

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

Deaf Students Involvement in Extracurricular Activities

by

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ABSTRACT

Desinya Garza: Deaf Students' Involvement in Extracurricular Activities
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In mainstream school settings, many deaf students are unable to participate in extracurricular activities while their hearing peers are able to go out for every extracurricular activity available. This is often due to the lack of assistance available for deaf students whether that is assistive technology, interpreters, and encouragement. Because of the lack of involvement, deaf students do not receive the benefits that extracurricular activities have to offer such as the development of teamwork, individual and group responsibility, physical strength and endurance, competition, diversity, a sense of culture and community, and the exploration of their passions and skills. In order to bring forth equal access and opportunity for deaf students to be involved in extracurricular activities, we must first find the underlying reason as to why they are not involved and how these extracurricular activities can affect postsecondary life. To answer this question, interviews were conducted for three different Deaf students currently attending Oklahoma State University asking questions pertaining to their experience and involvement through high school in extracurricular activities. These three students also responded to questions regarding any scholarships, early and automatic admissions to colleges, or employment opportunities because of their involvement in extracurricular activities. Results showed a lack of involvement for the majority of the students, and inconclusive data for the effect on postsecondary life. This study emphasizes the need for equal access and opportunity through assistive technology, interpreters, and encouragement from schools.

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PURPOSE STATEMENT AND SIGNIFICANCE

In schools across the nation, students are encouraged to get involved in extracurricular activities. Why? Extracurricular activities are said to give students opportunities to “learn the values of teamwork, individual and group responsibility, physical strength and endurance, competition, diversity, and a sense of culture and community,” as well as the exploration of interests and new skills (O’Brien, 1995). Does that same encouragement apply for students who are deaf or hard of hearing; and does this apply equally in mainstream and residential schools for the deaf? The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine the involvement of deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) students in extracurricular activities throughout high school and its impact on their life in postsecondary school.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) states that eligible children with disabilities have free access to public education in the least restrictive setting as well as special education and related services (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, n.d), these related services can include after school activities. In Oklahoma, Deaf and Hard of Hearing student’s parents can choose to enroll their student who is deaf or hard of hearing in either a public or mainstream school settings, Oklahoma School for the Deaf (a day school or residential setting), or homeschools. Mainstream schools are public schools that may or may not have a deaf classroom with a Deaf Education teacher, and there may or may not be sign language interpreters for the deaf and hard of hearing students within regular classrooms. Residential schools are where students are bused to a location, stay in dorms, and then are bused back home at the end of the week or the end of the semester, depending on the school.

These settings often have students that live close and attend the school but return home daily, as with regular schools. Homeschools, students are taught at home as provided by the Oklahoma Constitution, with parents or co-ops that may or may not provide access for deaf or hard of hearing students. Since the 1990's when the IDEA was put into place, fewer students are attending specialized settings such as deaf schools, and more are attending mainstream settings (Mathews, 9, 2018). In the United States, a total of 10.9% of students with a hearing impairment attend a separate or residential school for students with disabilities such as a deaf school while over 60% of students with a hearing impairment attend a mainstream school and are in the general classroom setting (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). In Oklahoma specifically, there are approximately 21,750 registered deaf people. Out of this number, all of them have been or currently are students. There are only 200 kids that attend Oklahoma School for the Deaf, meaning they have full access to after school activities. The remaining students either attend mainstream or homeschools, meaning they do not have full access to after school activities (Nelson, 2018). The only schools that offer regular classroom interpreters in the state of Oklahoma are Putnam City and Edison; however, they do not have interpreters for all extracurricular activities. They have interpreters for football, basketball, and other popular activities, but not for activities such as debate club. This leaves the students interested in the less popular activities to either figure it out on their own or not participate. At Oklahoma State University specifically, there has been 21 successful graduates since 2004 from either undergraduate or graduate studies. Each of these students were involved in extracurricular activities whether that was football, literature club, or art club. There have been 18 students that have dropped out, and they never had access to after school activities or quality interpreters. The students who graduated have

found jobs and they are living successful lives. On the other hand, the students who dropped out that had no access to extracurricular activities are working minimum wage jobs and have low literacy rates due to limited access to real world activities (Busby, 2019).

