

ATHLETIC INVOLVEMENT AND INFLUENCES
ON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS:
A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

By

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Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate College of the
Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
December, 2021

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“You just can’t beat the person who never gives up.”- Babe Ruth

That quote frequently resonated in my mind during this program. Another quote I caught myself repeating regularly included, “How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time!”

Both quotes have something in common. They are applicable to athletic and extracurricular participation, which was the focal point of my study. I am a firm believer that participation in extracurriculars can pay off in adulthood as they provide positive experiences for achieving success and instilling positive work habits later in life. Never did I imagine all of the years spent attending practices, games and matches would pay off in the classroom, as well. The fields, courts, and mats of competition teach children to set goals, to respond to set-backs, and to persevere. I hope this dissertation will show decision-makers that extracurricular opportunities should not be easily discarded during difficult financial times.

First, I would like to thank my parents, Joe and Sharon Garcia, who are proponents of education and athletics. Their support and encouragement throughout the program mirrored the days they took me to little league practices, games and matches years and years ago.

I would like to thank my co-hort “teammates.” It was a blast and an honor collaborating and learning from you all after being “drafted” to the 2015 OSU-OKC “team.” I miss attending “practices” with you all!

I would like to thank the program professors for their expertise and commitment to helping the “recruits” reach their academic goals! Dr. Curry, Dr. Harris, Dr. Mania, Dr. Bailey, and Dr. Richardson- you all made an impact on the program and helped us immensely each step of the way! You all are great “coaches!”

Additionally, I would like to thank my dissertation committee for their guidance and support. Dr. Curry, Dr. Harris, Dr. Floyd, and Dr. Loffi- your expertise and encouragement helped tremendously!

Lastly, I would like thank other members of my “organization:”

-My lovely wife Heather- thank you for spending many evenings with me at the kitchen table doing work for your job while I completed graduate school work

-My in-laws Duane and Jane Snavely for their support, meals, and board games (especially Sequence!)

-My children Kael, Connor, and Alaina and step-children Keegan, Kinzie and Karsyn for their encouragement, entertainment and understanding while I went back to school for the FINAL time!

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Date of Degree: DECEMBER, 2021

Title of Study: ATHLETIC INVOLVEMENT AND INFLUENCES ON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

Major Field: SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

Abstract: The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore teacher perceptions of the influence of reductions in athletic activities/opportunities on student outcomes and engagement in school. Six teachers that met the study's criteria were anonymously selected to share their experiences teaching and interacting with students at a high school that experienced a reduction in extracurricular activities. Victor Vroom's *Expectancy Theory* was the framework that guided the research process for this study. The objective of this model was to represent the variables of motivation and to provide insight regarding the reasons why some high school students are driven to participate in high school athletics. Findings revealed that teachers perceive many students display a decrease in motivation when extracurricular activities were eliminated. Another finding was extracurricular activities provided opportunities for students to be involved in the school setting. Other findings included extracurricular activities provided opportunities for students to seek rewards, as well as gain experiences that are not found in the classroom. Finally, the researcher provides implications for practice, policy, theory and recommendations for future research.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Historically, high school sports have experienced a high participation rate throughout the United States. For example, approximately 7.7 million teens in the United States competed in high school sports during the 2012–2013 school year (Gayles & Baker, 2015). Between 45-55% of students from various backgrounds, nationalities, and school settings (public and private) have participated in a high school sport (Yeung, 2015). The interest and involvement in high school sports goes even beyond the students and coaches directly involved. As Pruter (2013) indicated, “through more than a century of our history, high school sports have engaged variously our educators, our medical and psychological experts, our politicians, our military leaders, and our families...” (p. ix).

Despite the popularity of high school sports, districts, in recent years, have struggled to maintain athletic programs due to budget cuts and funding shortfalls (Bowen & Greene, 2012). Consequently, some high schools have eliminated athletics, or transitioned athletics to pay-to-play format (McNeal, 1998) where families are expected to “shoulder the burden” of programs that districts can no longer afford. Specifically, as school funding has decreased, options such as having parents cover athletic participation costs have been implemented, resulting in reduced numbers of students able to participate due to costs involved.

With such a high level of participation and deep-rooted history in public schools, the

elimination or reduction of student participation in athletics in high schools could affect millions. However, stakeholders may be affected differently depending upon their perspectives regarding the benefits of athletics. For example, to some, athletic participation is just practice and competition. To this group of stakeholders, their perception is that few benefits are gained from athletics, or the returns on athletic programs do not justify the financial costs involved and may take away time from studies (Eide & Ronan, 2001). In contrast, others believe that athletic competition is vital to promoting physical skills, satisfaction with school and teachers, and student socialization (Hoffmann, 2006). Recent research supports the latter perspective in that studies indicate participation in athletics can enhance citizenship skills and physical and emotional development (Yeung, 2015). Additionally, Duckworth (2016) emphasizes that involvement in athletics can lead to enhanced drive to achieve academic goals. She explained, in an interview with Bill Fitzsimmons, “what we have tended to find is that all that energy, drive, and commitment- all that grit- that was developed through athletics can almost always be transferred to something else” (p. 235). According to Duckworth (2016), athletics do have value.

Problem Statement

Research has shown that extracurricular activities, specifically athletics, can be beneficial to student academic outcomes (Lipscomb, 2006). Studies involving high school athletics suggest participants benefit from their involvement in several ways (Troutman & Dufur, 2007). Students who find success in athletics often show positive academic performance, increased scores in math and science, and a decrease in dropping out of school (Bowen & Greene, 2012). Extracurricular activities, in particular athletics, can make a positive impact on academics by building a stronger work ethic (Broh, 2002). Hoffman (2006) explains, “Studies regularly indicate that male and female students who participate in extracurricular activities, including athletics, derive a host of benefits” (p. 275), including better grades and life skills development (Hoffman, 2006). Also, evidence suggests there is

an increased educational attainment for females who participate in high school sports (Troutman & Dufur, 2007). Additionally, high school athletes can gain an improved self-esteem, develop a greater commitment to graduation, and increase their educational aspirations (Kreager, 2007).

Despite the evidence that suggests extracurricular activities, specifically athletics, can be beneficial for students, research also indicates that school leaders often cut extracurricular activities when funds are limited (Yeung, 2015) or are requiring parents to cover fees and costs to participate (Roth, 2003) resulting in decreased student participation. Forester (2015) stated, “It is no secret that funding sources for interscholastic athletic programs nationwide are becoming more and more limited” (p. 22). These shortfalls are leading some schools to eliminate some activities and move towards other options, including pay to play (McNeal, 1998).

The anomaly this causes is that educators may not realize that, when these programs are cut or eliminated, unintended consequences may occur that negatively influence student academic success. One reason for this anomaly may be the lack of understanding of how athletics may contribute to academic outcomes, as well as a lack of understanding of how reduction in opportunities influences student academic outcomes. Therefore, additional research is needed to gain a better understanding of teacher perceptions of the influence of reductions in athletic activities and opportunities on student outcomes and engagement in school.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore teacher perceptions of the influence of reductions in athletic activities/opportunities on student outcomes and engagement in school.

Research Questions

The following research questions guide this study:

What are teacher perceptions regarding the influence of reduction in athletic programs/opportunities on student learning in this school?

1. What are teacher perceptions regarding the influence of reductions in athletic opportunities in this school?
2. What are teacher perceptions regarding student outcomes for learning before and after reductions?
3. What are teacher perceptions regarding student engagement before and after athletic program reductions?
4. How does Vroom's Expectancy Theory explain these findings?

Epistemological Perspective

Applying a social constructivist epistemology is conducive to this study because, as Creswell (2014) noted, such a worldview relies on the views of the participants of the situation being studied. Consequently, this study seeks to understand the perspectives of educators on their views of athletes, athletics, and their influences on academic outcomes, before and after a decline in opportunities.

Theoretical Orientation

Seeking the thoughts and experiences of those associated to student athletes was the foundation of this study. Specifically, this case study sought to understand the perspectives of educators who work with student athletes daily. This included high school teachers with five or more years of experience at their current site.

Anfara and Mertz (2015) noted that good and useful theories provide a specific purpose. They observed, "A useful theory is one that tells an enlightening story about some phenomenon. It is a story that gives you new insights and broadens your understanding of the phenomenon" (p. 5). "It is meant to move the research project beyond the realm of the descriptive into the realm of the explanatory" (Anfara & Mertz, 2015, p. 112).

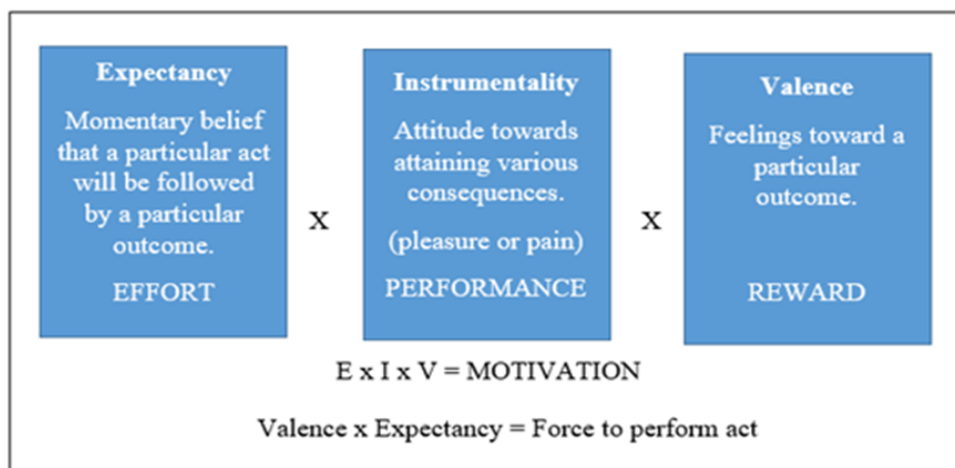
Vroom's Expectancy Theory was the framework that guided the research process for this study. This framework by Vroom (1995) identified that, "...concepts like need, motive, goal, incentive, and aptitude are appearing with much greater frequency [in discussions of factors that

influence student success] than concepts of aptitude, ability and skill” (p. 4).

Vroom’s (1995) Theory encompasses the concepts of *valence*, *instrumentality*, *expectancy*, and *force*. These variables make up a conceptual model that suggests that choices people make depend on the strength of the motivational force (expectancy of an outcome) and are equal to the sum of the products of the valence of outcomes and expectancies that the outcomes will be attained (Vroom, 1995, p. 33). For example, many adults would agree cardiovascular exercise would benefit their overall health. Yet not all adults partake in cardio activities. Those who do embed time for cardiovascular activity on a weekly basis have a higher motivational force to do so. This correlates with the thought process that effort leads to enhanced performance, and ultimately, effort is rewarded through enhanced outcomes, or the theory “hard work pays off.” For instance, athletes that work persistently during practice tend to earn more playing time and experience more success than those who do not work as hard. This understanding that hard work leads to enhanced outcomes is, perhaps, transferable to the learning process and to classroom responsibilities. Consequently, student athletes would be motivated to persevere in their efforts.

Figure 1

Vroom’s Expectancy Theory



Note. This figure represents the variables of motivation and force as detailed by Victor Vroom.

In sum, individuals do not always make optimal decisions, but they do make decisions they believe to be optimal at the time they make them (Vroom, 1995). Motivation is driven by expectancy, instrumentality, and valence, and this theory provides insight regarding the reasons why some high school students are driven to participate in high school athletics.

Procedures

This research design was a qualitative case study design. The purpose of case study research is for the researcher to search for meaning and understanding, to collect data, to conduct data analysis, and to produce a richly descriptive product (Merriam, 2009). For this study, my case was one high school in the Midwest that has reduced athletic programs within the past five years. Gathering data reflecting the thoughts and perceptions of teachers regarding the influence of the reduction of athletic opportunities has on student motivation, engagement, and outcomes provided insight into consequences of these changes in this district. Though not generalizable, findings may be transferable as educational leaders and policy makers contemplate the value of athletic participation in high school. This aligns with what Merriam (2009) specified about qualitative researchers and the “hope their work will be used by administrators and policymakers to improve the way things are done” while the researcher “collects data or evidence on the worth or value of the program, process, or technique” (p. 4).

Participant Selection

Purposeful, criterion sampling was employed to invite participants who meet the study’s specific criteria. For this case, criteria include teaching at the high school site both before and after the reduction in athletic program offerings. The sample will include six teachers of a large 5A Midwestern high school. To select participants, contact will be made to a district level administrator of Grand Public Schools to request permission to interview the educators listed above that fit the criteria. Site administrators were not able to participate because they did not meet the criteria of your

study, as none of them were at the site when the reductions occurred. To select educators anonymously, a request will be placed for a list of all teachers in the building who have taught before the change was made. A letter introducing this study and requesting potential participants is found in Appendix B. From that list, participants will be randomly selected to ensure their identity remains anonymous. My operational definition of a teacher is an individual who is a certified educator and who has served as a high school teacher for more than five years. This sampling method will allow for perspectives pertinent to my study to be interviewed. Patton (2002) found, “The logic and power of purposeful sampling derive from the emphasis on in-depth understanding. This leads to selecting *information-rich cases* for study in depth” (p. 46).

Data Collection

Data was collected through interviews, observations, documents and field notes to provide relevant evidence for my research questions. Participants will consist of a total of six teachers from a Midwestern urban 5A district (referred to under the pseudonym Grand Public Schools). The focus will be on their interactions with student athletes, as well as their feedback on how the reduction of athletic offerings is influencing student motivation, engagement and outcomes.

Instrument

In a case study, the human is the most important instrument for data collection (Erlandson, et al, 1993). I will be the instrument that collects and analyzes the data. Merriam (2009) explained, “Qualitative inquiry, which focuses on meaning in context, requires a data collection instrument that is sensitive to underlying meaning when gathering and interpreting data” (p. 2). Data collection techniques will consist of taking field notes from observations of classroom and extracurricular activities, as well as conducting virtual interviews of certified teachers.

Interviews

Interviews will follow a semi-structured interview protocol and will be approximately 45

minutes in length with six career high school teachers. Field notes will be taken during classroom observations and observations of extracurricular activities.

Digital recordings of interviews will be made to ensure data collection is accurate and includes nuances of language beyond the translated text. Interviews will be conducted virtually during a date and time of convenience to the research participants.

Observations

Observations will take place during the school day as classroom activities and extracurricular activities occur. I will plan to observe student engagement in both the classroom and extracurricular activities, including athletic activities that have not been eliminated (this site has had approximately four high school sports eliminated during the past five years). I plan to conduct extracurricular observations during the timeframe of October through November. This is the time when fall sports commence. This includes observing the following sports: football, cross country, and cheer. I plan to conduct classroom observations in March of 2021.

Data Analysis

According to Creswell (2014):

The researcher begins by gathering detailed information from participants and then forms this information into categories or themes. These themes are developed into broad patterns, theories, or generalizations that are then compared with personal experiences or with existing literature on the topic. (p. 65)

Qualitative data analysis seeks to find meaning that emerges from the data. Data analysis can be challenging because, in qualitative research, data collection and analysis is not predominantly a step-by-step process. It is a simultaneous activity (Merriam, 2009). According to Merriam (2009), “[Data analysis] is an interactive process throughout that allows the investigator to produce believable and trustworthy findings” (p. 165). Therefore, a constant comparative method of data analysis will be

employed (Merriam, 2009).

Analyzing the data will be a streamlined process in order to keep the data manageable, while successfully capturing and interpreting what was said by the participants. A successful strategy for attaining this is analyzing the data as it is gathered. This process will help to organize, refine and inform each set of data as it is collected (Merriam, 2009). A detailed explanation of data analysis is provided in Chapter 3. By applying this approach, a rich understanding of the participants can emerge.

Significance of the Study

To Research

Findings in the body of research and literature suggest that athletic participation has benefits for high school students (Fredricks, 2012). Research mainly discusses findings on positive academic achievement and improved life skills such as self-discipline and self-esteem (Kreager, 2007). This study aims to discover and understand the impact reductions of athletic participation has towards student outcomes and engagement.

To Theory

The theoretical framework of *Expectancy Theory* is central to the study and was used to explain findings of the study. Additionally, the theoretical framework for this study has been used in the design of research questions and data analysis. According to Anfara and Mertz (2015), “The purpose of a theoretical framework is to make sense of the data, to provide some coherent explanation for why people are doing or saying what they are doing or saying” (p. 112). For that reason, the theoretical framework is a key component of qualitative data analysis. A useful theory tells a story about a phenomenon and provides new insights that broadens your understanding about that phenomenon (Anfara & Mertz, 2015). The theoretical framework serves as a lens to take findings and to support them.

The discoveries from this study may serve as a source for policy makers when they contemplate financial decisions. The research from this study can contribute to an understanding on how reduction in opportunities influences student academic outcomes.

To Practice

This study will inform practice by investigating how student academic engagement and outcomes are influenced by reductions in athletic programs. In many communities, athletics are being eliminated due to budget shortfalls (McNeal, 1998). The findings of this study may provide data to assist with financial decision-making on extracurricular activities, specifically athletics.

Limitations

There are limitations for this study. Since this study relies on interviews, a few disadvantages are inevitable, including interviewer and participant bias. Specifically, when I, as well as the participants have a background in athletics, perceptions of the data can be influenced. These issues could interfere with building trustworthiness and accurate data. However, this limitation will be minimized by listening to the voices of all participants regarding their experiences with students before and after reductions in athletic opportunities at the school. The technique of listening to the voice of participants will allow their perceptions to emerge.

By applying criteria such as credibility, internal validity, transferability, external validity, reliability, conformability and objectivity to naturalistic inquiry (Patton, 2002), such potential interference issues will be further minimized. Additionally, the strategy of applying member checks, which is soliciting feedback from the data findings of some of the people interviewed, can help to ensure researcher perceptions of the data were not misinterpreted (Merriam, 2009).

