Extracurricular Activities

Definition

Extracurricular activities are activities performed by students that fall outside the realm of the normal curriculum of school or university education. Extracurricular activities exist at all levels of education. Such activities are generally voluntary as opposed to mandatory, non-paying, tend to be social or philanthropic as opposed to scholastic, and involve others of the same age.

Extra curricular activities are the activities that we undertake which are not a part of our school or work obligations.

Extra curriculum activities are part of informal education, which consists of learning activities that are voluntary and self-directed, life-long, and motivated mainly by intrinsic interests, curiosity, exploration, manipulation, fantasy, task completion, and social interaction. Informal learning occurs in an out-of-school setting and can be linear or non-linear and often is self-paced and visual- or object-oriented. It provides an experiential base and motivation for further activity and learning.

Out of school hours learning look to extend and enrich the curriculum, to tie such learning more closely to schooling objectives. They aim at complimenting the work carried out during the normal school day.

Extra curricular activities are an integral part of life. Every child is able to find one or more activities to broaden their education beyond the classroom.

They enhance the learning and development of students. While the taught curriculum offers a broad range of experience and learning opportunities we firmly feel that learning will be enhanced by offering the students the opportunity to participate in a variety of activities after school. A great emphasis is placed on ensuring that students take up hobbies and interests outside the taught curriculum. This enables
students to develop as fully as possible whilst giving them the chance to sample a wide variety of different experiences

**Importance of extracurricular activities**

Do extracurricular activities contribute to students' success at school? Yes, answers John H. Holloway, a consultant for the teaching and learning division of the Educational Testing Service (ETS) in Princeton, New Jersey. In a 1999 column Extracurricular Activities: The Path to Academic Success for Educational Leadership, Holloway examined some of the research into the potential benefits of extracurricular activities. Much of the research into extracurricular activities suggests that they have positive effects on students who participate, said Holloway. Those effects can be particularly important for students who belong to ethnic minorities, students with disabilities, and students at risk of dropping out of school. Holloway told Education World that research indicates "participation in school activities, especially athletics, leads to higher self-esteem and an enhanced status among peers. Some have argued that a positive self-esteem is a deterrent to antisocial behavior."

Steve Duncan of Montana State University, who has a doctorate in family studies, sees value in extracurricular activities too. "Recent research confirms that involvement in extracurricular activities is more than just child's play," Duncan wrote in Family Matters: What is the Role of "Extracurricular" Activities? "School extracurricular activities and involvement in community clubs and organizations are important in fostering the strengths of youth, strengths that help young people steer away from undesirable behavior."

Such involvement in extracurricular activities helps young people discover and share talents, develop character and competence and often provide the added benefit of close relationships with caring, principled adults outside the home.

There are specific benefits that may result through participation in extracurricular activities.

Youth who are involved in organizations are more likely to show leadership abilities and are more likely to become leaders, compared to non-participants.
One study showed that participants in extracurricular activities were more willing to work on a difficult task to completion without adult supervision, and more likely to voice their opinions whether others agreed with them or not.

One survey showed that membership in extracurricular activities made a difference compared to nonmembers, in terms of life skills. Involvement in such activities had a positive influence on self-esteem and community service.

The key points that will be made in this claim of fact are that students involved in extracurricular activities receive better grades than those who are not involved in extracurricular activities. In addition, activities improve the overall student. Therefore, they help students to receive better grades by teaching them character building lessons, teaching them lifelong skills, saving some at risk students who would possibly drop out of school, and helping students develop social skills.

**Character Building**

A myriad of components contribute to the reasons why extracurricular activities benefit students academically. One of these reasons is that students learn character-building lessons that they can apply to their study habits and to their lives. Activities such as athletics, music, theater, and organizations teach students how to discipline themselves through drills, practices, or rehearsals (Rombokas 8). The students have a responsibility to the activity and must perform the tasks assigned to them whether it be to run, sing, act, or organize an event. By participating and persevering in any of these activities, the students gain a sense of self-respect, self-esteem, and self-confidence (Rombokas 23). Extracurricular activities give them pride in their accomplishments, and they learn that if an activity is worth doing, it is worth doing well (Rombokas 11).