So, why is this topic something I am so passionate about? When I declared American Sign Language (ASL) as my minor going into my junior year of college, I knew I was starting something that would altar my passions and change my life. My junior year of high school I was in Levelland, Texas for a regional track meet. I had gone to McDonald's with a few of my teammates for a quick bite to eat before our next event later that day. There was a man walking around the McDonald's trying to sell bracelets he made to make some money. I noticed him getting turned away by many and having this look of defeat on his face. As he approached our table, we all gave him a smile and quickly learned he was deaf. On the bracelets, he had written, "I'm deaf. I am selling these bracelets to help my family. Anything helps." At the time, I had zero previous knowledge of ASL. We shook our heads letting the man know we did not want to buy a bracelet and he walked away, again with a look of defeat. I continued to watch the man make his way around the store, until he walked up to a young woman seated in a booth across from us. She read the note on the bracelet and began to sign to the man. I remember seeing his face light up and a smile instantly come across his face. In that instant, I knew I wanted to learn ASL. If I could go back to that moment and communicate with that man, I would in a heartbeat. Throughout the past two years of taking ASL classes, I have fallen in love with American Sign Language, Deaf culture, and their community. In the future, it is my dream to teach Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) either in a deaf school or in a mainstream school where I can teach deaf or hearing students with zero communication barriers. A major component of FCS is Family, Career, and

Community Leaders of America (FCCLA). This is an extracurricular organization that students can be a part of to learn leadership skills, communication skills, and explore their passions. I would love to see both deaf and hearing students have the opportunity to be a part of FCCLA. I would also like to see students who are deaf or hard of hearing have equal opportunity in other after school extracurricular activities.

Throughout this paper, I will be reviewing several pieces of literature, the methodology used for my research, findings from interviews along with the limitations of this study, discussion of these findings as well as implications for practice. Throughout this paper you will notice I use Deaf and deaf; Deaf is related to the people of the community who use sign language, have their own culture, and socialize with one another whereas the deaf designates anyone with a hearing loss. Typically, hard of hearing individuals socialize with hearing people, do not sign and are generally unaware there is a separate, inclusive culture that involves Deaf persons from many socioeconomic levels, different areas of work, ages, and political ties. The Deaf Community opens their arms and hearts to any and all willing to learn their language.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many studies over the impact of extracurricular activities on student outcomes have been conducted, however, minimal research over the impact on specifically deaf and hard-of-hearing students has been completed. Previous research has examined factors that play a role in their academic status, how involvement affects their lives postsecondary, and social interactions in educational settings. One study completed by Reed, Antia, and Kreimeyer at the College of Education at The University of Arizona (2008) examines the facilitators and detractors that play a role in deaf and hard-of-hearing students in public schools. Interviews

were completed for 25 DHH students, DHH and general education teachers, principals, parents, and interpreters. High family support, high student motivation, and good communication were all identified as facilitators. Detractors found in the study included a lack of family resources, family use of a language other than the majority language, and additional disabilities. Although the study showed no one single distinguishing facilitator or detractor, it did identify several facilitators and detractors that gave implications and methods for practice for professionals working with DHH students and their families. These implications included practices such as allowing itinerant teachers of DHH more time to communicate with the general education teachers of below-average students and holding DHH students to similar standards as hearing peers while also using instructional strategies that allows for DHH students to achieve those standards. Communication, assistance and individual modifications when necessary for deaf students in mainstream settings were the key findings of this study.