Another limitation of this study is that the perspectives of student athletes, those directly affected by the reductions in athletic programs, will not be gained due to the design of the study. However, the teachers selected as participants are veteran educators at the site, and their perceptions

regarding the influence of reductions in athletic opportunities are important. They will be able to explain trends in student engagement and student outcomes before and after the reduction of programs.

Also, with this being a qualitative study, the methods involved contain limitations. Interviewing a small sample of the population will be done, posing a potential limitation. However, the purpose of the study is to gain an in-depth understanding of the influence of a reduction of athletics and extracurricular participation on student motivation and engagement, not to produce generalizable results. Therefore, multiple sources of data will be collected to provide a deep understanding of this case.

Definition of Terms

Academic progress. Course completion and progress toward high school graduation.

Athletic participation. Students who participate in a high school sport.

Athletic program reductions. The decrease in school-wide sports offerings.

Career teacher. An individual who is a certified educator, who has served as a high school teacher and was present before and after athletic reductions at the school site in this study.

Engagement. Active participation in school-based activities (Harris et al., 2014).

Expectancy. Momentary belief concerning the likelihood a particular act will be followed by a particular outcome. (Vroom, 1995).

High school sports/athletics. A varsity sport sponsored by a public high school in grades 9-12 that has a certified educator serving as the head coach.

Instrumentality. Attitude for attainment towards an act. (Vroom, 1995).

Motivation. A process that governs choices made by persons or lower organisms among alternative forms of voluntary activity, involving one's expectancy, instrumentality, and valence towards an act. (Vroom, 1995).

Student outcomes. Student course completion and academic attainment.

Valence. Affective orientations toward a particular outcome. (Vroom, 1995).

Summary and Organization of Study

This chapter introduced data that showed high school athletics are often eliminated despite evidence that shows these programs make an impact on student academic outcomes (Bowen & Greene, 2012). Then, I outlined the applicability of an epistemology of social constructivism to rely on the views of the participants. Next I detailed the theoretical framework of Vroom's Expectancy Theory. Lastly, I outlined the significance of the current study and limitations. In Chapter II, I will provide a review of literature that provides details on: the history and progression of high school athletics in the United States, research on how athletics are beneficial to academic outcomes, and research that describes reasons for the cutting of athletics in schools. In Chapter III, I will expand on the methodology of the study, including the research design, data collection and data analysis.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

High school athletic competitions are sponsored across the United States in various forms, including team sports, individual sports and boys and girls' teams organized with local and national regulations. However, that has not always been the case. High school athletics originated as an after-school activity to keep boys busy and out of trouble (Pruter, 2013). Bungaard (2005) noted many historians attribute the early traces of athletics for children from the throwing and catching of stones and fruit towards each other, as well as bat-and-ball games from experience of warlike skills. As history shows, high school athletics grew in popularity and became a staple of importance for high school students, as evidenced by the required implementation of physical education classes and expansion of more sports participated in all seasons (Pruter, 2013). With such a rich history and role in high schools, the decline that is occurring in certain school districts is worthy of investigating.

This chapter contains an overview of literature related to the study. The first section discusses the history and benefits of high school athletics. The focus is on the early beginnings (after school activities at Boarding and Military schools) to the rise of sports in secondary schools from the 1800's through the 1920's. Associated academic benefits of athletic participation will then be reviewed.

The second section centers on literature that discusses: (1) the reasons for the cutting of

athletic programs in high schools; (2) research on why a lack of understanding exists on how athletics may make positive contributions to the development of students.

The third section of this review discusses the theoretical framework of the study. Vroom's Expectancy Theory, consisting of concepts of valence, instrumentality, and force (Vroom, 1995) will be detailed.

The goals of this review are: (1) to provide a succinct summary of the history and evolution of high school athletics; (2) to provide multiple perspectives regarding the value of high school athletics; (3) to convey the need for this study.

History of High School Athletics

The Early Beginnings

According to the Oxford Dictionary, the definition of athletics is "Physical sports and games of any kind" (<https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/athletics>, n.d.). Physical activities such as athletics have been rooted in high schools since the 1700s (Pruter, 2013). From the origins in boarding and military schools, what is contested today started out as an after school program based on informal play (Bundgaard, 2005). The following section details the specific origins of sports found in today's high schools.

In the United States, many high schools offer the opportunity for high school students to participate in physical sports, or commonly known as athletics. Such activities began in boarding schools on the East Coast as far back as the 1700s (Pruter, 2013). Once mandatory institution schooling took off, students experienced a shift in the structure of their daily lives and in the social organization of their time (Friedman, 2013). When the traditional school day was shortened at these boarding schools, students then inherited extra time that led to the organization of activities (Pruter, 2013).

The start of physical activities emerging in schools occurred in the early 1800's. Physical development was implemented into the curriculum at Round Hill School in Massachusetts in 1823 (Bundgaard, 2005). "A pastel of other sports soon flourished at the school, including team sports like early forms of baseball and football, plus cross-country running, swimming, wrestling, and boxing" (Pruter, 2013, p. 4). Founders of the school intended that the curriculum would train the whole child, including the intellectual, moral, and physical aspects of the child (Bundgaard, 2005). This philosophy paved the way to the physical education classes currently offered in public schools of today.

The 1850s was the start of organized competition, including informal intramural competition between class teams, as well as occasional interscholastic contests (Pruter, 2013). "Football, as Round Hillers played it, likely resembled a folk game... two teams of boys kicked a stuffed bag of some sort back and forth in a hewed-out open space" (Bundgaard, 2005, p. 14). By 1859, sports clubs helped to organize rules, assign captains and officials, and fund the activities (Pruter, 2013). This decade showed steady growth of athletics in the schools, but war would pause this momentum.

The Civil War Influence

When the US Civil War broke out, daily norms were devoted to this event. This included the growth of high school sports, which came to a halt (Pruter, 2013), as did the urban expansion of schools and staging of contests (Bundgaard, 2005). When the latter part of the 1860s arrived, the resurgence resumed with baseball and football being the sports of choice, coupled with the purchasing and development of playing fields, as well as a rise in military academies in the United States (Pruter, 2013).

Post-Civil War, military academies became established for secondary education (Bundgaard, 2005). Aside from providing education that taught military organization, "...the

academies appointed gymnasium directors to provide formal exercise programs” (Pruter, 2013, p.

6). According to Pruter (2013):

The private boarding-school academies thus paved the way for the development of interscholastic sports in American public schooling, and as with the private schools, it took many decades before a full-fledged system of interscholastic sports developed in the public high school. (p. 6)

The formation of interscholastic sports began in the 1870’s and 1880’s with baseball and football being the sponsored sports with league formations, though student-organized (Bundgaard, 2005; Pruter, 2013).

Growth of Boarding and Public High Schools

The 1890’s showed a major shift in the number of secondary high schools in the United States (Pruter, 2013).

By the end of the 1890s, the number of public schools had increased to 6,005, serving some 530,000 students, compared to 1,978 private schools, serving about 189,000 students. The 1890s likewise saw a tremendous concomitant growth of interscholastic sports in public schools (Pruter, 2013, p. 7).

Boarding schools also began to show growth. With the surge of schools, athletic programs boomed as well. During this era, sports had moved beyond Puritan prohibitions and were seen as a prominent activity (Bundgaard, 2005). With this dynamic at play, including the fact that many athletic programs lacked adult supervision, “The physical educators during the first years of the new century would cast their eyes on high school interscholastic sports... and see that such sports could become a part of the educational curriculum” (Pruter, 2013, p. 44). According to Bundgaard (2005), boys in boarding school continued to organize sports so interscholastic competition could begin.

The Formation of Organized Athletics in High Schools

Up to this point, students, not adults, regulated interscholastic sports (Pruter, 2013). With the sudden growth of public schools, “educational reformers brought student athletics under their regulatory control, not only to end reputed abuses in interscholastic sports but also to make them a part of the physical education curriculum” (Pruter, 2013, p. 45). Additionally, sports were viewed as teaching values of cooperation, hard work, and respect for authority, as well as serving as a channel for preparing students to be physical laborers (Friedman, 2013).

The transferring of leadership did not happen swiftly. According to Bundgaard (2005):

In the later nineteenth century, no athletic conference existed to pull schools together in seeking common goals and laying down rules. No board of trustees decreed that faculty should control the sports program. Moreover, no single pattern characterized the gradual authority assumed by faculty over athletics. Rather than a universal takeover, the shift to adult authority became more of a weaning process whereby boys learned to let go of their own athletic destiny and headmasters assumed responsibility for athletics. (p. 152)

The Progressive Era also encompassed making high schools open to all, not just College-bound students, which included educating students from all socioeconomic and social backgrounds (Pruter, 2013). Unifying students was seen as important to school officials, and the promotion of high school athletics was a tool for achieving this goal.

The Rise of Physical Education in Secondary Schools

The growth of physical education mirrored the growth of sports during this time. The advancement of physical education was accelerated with the construction of separate gymnasium buildings and the appointment of gymnasium overseers at the school site (Bundgaard, 2005). With newly designated spaces for physical activities, new activities were in demand. Physical

educators fashioned new indoor sports as energetic alternatives to calisthenics, including basketball, invented by physical educator James Naismith, and volleyball in 1895 (Pruter, 2013).

According to Bundgaard (2005), “The gymnasium proved to be a focal point in the latter decades of the nineteenth century for the development of organized sport programs in the boarding schools” (p. 97). After the turn of the century, two circumstances presented itself that led to a physical education movement- the lack of variety of activities in physical education classes and the lack of control of extracurricular sports (Pruter, 2013). In 1903, the AAAPPE (the American Association for the Advancement of Physical Education) met and discussed taking over and managing extracurricular sports (Pruter, 2013).

Establishment of Institutional Control

History showed official control would be needed as the landscape of high school sports grew. In 1905, public and private schools received surveys to seek their thoughts on who should manage high school athletics, and results concluded faculty involvement was needed to keep things in order and to keep the playing fields even (Pruter, 2013). This was in response to the rapid popularity of sports and interscholastic competition (Bundgaard, 2005). “Although educators recognized that abuses and evils existed in interscholastic sports, they were overwhelmingly supportive of them in the schools and saw value in terms of the educational mission of the schools” (Pruter, 2013, p. 56). Bundgaard (2005) noted faculty supervision would become needed in order to establish equity, to manage the expansion of competitions, and to control growing crowds and escalating costs.

The path to regulate interscholastic sports was not easy. Pruter (2013) reported most state associations focused on one or two main sports (usually basketball) with little interest in regulating any other sport. Additionally, administrators across the country held various beliefs on how to regulate and to form leagues and shift control (Bundgaard, 2005; Pruter, 2013). A question

emerged who should manage the teams. In particular, student management with the assistance of faculty was contrasted with full control given to faculty. One model that developed was PSAL (Public Schools Athletic League), based on the philosophy to provide athletic competition for elite and high school athletes, to raise physical fitness and improve the health of the youth (Pruter, 2013). “[PSAL] was the largest school league in North America and became a model for educators not only across the continent, but overseas as well (Pruter, 2013, p. 68).

Athletics in the early 1900’s

By the early 1900s, the development of schools and the growth of sports was rapid. Additionally, with athletics now being controlled by school administrators and leagues, an attitude of athletics for all derived along with more organization and intensity, as well as involvement of the best players for competition (Bundgaard, 2005). At the turn of the century, the expansion of sports, along with the myriad of decisions to be made, ushered in the appointments of athletic directors (Bundgaard, 2005, 176).

Another area of new development included the inclusion of women in athletics. Pruter (2013) noted many individuals in the medical and educational establishments had realized that women, in addition to men, required physical exercise for health reasons.

The involvement of girls playing sports was not as it is at the present time. The critics of competitive athletics for girls largely came from the ranks of collegiate physical education instructors, mostly female. They promoted the belief that there should be sports for girls, but only in “moderation.”... Certain sports, such as basketball and track and field, were considered too physically taxing for young girls, and if such sports were played, the rules needed to be modified and adapted to the presumed capabilities of young ladies. (Pruter, 2013, p. 148)

As the Progressive Era ensued, so did control of girls' sports in high schools. Robert Pruter (2013) explained educators succeeded in the cultural war down into high schools resulting in girls' athletic programs being diluted to the point of the domestication of basketball without interschool competition by the end of World War I.

High School Sports in the 1920's

By the 1920's, many elements fell into place that led to a second surge of high school sports. Sports in America gained momentum in the twentieth century, unlike other movements at the time (Bundgaard, 2005). From the continued increase in student enrollment, to the variety of classes, to anti-child labor laws, and to attendance laws, interscholastic sports soared as a result (Pruter, 2013).

According to Pruter (2013):

Whereas almost all the schools in such large systems would adapt major sports such as football, basketball, baseball, and track and field, many fewer high schools in these leagues would take up the minor sports, typically offering about ten to twelve sports. The growth of wealthy suburban school districts with extensive athletic facilities and campuses also encouraged the adoption of more sports. (p. 174)

Bundgaard (2005) concluded similar findings in the expansion and permanent establishment of athletics in high schools throughout the country. He noted the staying power of athletics in high schools and the two becoming synonymous as a phenomenon. According to history, athletics are deep-rooted in high schools in the United States.

Benefits of High School Athletics

With such a rich history of athletics in schools with a foundation of having sports to improve the lives of students (Pruter, 2013), it is surprising to see some schools eliminating sports in high schools at the present time. This section will review literature that specifies high school

athletics are beneficial to students, as well as examine literature that shows a lack of understanding how athletics benefit students.

Improved Academic Performance

Athletic participation goes well beyond practicing for competition. Research shows student participation and experiences lead to additional benefits. Extracurricular activity, including participation in school athletics, is beneficial to students (Lipscomb, 2006). Athletic participation, according to research, has many benefits to high school students, including academic performance and positive development on life skills (Hoffmann, 2006). Students who find success in athletics show positive academic performance (Bowen & Greene, 2012). According to Troutman and Dufur (2007), “Involvement in interscholastic sport is also related to academic achievement. Participants have higher grades, spend more time on homework, have higher educational aspirations, and are more likely to attend college than are their counterparts” (p. 444).

Findings have also shown specific academic increases by school subjects. High school athletes show higher scores in math and language arts and are less likely to drop out of school (Bowen & Greene, 2012). Sports participation increases math and science achievement (Lipscomb, 2006). According to Bowen and Greene (2012), “[T]he more that a high school produces winning teams, offers more sports, and expands the number of students who can participate in athletics, the better a school does academically” (p. 12). According to Rees and Sabia (2010), “[H]igh school athletes on average perform better academically than non-athletes, an association that persists even after controlling for factors such as race, ethnicity, and family background variables” (p. 752).

In a study conducted by Harris et al., (2014), they concluded African American

students benefit from high school athletics. African American students experience team involvement and cultural competence (Harris et al., 2014). “Black students also identified class participation and extra-curricular activity involvement as contributors to academic achievement” (Harris et al., 2014, Wiggan, 2008, p. 182).

Improved Life Skills

Many findings support a correlation between being involved with an athletic sport and improved life skills. Extracurricular activities—in particular athletics—make a positive impact on academics by building a stronger work ethic (Broh, 2002). Students, possibly, learn self-discipline from athletics and this leads to academic benefits (Bowen & Greene, 2012). Gayles and Baker (2015) noted high school students who participate in sports generally display better grades, stay in school, have a greater interest in college, and describe more positive high school scholastic experiences than their non-athlete classmates. Kreager (2007) explained:

Studies, in fact, concur on many of these points in consistently finding positive relationships between sports participation and a host of individual benefits, including increased self-esteem, locus of control, academic achievement, commitment to graduation, educational aspirations, and economic attainment (Eccles and Barber 1999; Fejgin 1994; Mahoney and Cairns 1997; Marsh 1993; McNeal 1995; Otto and Alwin 1977). (p. 706)

According to work on grit by Angela Duckworth (2016), long-term studies (results based on kids later in life) showed researchers that more participation in extracurricular activities in school predicted improved outcomes, including better grades, higher self-esteem, and a decreased chance of getting into trouble. Conclusions of these studies were based on metrics of longitudinal data which show measurable factors for displaying improved life skills attributed to extracurricular participation.

Being physically active is a trait beneficial to one's health as habits and experiences gained from participation can have long-lasting effects. Schools that offer sports encourage sustained participation throughout life (Fuller et al., 2011). Additionally, extracurricular activities, such as sports, develop a sense of community and culture, as well as experience healthy competition and improve physical strength (Ebie, 2005, p. 1).

According to Ebie (2005), athletic participation gives validity to the benefit of high school athletics for students. Various examples include: the building of a strong work ethic, improved self-discipline, and increased self-esteem. When these traits are transferred to the classroom, higher academic outcomes ensue. When these traits are transferred to daily routines, students will benefit. According to Ebie (2005), student athletes decided to participate in sports because of their desire to experience teamwork, specifically for the social and psychological aspects of it. A study by Kaylor and Flores (2007) found a similar outcome. From their study based on increasing academic motivation from a diverse population of students, they found the four students (who were involved in extracurricular school activities) viewed school in a constructive way and attached positive meanings to school and their lives.

Character and resilience, which are qualities found to be associated in the sports world were identified in a psychology study by Brown (2015) as being positive traits for students to have when facing stress. "Sports teams and their coaches often talk, in the media at least, about character, implying the ability to battle on despite setbacks. Educators who show that they value resilience over performance, are encouraging a growth mindset..." (Brown, 2015, p. 117).

Another study by Dobosz and Beaty (1999) showed high school athletic participation having positive benefits with developing leadership skills. Athletic participation for high school students exposes them to leadership role models, such as coaches, and frequently requires them to

display leadership skills with their teammates (Dobosz & Beaty, 1999). Findings from their study showed high school athletes outscored nonathletes on a leadership aptitude scale.