**Skills**

Through extracurricular activities, students learn life skills that benefit their studies. Matt Craft, president of the Iowa State University
Government of the Student Body, stated that being involved teaches students organization and time management skills. Because activities take time out of the students’ schedules, the involved students must plan their time wisely and efficiently to complete the assigned tasks (Craft). In addition to organizational skills, extracurricular activities in the arts teach students analytical skills and creative problem solving skills since they have to think creatively to successfully perform music, act in a play, or produce a work of art (Rombokas 10).

**Students at Risk**

Not only do extracurricular activities help students that are already successful in school to further excel, they also help students that are at risk of dropping or flunking out to remain in school. Erin Fowkes, counselor at the Battle Creek-Ida Grove High School, stated that students involved in activities at that high school cannot flunk more than two classes or they will be unable to participate. Therefore, the borderline students who thoroughly enjoy their activity work hard to pass their classes in order that they may continue to participate (Fowkes). In Rombokas’ research, she found that extracurricular activities are the only component that makes some students stay in school and attend regularly (Rombokas 10). Another benefit of extracurricular activities for at risk students is that it lessens the number of discipline problems.

**Social**

Although social aspects of a student’s life do not directly affect his or her grade point average, they do affect the overall wellbeing of the student. Education is not solely learned by reading the textbook for students can learn an incredible amount from their peers through extracurricular activities. Students learn how to compromise and work in a group. Extracurricular activities also allow students to meet and interact with peers that may not be within their close group of friends. In addition, extracurricular activities help to enhance these social skills and teach lessons not learned in a classroom. Laura Bestler, assistant
director of the student activities at the Student Activities Center, said that extracurricular activities are an effective way to network and meet other people with whom the students can study (Bestler). Reinforcing Bestler's statement, Erin Fowkes commented that extracurricular activities teach students to work in teams and work cooperatively, skills that will help students be successful in school and attain jobs in the future (Fowkes).

**What can be done in an English class to enhance the learning experience?**

**Arts and Crafts**

Using arts and crafts in the classroom can be an excellent way to facilitate language learning with young learners. For mixed age and level classes, arts and crafts activities can supplement a course book which isn't always appropriate for all students. It's useful to show students an example of the end product. They will then have a clear idea of what they are going to make.

**Project Work**

Project work is becoming an increasingly popular feature within the ELT classroom. Common projects are class magazines, group wall displays about students' countries and designs for cities of the future. A project involves students in deciding together what they want to do to complete a project whilst the teacher plays a more supporting role.

**Some advantages of project work are:**

- Increased motivation - learners become personally involved in the project.
- All four skills, reading, writing, listening and speaking, are integrated.
- Autonomous learning is promoted as learners become more responsible for their own learning.
- There are learning outcomes - learners have an end product.
- Authentic tasks and therefore the language input are more authentic.
Interpersonal relations are developed through working as a group.
Content and methodology can be decided between the learners and the teacher and within the group themselves so it is more learner centred.
Learners often get help from parents for project work thus involving the parent more in the child’s learning. If the project is also displayed parents can see it at open days or when they pick the child up from the school.
A break from routine and the chance to do something different.
A context is established which balances the need for fluency and accuracy.

Portfolios

These are a great way to help students review what they have done over the term or year, organize and assess their work. The students choose a certain number of pieces of work they want included in the portfolio.

Conclusion

Therefore, administrations of schools and teachers ought to think seriously and plan for their extracurricular activities since they clearly benefit the students' academic achievement. Schools should encourage students to participate in extracurricular activities since they benefit the students in so many ways. Activities provide and instruct students with lessons that will last them a lifetime. Many people believe that young learners aren't capable of taking responsibility for their own learning and that all responsibility should rest with the teacher, but by using a few of the above mentioned ideas we can start the long but important process of developing learner autonomy and ultimately improving the effectiveness of their learning.

Unfortunately, the current obsession with targets and the completion of prescribed coursework rather works against the sense of fun and wonder that extracurricular activities provide.
References


