
Thank you for your request to our REL Reference Desk regarding evidence-based information about connections between extracurricular activities and academic/behavioral success for students with emotional/behavioral disorders (EBD). Ask A REL is a collaborative reference desk service provided by the ten regional educational laboratories (REL) that, by design, functions much in the same way as a technical reference library. It provides references, referrals, and brief responses in the form of citations on research based education questions.

The information below represents the most rigorous research available. Researchers consider the type of methodology and give priority to research reports that employ well described and thorough methods. The resources were also selected based on the date of the publication with a preference for research from the last ten years. Additional criteria for inclusion include the source and funder of the resource.

Question: *What evidence is there linking extracurricular involvement with academic success and lower disciplinary issues for students served in special education as EBD?*

Search Process

Key words and search strings used in the search: *extracurricular activities AND academic success; extracurricular activities AND disciplinary issues; EBD AND extracurriculars AND academic performance; EBD AND extracurriculars AND disciplinary action*

Search databases and websites:

1. ERIC: <http://www.eric.ed.gov/>
2. JSTOR: <http://www.jstor.org/action/showAdvancedSearch>
3. Google Scholar: www.google.com/scholar
4. Institute of Education Sciences (IES) Resources: <http://ies.ed.gov>
5. What Works Clearinghouse: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>

Sample Citations Retrieved: (NOTE: Abstracts and executive summaries are copied directly from the reports when possible to ensure accuracy):

Achilles, G.M., McLaughlin, M.J., & Croninger, R.G. (2007). Sociocultural Correlates of Disciplinary Exclusion Among Students With Emotional, Behavioral, and Learning Disabilities in the SEELS National Dataset. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 15(1), 33-45. doi: 10.1177/10634266070150010401

Abstract/Summary: Suspension and expulsion are widely used to exclude students with and without disabilities who present problem behaviors in school, despite contentious legal debate and evidence associating these methods with high ecological stress and problematic developmental outcomes. Using selected participant data (N = 1,824) from the SEELS study, the

study authors entered multilevel predictors into logistic regression analyses to identify factors associated with higher likelihood of exclusion (HLE) among students in three high-exclusion disability groups: emotional/behavioral disorders (EBD), other health impairment (OHI) with a diagnosis of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and learning disability (LD). When the authors examined disability groups together, HLE was more likely among students with EBD and ADHD compared to students with LD. HLE was also associated with African American ethnicity, older age, male gender, low socio-economic status, multiple school changes, urban schooling, and having parents who expressed low school satisfaction. However, when the authors examined the disability groups individually, predictor profiles varied markedly by disability type. The authors discuss implications for school programs.

Gifford, B., Evans, K., Bai, Y. (2013). *America's Promise Alliance: 10 Indicators of Academic Achievement and Youth Success*. Durham, NC: Duke University Center for Child and Family Policy. Retrieved from:
<http://childandfamilypolicy.duke.edu/resources/publications/?t=reports>

Abstract/Summary: Approximately one quarter of U.S. students do not graduate from high school with their peers. Failing to complete high school severely limits opportunities for employment and future financial stability. High school dropouts earn lower wages through their lifetime and work for fewer years. The costs to society of high school dropouts are also high and include lost tax revenue and a citizenship that is less civically engaged and more reliant on government subsidies. The Grad Nation Campaign of the America's Promise Alliance aims to raise awareness of the dropout crisis and to mobilize action to improve the high school graduation rate. The Alliance has established a goal that at least 90 percent of the class of 2020 will earn a high school diploma, with no high school graduating less than 80 percent of its students. During the next decade, it will be important to track the nation's progress toward this goal. This report identifies 10 national and state indicators of academic achievement and youth success that the scientific literature has shown to be important factors for future well-being. Each indicator is based on valid, reliable, and nationally-representative information that allows for tracking historical trends and is likely to be available in future years, so that progress can be monitored. The authors examine changes in each indicator over the most recent eight to ten years. The report also documents the achievement gap that persists across many educational domains. Reducing racial and ethnic gaps while raising the achievement of all youth is an important step in preparing the nation's youth for success. The 10 indicators, along with a brief description of their importance, are provided in this paper. The remainder of the report focuses on describing recent trends related to these indicators. The 10 indicators include: (1) High School Graduation; (2) 9th to 10th Grade Promotion; (3) Preschool Enrollment; (4) 4th Grade Reading Proficiency; (5) 8th Grade Math Proficiency; (6) 8th Grade Science Proficiency; (7) College Enrollment among Young Adults; (8) Voting among Young Adults; (9) Volunteering and

Service among Young Adults; and (10) Participation in Extracurricular Activities. (Contains 28 figures.)