It adds further evidence to the theory that the types of personal and social behavior associated with athletic training and participation may indeed increase, or at least strengthen, high school students' leadership potential... These findings have important implications. It would seem prudent for educational policy-makers and administrators to reexamine any budget cuts that threaten extracurricular athletics at either the elementary or secondary school level. (Dobosz & Beaty, 1999, p. 219)

In a study conducted by Carlson et al. (2005), their findings support high school athletic participation as having positive lasting effects through adulthood. They found students who participated in varsity level athletics were more likely to have postsecondary education, be employed full time, and to participate in physical fitness activities, as well have a lower chance of being a daily smoker (p. 1).

According to the National Federation of High Schools' mission (NFHS, 2018), there are numerous benefits associated with extracurricular participation. Some of these benefits included:

- Enriches the educational experience.
- Encourages academic achievement.
- Promotes respect, integrity and sportsmanship.
- Prepares for the future in a global community.
- Develops leadership and life skills.
- Promotes healthy lifestyles and safe competition.
- Encourages positive school/community culture

Reasons for the Cutting of Athletic Programs

Despite the research and the deep-rooted history of high school athletics in US public schools, some districts are removing athletics. Reasons for this include budgetary shortfalls, but the lack of understanding the role athletics play in the lives of students, research shows, contributes to this situation.

Budgets

Public school budgets, as research shows, are the main reason for the cutting of athletics in high schools across the United States (Forester, 2015; McNeal, 1998). With schools facing decreased funding, extracurricular activities, such as athletics, are negatively impacted financially (Mazerolle, Raso, Pagnotta, Stearns, & Casa, 2015). This section looks at the role budgets play on athletic opportunities in high schools and how budget shortfalls, many times, trickle down to athletic programs.

High School athletic programs have associated financial costs such as the purchasing of equipment, stipends for coaches and upkeep of fields and courts. According to Bowen and Green (2012), “High school sports continue to attract more public attention and to consume greater public resources while school budgets have become very tight” (p. 2). When funding shortfalls become a concern for schools, designated funds for sports may be diverted to other needs of the schools. According to Forester (2015), “Athletic directors and coaches nationwide are feeling the effects of a strained economy. More and more athletic programs are being forced to operate with seemingly insufficient funding allocations” (p. 7). When funding erodes (Cohen et al., 2007), the opportunities disappear. A study by Troutman and Dufur (2007) found, “America’s education system is experiencing increased pressure to improve students’ proficiency and standardized test scores, and in some instances, costly extracurricular activities have received reduced funds or

been cut entirely” (p. 459). Research by McNeal (1998) found, “These activities are often among the first items to be targeted for budget cuts in times of fiscal constraints” (p. 183).

Mazerolle, et al. (2015) noted on budgets:

National recession and shifts in governing philosophy have led to major changes in public school funding and cutbacks in states’ general funds over the past several years. The general fund is based on state tax revenue and pays for the bulk of educational operations, which includes the salaries and benefits of teachers and support staff, teaching supplies, and most student programming... It is evident that public education departments nationally are trying to preserve academic programs by eliminating extracurricular activities and services. (p. 1065)

Their study found nationwide cutbacks on extracurricular spending, in order to preserve spending for the classroom, proved to be a barrier for athletic directors hiring athletic trainers for high school athletic programs (Mazerolle, et al., 2015).

There has been a history of school districts consolidating and eliminating high school athletics for budgetary purposes. According to Reeves (2006):

For the 49,500-student Anchorage School District in Alaska, the choice was to cut programs.... Anchorage has cut the budget for a number of years, including an initial \$26 million cut and a \$2 million cut last year. One of the casualties of limited funding has been athletics. (Severe Measures section, para. 3)

In rural Southern Illinois, Franklin Community Unit School District, consolidated teams with other districts (Reeves, 2006, Severe Measures section, para. 1). In Texas, budget constraints in 2011 caused superintendents to make choices on how to meet academic needs with smaller budgets. According to Starrett, et al. (2014), “Other districts (16%) opted to cut programs such as extracurricular activities or non-core classes rather than personnel” (p. 38).

The state of Alabama has wrestled with having parents pay for their children to participate in high school athletics due to budget constraints (Roth, 2003). “One particular example of such a fee charged to public school students today is referred to in education funding parlance as a ‘pay-to-play’ fee... including extracurricular programs such as football and band” (Roth, 2003, p. 742). An economic recession in the state has led to policy makers having to resort to limit resources, with education and extracurricular activities being on the forefront (Roth, 2003). Pay-to-play is also occurring in Michigan. According to Heinze and Zdroik (2018), “Due to tight funding and budget cuts, however, schools are increasingly charging ‘pay-to-play’ fees for participating in sports activities. A Michigan study found a 100% increase in the number of schools with such fees between 1994 and 2009” (p. 53). Additionally, the state of Pennsylvania grew 12% from 2010 to 2012 in the implementation of "pay to play" fee structures in athletics (Heinze & Zdroik, 2018).

Lack of Understanding on How Athletics Positively Contribute to Students

Current research is producing results on various explanations for why there is a lack of understanding regarding how students benefit from athletic participation. Studies are showing this lack of understanding exists for many reasons, including: adults feel athletes are entitled to special treatment, adults hold a negative view of athletes, athletics are detrimental to students, athletics will overschedule students, and outside factors contribute to student academic outcomes (Bailey & Bhattacharyya, 2017; Fredricks, 2012; Fuller et al., 2017; Guest & Schneider, 2003; Morris, 2016). Additionally, studies are showing there is a misunderstanding of linkage between participation and benefits. Precisely, factors such as parental involvement, age, and type of sport dictate the level of benefits.

Entitled Students

As mentioned, high school athletics are contested in many schools across the United

States. With such a wide range of coverage, many individuals see high school athletes as entitled students. Based on the work of Fuller et al. (2017), athletes may be recipients of preferential treatment due to their talents and popularity. The Fuller study (2017) found, “Overwhelmingly, 90% of the participants indicated that student-athletes in their school received special privileges that were unavailable to the larger student body” (p. 47). Such privileges include the inflation of grades, work extensions, exempted class time, and extra tutoring (Fuller et al., 2017). Wooten (1994) found, “In many cases, the sports identity, status, and preferential treatment create a seductive environment of entitlement, permissiveness, and dependence” (p. 2).

Negative Perception of Student Athletes

A poll of athletes in college conducted by Sarah Bailey and Mouchumi Bhattacharyya (2017) shows athletes feel they are being judged poorly regarding their academic abilities. “Of those athletes, 33% believed that their academic ability was poorly perceived by faculty members, while 59.6% believed that their non-athletic peers had an unfavorable opinion of their academic abilities” (Bailey & Bhattacharyya, 2017, p. 173).

Another negative perception is the notion student athletes are at risk for abusing illegal substances. From drugs, to alcohol, and to steroids, athletes are subjected to making headlines for drug use (Naylor, Gardner, & Zaichkowsky, 2001). According to Goldberg and Elliot (2008), “Although high school sports can have significant benefits, substance use and abuse, disordered eating practices and other problem behaviors have been reported among these student-athletes” (p. 78). Additionally, this perception is targeting student athletes. Reported Yamaguchi, Johnston, and O’Malley (2003), “For example, though students in athletics and extracurricular activities may have the lowest reported drug use rate, the legal cases of Earls in 2002 and Vernonia in 1995 support the legality of schools to target these students” (p. 159).

Athletic Participation Detrimental

Another reason for the misunderstanding of athletic participation is that some see athletics as being detrimental to students. In a study conducted by Guest and Schneider (2003), they summarized:

We suggest that such schools may provide an environment in which sports are both part of a good student's portfolio and are seen as a viable route to social mobility. In contrast, in upper-class schools and in schools where almost everyone goes on to four-year colleges, our findings suggest that an athletic identity may actually be detrimental to the portfolio of a good student. (p. 103)

According to the authors, a student with a strong academic background can have his/her identity morph into having an athletic identity through athletic participation. As stated by Guest and Schneider (2003), "...being seen as athletic may be associated with a lack of seriousness" (p. 103).

Overscheduling of Students

In a study by Fredricks (2012), she sought to find whether or not students who participate in extracurricular activities (including sports) are overscheduled, thus having negative values for students. These negative consequences range from excessive time requirements to disrupting family obligations, to increased pressure from parents, to distractions from academics (Fredricks, 2012, p. 296). However, her findings show the opposite. According to Fredricks (2012), "These findings are consistent with prior research showing the academic benefits of extracurricular participation in both high school and young adulthood" (Fredricks and Eccles 2010; Marsh and Kleitman 2002; Mahoney et al.2003) (p. 304). Benefits identified in her findings include: higher grades, test scores, educational expectations, and educational status (p. 304). These benefits are attributed, says Fredericks (2012), "to supportive adults and academically-oriented peers who can

provide them with social capital and encourage them to comply with school norms and values (Eccles & Gootman 2002, Fredricks, 2010) (p. 304).

Misunderstood Links

In research conducted by Morris (2016), "...the mechanisms linking [Extracurricular Activity Participation] to educational outcomes are poorly understood" (p. 1376). Morris' work finds high school extracurricular participation leads to higher math scores and increased four-year college attendance. With other studies in literature that confirm similar findings, Morris' focus on the "why" EAP is beneficial in order to clarify the misunderstandings about athletic participation (Morris, 2016).

One possible explanation as to why EAP positively affects achievement and college attendance is that it alters the educational outlook of those participating by exposing students to new academic possibilities, boosting standards or expectations for course grades, or altering personal goals. (Morris, 2016, p. 1380)

Outside factors contribute to the lack of understanding on how athletics positively contribute to student academic outcomes. In short, when athletes become involved with extracurricular activities, their attitudes on academic achievement and educational aspirations are enhanced (Morris, 2016, p. 1381). Additional work by Hwang, Feltz, Kietzmann, and Diemer, (2016) found similar results. "In contrast, negative effects of athletic participation on academics also have been found, depending on contextual factors and demographical backgrounds, such as parental involvement, race, gender, and type of sport" (p. 764). In sum, athletic participation is not a one-size-fits-all for students for benefits. "A similarly nuanced relation was found by type of sport participation. Youth in nonrevenue generating sports (i.e., swimming, cross-country) held more nuanced athletic and academic identities, while youth in revenue generating sports (i.e.,

basketball, football) did not” (Hwang et al., 2016, p. 779). Links such as involvement of parents, race and type of sport contribute to the benefits, according to these studies.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study will be Vroom’s *Expectancy Theory* (1995) because it provides a lens for understanding the interrelationship of choices people make, the extent of their satisfaction, and the level of performance or effectiveness on their chosen actions (Vroom, 1995). This perspective resonates with how individuals experience pleasure and are motivated to continue the act because of the positive experiences gained.

Vroom’s *Expectancy Theory* centers on the relationship between people and their work (Vroom, 1995, p. xii). According to Vroom (1995), “Expectancy Theory asserts that human choice is subjectively rational. People do not always make optimal decisions but they do make decisions that they believe to be optimal at the time they make them” (p. xviii). This understanding correlates with athletes and their experiences participating with their sport. Specifically, when a student athlete decides to practice to the fullest extent, as well as compete to his/her highest capability because he/she has the motivation to do so and feels such action would be in his/her best interest for optimal results, this example specifies the motivation that can be explained through Expectancy Theory.

Vroom’s Theory encompasses the four concepts of *valence*, *instrumentality*, *expectancy*, and *force* (Vroom, 1995). These variables make up a conceptual model that concludes motivation is comprised of expectancy, instrumentality, and valence, with expectancy defined as momentary belief that a particular act will be followed by a particular outcome (effort), instrumentality defined as one’s attitude towards attaining various consequences (performance), and valence meaning one’s feelings toward a particular outcome (reward).

Expectancy is an important aspect of the theoretical framework. If a person believes a certain outcome is to follow a certain act, the person believes in a 1.00 value of expectancy; if the person believes in a 50-50 chance, the person assumes a .50 expectancy value (Vroom, 1995, p. 29). This correlates with the theory that “hard work pays off,” and, consequently, student athletes would persevere in their efforts. If an athlete believes practicing will lead to more successes, the expectancy rate will be high.

A 1962 study by Diggory, Klein, and Cohen found the amount of effort exerted by subjects showed two different outcomes. From Vroom (1995) on this study:

Apparently, giving a person information to the effect that he has attained a low level of performance may either increase or decrease the amount of effort he exerts and the level of his subsequent performance. Similarly, giving him information to the effect that he has attained a high level of performance may either increase or decrease the amount of effort he exerts and his level of performance. How can one account for these findings? (p. 293)

No matter the type of feedback provided on performance, subjects either increased or decreased their efforts. Decreasing efforts seems logical when one feels defeated or when one feels the task is mastered so effort can be decreased. However, an explanation on increased effort in these situations deserves attention.

Expectancy Theory and High School Athletics

Vroom’s theory is pertinent to the study because his findings detail the phenomena of choice and satisfaction. Extracurricular activities, specifically athletics, provide high school students an environment of opportunities and experiences for making choices, exerting physical and mental effort, setting goals, being motivated by others, and experiencing successes and setbacks.

In respect for finding the right framework, Anfara and Mertz (2015) noted the framework should resonate with the way you are thinking implicitly about the problem you are researching, make sense, provide clarity for those thoughts, and provide direction for the study. With the study's purpose of exploring how school educators view the perceptions of the influence of reductions in athletic activities and opportunities on student outcomes and engagement in school, Vroom's theory will support observations in the field, drive the questions asked of the participants, and determine the documents attended to for the study.

Chapter II Summary

Chapter II presented a detailed view of literature to substantiate the need for this study. First, this review covered the history and formation of athletics in high schools. Then the review explored how athletics are beneficial to students by improving academic performance and by improving their life skills. Studies show that scores in the subjects of math, language arts, and science increase when students participate in athletics. Additionally, the drop-out rate of student athletes improves when they participate in sports. Life skills such as work ethic, self-discipline, increased self-esteem are shown to have improved as the result of being an athlete. Next, research discussing the reasons for the cutting of athletics in high school was presented. Findings showed that decreased school budgets are the main catalyst for eliminating school sports. As school funding decreases, schools are left to make decisions on how to adjust budgets, and often athletic opportunities are diminished as a result. Then the literature review discussed research on why a misunderstanding exists on how athletics positively contribute to students. One reason is the perception that student athletes are entitled individuals. This viewpoint of athletes depicts them as receiving special treatment and not playing by the same rules as other students. Another study produced findings that students with good grades who participated in school athletics may have a stigma associated to their character. This study, in short, concluded that student athletes from

upper-class upbringings can be categorized as not serious, which is detrimental to his/her identity.

The chapter concluded with specifics of the Theoretical Framework of Vroom's *Expectancy*

Theory. Chapter III will explain the methodology and data collection for this study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology and data collection techniques used in this study. The methodology and procedures selected are based on the type of study pursued. This study centers on collaboration with human subjects and their perspectives on specific activities and occurrences. A case study method allows the researcher to search for the meaning and understanding with the end product being richly descriptive (Merriam, 2009, p. 39). Therefore, a qualitative case study is the most suitable design as it takes data from interviews with teachers, as well as from observations of high school athletic activities (those still offered to students) and document analysis.

Statement of the Problem

Educators have differing perspectives regarding the educational value of high school athletics. For those educators who do perceive athletics as important, they often include non-academic benefits of involvement. For example, according to Yeung (2015), “[I]nterscholastic sports and fine arts activities promote citizenship and sportsmanship. They instill a sense of pride in community, teach lifelong lessons of teamwork and self-discipline and facilitate the physical and emotional development of our nation’s youth” (p. 363). Despite these perceived benefits, more and more athletic programs are facing insufficient funding allocations

due to the effects of a strained economy (Forester, 2015). The result has been a decrease in extracurricular athletic opportunities for students. This decrease in opportunity may influence student academic progress in ways that are not fully understood. As funding decisions are made, additional information is needed regarding teacher perceptions of the influence of athletic participation and the decrease in opportunity for athletic participation on students.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore teacher perceptions of the influence of reductions in athletic activities/opportunities on student outcomes and engagement in school.

This inquiry is guided by the following questions:

What are teacher perceptions regarding the influence of reduction in athletic programs/opportunities on student learning in this school?

1. What are teacher perceptions regarding the influence of reductions in athletic opportunities in this school?
2. What are teacher perceptions regarding student outcomes for learning before and after reductions?
3. What are teacher perceptions regarding student engagement before and after athletic program reductions?
4. How does Vroom's Expectancy Theory explain these findings?

Researcher's Role and Bias

Having been a high school athlete, coach and educator, I have personal experiences in the setting in which I plan to observe. These experiences include observing the school climate, classroom settings and extracurricular activities. Additionally, I have developed bonds with educators over the years and hold them in high regards. Moreover, I believe high school athletics

are beneficial to student athletes, not only because of my experiences, but also from the experiences I witnessed from teammates and from the student athletes I have coached over the years.

In short, observing classrooms, extracurricular events, and conversing with teachers will not be new experiences. However, sitting on the side conducting observations of these events and interactions will be a new experience. As stated, I have experienced high school athletic participation during my freshman through senior years of school. This bias could play a role in my study as I consider high school athletic involvement to be a positive experience for students. Yet, the awareness of such biases and a focus of a sound methodology can be helpful in limiting the impact of the study.

According to Erlandson, et al. (1993):

The obligation of the researcher in writing the report is to produce a document that will allow for active participation on the part of the reader and provide the basis for developing working hypotheses that can be applied in other contexts. (p. 40)

My research design, thick description and data analysis strategies will allow for the data to provide the findings, not my biases. Additionally, the individuals I plan to interview will not be of any close, personal relationship to me. I have never taught in a high school, and my one year of coaching at a high school was in a different district.

Research Design

This research design is a qualitative case study.

According to Merriam (2009):

In its broadest sense, [qualitative] research is a systemic process by which we know more about something than we did before engaging in the process. We can engage in this process to contribute to the knowledge base in the field (pure research), improve the

practice of a particular discipline, (applied research), assess the value of something (evaluation research), or address a particular, localized problem (action research). (p. 4).