Another study done at the University of Texas at Austin examined the impact of extracurricular involvement on postsecondary outcomes of DHH youth (Schoffstall & Cawthon, 2016). The study's findings suggest that overall involvement in extracurricular activities only predicted independent living in postsecondary when comparing participation versus non-participation. Youth who were involved in more than one activity predicted their postsecondary enrollment and involvement. The study also may suggest that being involved in extracurricular activities gives DHH youth opportunity for development of life skills that they carry to their independent life in postsecondary.

A study done at Sichuan Normal University and Palacky University (2014) describes how DHH children socialize and interact with their hearing peers, identify difficulties and

challenges for those students attempting to interact, as well as finding effective methods to encourage social interaction between deaf and hearing students. The purpose of this study was to encourage support for these children who are DHH and enable them for active participation in inclusive education settings. The study suggests that DHH students need opportunities to develop communication abilities in order to engage in meaningful social interactions and opportunity to develop social skills in initiating conversation with hearing students. It also points out that hearing students need encouragement to engage in conversation with DHH students. DHH students desire interaction with both those who are DHH and hearing. Hearing students often give few responses to DHH students due to the inability to communicate and carry conversation without having to repeat themselves for the DHH who may not understand. This study suggests that negative responses from hearing youth impede the ability for the DHH to engage in meaningful conversation, resulting in lower social skills.

METHODOLOGY

As I began my thesis prep semester, I had many ideas in mind for my capstone project for the Honors College. I struggled to decide if I wanted to cover a topic that correlated to my major, or one that correlated to my minor. In high school, my passion was leadership and being involved. In my final two years of college, while I am still involved, my passion shifted towards the beautiful language of American Sign Language (ASL). Because of my passion for advocating for ASL and the Deaf community, as well as student involvement at OSU, I found a way to integrate both. I decided to research the topic of deaf students' involvement in extracurricular activities. I began to wonder, is there a positive reason for deaf students to be involved in these activities, whether on this campus or at their

high school? Would they be given a better chance at scholarships, college admissions, or employment if they were involved? How would I generalize this topic to bring forth awareness and equal access for deaf students in all types of schools? I began to examine different methods that could be used for my purpose, and settled on using interviews and personal narratives. I created my own questions that covered many different aspects of students' involvement including where they went to high school, what they did while attending high school (what after school activities were they involved in or wanted to be involved in but had no access), were they supported and encouraged, did they require assistance or an interpreter (if an interpreter was even available), and their personal feelings about their involvement or lack of involvement. Based upon their interviews, I would analyze their responses, report my findings, and form a final idea.

I started this process by identifying what I am passionate about. American Sign Language and advocating for equal access for the Deaf community quickly became a passion of mine as I began my first ASL class my junior year of college. Although I do love my major degree, I knew I wanted to address a problem that could bring forth awareness to the problems people in the Deaf community face. I began brainstorming many different ideas such as open captioning in public places, inability to communicate with many hearing people (or hearing peoples unwillingness to communicate in a different format than speech to a non-verbal person), access to on-campus activities, and so much more. I decided on the idea of deaf people not being able or encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities due to unequal access. I then began researching to see if there were other pieces of literature already created on this topic. I was able to find a few works that pertained to my topic; however, I wanted to make mine a bit more specific to my own purpose and our campus. After

identifying a problem and reading other pieces of literature pertaining to my subject, I began to brainstorm how I would address the problem of deaf students' minimal involvement in extracurricular activities. I decided that interviewing students and learning about personal stories and narratives would be the best option. Before I could begin interviewing, I needed to identify whom exactly I would interview. I discussed with my advisor about several deaf and hard-of-hearing students that attended Oklahoma State University and concluded that these students would be who I use for my interview purposes. I reached out to a total of six deaf students currently at Oklahoma State University. I started with an initial e-mail asking the students if they would be interested in helping out with my research by answering a few questions I had. The following paragraph is a sample of the e-mail I used for each of the students:

“Hi Student Name!

