in an increased academic performance and higher GPAs among student-athletes. This was found to be largely due to positive correlation between participation and increased memory, concentration, and conscientious classroom behavior (Trudeau & Shepard, 2008).

Finally, a study done by Lumpkin and Favor (2012) looked at a comparison of the academic results between athletes and non-athletes, with a focus on graduation and dropout rates. The study included almost 150,000 high school students. student participants, all of which were currently enrolled in grades 9-12 in Kansas High Schools. The type of data collected was students' grade point averages both graduation and dropout rates, and state assessment results and ACT scores. This study concluded that athletes did graduate at a much higher rate compared to their non-athlete counter parts, 98% versus 88%. The results of this study also found that the likelihood of non-athletes dropping out of school was significantly higher (15 times more likely) than that of athletes (Lumpkin & Favor, 2012).