For this study, I explored teacher perceptions of the influence of reductions in athletic activities/opportunities on student outcomes and engagement in school. I conducted virtual interviews with six career teachers to uncover their thoughts on how athletic involvement might play a role in academic success. Moreover, I evaluated online and print documents, such as graduation rates and de-identified discipline records before and after changes were made in athletics. During observations, I took field notes at extracurricular events and during classroom observations. Therefore, a qualitative case study design was beneficial to this inquiry because the data collected from interviews and observations was organized and interpreted to provide an understanding of the research questions guiding this study. According to Merriam (2009), “Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (p. 5).

Because my study is a qualitative case study, I have found several components from Merriam to help me organize and design my study. Merriam (2009) described several features normally found in qualitative case study analysis. These features are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1

Characteristics of Qualitative Case Study by Merriam

Design strategies	Collecting Qualitative Data	Analyzing Data
Shape topic of study into a research problem, identity logic and context of study, select theoretical framework, conduct literature review, select study sample.	Conducting effective interviews, being a careful observer, mining data from documents.	Early management of data analysis and organization, inventory, organize, code data to lead to findings and categorized data, validity, reliability, and ethics help to ensure trustworthiness

of the study.

Note. From the work of Merriam (2009).

Epistemology

Applying a social constructivist epistemology was conducive to this study because, as Creswell (2014) noted, such a worldview relies on the views of the participants of the situation being studied. One of the goals of this study is to understand the perceptions of athletic involvement according to career teachers. As stated by Creswell (2014), “The researcher’s intent is to make sense of (or interpret) the meanings others have about the world” (p. 8). A constructivist worldview provides an approach that allows backgrounds, experiences and interactions to speak on the topic. Teachers who were interviewed have formed ideas and beliefs about student athletes, and their beliefs about student athletes provided the pertinent data for this study. Thus, the “what” research questions guiding this study on extracurricular participation and the influences on academic outcomes can be addressed. Researchers construct knowledge; they do not find knowledge (Merriam, 2009, pp. 8-9).

Population and Sample

The Grand Public Schools (GPS) district (pseudonym for the district in this study) is located in the Midwest. The district serves a multi-cultural population of students consisting of the following ethnicities: Pacific Islander (0.5%), Asian (2%), Native American (2%), Multiracial (7%), Caucasian (13%), African American (20%), Hispanic (56%). GPS also has a large population of bilingual and English Language Learners (18,000 and 13,000 respectively), along with a 100% free and reduced lunch rate. The district employs close to 4,600 employees.

Justice High School (pseudonym for the school site in this study) serves students in grades nine through twelve. The school has an enrollment of approximately 700 students consisting of the following ethnicities: Black (61.5%), Hispanic (17.9%), White (9.8%),

American Indian (2.7%), Asian (2.1), Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (0.7%), two or more races (5.3%). Most of the school population is economically disadvantaged (88%). Additionally, four high school sports have been dropped since 2015 at this school site. The following sports are currently being offered at the school: baseball, basketball, cheer, cross country, football, golf, softball, track, and volleyball. Sports that have been dropped include tennis, soccer, swimming, and wrestling. During this time, JROTC was dropped, as well. In total, approximately 120 students were affected by this reduction, or roughly 17% of the student population.

This study was a case study with participants that included six career teachers at Justice High School to gain insight on the influence of reduction in student athletic participation on student outcomes and engagement in school. I chose the Grand Public Schools district because a district of this size provided me with an applicable sample of educators to select from to interview and a variety of educational and extracurricular settings to observe. The school site has eliminated four sport offerings dating back to the 2015-16 school year.

Participant Selection

Purposeful, criterion sampling was utilized to select participants. According to Merriam (2009):

The criteria you establish for purposeful sampling directly reflect the purpose of the study and guide in the identification of information-rich cases. You not only spell out the criteria you will use, but you also say why the criteria are important. (pp.77-78)

I selected six high school teachers to interview via Zoom so that I could acquire data from the perspectives of individuals who have worked in the district before and after reductions to athletic opportunities. Additionally, choosing classroom teachers allowed me to understand the perspectives of individuals who work with a population of students both involved in athletics and not involved in athletics. These individuals were selected from the Grand Public School District,

providing a large sample from which to select to interview and to make observations in a variety of settings. A copy of the e-mail Invitation for Study Participation is in Appendix C, and a copy of the Informed Consent Form is in Appendix D.

Data Collection

Data collected for this study consisted of information found in a school setting. Data were collected by me, the instrument for data collection in qualitative research design (Erlandson, et al, 1993), through interviews, observations and document analysis. Interviews were conducted with high school teachers who have been at the school before and after the reductions of athletic offerings took place. Specifically, participants included six experienced, career high school teachers. The focus was on their perceptions of student outcomes and engagement in school after reductions in athletic activities/opportunities were made.

Interviews were conducted virtually via Zoom during the months of October through February. Digital recordings were made to ensure accurate data collection that includes nuances of language beyond the printed text.

Pseudonyms were used to protect participant identity. Interview questions were designed to capture the thoughts of educators on how athletic participation contributes to the development of academic outcomes and engagement. The interview protocol is provided in Appendix A.

Interviews played a pivotal role in the study because of valuable data that can be obtained. According to Merriam (2009):

As I noted earlier, most interviews in qualitative research are semi-structured; thus, the interview guide will probably contain several specific questions that you want to ask everyone, some more open-ended questions that could be followed-up with probes, and perhaps a list of some areas, topics, and issues that you want to know more about but do not have enough information about at the outset of your study to form specific questions.

(p. 103)

Observations of athletic competitions and classrooms occurred between the months of October and March for a total of three athletic events and six classroom observations. Being able to observe the high school student body during class and extracurricular activities, specifically athletic competitions, provided relevant details to create a thick description of students' experiences because those events provided a setting that displayed these experiences.

Observations allowed routines to be identified, contexts to be understood, and the triangulation of emerging findings to occur (Merriam, 2009, p. 119). I looked for behaviors related to student learning and student engagement (participation). "Observation makes it possible to record behavior as it is happening" (Merriam, 2009, p. 119). Field notes of observations included descriptions, direct quotations and comments of the observer based on the physical setting, the participants, activities, interactions, and conversations (Merriam, 2009).

Documents were another data source collected for this study. Documents included graduation rates and de-identified discipline records before and after changes were made in athletics. The goal of document analysis was to gain an understanding of the school's course completion and graduation rates before and after cuts were made to extracurricular activities. Information from school and district webpages was also viewed in order to explore how the school promotes and values extracurricular activities. Benefits of this type of data collection, as outlined by Creswell (2014):

- Enables a researcher to obtain the language and words of participants.
- Can be accessed at a time convenient to researcher- an unobtrusive source of information.
- Represents data to which participants have given attention.

- As written evidence, it saves a researcher the time and expense of transcribing (pp. 192-93).

Table 2 shows the alignment of data sources with the study’s research questions.

Table 2

Alignment of Research Questions

Research question	Data Sources
What are teacher perceptions regarding the influence of reductions in athletic opportunities in this school?	Interviews and observations
What are teacher perceptions regarding student outcomes for learning before and after reductions?	Interviews and print documents of academic data including graduation rates and de-identified discipline records.
What are teacher perceptions regarding student engagement before and after athletic program reductions?	Interviews and student participation data on school based activities.
How does Vroom’s Expectancy Theory explain these findings?	Theoretical framework.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is a key component in the pursuit of transforming data into findings. The overall strategy for achieving an intensive data analysis for this study was to inventory, organize, and code the data. According to Merriam (2009), data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously, following a constant comparative method.

Following Merriam’s methodology, I started the data analysis process after I completed

each observation and interview. Analysis included organizing the data and identifying segments. For observations, analysis included taking field notes and transcribing my observations of elements observed including: the physical setting, the participants, activities and interactions, conversation, subtle factors, and my own behavior (Merriam, 2009). For interviews, data analysis started by transcribing, word-for-word, the questions and responses to open-ended questions with teachers. For online and print documents data, analysis included analyzing the data of graduation rates and de-identified discipline records in order to uncover insights relevant to the research problem (Merriam, 2009, p. 163). With a qualitative case study that encompasses interviews, document analysis, and observations as the main sources of data, bringing meaning to the words shared by the interviewees, as well as providing thick, rich details of observations helped to capture and to illustrate the findings. Throughout the data collection process, data were triangulated to promote deeper understanding of the findings.

Once all data were collected, the following steps, as outlined by Merriam (2009), helped in making sense of the data:

- Inventory and organize data set so it is easily retrievable
- Identifying segments in your data set that are responsive to research questions
- Identifying units of data
- Compare one unit of information with the next to look for recurring data regularities
- Code the data
- Assign and sort bits of data into categories
- Name categories

The steps listed above helped to take a complex process and organize the process to a

series of steps, including inventorying and organizing all of the data. Analysis proceeded by reviewing the first interview transcript, the first set of field notes and collected documents and making notations next to bits of data that seemed interesting and/or relevant to the study (Merriam, 2009). Merriam (2009) explains, “This data set needs to be organized and labeled according to some organizing scheme that makes sense to... the researcher- and a scheme that enables [the researcher] any piece of... data at any time” (p. 174).

Coding, taking the bits of information and applying designations to the data, followed transcription of interview data. Coding involved identifying recurring shortened designations such as words, letters, numbers, phrases, colors, or a combination of these (Merriam, 2009, p. 173). This type of coding helped to organize and manage the data as the study progressed.

The next step in data analysis was to identify categories into which codes could be organized. Categorizing codes from the data “brings meaning and identity to a recurrent [patterned] experience and its variant manifestations” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 199). According to Merriam (2009):

Assigning codes to pieces of data is the way you begin to construct categories. After working through the entire transcript in this manner, you go back over your marginal notes and comments (codes) and try to group these comments and notes that seem to go together. (p. 179)

Identifying and constructing categories served to discover reoccurring patterns that cut across the data, as well as find categories and renaming them to precisely reflect what is in the data (Merriam, 2009). This process continued until units of information were identified and continued until saturation was reached (Merriam, 2009).

Naming the categories to indicate themes that emerged during data analysis followed Merriam’s (2009) criteria (pp. 185-186):

- Be responsive to the purpose of research
- Be exhaustive
- Be mutually exclusive
- Be sensitizing
- Be conceptually congruent

These data analysis steps provided direction for making sense of the data. A spreadsheet was used to document and identify key words and phrases shared by all participants. Organizing data in this way allowed for patterns and themes to emerge (specifically repetitive words, terms and experiences shared by the participants). Effort was placed on revealing teacher perceptions on the influence of athletic and extracurricular reductions on student outcomes and engagement. Capturing and interpreting what is conveyed by the participants in an accurate voice is the key for identifying the findings of the study. Following Merriam's (2009) method for data analysis provided a framework to answer research questions of this study.

Data Verification

Trustworthiness in this study means applying criteria such as credibility, internal validity, transferability, external validity, reliability, conformability and objectivity to naturalistic inquiry (Patton, 2002). Trustworthiness was attained by being consistent with my observations (purposeful while observing, obtaining in-depth and accurate data). Also, implementing triangulation of data (using many sources- notes, documents to verify the data) was exercised. Additionally, utilizing purposeful sampling (to acquire a specific range of samples while generating relevant data) was practiced. This is referred to as the audit trail. "The audit trail leads to dependability and confirmability by allowing an auditor to determine the trustworthiness of the study" (Erlandson, et al, 1993, p. 148). These examples/techniques will serve as a guide to ensure that the data accurately represents what it was intended to.

Table 3*Trustworthiness Table*

Technique	Results	Examples
Prolonged engagement	Build trust, develop rapport, build relationships, obtain wide scope of data and obtain accurate data.	Multiple days were spent conducting observations in classrooms, at athletic events and interviews via Zoom.
Persistent observation	Obtain in-depth data, obtain accurate data, sort relevancies from irrelevancies and recognize deceptions.	Structured observations were scheduled and conducted consisting of capturing notes on the physical setting, the participants, activities, interactions and conversations.
Triangulation	Verify data.	Interview notes and observation/field notes.
Peer debriefing	Test working hypotheses, find alternative explanations, and explore emerging design and hypotheses.	Consultation to gain feedback from professor and with colleagues was held.
Member checking	Test categories, interpretations, or conclusions (constructions).	Throughout interviews participants were asked probing questions for clarity.
Reflexive journal and thick description	Document researcher decisions, provide database for transferability judgments and provide a vicarious experience for the reader.	After the observations and interviews I added additional detailed notes. I included as many relevant details as possible to create a thick description.
Purposeful sampling	Generate data for emergent	Purposeful random sampling

	design and emerging hypothesis.	of educators was utilized.
Audit trail	Allow auditor to determine trustworthiness of the study.	Field notes from observations, verbatim transcripts and recordings of interviews are available.

Note. From the work of Erlandson et al. (1993, p. 161).

Limitations

Limitations for this study do exist. As with all qualitative case studies, the sensitivity and integrity of the investigator play a role in depending on his or her instincts throughout most of the research (Merriam, 2009). Since I was the data collection instrument in this qualitative case study, and because this study relies on interviews and observations, interviewer and participant bias were potential limitations. These issues could interfere with building trustworthiness and accurate data. However, by recognizing potential bias and by carefully listening to the voices of the teachers, this limitation was minimized. Additionally, by applying a combination of observations, interviewing, and document analysis, the researcher can validate and cross-check findings which can compensate for limitations (Patton, 2002), and can enhance findings that more accurately reflect the perspectives of the participants (Merriam, 2009).

Another limitation of this study was not interviewing student athletes, those directly affected by the reductions in athletic programs. However, the six teachers selected as participants are veteran educators, and their perceptions regarding the influence of reductions in athletic opportunities are important. They were able to describe trends in student engagement and student outcomes before and after the reduction of programs in the high school.

Also, with this being a qualitative study, the sampling method of purposeful sampling may contain limitations. “Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned (Merriam, 2009, p. 77). Therefore, interviewing a specific sample of the population (in this case educators of high schools that have experienced a reduction in athletic sports offerings) is criteria central to the study.

Additionally, choosing the right details and description to include posed a challenge. Merriam (2009) summarized, “And assuming time is available to produce a worthy case study, the product may be too lengthy, too detailed, or too involved for busy policymakers and practitioners to read and use. The amount of description... is up to the investigator” (pp. 51-52).

Chapter III Summary

Chapter Three consisted of an in-depth review of the methodology that was applied to this study. Additionally, my role as researcher, bias and data collection strategies were addressed. Interviews, observations and print documents of student academic data will be the main data sources for this study. Chapter IV will present data on the population of the study, stories, and classroom observations of all six participants, and observations of extracurricular activities.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Whether journeying across a country or conducting a qualitative study, an explorer travels, examines, processes and organizes newfound information for discovery. This study explores teacher perceptions of the influence of reductions in athletic activities/opportunities on student outcomes and engagement in school. Data acquired includes information on Grand Public Schools, online and print documents on graduation rates and de-identified discipline records at Justice High School before and after changes were made in athletic offerings, interviews of six educators who have been teaching at Justice High School for five or more years (pseudonyms are used for confidentiality of the participants) and observations of student interactions and extracurricular activities.

During data collection for this study, health concerns were navigated, specifically health guidelines pertaining to COVID-19. Safeguards included conducting interviews virtually via Zoom as a safety precaution. Additionally, in-person observations of extracurricular activities and classroom observations were completed following district and CDC guidelines.

Population

Grand Public Schools

Grand Public Schools serves over 35,000 students and employs over 4,600

administrators, teachers, and support personnel who serve a student population that is composed of Pacific Islander (0.5%), Asian (2%), Native American (2%), Multiracial (7%), Caucasian (13%), African American (20%), Hispanic (56%). The Hispanic population is the largest racial/ethnic composition, surpassing 18,000 students every year since 2013. Eighteen thousand students in GPS are bilingual and 13,000 are English Language Learners. Additionally, GPS offers special education services and programs to serve approximately 12% of its population with disabilities or special needs. The student mobility rate is just over 35%, and the student economically disadvantaged rate is 88%.

Current district office leadership has been in place since the summer of 2018. The superintendent of Grand Public Schools has made significant changes to better serve the students, including steadying leadership, reorganizing the structure of the district, redistricting of school feeder patterns, closing of surplus school buildings with the goal of improving the use of resources (funds and personnel), and establishing a vision for equity. These changes were part of the superintendent's initial long-term plan, "The Grand Pledge." "The Grand Pledge" is a strategic road map that "paints a picture" to keep everyone aligned and focused to the initiatives of turning intentions into results for students, according to the district webpage. This initiative considers the challenges of the district and pledges to cultivate great schools to propel kids to be successful adults.

In addition to the restructuring of the district, the leadership team also instituted "The New Path" and "Central Standards" initiatives, which are extensions of "The Great Pledge." "The New Path" features plans and expectations that were frequently communicated and developed with input from the community and school board. For example, multiple pathways for re-districting school feeder patterns included input from the district community. The

superintendent communicated that this reorganization better aligns resources and helps build a stronger footing for equity. In addition to the re-districting of feeder patterns, the repurposing of district buildings was also a part of this initiative with financial incentives being the result. Through the closing, consolidating, selling, and leasing of targeted buildings, GPS was able to generate additional revenue. Additionally, the superintendent stated, “This aggressive re-districting benefits children and allows them to become beneficiaries of not just academic benefits, but whole child benefits.”

The “Central Standards” initiative includes direction on how the district can better serve the school community. This initiative includes strategies such as service, student success, relationships, effective communication, and collaboration. The intended result is effective teaching and learning, great community, improved culture, and effective systems. The superintendent recognizes the challenges of the school community and feels strong customer service and the building of relationships is vital and pairs well with “The New Path.”

Prior to this reorganization, the district began to examine extracurricular activities during the 2015-16 academic year. With school resources and funding needing to be reviewed, many sites, including Justice High School, were required to make program cuts to allocate funding to other areas. For JHS, program cuts meant the elimination of tennis, swimming, wrestling, soccer and JROTC, affecting approximately 120 students. Although change is never easy, GPS has communicated their reasons and goals with the school community in hopes of being transparent and providing an equitable education experience for all students.