I hope you are doing great. My name is Desinya Garza and I am currently a senior at OSU studying Human Development and Family Sciences and I am also working on getting my minor in ASL. To end my college career, I am doing my thesis for the Honors College over deaf students' involvement in extracurricular activities throughout high school and here on campus. I would love the opportunity to interview you and ask about your experience in schools growing up. Your input will really help me form a thesis that can work to bring equal access to deaf students in different types of schools.

Here is a sample of some of the questions that will be asked in the interview:

- Were you encouraged to do sports or be in clubs throughout high school?
- Did your parents/guardians/family members support and encourage you to be in these extracurricular activities?
- Did you have an interpreter with you throughout the activities?
- Was there any sort of assistance or changes made for you in the activities, other than an interpreter (Did you have an interpreter)?
- Do you think being involved or not being involved in extracurricular activities affected how you live now?

I am able to do in-person, Skype, Facetime, or e-mail interviews - whichever you prefer. Let me know if an interview is something you would be interested in and we can schedule an interview time. The sooner we can get this done, the better. Your help would be greatly appreciated!

Thank you so much!
Desinya Garza”

Once I had heard back from students indicating whether they were interested in completing the interview, we worked together to set a time to do an in-person interview, Skype, or Facetime interview. If we were unable to find a time that worked best for any of these three, we decided an e-mail interview would work best. I sent the following questions to students who needed to complete the interview through e-mail and asked them to save it, edit, and answer the questions according to their own experiences:

- Name, classification, and where did you attend high school?
- Were sports and clubs offered to you in high school?
- Did your school encourage you to do sports or be in clubs throughout high school?
- Did your parents/guardians/family members support and encourage you to be in these extracurricular activities?
- Did you have an interpreter with you throughout the activities?
- If so, what was your interpreter’s level of certification?
- Was there any sort of assistance or changes made for you in the activities, other than an interpreter?
- Do you think being involved or not being involved in extracurricular activities affected how you live now?
- If you were involved in extracurricular activities, were you given opportunities such as scholarships, college admissions, or employment?
- Had you not been involved in these activities, do you think you would have received these same opportunities?

As I received responses from each of the students who completed the interview through e-mail, I saved their documents under their name to allow for easy access when I would later analyze their responses and report my findings. These same questions were also used for students who completed the in-person interview. For the in-person interview, which was only completed by one student, we used sign language for means of communication in the interview. This required me to practice asking the questions in order to correctly communicate my purpose. For accuracy purposes, we also had an interpreter in the room just

in case extra help was needed or there was any miscommunication. I signed most of the questions to the interviewee, however, because I am not yet fluent in ASL, I did need the assistance from the interpreter multiple times. It was also needed so that I could record the students' responses as they gave their personal narratives. Once I had each of the interviews completed, I began to analyze their responses and create a final report.

Because I am currently a student at Oklahoma State, I knew that obtaining information from students who are currently a part of our campus would result in the most relevant and understandable narratives. I chose to reach out to six deaf students for my research sample. Out of the six students I e-mailed for the initial interview, one student was a graduate student whom also was a professor teaching two American Sign Language classes. The remaining five were all students in their undergrad years across various grade levels. I had previously communicated with four out of the six students I interviewed in ASL classes and at silent events, so I knew they had great stories and experiences that needed to be shared with more people than just those in the deaf community. I chose to conduct interviews because a huge part of Deaf culture is communication. Because deaf people are often in situations where they are unable to communicate with people because of language barriers, when they get the opportunity to communicate with someone they typically make the most of the time. Unfortunately, I only heard back from three of the six students. Although I only interviewed one of the three final students face-to-face, it was still so valuable to be able to interact with them and be a part of their culture and community for even just a short period of time. It would have been ideal to complete each of the interviews in-person, but due to busy student schedules not matching up, we had to make e-mail interviews work. It still was very

efficient in learning about the deaf students' involvement and stories of their high school years.