Kronholz, J. (2012). Academic Value of Non-Academics: The Case for Keeping Extracurriculars. *Education Next*, 12(1), 8-14.

Abstract/Summary: A growing body of research says there is a link between afterschool activities and graduating from high school, going to college, and becoming a responsible citizen. Temple University psychologist Laurence Steinberg, whose book, "You and Your Adolescent: The Essential Guide for Ages 10-25," discusses afterschool activities. He suggested two more reasons for what he believes is a causal link between activities and academic success. Kids who are involved in clubs and sports spend an extra couple of hours a week with an adult, usually a role model like a drama director or a football coach. Extracurriculars also make school more palatable for a whole lot of kids who otherwise find it bleak or unsatisfying. As with a lot of social science research, the findings about extracurriculars are not always consistent or conclusive. But some researchers insist there is a cause-effect relationship between activities and academic success, not just the other way around. Margo Gardner, a research scientist at Columbia University's National Center for Children and Families (NSCF), is among them--and certainly not alone. Using data from the 1988 National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS), and controlling for poverty, race, gender, test scores, and parental involvement, Gardner has calculated that the odds of attending college were 97 percent higher for youngsters who took part in school-sponsored activities for two years than for those who didn't do any school activities.

Mattison, R.E. & Blader, J.C. (2013). What Affects Academic Functioning in Secondary Special Education Students with Serious Emotional and/or Behavioral Problems? *Behavioral Disorders*, 38(4), 201-211. Doi:

Abstract/Summary: Concern is growing over the limited academic progress in special education students with emotional and/or behavioral disorders (EBD). We know little about how academic and behavioral factors interact in these students to affect their academic functioning. Therefore, potential associations were investigated over the course of one school year for 196 secondary students with EBD in a self-contained public school (SCS). Demographics, IQ and achievement testing, teacher checklist ratings for emotional/ behavioral problems, and standard measures of school function were gathered. First, academic achievement was studied, and regression analyses showed that both reading and math achievement were significantly increased by higher verbal IQ and lower ADHD-inattentive symptoms (ADHD-I), and math also by higher performance IQ and younger age. Next, general academic performance was examined, and regression analysis demonstrated that major-subject GPA was significantly increased by lower ADHD-I teacher ratings, higher math achievement, and younger age. In comparison, out-of-

school suspensions were significantly increased by higher conduct disorder and lower social phobia ratings. Thus, in these students with EBD in an SCS, academic functioning was primarily affected by academic parameters, and by ADHD-I but not by other emotional/behavioral problems. These results can further inform the planning of academic interventions for many students with EBD.

Reschly, A.L. & Christenson, S.L. (2006). Prediction of Dropout Among Students With Mild Disabilities: A Case for the Inclusion of Student Engagement Variables. *Remedial and Special Education, 27*(5), 276-292. doi: 10.1177/07419325060270050301

Abstract/Summary: This study examined the engagement of students with learning disabilities and emotional disturbance and the relation of this engagement to school completion. Participants were parent-identified students with learning disabilities (LD) and emotional or behavioral disorders (EBD) and comparison groups of average-achieving peers and students without disabilities who dropped out or stayed in school. Comparisons of the engagement of students with LD or EBD and average-achieving peers showed significant differences (but small in terms of effect sizes) and indicated that students with LD or EBD reported less desirable engagement than their average-achieving peers. After accounting for achievement test scores, grade retention, and socioeconomic status, student engagement variables were significant predictors of school dropout and completion for students with LD or EBD and students without disabilities. Implications of these results in terms of the construct of student engagement and school dropout and future directions for research are discussed.

Wagner, M. & Davis, M. (2006). How Are We Preparing Students With Emotional Disturbances for the Transition to Young Adulthood? Findings From the National Longitudinal Transition Study—2. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 14*(2), 86-98. doi: 10.1177/10634266060140020501

Abstract/Summary: The authors describe five principles they identified from the literature on exemplary practices to help students with emotional disturbances (ED) have positive secondary school experiences and successful trajectories into early adulthood. The five are relationships, rigor, relevance, attention to the whole child, and involving students and families in goal-driven transition planning. The authors evaluated implementation of these practices for middle and secondary school students with ED by using data from a nationally representative longitudinal study of students receiving special education services. The results suggest that exposure to best practices has improved since the 1980s and is similar to that for students with other disabilities, but significant opportunity for improvement remains. The authors also identify implications for school programming.

Referrals

Organizations:

- Duke Center for Child and Family Policy: <http://childandfamilypolicy.duke.edu>

Federally Funded Resources:

- Institute of Education Sciences (IES), public search engine available at: <http://ies.ed.gov/pubsearch/>
- What Works Clearinghouse: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>
- Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports: <https://www.pbis.org/>

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