Justice High School

Justice High School was established in the late 1940’s. As the result of recent district redistricting (2019-20 school year), the school currently serves students in grades 9-12. Table 4 details the graduation rates and de-identified discipline data of the school from school years

2013-2020, which encompasses the time extracurricular activity offerings began to decline to the present.

Table 4

Graduation Rates and De-Identified Discipline Data

School Year	Graduation Rate	Total number of suspensions	Total number of discipline events
2013-2014	76.71%	266	1,752
2014-2015	84.88%	204	1,056
2015-2016	80.72%	228	1,212
2016-2017	85.26%	278	1,191
2017-2018	89.90%	205	1,038
2018-2019	88.20%	284	1,363
2019-2020	Not available	250	1,754

Participants

The following participants (three males and three females) were interviewed and observed in their classrooms. These six participants have been teaching at Justice High School for five years or longer and serve in various teaching roles including: English teacher, math teacher, social studies teacher, foreign language teacher, history teacher, and electives teacher.

Pseudonyms are used to protect their identities.

Chris Fannigan

Chris Fannigan currently teaches and coaches for Justice High School. His journey to education started when he was in high school helping coach a youth AAU basketball team. He shared an interesting coaching story that described how his interest in coaching was sparked. His brief story centered around a game where his team was seconds away from advancing to the

national tournament, but a last second three-point shot made by the opposing team foiled the outcome. When asked how he chose education as a profession, Chris explained, “It was backwards for me. I knew I wanted to coach. As a seventeen-year-old I just felt the calling. I got into teaching to coach, but now I’m more of a teacher.”

As time as a classroom teacher elapsed, his passion for teaching surpassed the call for coaching. “And now I’m more of an educator than a coach. If I gave up the coaching for lent or for life, either one, it wouldn’t bother me..., as long as I have the ability to make a difference and explain the importance of education.” He pointed out he does not even coach his favorite sport anymore, which highlights his call to teaching surpassing his call to coach.

Chris elaborated that starting out as a teacher was not easy twenty plus years ago. “I didn’t learn how to be a teacher in college. I learned all the methodology and all the different pedagogy, but it wasn’t until- it’s the induction by fire that you learn exactly what you’re doing and how to do it.” He stressed that he has few discipline issues with students because he keeps them busy in the classroom, he establishes relationships with the student body, and he supports and acknowledges their work and accomplishments. Chris added, “It’s those small things because I can’t celebrate everybody’s wins, but I can celebrate most of them.” He feels it is not only important to tell the students he cares, but it is important to show them you care.

Expectations and technology were two things Chris stated after hearing the question on what major changes in education have you experienced. His reply started with:

Well... the one consistent- is a fourteen-year-old thinks like a fourteen-year-old. So even though the kids stay the same- how you deliver your instruction and the expectations of teachers and all of the different hoops you have to jump through in education are way different.

He continued to give the example that expectations with lesson plans are different today. “When I started my first teaching job, my lesson plan was in a lesson plan book. It wasn’t typed out; it wasn’t done with the five E’s,” Chris said. He expanded that in the past a principal would come in, ask what you are teaching that day and for the week, and look at the lesson plan book. Today, he added, it is more focused towards how you will teach, not just what will you teach.

Chris also alluded to technology as being different today compared to the past. “[T]he technology that you used in education in 20 some odd years has just increased tremendously and in some aspects, it’s helped and in some, it has hurt,” he said. He gave the example that technology can be a major distractor to student focus. He said students can get tied up looking at Snap Chats or posts on Twitter.

When asked about the recent reduction in extracurricular athletic opportunities for students, Chris pointed out that students need to be motivated and extracurriculars are motivational “carrots” for students. “Do we offer everything that we need to offer for these kids to feel like they have a carrot? Carrots are motivators, no matter how big or small. If you have little, small carrots you have the wins,” Chris detailed. To provide these opportunities meaningfully, he mentioned participation should occur in Middle School, or even earlier in order to gain the needed fundamentals, or basic athletic skills.

Chris shared an example of how the reduction of some extracurricular opportunities has played a role in the culture and climate of the school. His example comes from the discontinuation of Justice High School’s ROTC program. Chris stated:

[W]hen they shut down the ROTC program, there were a lot of kids that just felt like they were lost because they lived it, breathed it and loved it. And there were a lot of kids you could tell, literally finish one or two more years of high school without really kind of ownership of something that they would call theirs. Now, I don’t know what the

graduation rate [is], I would still think it was pretty high because those kids we had in ROTC were pretty top notch kids, but some of them needed that discipline and focus and structure that the ROTC program provided them and they didn't find it anywhere else.

Chris returned to his point about student motivation. In this situation, he stated this program, along with other extracurricular activities, provides intrinsic motivation to students. He expanded on this topic with the following question on the influence of extracurricular opportunities for students. "I would say that having all of the things that we have is a positive because there has to be something other than just Math, Science, English and History," said Chris. "[W]hen these kids are involved and their participation is directly correlated with the grades and the no pass-no fail that the OSSAA has implemented, there is even extra motivation for them to make sure that their attendance is there."

The topic of the value of providing extracurricular activities and challenges related to providing opportunities came next. The value is enormous, Chris shared. "I don't know that it is why kids graduate, but it gives them an opportunity to be part of something that is greater than themselves. It helps them learn so much about life." Chris expanded on value with traits such as team building process, students learning about wins and losses, and relationship building.

As for the challenges related to providing extracurricular opportunities, Chris mentioned money and resources. He stated, "Are we allocating our resources into the areas that we need to allocate them to in order to make sure that we offer our kids enough?" He articulated that the end result should be placing resources that will help students be more successful in education. "I'm not saying that you need to pour money into your football program, but let's put the money in the places that can directly impact the extracurriculars of our kids," Chris explained. "[A]s long as we are putting resources into kids, it still gives them pathways to be able to succeed, not only in school, but also when they are out."

Classroom Observation of Mr. Fannigan: Planning for the Future

This afternoon class, led by Chris, started with students taking in their seats at tables facing the front of the classroom. Being socially distanced, students were one per table for this class period. I took a seat in the back-right of the classroom for this observation.

As soon as attendance was taken, Chris informed the class they would work on pre-enrollment. Anticipating students would say they have completed this in another class, Chris said the program is not always accurate, and the counselors have many students to serve, so it is imperative that students “take ownership of their education” and look at their courses to make sure they are registered for the right classes for next school year, as well as are taking the correct classes to meet graduation requirements. In the middle of this, a student asked about a gym chair with the name of another school that was in the classroom. Chris explained that he salvaged that chair, and a few others, when the school shut down. He explained that when the school consolidated with Justice High School, he thought it was important for the students coming over to Justice HS to see some artifacts from their former school.

After this exchange, Chris transitioned and asked students about the requirements it takes for students to graduate high school. He stressed that many students fall short with requirements because they receive an NG (no grade) for a class. Chris added that he has seen many students have a passing grade in the class, but the student received an NG, “because they had too many absences.” He expanded that first hour and post lunch classes tend to have the highest number of NG grades given.

Subject by subject, Chris reviewed the number of credits it takes to graduate. He also explained how athletics and other extracurricular activities work towards education credits. One student then asked about vo-tech classes. Chris recommended that students explore

opportunities to see what they like. He also added, “It is always a good idea to take advantage of free training.”

From there, topics of COVID testing and the school climate from the year prior came up. The class talked about how one year ago they left for spring break and did not come back due to the pandemic. One could sense they were worried about the same for this year.

Susan Bond

“Ironically, I didn’t start off teaching,” exclaimed Susan when asked why she chose teaching as a profession. Growing up she wanted to be a teacher, but her path led her to a job that would pay for the remainder of her degree if in the field of business. After years of utilizing her associate and bachelor’s degrees in business, she stated, “I finally said, ‘Ok, can I go be what I really want to be?’ And, thus went into teaching. I wanted to help kids and I’ve always wanted to help kids.”

Additionally, personal experiences with a foster child added to the calling of becoming an educator. “No one had, unfortunately in his life, ever taken the time to see that he’s struggling.” She added this child had been “bounced” from one school to another, and one place to another place. This contributed to the child having behavioral issues and the help the child needed was hampered by bureaucratic processes, causing great frustration to Susan. “I had to literally fight the system to get him help.” Between this child and the experiences of another child, as well as her experiences in the workforce, she detailed a moment that drew her to take the leap to education:

Why as a manager am I told to manage people differently because different things motivate them, but as a kid we’re told to teach them all the same? Why do things not motivate them differently? What switch is flipped between twelfth grade when they graduate and go to the work force?... That’s, I guess, that’s the trigger if you will.

After these experiences, Susan made the transition to education as a high school teacher. Years later, she is teaching subjects based on her background in business.

When asked about the major changes experienced during her career, Susan shared a few examples. “It’s ambiguous. There’s constant change in education.” She continued, “Your children change, your technology changes. Unfortunately, your administration changes so therefore, policies and procedures change, [and] expectations change.” The main change, as noted by Susan, is technology. “This year, we’re teaching virtually so we learned Canvas, and that [is] how we communicate with our students [and] we present our materials,” she added.

Regarding the reduction in extracurricular offerings at Justice High School, Susan was quick to point out that finances were behind the reduction. “I understand the need for the cuts because they were making reductions because of monetary reasons.” However, she elaborated that this hurts the school. Susan mentioned:

I think we do our students a disservice because we are not giving them that extracurricular. The extracurricular gives them buy-in and let’s face it. I mean, it makes them more well-rounded and you know, these schools that we see in some of these other cities that offer more extracurriculars, their students are leaving high school and going on to college.

Susan provided feedback on the change the reduction of extracurricular activities has had in her classroom. “When I started teaching [more than five years ago], the first year or two years of teaching, there was effort put in. The students would put in effort. They wanted to learn. She continued, “When we took away the extracurriculars, we took away the pieces that interested them.” Susan elaborated that this took away structure, protocols, and policies for the students. “And you know, we took that away, so why do they have to do the work?”

Susan shared the athletic culture of the school consists of a strong tradition in football and basketball, along with a strong booster presence in both of those sports. “[JHS] was always a big football school and basketball school to begin with, and it just became more heavily influenced that way,” she detailed. “The booster club was there for football and basketball and would help with the other sports,” she added.

Susan continued to share that the school does a great job promoting sports that are currently being offered, as well as having students move on to college to play, especially in football and basketball. “We have students that sign every year with various colleges. Most of them are two-year colleges,” Susan shared. However, she would like to see students move on to the next level in other sports.

On the topic of making changes to opportunities for extracurricular participation for students, Susan mentioned she would increase opportunities for participation by forming intramural leagues. “I honestly would promptly open up sports and see if we couldn’t do like an intramural situation to generate interest.” She elaborated, “I would go to the junior highs, even the elementaries and start introducing this [and] expand football by offering some little league teams there. Soccer, by getting them involved in North OKC soccer.” The purpose of this, Susan explained, is getting students involved at a younger age. This would increase interest and by the time students reach high school, students would be ready to compete with other schools. “That [students participating with no experience] is very difficult to do when you are going up against teams that have played club and have played rec[reation].” Additionally, intramural leagues could be utilized at the high school level for sports that do not have enough to field a team. “If we don’t have enough interest, then maybe form an intramural league where the school is playing other schools that don’t have enough to form a team, but they want to try it out [and] they want to experience it,” said Susan.

Susan shared an idea to create intramural leagues as a solution for schools that do not have enough students to form a team for a particular sport. “I don’t necessarily see all of the schools having a golf team. Or not all of the schools maybe having a swimming team. I think it is based on the population of the school.” Therefore, if schools that had a couple of students who wanted to play a sport that did not have enough at their school site, students from across all sites that wanted to play the sport could do so. “So maybe the intramural would be another option,” Susan added.

Susan believed extracurricular activities are highly valuable to students. She expressed, “You are talking to a person who was in choir, who played in band, who was a majorette, and who played soccer, and as in AP and honors classes.” She added:

I think that it gives the students a chance to see what they like, aside from curriculum. It gives them a chance to see [some activities] we don’t offer. We are not offering an opportunity in our schools for our students to try technical trades. We are not offering opportunity for our students to try extracurriculars on all sports, just certain sports that we’ve picked and chosen along the way.

Susan explained that even the opportunities schools offer differ based on a child’s zip code. She expanded by saying a north side school could have an established football program and no soccer team, and a south side school could feature the opposite. Many students’ opportunities are dependent on where they live. “I was kind of hoping to see that the sports would return across the board. I’m still kind of holding out hope for that,” she added.

Susan described some specific values students gain from extracurricular participation in school:

Playing in athletics and having an opportunity to play athletics, or to be ROTC or Business Professionals of America, or any of these things of that nature, it teaches them

self-confidence. It teaches them how to be part of a team. It teaches them how to come up with leadership skills. I mean, let's face it, in today's day and age, how to get out of their technology devices and have face-to-face communications and personal connections that they don't have because they've grown up in the world of technology, where face-to-face conversation doesn't occur often.

Susan feels students can become more well-rounded by participating in extracurricular activities and can learn direct conversation skills, experiences many students are lacking.

When asked about the challenges related to providing extracurricular activities, Susan replied with a laugh, "Multiple." She continued, "I think we solved a lot of them with [The New Path] by setting the framework, if you will, of the schools feeding into the other schools. I think that took a lot of the challenges away there." Additionally, getting students involved at an earlier age, as alluded to earlier, is a challenge. Susan explained that groups like the YMCA and other sports organizations can create opportunities to expose students to sports at a younger age. Creating partnerships and developing intramural leagues, she mentioned, can be the catalyst. "I think it is going to have to start at that level before it can ever go to, 'hey, we've got a high school soccer team or a junior high soccer team or we've got a junior high tennis team.'"

Classroom Observation of Ms. Bond: Bonding with Students

This Thursday morning class started with Susan greeting students as they entered the classroom. Aside from the customary good morning, Susan facilitated dialogue with a couple of the early students. One of these students mentioned that she was early to this class because "it is her favorite." "This class and lunch," the student clarified.

One by one, a total of ten students took their seats at rectangular tables facing the front of the classroom, where Susan had an interactive television showing a google slide presentation and a lectern nestled in the front corner of the room. The quiet and calm classroom was further

complimented with mid-range lighting (not too dark, and not too light) and Susan said that students who needed her direct instruction on the topic needed to sit up front and students who needed to complete make-up work could move to the other open seats.

The walls were adorned with a mix of athletic posters and educational posters. Students took out materials and listened to Susan move through the subject content. As the lesson progressed, Susan would ask whole-class questions to monitor the students. A couple of students were quick to respond, either with an answer or a follow-up question. Susan's instruction included examples from her personal experiences, as well as scenarios based on student relevance.

As class time continued, Susan walked down the middle of the classroom, where the rectangular tables were spaced, and observed student behaviors. A couple of gentle reminders were given, serving as cues for students who were off task to get back to work. This was effective both times as students were observed straightening up and refocusing their attention to their work.

Towards the end of class, more questions were asked, and student responses were given. Regardless of being correct or incorrect, students were praised verbally for sharing and contributing to the lesson. Some students who were making-up work trailed off in their efforts but were given an opportunity to get missing work completed, nonetheless.

Cindy Smith

Cindy Smith is a veteran teacher that did not originally plan to become an educator. “Okay, I didn’t exactly choose teaching as a profession for myself. I’d like to say that this was God’s choice for my life,” said Cindy. When she was attending college, she chose a program that, according to one of her professors, would cause her to have to move out of state to obtain gainful employment. Therefore, Cindy decided to seek teaching certification while substitute teaching and working on her degree.

The precise moment for deciding to go all-in to teaching, Cindy shared, occurred when she took a long-term substitute position. She explained: “I ended up doing a long-term sub assignment for a teacher who went out pregnant the first week of school. I ended up in her spot the entire year.” During her time serving as a substitute teacher, she said she recalls enjoying seeing the students learn math and be excited to learn. “I was working at a Middle School at the time and the students actually appreciated me helping them to learn math. Not so much today, but back then yes,” Cindy said with a laugh.

When this teacher whom Cindy was substituting for decided that she was not going to return to the position, she indicated that the principal informed her she would be offered the position if she was able to complete her certification. A year later, she completed another year of long-term substituting, completed her certification and was hired to take over the position full-time.

Cindy said attitudes toward education have changed during her career. “Ah, my experiences have gone from positive behavior and attitude toward education for the most part, now to a pessimistic attitude toward education.” She attributes this change to students becoming frustrated with, or simply, not liking school subjects. “Most people, for whatever reason, do not like math. [M]ost people say numbers confuse them. I can’t understand that, math is basic. It doesn’t change... [N]umbers don’t lie. They’re either gonna add up or they’re not.” She also added that early in her career she would enjoy seeing students becoming excited about learning.

Cindy also mentioned she feels the value students place on education is not as strong as it once was. “Mostly with students, their whole belief or attitude has changed toward education. And it’s a struggle. It’s a daily fight with a lot of students- not all of them, but with a lot of students. It’s like pulling teeth that don’t want to come out.” Many students, she explained, become blinded by aspirations of becoming the next big star. “And that’s not necessarily true and

I don't want their bubble to be burst. But they need something to fall back on if that dream of being the next superstar doesn't come to reality.”

However, Cindy mentioned students occasionally return to apologize for their attitude and behavior as they realized she was just trying to prepare them for their futures. She mentioned some discovered skills, such as math, came into play in adulthood. “I’ve had students come back after graduating in past years and apologize for their behavior and their attitude and thank me for pushing math down their throats... They said it has come in handy and now they can see it and understand what I was trying to tell them back then.”

Though Cindy mentioned she was “not sure” of many of the extracurricular activities’ statuses and availability to students, she did share that she noticed many students began to lose opportunities with the loss of elective options. Cindy noted:

We had a couple of students who wanted to go into the service, but without R-O-T-C they weren’t able to get their foot in the door the way they had planned. And, they had taken the program for a couple of years before it was cut out. So that was very disappointing for some of the students who were looking at going into the service through that program.