If I had chosen to use a different method such as surveys, case studies, experiments, or observations, the data I collected would not have been as personal as the interviews were. If I had used surveys, I may have been able to reach more people in the deaf community, however, the questions may not have been as applicable to a large amount of people and we would not get any extra information or personal stories as most Deaf persons prefer face to face as sometimes they can misunderstand English. ASL is based on French so the grammar follows French grammar instead of English. If I were to use a case study on one student only, I would not have the amount of data I currently do and would not have been able to compare and contrast different experiences at different schools and in different activities. An experiment also would have been difficult for my specific topic because it is a topic that questions their high school experiences, and an experiment would be for something that is more current. Lastly, an observation would also be difficult due to timing. My topic is, again, dealing with past experiences and observations would only work for a current topic.

Although my sample size was on the smaller side, I do feel as if it is accurate because many deaf have similar experiences. Each of the students I interviewed attended mainstream schools. One of the student's was very involved and the other two were not as involved due to differing reasons. I interviewed students who had interpreters, assistance, and some who did not. We had a variety of opinions, stories, and responses to the interviews, which increased possibility of this data being generalized to a bigger sample group. The only way to increase the generalization of this data would be to find deaf students who did not live in Oklahoma majority of their lives.

FINDINGS

In this section, the findings and themes from each of the three interviews will be presented and examined in detail as they pertain to deaf student's involvement in extracurricular activities. After each of the interviews has been presented, limitations to the qualitative study will be discussed.

Interviewee #1. A Deaf graduate student attending Oklahoma State University teaching American Sign Language I and II was the first interviewee. This student attended high school at a big mainstream school and his involvement varied through his years in school. At his school there were many sports to get involved in such as football, soccer, basketball, track, and swimming. In his first year of high school, this student was afraid to get involved due to communication barriers and being in a new place. After his freshman year, he decided to get more involved not only in sports but also very much involved in the deaf community. He started learning more ASL and found his place in the deaf community. He saw his other deaf friends getting involved and realized that he, too, could be involved in sports and clubs despite the communication barriers. Before high school, this student attended a private school and often dealt with discrimination and a coach unwilling to assist in any way, along with no interpreter available to assist in the communication. At his high school, he had an interpreter; they found assistive technology and ways for deaf students to be involved in sports. The interpreter also assisted in finding methods that worked best for deaf students to be involved in extracurricular activities. In swimming, his coach would stick his hand underwater and wave it around so that the student knew to come up for coaching or other reasons. Specific signal lights have also been used in swimming pools to assist the deaf while swimming. When asked if this student was encouraged by the school to participate in

extracurricular activities, he said that it was more his deaf friends that encouraged him to try something. They would tell him that deaf people could participate too. They encouraged him to prove hearing people who said they weren't able to participate wrong. He said their motivation to advocate for the deaf community inspired him and always having their support was helpful. When this student was asked if he believed that participation or non-participation in sports or clubs affected how he lives now, he responded by explaining how it makes both deaf and hearing people more aware of the other cultural group. He explained, because of the deaf student's involvement at his school, hearing students now know that deaf does not mean incapable. The deaf students showed that they have skills as well. It also put the idea of assistive technology in the light to bring forth more equal access in extracurricular activities for those with disabilities. This student was not given any extra opportunity such as scholarships, college admissions, or employment because of his involvement. However, this student explained that at Gallaudet University, a college for deaf and hard-of-hearing students located in Washington, D.C., they do give extra scholarships and admissions for students who were involved in high school. This student was offered a position on the swim team at Gallaudet, but kindly rejected to stay closer to home.

Interviewee #2. A Deaf student attending Oklahoma State University who was interviewed through e-mail contact was the second interviewee. This student attended a mainstream school in Oklahoma. At this school, many sports and clubs were available to her. However, due to lack of interest, she did not participate. The student did not identify whether or not she had an interpreter, or if any assistance was offered to her or other deaf students who many have participated at her school. Her parents let her decide what she was involved

in and what she was not involved in. This student did not get any scholarships but she was automatically accepted to three different schools in the state of Oklahoma.