When asked about the influence the reduction of athletic opportunities has had on the culture and climate of the school, she said, “[O]ur main sports or athletics would be football and basketball and those two areas are still pretty strong at [Justice High School]. [T]hey still have a handful of sports outside of football and basketball.” Cindy added, “Sports can influence certain students in a positive manner. Some students don’t care one way or the other.”

Cindy provided an example of coaches helping her out with student athletes she was teaching:

I would talk to their coaches when they weren't doing what they were supposed to in class. The coach would get on to them and then make them do after school tutoring to, ah, bring up their grades and do what they needed to whatever they were missing in my classroom.

Cindy felt this was beneficial to the students. “So for me, that had a positive impact on the students, forcing them. You either make up your academics or you don't get to play, which was helping me to help them- the student.”

When asked about what changes she would make to opportunities for extracurricular participation, she said she would place an emphasis on grades first. “In order to be able to participate in sports of any kind, students would have to make at least an average passing grade, which would be a C in my books.” She believes a student striving for C's or higher shows they are serious about their academics. “And then they could participate in sports- as long as they kept their grade up or improved it. But anything below a C, I wouldn't allow them to participate in sports...”

In regards to challenges related to providing extracurricular opportunities and her perception of the value of extracurricular opportunities, she replied she was not sure on the challenges. However, she did mention motivation and incentive on the other. “I see it as an incentive to the students to offer extracurricular activities for them. And especially if it's something that they enjoy doing and they look forward to doing that helps to motivate them.”

Classroom Observation of Ms. Smith: A Helping Hand

This afternoon class was preceded with Cindy standing outside of her classroom while the hustle and bustle of high school students transitioned out from one class to the next out in the reverberating hallway. Upon being greeted by Cindy, I took a seat in the back of the

classroom. Another student was wiping down desks and politely offered me cleaning supplies to sanitize my desk.

After the sound of the bell, Cindy provided a quick verbal review of the math skills the class had been covering that week. As this discussion bounced back and forth between Cindy and the class, she handed out a worksheet for the day's lesson and then promptly began teaching. "Let's look at number one," said Cindy. She then drew a representation of the angles from problem number one while the students began working. Questions then bounced back and forth between the class and Cindy.

As the lesson progressed with Cindy working out the math problems step-by-step on the whiteboard, she pushed the class to keep working and applying themselves. "Can you see it now?" asked Cindy as one of the students could not provide the answer at first. "C'mon, I know you know this," she added while students worked to find the missing angles on their math handout.

As the lesson hit the mid-point, Cindy assigned the class to complete the remaining problems on their own. If help was needed, she would provide one-on-one assistance at her desk. Not more than a minute later, a student navigated her way to Cindy's desk. As the student received assistance, another student took out his math notes from his backpack. Having noticed, Cindy praised the student for taking the initiative of referring to his notes for support in solving the problems. With a smile, the student worked and a constant banter of verbal support from Cindy filled the classroom.

Emily Sims

Emily Sims grew up always wanting to be a high school teacher. She has taught in various teaching settings for over twenty years, including the middle school level, high school

level and multiple subject areas. Emily stated education is “in my blood.” She elaborated, “I have a lot of family of mine, you know, in the education business.” This includes aunts and cousins on both sides of her family that serve as teachers, principals, and upper administration. “All my life I wanted to be a teacher. I mean, and I did try to fight it a little bit but I knew what teachers made,” said Emily with a chuckle. Additionally, her positive experiences as a high school student, including being an athlete, contributed to her desire to become a high school teacher.

Emily noted that she has seen many changes over the years in education. At the forefront is technology, specifically online instruction. Also, she has seen many initiatives come and go. “[I]t feels like curriculum-wise, or maybe just education in general, things been all over the place.” Emily elaborated that she felt certain initiatives were not implemented long enough before it was discarded. “From one spectrum to the other,” she detailed.

When asked about the reduction in extracurricular activities, she mentioned finances were behind the reductions:

[T]he cutbacks- I understand why they’re happening, but I really think that we really focus on the wrong things...and I understand, that reading, math, the academics is very important but at the same time, the user incentives- these are things that are going to get our students involved... [A]thletics is just a very important component to a lot of our inner-city kids.

When asked how this has influenced students in your classroom, Emily replied, “I don't think it has influenced them in a positive way. I think that it has hurt them more.” Emily continued her point by saying students have other options, such as working and making money. Students, she said, need motivation and incentives. By taking away athletics, students are losing “a great outlet.”

Emily described the reduction as having a negative effect on the current climate of extracurricular activities. This includes student motivation, sports for girls, staffing and academic elective offerings. She said a lack of motivation and fundamentals, athletically and academically, have been the result of cutbacks, causing a “disservice to the kids.” Emily elaborated, “Academically and then it’s gonna lead into the athletics because they’re not going to be able to participate because they’re not going to have the background.” With the decline in offerings over the past five years, Emily added the reduction has affected sports for girls in the school and staff availability. “I mean, we’re stretched out so thin sometimes. Our Athletic Coordinators are teaching full time and they don’t have the time to walk around and check on every single athlete.”

The reduction has had an adverse effect on “all activities,” exclaimed Emily. From a small list of elective offerings to the overall high school experience, Emily feels money and resources could be better managed as there’s an obligation for preparing students for the future. She mentioned a couple of stories where former students had visited her after they had returned from attending college out of state. She said former students were quick to point out that they noticed schools in other states offered their high school students more resources such as electives, classes and sports.

When asked about changes she would make towards opportunities for extracurricular participation, Emily mentioned many strategies including making school more enticing to students, providing the right programs and opportunities, and making sure students are more well-rounded. The end results, Emily mentioned, would be pride. She elaborated:

Because like I said that is what's gonna get our kids involved, our families involved, our community involved. That, that feeling of pride. And not just in athletics but once you have that pride in your school, it's gonna be pride all the way around. It’s

gonna be pride for your academics. It will be pride- I graduated from [Grand Public Schools].

Emily explained her perspectives on the value and challenges of providing extracurricular activities. Emily said more involvement could lead to more scholarships and opportunities for students to stay away from the “wrong crowd.” She added, “I just think we should focus on our kids having the opportunities... And, you know, [students could] find other interests if we offered other things.”

Emily closed with detailing an array of challenges related to providing extracurricular activities. These obstacles include transportation, feeding athletes, and after school responsibilities many students face. She elaborated that many students do not have cars, so getting home after practice is a challenge for many. Additionally, many students have work obligations to navigate. “A lot of our kids have to work after school [and deal with] scheduling issues.” Emily provided possible solutions such as practicing at the end of the school day or practicing before school. “I mean that’s something that we should think about. A lot of our kids have responsibilities, you know. They help with the bills too, sometimes,” she said.

Classroom Observation of Ms. Sims: Grooving to the Beat

The dimly lit classroom was filled with music as I entered. A few steps in and I was greeted by Emily. A few students from the previous class wrapped-up conversations and headed out the door while students for the upcoming class trickled in. Emily was quick to point out a black desk where I could sit and asked if I needed anything.

After a quick attendance check students were asked who had their presentations completed and ready to share. The sound of crickets permeated the room and Emily provided a brief rundown of the presentation expectations (five slides to detail the challenges and achievements of a prominent person from a particular nationality). She mentioned all students

have had plenty of time to complete this assignment and she reviewed her expectations, particularly on being timely with turning in assignments. She then gave the class time to work. One student then interjected that he would be ready to present in a few minutes. Emily instructed the class to work on their presentations and for that student to prepare to share his presentation.

Students then began typing on their Chromebooks as music filled the classroom. Emily walked the five-by-five rows of desks and stopped to give one-on-one assistance to another student (presumably new to the class). About ten minutes later, the student who said he would be ready to present informed Emily his presentation was good to go.

After overcoming a brief technology issue, the student began to make his presentation. Characteristics of a particular rapper/singer/songwriter who passed away in 2020 were detailed by the student in a low, apprehensive voice. The rest of the class listened while keeping focus on their tasks. Once the presentation was over, Emily provided a couple of follow-up comments about the presentation. One included, “I didn’t realize [he] was of Latin heritage?” The student responded that his mother was of Panamanian descent.

Once the presentation concluded, Emily checked on the progress of her students. She then asked me a few questions about the progress of my work. Once our conversation faded, she resumed monitoring the class as students plucked away at their keyboards while music played in the background.

Ken Allen

Ken Allen has been in education for over two decades. Coming from a family of educators consisting of teachers, coaches, office staff and an administrator, he said he originally tried to do something other than becoming an educator. “Tried to avoid it,” said Ken with a grin. “I come from a family, kind of, of educators.”

Ken said although he fought the calling to the world of education, it finally caught up with him while he was taking a college accounting class where his intuition told him this is not what I want to do. “I went to college- that wasn’t my intentions, and it’s like, the more I was in college it was more like God saying, ‘Hey, no, this is what you’re supposed to do.’” Ken expanded by saying he ended up being in education, reluctant at first, but over twenty years later “he guesses he made the right call.”

Ken pointed out two factors when asked about the major changes he has seen in education throughout his career. There are educational programs that do not last and frequent turnover of leadership (site and district level). “You know, we’ve seen all kinds of programs come and go: Love and Logic, Assertive Discipline, just all kinds of different programs. Administration-wise for [Grand Public Schools] seems to be an issue, too. A constant revolving door.” However, Ken mentioned hope is on the horizon. “Hopefully we’ve moved past that now and we’re getting some more stability in, but I think early on especially, instability was a big issue.” He attributes instability due to not having a local person come in to lead the district, specifically, the superintendent. “But if there’s somebody that’s from around here and invested in the community, I think that makes a difference.”

When asked about the reduction in athletic opportunities from five years ago, Ken said it hurt programs, both short term and long term. “So, for us, it’s really hurt because we have tried to build back programs and once you let ‘em go for a couple of years it takes a lot to get them going again.” Ken illustrated that a one-year reduction is one thing, but a multiple year reduction puts a toll on the numbers that come out for a sport. Additionally, “[I]t definitely hurts because if they’re not involved in it from the start and then their junior, senior year you want to try to get them involved, sometimes it doesn’t work out,” Ken pointed out.

The effects of the reduction show up in the classroom, as well. When probed about why that is, Ken replied:

I think that you do have that portion of students that want to participate so they're gonna take a better pride in what their grade is to make, make sure they're eligible, Although the number I don't feel is high, there are kids that that's the only reason that they're involved in school is for sports and if you take their sport away, then they're more likely to struggle academically and or drop out of school. I mean we've seen that happen.

When asked to provide any examples, Ken said he can't think of a specific student, but he knows over the years there have been several students that, once the sport season concludes, their attendance and grades decline. "I do know we've had several that that's been an issue," said Ken.

"I feel it's improving. I think we are turning a corner on that," stated Ken when asked about influences of athletic opportunities in the school. Ken also brought up an interesting perspective when asked, what influence, if any, has the reduction of athletic opportunities had on the culture or climate of the school? Ken discussed that the recruitment of teachers has been affected with the decline in athletic offerings. "I can think of a couple of interviews that we sat in on coaches and their concern was, 'you don't offer this other sport which I want to coach'. So ultimately they decided to go a different route." In short, Justice High School has lost out on the hiring of teachers due to the educator wanting to coach a sport and Justice did not offer it at the time.

In respect to the current climate of extracurricular activities, Ken is happy to report that the return of many sports is in full swing. "So, pretty excited because we are bringing back those three sports that we didn't have last year, and some of the past five years. So, that, I think we're turning a corner on that." Ken credits the administration (district and site) on this resurgence. "I think at a building level our administration has been phenomenal with wanting to get involved.

[M]atter of fact, present administration last year came to me several times, goin', 'what do we need to do to get these sports back?'"

This resurgence will not come without some challenges in regard to providing extracurricular opportunities. "For us in our building specifically it's number of coaches. We're kinda spread thin. I had a lot of coaches that are coaching three sports." Additionally, Ken mentioned the number of certified teachers in the building is down, which means the opportunity to have a certified coach for a sport decreases. "And to me, for an assistant role, that might be okay, but I feel it's important that your head coach be in the building so they can see those kids every day in the hall."

Ken provided the following insight on the value of providing extracurricular opportunities. "I just think it gives kids the opportunity to do something that they want to do and be involved. It increases school spirit." Moreover, student involvement, Ken perceived, increases as students must attend school in order to support the teams. "And, of course that's gonna help your attendance because they're gonna be like, 'Hey I know that if I miss school I'm not gonna be able to go on this trip.'"

Classroom Observation of Mr. Allen: One Task at a Time

This morning class started with an open classroom door that led to a six by five alignment of student desks. Once I was seated in the back-middle of the classroom, students began to arrive. Immediately, a student noticed my presence and asked if I was there to conduct a teacher observation. In the middle of my reply, Ken redirected the student by telling her I was a guest of his doing work for a project. The student politely accepted that answer and proceeded to sit down in her seat and take out her class materials.

Once attendance was taken, Ken told the class the focus of the hour was to work on class registration for the next school year to be followed by working on their reading

assignment. Class registration entailed students accessing their Canvas accounts and reviewing their transcripts to make sure grade classification and course selections are accurate. Ken proceeded to cast his laptop to the Interactive TV mounted at the front of the classroom to walk students step-by-step through this process. A couple of students commented they have already completed this process in another class, but Ken countered that this is the time to double-check as the system can still contain mistakes. One student said she found an error and a few questions about transcripts from the students followed.

The class then transitioned to subject area work. Ken gave a quick review of the topics they have been covering (the Enlightenment and influences on America). Next he said he has assigned an article with corresponding questions on Canvas for the class to complete. Also, Ken said class time can be used to make up any missing work, as the end of the quarter is nearing. He said, “You can look at this class on Canvas to see the missing assignments you may have. Focus on one task at a time.” Following this, students proceeded to work on various tasks. Ken then walked the aisles of desks and had brief individual conversations with students about work that needed to be turned in or questions on the current assignment.

Phil Arthur

Phil Arthur comes from a multi-generational family of educators, with both parents and a sibling having been educators. Phil also has educators in his family on both sides. His calling to education came early during his undergrad career. “My sophomore year in college. I saw how deficient some people were in grammar and reading comprehension,” he said.

When asked about the major changes in education he has experienced during his career, he mentioned technology as being the main change. From resources, to the way roll is called to how grades are posted, he said technology has led the way with changes in education. “I’ve

discovered [resources], teachers sharing with teachers and all of these programs that I can just access them with the click of a button, click of a mouse, and so technology is the biggest thing.”

When asked if these changes are for the better, Phil affirmed they are. However, he did mention a negative, “I think that sometimes the interaction suffers,” he said. “We as teachers need to make sure that we are having meaningful discourse about...utilizing technology.”

For the interview question regarding the reduction of extracurricular opportunities for students, Phil stated finances and student interest contribute to the reduction. He detailed that some sports such as basketball and football are “self-sustaining” because football is “America’s sport” and basketball is an indoor sport. Phil elaborated:

People don’t value wrestling in the urban communities. They don’t value baseball. I mean, there are so many programs throughout the country that bring black kids and minorities, especially in the urban districts, back to baseball. And so basketball is one of those sports economically that you can go ahead and all you need is one basketball and 15 to 20 kids and you can get better. But in baseball, we need [a] bag, gloves and all of those other things. So it has been about finances. That’s pretty much what it is. And then interest. You know, kids would rather stay home and play video games.

Phil discussed how the district has attempted to generate interest with athletics with the students. From the “Parks and Promise” initiative to the refurbishing of gyms and fields, Grand Public Schools has made strides in making investments in recent years. However, from the “rough patch” caused by the pandemic and the fact that many students from the district have to work, interest in sports has decreased. Phil stated, “[B]ut you know suburban communities, a lot of times, are blue collar communities where people have to work where kids reach the age of 15 or 16, they get their work permits and money becomes the motivation. Kids would just rather work.”

Phil shared his perspective of the current climate of extracurricular activities at Justice High School. From low fan participation to the plethora of options students have from watching sports digitally, Phil believes interest has waned over the past five years. He stated, “People will choose those traditionally black schools... as marquee games and so communities [will] be there, rival communities and people, but there are some opponents that we have that the rivalry, the-the community rivalries don’t exist.” He continued, “Kids can get their entertainment on their electronic devices, or they can stream it on their computers or their televisions, so they can still watch, but they do it electronically from their home.”

To help increase student and fan interest, Phil shared a few ideas. “I think it begins with information booths, advertisements. I think you have to lower the cost of admission into games. I think you have to give service points for participation.” Phil also shared the idea of making participation mandatory in order to ensure students experience extracurricular activities in high school. By advocating for students to try new activities, they may find something that “triggers’ their desire to try college and stay in college, Phil stated.

On the topic of the value extracurricular activities provide to students, Phil shared many examples on how students learn and experience many life lessons from extracurricular participation. “The value is immeasurable,” he stated. “[T]he three things that people look for in this life, even adults, are acknowledgement, acceptance and purpose.” He elaborated that acceptance comes with being on a team and reaching goals. “[T]here are just more [things] to be said than for a need to participate in trying to attain a goal than reaching the goal itself. There are so many life lessons and skills that emanate from that.” Phil described skill building, developing life-long relationships, and respect for the opposition as other experiences students associate with extracurricular participation.

Regarding the challenges related to providing extracurricular opportunities, Phil mentioned finances. His second reply was participation; specifically, the work-aspect. “Kids don’t value the work aspect of-of it anymore. They just want to play,” he said. Phil continued, “And it is almost that old math thing when the math teacher says, ‘show your work, what are the steps for getting that answer,’ and that is a lost skill in this generation. Sometimes work is just work.”

Lastly, Phil shared his sentiment on the topic of influences of extracurricular on students. “Every program is vital. And so I made sure that I tried to attend as many events as I could because those kids are important.” He shared, “I would advocate that we all participate in attending events outside our expertise, that we not be myopic about our own programs because other programs exist. And when we do that, one, we support our community.”