Interviewee #3. A Deaf student attending Oklahoma State University who was also interviewed through e-mail was the third and final interviewee. This student attended a mainstream school in Oklahoma. At her school, they did have sports and clubs. However, because she did not live in the same town as her school she was unable to participate in these extracurricular activities. The town she resided in was a small town that did not offer a Deaf Education program for deaf and hard-of-hearing students that use solely sign language to communicate. They also did not provide interpreters for the deaf and hard-of-hearing students who were placed in the regular classrooms. The public school she attended was an hour away and it was not possible for this student to be in sports or clubs due to the distance. This student also had no interest in participating in extracurricular activities. She explained that if she had lived in the same town as her school, she may have been interested in participating and she's sure that her parents would have encouraged her to get involved. This student did not receive any scholarships, college admissions, or employment opportunities.

LIMITATIONS

Because of the minimal amount of responses recorded, it is hard to come to one single conclusion as to whether or not deaf students being involved greatly impacts their life postsecondary. Only having three interviews completed restricts the chance of generalization to the general deaf public. The amount of deaf students attending high school or college in the state of Oklahoma, which was our setting for the study, greatly outnumbers our sample size of three. Each student had particular reasons as to why they did not participate at some point whether it was due to discrimination, lack of interest, or location. Although one single

conclusion was not made, it can still be inferred that a lack of interest, availability, and opportunity can potentially prohibit deaf students from reaping the benefits of extracurricular activities throughout high school. The study was also limited by the fact that none of the students received extra benefits such as scholarships, college acceptance, or job opportunities because of extracurricular involvement. However, the student that was involved makes it possible to infer that participation did have some benefits for himself and other deaf students.

DISCUSSION

The findings from this study in relation to previous research completed on this topic show ability to communicate and availability to be the most prevalent factors in determining a student's participation in extracurricular activities throughout high school. Throughout this section, I will relate emerging themes of the findings to previous research as well as inferences that can be made from the data.

Factors of Students Participation. For the majority of the interviewees, it seems that their parents were encouraging and allowed for the students to decide what they participated in and what they didn't. The first student was encouraged by his parents to participate in extracurricular events; he explained that his mom said he could go for whatever he wanted. The second student also explained that her parents let her choose what she wanted to do. The third student who was unable to participate in extracurricular activities explained that if she was able to be a part of an extracurricular activity that her parents would have encouraged her to do so. The research conducted by Reed, Antia, and Kreimeyer (2008) expresses that one of the facilitators for student's academic status and success is familial support. It is obvious that each of the interviewees had their parents' support, whether or not they went out for extracurricular activities. Therefore, the parental support could play a role in the student's

success after high school. Success can come not only in the classroom, but also from sports and clubs. The students in the study from Reed, Antia, and Kreimeyer (2008) were deemed successful if they had good relationships with friends, and positive self-perceptions. Each of these factors can be gained in extracurricular participation through communication and interactions with peers.

It can also be inferred that students were involved because of peer encouragement and school encouragement. From the first interview, we see that this student faced discrimination in junior high when his school seemed unwilling to accommodate for his deafness. This led to the student staying out of extracurricular activities for a while. Once he moved to a new school that was willing to accommodate and help where they could, he got involved again. He had an interpreter and coaches who communicated well with one another in order to increase the student's chance for success in any activity. Because of the coach's willingness and standard set for this student, he had the opportunity to continue swimming for a college team. Reed, Antia, and Kreimeyer (2008) discuss how having highly set standards for both deaf students and hearing students potentially increases chances for success. Having the interpreter who removed communication barriers resulted in this student's higher chance of success in his extracurricular activity. This coach understood the concept of equal access and made it possible for this student to benefit from his extracurricular activity.

The first interviewed student also explained he had peer support as he participated in extracurricular activities. He said his peers encouraged him and other deaf students to get involved in order to prove that they were just as capable as hearing students to compete and win. By deaf students being involved it brought awareness to deaf student's abilities. It also encouraged other deaf and hard-of-hearing students to get involved. Thus, more students

were exploring their passions and gaining skills from participating in extracurricular activities.

Factors of Students Non-Participation. Next, could two out of the three student's lack of interest in extracurricular activities be rooted in the fact that there may have been communication barriers had they partaken in the activities? The third interviewee said that she was not interested in joining sports or clubs, however it might have been because of where she lived. She said that she probably would have joined sports or clubs had her living situation been different, and that her life could potentially be much different now if she had been a part of extracurricular activities. The study completed by Xie, Potmesil, and Peters (2014) explains that deaf and hard of hearing students experience more failures in interactions than hearing peers. They found that students do better in one-on-one interactions than group interactions, and perhaps this research supports the idea that this may be the reasoning for some deaf students choosing not to participate in extracurricular activities. Because of communication barriers they may face in extracurricular activities, they choose not to participate. It is essential that schools find ways to allow for failed interactions to not occur between deaf students and hearing students. By integrating programs and services into all schools such as deaf education programs, interpreters for all settings, assistive technology, and American Sign Language courses the chance for communication increases. Interactions and the ability to communicate with their hearing peers is essential for involvement in extracurricular activities. Without these two, the previously mentioned skills that students gain such as teamwork, social skills, and a sense of community are not likely to develop in students who cannot communicate with peers.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

To bring forth opportunity for deaf students to develop their skills and passions through extracurricular activities, we must find a way for equal access for all students. By increasing the amount of schools that offer deaf education programs, interpreters for the regular classroom and extracurricular events, assistive technology in the classroom as well as sports and clubs, and American Sign Language courses, we increase the opportunity for communication. Integrating each of these into schools decreases the amount of communication barriers between deaf and hearing students. Perhaps by incorporating these programs and services, more deaf students will be likely to get involved in extracurricular activities. Thus, gaining the benefits of extracurricular activities such as learning the values of teamwork, individual and group responsibility, physical strength and endurance, competition, diversity, a sense of culture and community, and exploration of interests (O'Brien, 1995). Once these are brought forth into more schools throughout the state of Oklahoma and the nation and more deaf and hard-of-hearing students are involved, it is essential that educators hold DHH students to similar high standards as they do hearing students in extracurricular events. This will allow for deaf students to show hearing peers and staff that they, too, are able to compete in extracurricular activities and win. By introducing new cultures to students from both groups we allow for relationships to be made, in turn increasing the likelihood of students to be involved in extracurricular activities; therefore, allowing for skills and passions to be discovered and developed through extracurricular activities. This in itself increases students' readiness for postsecondary life because they become more willing to step out and get involved and find ways to further explore their skills and passions. It also may increase deaf student's chances at scholarships, college acceptance, and job opportunities.

CONCLUSION

Although the lack of significance in the findings provided no specific results as to whether deaf and hard-of-hearing students are given positive reasoning (development of skills, scholarships, automatic acceptance to college, job opportunities, etc.) to be involved in extracurricular activities, it is still evident that in some schools there is a lack of encouragement, opportunity, and access for DHH to participate in extracurricular activities. When examining previous research as well as the interviews and discussion from this study, it can still be inferred that extracurricular activities do provide students opportunity to develop and explore their passions and skills, as well as bring forth awareness for the deaf community and their abilities. This study identified several factors that played a role in whether or not a DHH student participated in extracurricular activities while also identifying ways for these students to become more involved. Because of previous studies done on this topic and narratives told from deaf and hard-of-hearing students, all students should be held to high standards and encouraged to be a part of extracurricular activities so that these passions and skills can be developed in all students. Equal access for all students is the final goal, and by finding more methods to involve deaf and hard-of-hearing students we can bring forth equal access.

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