Classroom Observation of Mr. Arthur: No Wasted Time

This afternoon class started with students waiting outside the classroom while Phil made his way to the door to open it as the bell sounded. One female student turned to me and asked, “Are you a sub for this class?” As I replied no, Phil opened the door and let the class enter. He was quick to greet all and give me a mutual fist bump as I entered the classroom. I then spotted an open desk in the back-middle area of the classroom and made my way to secure that spot to conduct the observation.

As students took their seats, which involved selecting a desk that was not marked with an “x” in blue tape (to aid with social distancing students), Phil began taking attendance for the class. He asked the students if they had seen the two students who were absent for the period. A couple of “no” replies and a few speculative responses were given. Immediately following attendance, Phil explained the agenda for the day. The agenda included students working on their open book assignment and finding the online reading and quiz. Students took out their Chromebooks and started working on these tasks.

At one point, Phil went across the hall to ask a Bilingual Assistant to help a Spanish speaking student with the tasks for the day. Once this issue was resolved, Phil took a seat at his desk at the front of the classroom and watched the students work. A few minutes later, he walked around the classroom and made occasional banter with some of the students. From candy, to sports, to Nike Air Jordan shoes, students were seen smiling and laughing as they worked.

As the class progressed and students worked quietly, Phil apologized to me for “not much excitement going on.” He then spoke on the students’ return to school options and speculation currently being spoken in many circles. He said he knows many students like the current schedule as some of them are treating the at-home days as non-school days.

As class time continued, I thanked Phil and wished him a great rest of the school year. He reciprocated and wished me well. From start to finish, students worked on their assignments and Phil was there to help when needed, weaving in light-hearted comments here and there.

Extracurricular Observations

Race Against Time

This competition was the 5A High School Cross Country Regionals qualifier for the State Tournament. The location of this meet was at a middle school campus in a neighboring school district that had a wide-open field favorable to a long-distance running event. The weather on this midday Saturday afternoon was fifty degrees with calm winds and minimal clouds, resulting in a sunny day.

The field was a large, slightly sloped square area marked with a starting line and a distinctive finish line distinguished with orange cones and a blue air-filled pop-up banner with a hanging digital clock that kept official time of the race. The browning grass made the whole landscape look like the runners were running through a freshly cut wheat field. The 5k course was designed with a long straight-a-way that led to a path consisting of a couple of snaking loops in

the middle of the course. The course then resumed to its counterclockwise circular path. The competitors had to complete this route twice.

Circling the perimeter of the course one could see many teams setting-up team sites with school-colored flags, banners, and signs. Spectators, coaches, officials, and contestants were sprinkled throughout the course setting. With the girls' competition already underway, loud voices could be heard echoing throughout the overall environment. Instructions such as "keep pushing" and encouraging words like "almost there" were heard from coaches, teammates, and spectators. During this time, the competitors for the boys' race could be seen warming-up for the competition. Warm-ups consisted of stretching, jogging around the course and bursts of short sprints. Shouts of "1-2-3 team" accompanied many team warm-ups.

As soon as the girls race began to come to a close, many spectators started to dart to the finish line to catch up with their athletes. One could hear all types of conversations from performance critiques to congratulatory words. Shortly after this race concluded, music began to blare from the starting line, at which point many spectators hurried to the starting line while others scurried out to other spots on the race course to gain a great vantage point to see the race and to encourage the runners.

Teams began to accumulate at the starting line. Runners from each school stood shoulder to shoulder with runners from other schools. The music stopped and instructions were given to the runners. Once the instructions concluded, the horn sounded and the runners were off.

As thundering feet hit the flat, golden grass the runners advanced down the straight-a-way. Cheers and hollering followed the runners. Spectators and coaches were then weaving around each other to advance to other course checkpoints. "Let's go, push your teammates, and make a pass" were common verbiage expressed by many. As some runners began

to advance ahead of the herd, the once big group morphed into various pockets of runners. One runner took a significant lead and one spectator said, “that lead runner is trying to burn them out.”

Once the runners made their way back to the starting point, this signified the halfway mark. More hand clapping and comments from observers were heard such as, “one more lap” and “there you go.” Various expressions were seen in the runners ranging from smooth strides and expressionless facial features to straining cheeks and eyes. During this second lap, it was noted that many fans were cheering for all runners, no matter what school they attended.

During the last quarter mile of the race, claps and cheers began to intensify. Coaches were shouting times and distance left, fans were yelling encouraging words, and many runners were giving all they had as they galloped towards the finish line, trying to pass runners ahead of them. By now, a majority of the crowd had congregated at the finish line, staying behind the double-sided blue, four-foot tall transparent mesh barrier.

Runner after runner began to cross the finish line and head towards their teams’ site. Hugs, high fives, and positive words were witnessed while runners were catching their breath and placing hands on their hips or head. At their team site, photos were taken, hugs were shared, and sips of liquid were consumed. During this time, comments such as “great race” and “great season” resonated throughout the landscape. Also, during this time, performance times were being calculated by event officials to inform runners who qualified for the state tournament. Once times were tabbed, results were written with a black dry erase marker on the side of a white equipment trailer. After runners, coaches, and spectators saw the results, they began to leave the event site and head to the parking lot. Conversations switched from the completion of the races to food and Saturday afternoon plans.

Game on the Gridiron

This competition was an away football game for Justice High School. The location of this event was in a smaller town approximately 30 minutes away from the city. Being late October, the cool, fall air was paired with a setting sun radiating a light-orange haze on the clouds minutes before kick-off. The marching band had taken the field, playing pump-up songs such as “Crazy Train” by Ozzy Osbourne. As the clock clicked closer to 7:00p.m., fans began to trickle-in on both sides of the football field; home fans on the west side and visiting fans on the east side. While fans continued to take their seats (shoes echoing off of the grey aluminum bleachers with each step), the PA system rang out Guns N’ Roses’ “Welcome to the Jungle” as the home football team sprinted onto the field. This was capped with, “And now time for Tiger Football!” Just as quickly as the home football team appeared on the field, they retreated to the locker rooms.

Next, the announcer said it was time for the National Anthem, including a reminder for gentleman to remove their caps. The high school band then performed the anthem. Once they wrapped-up that performance, they transitioned into another song while they changed their on-field formation to make two parallel lines going north to south ending with the cheer team erecting a banner with the school logo. This formation created a running alley for the home team to stampede through. The band, cheerleaders and other members of the home school were playing, dancing, and singing while waiting for the home football team to make their grand entrance.

At this juncture, game captains from both teams (designated players to participate in the coin flip to determine who gets the football first) were escorted to the center of the field by game officials for the coin toss. Once this ceremony concluded with the home team winning the coin flip, all players retreated to their respective locker rooms. In the blink of an eye, the home team came screaming onto the field with the band belting out the school fight song. On the other side

of the field, the visiting team ran onto the turf jumping up, high fiving each other, some acknowledging their fans in the stands and verbally preparing for the game. “Let’s set the tone,” screamed one of the players.

Once the game commenced, a vast array of emotion, coaching, critiquing, and comments could be heard. Each play, good or bad, drew comments from fans in the stands, players, and coaches on the field. A few plays into the game, a coach could be heard telling a group of players after he removed his head-set, “Hey, you all are doing great. Watch the ball.” Fans could be heard saying, “Wake up ‘d’.” “Wrap him up!”

As the game continued to be a back-and-forth battle with neither team scoring in the first quarter, more of the same type of comments could be heard. “Move the chains” and “Go o-line” were repeatedly barked from the stands. When players were not on the field, coaches could be seen providing direction on what to do and how to respond to the current situation of the game as players gulped water from plastic squirt bottles. At one point, one of the player’s from Justice High School could be seen sipping on pickle juice straight from a glass jar (OC- Pickle juice is believed to combat muscle cramps as the sodium content in the liquid can help replenish electrolyte loss from athletic activity).

In the second quarter, JHS found success moving the football down the field. They eventually scored a touchdown. This resulted in jubilation from the fans in the stands and players and coaches on the sidelines. A ringing cowbell resounded from the stands while the players yelled in celebration. Coaches high-fived players while teammates could be seen celebrating the team’s current success. “We’re not going anywhere” shouted one of the JHS players. The aluminum stands were echoing voices and foot stomps during this time.

A few minutes later the home team scored a touchdown. As one could imagine, the home side burst into celebration, including the band playing the school fight song. On the JHS side,

players jogged back to their sideline and began to refocus. Fans from the JHS side yelled an assortment of comments, including remarks on the officiating and words of encouragement to the players.

When the JHS team once again had the football, they drove down the field and scored to regain the lead. Moments before the score, their fans were chanting, “Let’s go [TEAM], let’s go,” accompanied by foot stomps in unison. Coaches were getting overly excited, as having to be reminded to get back to the sideline and off the field. A couple of minutes after the score, the first half was over. The visiting team had the lead, despite being called for penalties four times. The home team was not called one time for a penalty, as pointed out by a spectator. “We are used to that,” exclaimed the fan. “This happens every time we play!”

Leaders of Cheer

This activity was a Cheerleading event at an away football game for Justice High School. The location of this event was approximately 20 miles away from the city. With this game taking place in late fall, gloves, jackets, and headwear adorned the crowd, as well as the Cheerleading team.

The Cheerleading team arrived about five minutes before kickoff. An overheard comment from a fan sitting on the Justice side indicated that the team stopped for food on the way and the service was slow, causing them to arrive late. With school being out, “Some of them needed dinner,” said the fan.

As members of the cheerleading team sat down their purses, brown bags of food and foam cups on the cold, metal bleachers, they made their way to the east sideline of the brightly lit field and began to congregate. By now, the opening kickoff commenced, and the game was underway. Cheerleaders started to make a formation but were missing some of their teammates

who were still putting their belongings on the bleachers. Minutes later as the game progressed, a few cheers and chants were performed by the cheer team.

About fourteen minutes into the game, JHS scored a touchdown. Some of the cheerleaders jumped for joy. The band from JHS did not make the trip to this game, so the cheerleaders did not have a school fight song to cheer to, making it challenging to perform their celebratory routine. This same sequence of events was observed after JHS scored a second touchdown.

Despite appearing to not have a cheer coach present to lead them (and possibly no team captain), the members of the cheer team still took their place on this sideline and cheered intermittently as the game carried on. With elements out of their control such as no school in session, no school transportation, the leaders of cheer overcame challenges still arrived to perform their sport.

Chapter IV Summary

Chapter IV presented the data on the population of the study, stories, and observations of all six career teachers who have been teaching at Justice High School for more than five years and can provide details of the school before and after extracurricular offerings were decreased. All six participants shared descriptions that were rich and thick in regards to the purpose of the study. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to keep their identities confidential. Chapter V will discuss emergent themes (categories) derived from analysis of the findings. Chapter VI will conclude the study applying the theoretical framework of Vroom's (1995) Expectancy Theory as a lens to view the themes and provide implications.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Chapter V discusses the major themes that emerged in data analysis. Themes were derived by data analysis of the interviews of six career teachers who have been at Justice High School for five or more years and provided perspectives on the site before and after many extracurricular activities were discontinued and how these events and athletic involvement influence high school students. This process consisted of transcribing the data, identifying segments, identifying units, identifying reoccurring regularities, coding the data, assigning the data into categories, and developing themes. Additionally, data have been analyzed from classroom and extracurricular observations and district documents. The steps of data analysis were more completely described in Chapter III. The data from observations not only helped to provide rich descriptions of students' experiences, it, according to Merriam (2009), also provided knowledge of the context and is a helpful strategy for understanding the phenomena. From the analysis of the data, five themes emerged. These themes are incentive, motivation, involvement, opportunities, rewards.

Figures 2 and 3 organize the responses of the participants and classroom and extracurricular observations, respectively. On Figure 2, the interview questions are color coded based on how they coincide with the study's research questions. Red represents the first research

question, green represents the second research question, and blue represents the third research question. This strategy helped me to organize the findings of the study (the fourth research question is on the theoretical framework). For both Figures 2 and 3, I color coded the themes in relation to the Theoretical Framework, which will be discussed in Chapter VI. Orange represents expectancy, yellow represents instrumentality, and grey represents valence.

Figure 2

Coding of Participant Responses

	Chris F.	Susan B.	Cindy S.	Emily S.	Ken A.	Phil A.	Category (Theme)
Why did you choose teaching?	Calling	Calling	God's choice	Family	Family	Family	Calling and family
How long have you taught?	Around 20 years	Over 5 years	Over 30 years	Over 20 years	Over 20 years	Over 30 years	Over 20 years
What is your perception of reduction of athletic opportunities?	Athletic opport. are motivators; admin. costs	Athletic opport. provide students buy-in; monetary reasons	EC opport. are good for students	Athletic opportunities are incentives	Affects urban area kids	Finances	Motivator/ Incentive; finances
How has this change influenced students in the classroom?	Hard to say due to the pandemic	Reduction too away pieces that interested them	Some for the better, some the same	Loss on an incentive, kids not as motivated	For some, athletics the only reason they attended school	Kids would rather work	Loss of an incentive, interest
What influence has the reduction had on the school's culture and climate?	Hurt intrinsic motivation	More influence put on the two big sports	Lack of electives	Hurt student motivation	Hurt teacher quality	Fan apathy, low fan attendance	Negative effects on culture and climate
What is your perception of the influence of athletic	Direct correlation between participation and grades	Gets students into college	Sports can serve as a positive influences on students	Sports prepare students for the future	Provide kids an opportunity	Kids don't see the big picture	Positive on students

opportunities for students?							
What changes would you make to opportunities for extracurr. participation?	Solicit student feedback on their interests	Promptly open up sports, generate interest before HS	Academics first	Make school more enticing, get the right programs	In school athletics	Make participation mandatory to provide new experiences	Student centered
What is your perception of the value of extracurr. opportunities?	Value is enormous, gives students opportunity to be a part of something bigger than themselves	Gives students opportunity to see what they like	An incentive, motivator	Gets students involved	Creates involvement	Immeasurable motivation for participating	Involvement motivator
What are the challenges related to providing extracurr. opportunities?	Resources	Partnerships, getting students involved at an earlier age	Low participation and interest	Transportation	Number of coaches	Finances	Resources
Is there anything you would like to add?	Provide more opportunities	I struggle with not adding back the dropped sports	No	Provide the opportunities	No	Support to all	Provide opportunities

Figure 3

Coding of Classroom and Extracurricular Observations

	Chris F.	Susan B.	Cindy S.	Emily S.	Ken A.	Phil A.	Category (Theme)
Classroom Observations	Importance of lesson, planning for the future; extracurricular and vo-tech classes; students' questions answered	Opportunity for make-up work; student questions answered and verbal praise given	Verbal push to student; pushed students to figure work out step by step; verbal praise	Revisit of student expectations on work	Class time for individual work, needs	Individual work; light-hearted atmosphere	Student-centered classrooms; emphasis on completing work
	Cross Country Meet		Football Game		Cheerleading		
Extracurricular Activities	Motivation, vocal support from teams, coaches and fans; sportsmanship; push to do best		Encouragement, motivation, coaching, support; celebration of success from team, coaches, and fans; adversity		Disjointed, perseverance to perform		Motivation, support, perseverance

Themes

Incentive

One theme discussed by numerous teachers and reoccurred in the data was incentive. The data revealed many teachers mentioning extracurricular activities serve as an incentive for students to attend school and to keep their grades up. “Most of them put in the effort,” said Susan Bond. “[B]ut a lot of them will focus more if they are in a sport- the no pass, no play.” During a classroom observation, Susan provided students an in-class opportunity for students to make-up missing work to help their grade improve. This allocated school time accentuated the

importance of helping students work towards keeping their grades up. Susan realized students often need assistance keeping up with missing assignments and her efforts emphasized the importance of incentivizing students to do their work.

Ken Allen shared a similar outlook. He stated that he feels there is a percentage of the student body that attends school only for participation in activities. If their activity is taken away, “[T]here’re more likely to struggle academically and or drop out of school,” Ken said. During an observation with his students, Ken spent the last part of class time circulating the classroom to have brief individual student conversations about missing class work and taking questions on the current assignment. This mirrors Susan’s intentional use of class time to assist students with missing work.

Emily Sims stated, “In the classroom, [sports] is an incentive for them. It [makes] them want to learn, to want to do better in the classroom, to study.” Chris Fannigan explained that athletic opportunities provide an incentive for students that “pushes them toward graduation after high school for four years.” He added, “There has to be something other than Math, Science, English and History.” Cindy Smith also added that extracurricular opportunities, she perceives, is an incentive to offer the students. Phil Arthur expressed students are tempted to work jobs while they attend high school. Sports can serve as an incentive to stay because they provide a forum to “express themselves through athletics” and find “acknowledgement, acceptance, and purpose” through sports participation, Phil stated. While observing Phil’s class, he spent time conversing with students if they had information on students who have missed a few school days during the past couple of weeks. He had additional side conversations that were light-hearted and made students smile and apply themselves during his class.

Motivation

Another theme found in the data was motivation. When activities were decreased, the motivators or “carrots” were taken away for some students, Chris Fannigan shared. He added, “You know, carrots are motivators, no matter how big or small.” Students display intrinsic motivation when they participate in a program of their liking. They have something to “call theirs and they take ownership of it,” he added. Chris fostered student motivation in the classroom by encouraging students to make sure their class course schedule is correct for next school year. His question and answer part of class allowed students to become motivated and invested in their efforts for meeting minimum graduate requirements.

Susan Bond shared details about the loss of motivation displayed by many students when the extracurricular activity of JROTC was dropped. She explained that most students involved with JROTC put in the effort when the program was offered. When it was cut, it took away “the pieces that interested them.” “It gave them a reason to dress up and represent their school,” Susan shared.

Cindy Smith provided another perspective of motivation. Her example of motivation comes in the form of coaches motivating their students to complete academic tasks. “I’ve had students in class from the football team and basketball team. I would talk to their coaches when they weren’t doing what they were supposed to in class.” Cindy explained that involving coaches had a “positive impact” on students to motivate them to do the right thing in the classroom. While observing a class, Cindy was a constant promoter of motivation. Frequent words of encouragement such as, “C’mon, I know you know this” and “Can you see it now” filled the classroom while going over problems on the board. Students were pushed to do the work and to try the problems first on their own. If they were still stuck on a problem, they were expected to consult their notes. If they still had trouble, they could ask the teacher for one-one-one assistance.

This method appeared to work as students were motivated to attempt the work on their own as they knew they had a safety-net with their teacher if they needed it.

Emily Sims, when responding to her perception of the reduction in athletic opportunities, said students are not as motivated as a result. “They’re not as committed. At the end of the day it hurts,” she said. When discussing how the reductions are influencing students in the classroom, she said, “It’s taking away from them. It’s taking away from our students in every way possible. It’s a motivator for them. A great outlet.” While visiting her classroom, Emily shared a lecture that embedded motivation and the importance of being timely when completing assignments. This was in response to many students not having their google presentation ready that day. She said she would provide class time right then for students to complete their presentation. Emily told the class she would be happy to help, but students need to take it upon themselves to take deadlines seriously. Buried underneath the tone of disappointment, there was a tone of motivation for students to be timely assignment due dates.

Motivation was frequently observed at both the cross country meet and the football game in the form of words of encouragement from coaches and spectators. Motivational directives and performance critiques were heard at both events. Phrases included “Let’s set the tone” and “Hey, you all are doing great,” were observed, and coaches giving performance critiques and hi-fiving players were frequent. Cheerleaders on the sideline provided another layer of motivational support for the football players. The cross-country event featured the phenomenon of fans cheering for most or all runners involved in the competition, not just participants from their team/school. Although cheers such as “almost there” and “keep pushing” were heard during the meet, clapping and cheering for all contestants was observed from many fans when runners reached certain course check points and as runners crossed the finish line. During the football game, fans from Justice High School chanted multiple words of encouragement and cheered

when the players made great plays, including the ringing of a cowbell signifying a celebratory play. Fans also displayed encouragement by stomping in unison on the metal bleachers paired with a “Let’s go [Team]” chant. Additionally, “Move the chains” and “Go O-line” resounded from the crowd during the game. Players were hearing words of encouragement from coaches, as well, on the sidelines between plays.

Involvement

Involvement is a theme that was frequently shared among the teachers at Justice High School. Extracurricular activities allow students to be involved with an activity that provides them with experiences that align with the concept of instrumentality. Emily Sims mentioned student involvement in extracurricular activities is valuable in keeping students from getting into trouble. “[A]nd of course if we don’t offer [activities] to them, they’re gonna leave... and they’re gonna be negative ways. You know, it keeps them from getting into things after school.” Ken Allen mentioned involvement, as well. He stated athletics offer students a chance to “be involved” and “it increases school spirit.” Chris Fannigan explained instances where athletic involvement kept students enrolled in school.

There are some kids that I’ve coached that were so focused on being a part of a ball program that they had to succeed in school. And the only way that they were going to be able to participate in the things that they loved the most was by succeeding in school. Susan Bond detailed how athletic involvement at a younger age will help students to be better prepared to compete in high school, as well as expose students to new experiences. “Build a junior high team and then work on building a high school team,” she detailed. Phil Arthur, when speaking on athletic participation, stated, “There are so many life lessons and skills that emanate from that.” He mentioned attaining goals, skill building, and creating lifelong relationships with team mates as positive take-a-ways from athletic involvement.

Opportunities

Providing students opportunities and preparing them for the future is another theme displayed by the data in regards to athletic participation. Emily Sims directly mentioned athletic opportunities help prepare students for the future and “go on to the next level... athletically [and for] career purposes.”

“I think that it gives the students a chance to see what they like, aside from the curriculum,” said Susan Bond. She said this was important because students are often asked in the 8th grade, via the ICAP (Individual Career Academic Plan) what they want to be when they grow up. “But in 8th grade you’ve got to tell me what you want to, what direction you want to go when I’ve not exposed you to any opportunities to make that decision?” Susan expressed that students are currently growing up in a world of technology where “face-to-face conversation doesn’t occur that often.” Through athletics, students have the opportunity to learn self-confidence, learn to be part of a team, and develop leadership skills. Chris Fannigan expressed he feels students are afforded “an opportunity to be a part of something greater than themselves.” He detailed athletic opportunities provide the forum of the team building process, celebrating wins, crying with losses, and relationship building. Chris added the more opportunities and resources we put into kids, the more pathways students have to be able to succeed. Phil Arthur said the value of extracurricular opportunities is “immeasurable.” “The acceptance that comes with being part of a team and the purpose [of a] team goal that we’re trying to reach.” Ken Allen, over a good portion of his interview, spoke of the district and site administration striving to restore athletic opportunities that were discontinued over the last five years. The main goal is to provide opportunities to students. Ken mentioned the previous district athletic director had to make athletic cuts based on finances. Now that finances have improved, the new district athletic director “wants to give kids every opportunity possible to get involved.”

The data also showed Grand Public Schools is striving for students to have opportunities. For GPS, new district-level leadership was established in 2018 and planning for changes ranging from school feeder patterns to the allocation of resources district-wide began to take effect. Initiatives such as the long-term vision called “The Grand Pledge” and its extensions (“The New Path” and “Central Standards”) helped to facilitate these changes. The superintendent believed there was disparity between building usage, program offerings and staffing across the district, so he spearheaded the organizational modifications in order to achieve educational fairness for all. By closing some school buildings that served a small number of students and redistricting other school buildings and feeder patterns to balance school populations and certified and support personnel, the goal of achieving fairness could be attained. These changes can be seen as providing equitable opportunities for all students; for all students to have an art teacher, a physical education teacher, a music teacher, and daily access to a counselor.

Rewards

The data revealed students are motivated by being rewarded through athletic participation. Susan Bond explained that many athletes at Justice High School work for scholarships. “We have students that sign every year with various colleges,” she said. “[T]hey get the big eyes of looking at the big name schools.” Cindy Smith shared a perspective that many student athletes use athletic participation as a route to stardom. “They think they’re gonna be the next Michael Jordan or whoever the big football player is at the time,” Cindy said. Phil Arthur repeated a similar outlook. “[And kids still have] aspirations or dreams that they can play college sports and...they see the glamor of Division I on TV of football, baseball, basketball, wrestling, track and they aspire to that, so that has been a positive.” Chris Fannigan mentioned how the recent merger of Justice High School and another high school affected athletics. He explained that students from the other school had high participation rates for soccer, a sport Justice HS did not

have. Consequently, soccer is returning to Justice HS. Providing soccer for the new students allows them to join a sport that they value.

Chapter V Summary

Chapter V discussed the themes that emerged from the data. The themes of incentive, motivation, involvement, opportunities, rewards were common throughout the data. Data from Grand Public Schools, Justice High School, classroom observations and observations of extracurricular events served to triangulate the data, as well.

The data from Grand Public Schools featured the recent restructuring of the district. The superintendent believed equity was lacking across the district and he felt changes needed to be made. This included closing some school buildings that were operating at a low capacity, redistricting school feeder patterns to better align student and staff numbers, and ensuring all schools have full time teachers in the areas of physical education, music and art, as well as on-site school counselors.

Justice High School's data on graduation rates and discipline events shows no trends from 2015 (when some athletic offerings were cut) to the present. As discussed, there are a few factors that may play a role in that, including a change in school leadership and the effects of "The Grand Pledge" such as the realignment of grade-levels at Justice High School (going from grades 7-12 to 9-12) and students from a neighboring closed high school coming over to JHS. Extracurricular Observations contained data that showed students experiencing motivation and support and encouragement. At both the cross country meet and football game, athletes were motivated by teammates, coaches, and spectators. Athletes also received verbal support and encouragement from teammates, coaches, and spectators, as well.

In Chapter VI, answers to research questions will be presented from data analysis, as well as a discussion section to explain the findings through Vroom's framework and application to the

pertinent literature. Lastly, implications for practice, policy, theory and future research will be shared.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter VI provides the findings of this study. First, research questions on the influence athletic involvement has on high school students will be answered. Then, a discussion section will report the findings of the study through the lens of Vroom's Expectancy Theory, as well as compare these findings with previous findings in the literature. Chapter VI concludes with describing implications for practice, policy and theory, and making recommendations for future research based on the findings in this study.

Findings

Research Question #1

The first research question was, "What are teacher perceptions regarding the influence of reductions in athletic opportunities in this school?" These participants felt that reductions in athletic opportunities in the school contributed to a loss of motivators and incentives to students. All participants indicated they believe activities are good for students, and three participants specifically said the reduction of opportunities has hurt student motivation in regards to student attendance and grades. Susan Bond mentioned, "I think we do our students a disservice by not giving them that extracurricular."

Finances were also discussed among many participants when asked their perceptions of the change in athletic offerings. Participants who shared this viewpoint felt it was related to the

district meeting budgetary needs, and a point was made that it may be beneficial for the sake of the students for the district to look at other resources to eliminate before applying cutbacks to extracurricular activities. “Basically we were told, ‘Well, this is the allotment (of athletics) you’re going to have,’” replied Ken Allen when discussing his experience dealing with athletic reductions. “If we were able to move that money elsewhere, maybe it would benefit our kids a lot better,” stated Ms. Sims.

One participant noted she believes athletics are good, but many students put athletics before academics. “I think their academics need to come first,” Ms. Smith stated. She also mentioned the reduction of athletic opportunities has had a mixed influence on her students. She said on the reduction’s influence of students in her classroom: “Some for the better. Some pretty much the same.” Ms. Smith continued that many students become too focused on becoming the next star player.

Observations of athletic activities showed these events provide students with positive experiences. These experiences come in the form of encouraging interactions with coaches, teammates, and fans. This includes vocal support, sportsmanship, push for athletes to do their best, celebration of success and dealing with adversity. It was also observed that athletic activities provide challenging situations. During the football game observation, players from Justice High School were observed being upset at the officiating. JHS had the lead at halftime, but they were called four times for penalties and the other team was not penalized one time. This was evident to a spectator, as well. “This happens every time we play!”

Research Question #2

The second research question was, “What are teacher perceptions regarding student outcomes for learning before and after reductions?” The decline of student outcomes (academic attainment and course completion) due to a loss of interest in school as a result of extracurricular

activity reductions was an emergent theme in reference to teacher perceptions regarding student outcomes for learning before and after reductions. For some students, sports are the only reason they are involved with school, Ken Allen shared. Susan Bond added, “They are just going to go into the workforce if they graduate. And if they don’t graduate, they are just going to go into the workforce. And unfortunately, I’ve had a kid flat out tell me that.” Specifically, when the “carrot” (extracurricular offerings according to Ms. Fannigan) is taken away, many students no longer felt the need to attend school. This directly affects academic attainment and course completion.

Additionally, classroom observations showed many students needing class time and encouragement to complete missing assignments. In four classrooms, teachers provided time for students to work on coursework that was not completed. This showed being in the classroom (for many students) was helpful not just for learning, but for completing assignments.

When reviewing the data from interviews, no participants shared percentages or any information to provide evidence if fewer students are completing courses as a result of reduction on extracurricular activities. Additionally, district data on Table 4 shows an inconsistent pattern of graduation rates that would provide evidence of student course completion in relation to the reduction of extracurricular opportunities. The data showed a decrease in the graduation rate from the 2014-15 school year to the 2015-16 school year (84.44% graduation rate and 80.72% graduation rate, respectively). However, the rate increased to 85.25% during the 2016-17 school year. This trend revealed the graduation rate was not directly influenced by the reduction of extracurricular offerings, although many participants perceive the conclusion that many students will lose interest in school, and in some cases not graduate, if their extracurricular activity is no longer available. Additionally, Mr. Fannigan noted many students who were affected by the loss of an activity in which they were involved still persisted and graduated. He pointed out that many

of these students were top-notch and were able to finish school despite losing their extracurricular activity.

Research Question #3

The third research question was, “What are teacher perceptions regarding student engagement before and after athletic program reductions?” The reduction of athletic programs had a negative effect on student engagement, according to the perceptions of teachers. Many teachers shared stories of decreased student engagement involving students whose activities were cut. Mr. Fannigan shared the following on a particular student:

It was like well, without this, what’s the point of the other, you know? So, they really had something to call theirs. And unfortunately in education, the diploma is theirs, but these kids looked at it as, you know, something else to call theirs and they take ownership of it.

And that was devastating for a lot of those kids.

Mr. Fannigan, along with others, described extracurricular activities as being motivators for the students. He specifically referred to these activities as carrots that kept pushing students to graduate from school. For some, if the carrot is taken away, student engagement will decrease, Mr. Fannigan alluded.

Additionally, four of the participants shared thoughts on how extracurricular activities provide experiences for students they do not receive from the school curriculum. By providing these activities to students, student engagement increases. Ms. Bond shared students learn self-confidence, how to be a part of a team and leadership skills. Mr. Arthur reiterated similar beliefs, adding respect for opponents. Ms. Sims added extracurricular activities helps students find out what they really like. Conversely, Ms. Smith shared that some students “don’t care one way or the other” regarding student engagement before and after athletic program reductions.

“[F]or the students who didn’t care one way or the other, maybe they didn’t get a chance to play that often. I’m not sure, but it had no positive impact on them at all,” she stated.

Research Question #4

The fourth research question was, “How does Vroom’s Expectancy Theory explain these findings?” Vroom’s (1995) Expectancy Theory discusses the variables of expectancy, instrumentality and valence for explaining why individuals are motivated to perform the choices they make. These variables from Vroom’s (1995) Expectancy Theory frame the findings from the research questions. A more detailed explanation is provided in the Discussion section later in the chapter.

The research questions concluded the following: loss of student motivation and incentives, loss of interest in school, and negatively affected student engagement. Motivation and incentive were shared by participants and identified in observations, which aligns with Vroom’s (1995) variable of expectancy. Participants shared examples of some students only coming to school in order to play in a sport (incentive) and other examples of students keeping their grades up during the sport season to stay eligible (motivation).

Instrumentality, as described by Vroom (1995), is one’s attitude towards attaining various consequences. Many of the participants stated they noticed a decline in student outcomes after the reduction of extracurricular activities. Susan Bond shared when extracurriculars were taken away, students lost pieces that interested them and their effort in the classroom declined. This revealed a decline in academic attainment for some students.

Vroom’s (1995) work on valence said this concept refers to affective orientations towards particular outcomes. Valence includes how one feels about extrinsic rewards. Rewards is a category discussed by participants that aligns with the variable of valence. When a student believes joining a sport or club will enhance his/her status, or something of value will be gained,

valence is displayed. Susan Bond discussed scholarships and how they are on the minds of students while they compete in a sport, and Cindy Smith shared thoughts on how she has taught some students who believe they will be the next big athletic star. Phil Arthur shared similar thoughts on how many students “see the glamor of Division I sports on TV.”

Discussion

This section will report the findings of the study. I will summarize the findings through the lens of Vroom’s (1995) Expectancy Theory. I will also compare these findings with previous findings in the literature.

One finding in the study was a decrease in student motivation. In relation to why many participants shared there was a loss of motivation and incentive with students, Vroom’s Expectancy Theory (1995) noted, “expectancy is an action-outcome association” (p. 21). The more a person believes a particular outcome will follow a particular act, the degree of expectancy will be higher, which explains why many high school students are perceived to be motivated by athletic opportunities. The opportunity to participate in athletics likely motivates students to come to school, which benefits their academic achievement. These findings align with Kaylor and Flores (2007) who found increased academic motivation from students who were involved in extracurricular school activities. Bowen and Greene (2012) shared similar findings that students who participate in athletics show positive academic performance, and Lipscomb (2006) said sports participation increases math and science achievement. Specifically, when a student is held accountable for passing grades to be eligible to participate in activities, the student likely persists in school work to achieve that reward. Therefore, the student may put in extra work (extra studying) modeling the action-outcome association of expectancy. Although findings from this study do not suggest that the elimination of these extracurricular activities influenced student

graduation rates, evidence does suggest that the quality of student experiences in school may have suffered. As Ms. Sims explained:

[Extracurriculars] are the things that are going to get our students involved in the classroom and to prepare for the future either athletically, academically, or career purposes. There are so many other things we could offer [such as] drama and debate. It's a disservice for them when we don't have the things they need.

Another finding in the study was extracurricular activities provide opportunities for students to be involved. Through Vroom's Expectancy Theory (1995), involvement and opportunities were categories shared by the participants that align with instrumentality. Instrumentality, as described by Vroom (1995), is one's attitude towards attaining various consequences. When students are presented with options to join extracurricular activities and opportunities, instrumentality is applied. Many participants shared thoughts on how athletic involvement exposes students to set goals, stay in school and prepare them for the future. Ms. Bond and Mr. Arthur shared students learn skills such as self-confidence, how to be a part of a team, leadership, and respect for opponents. In the literature, this was supported by the research. Hoffmann (2006) said athletic participation was beneficial to students, including development on life skills. Ebie (2005) reported athletic participation helps to build a strong work ethic, improve self-discipline, and increase self-esteem. Findings from this study support these understandings. Teachers described students as less enthusiastic about school. Additionally, the students who were affected by the discontinuation of JROTC, although they persisted until high school completion, did not display the "ownership" or "pride" of being able to represent their school in competitions. Because JROTC students were typically high achieving students, they were successful in school. Again, it may be that the quality, rather than the eventual outcome, of student experiences in education is primarily affected by discontinuation of activities. This finding is important because findings in

the literature suggest extracurricular activities contribute to the development of many positive attributes on students such as improved academic performance (Lipscomb, 2006), a strong work ethic (Broh, 2002), and character and resilience (Brown, 2015). Additional research could explore how the quality of educational experiences is impacted by reduction of activities.

A third finding is extracurricular activities involves valence. When students feel something of value will be gained, valence is displayed. Valence is based on how one feels about extrinsic rewards. Replies from participants shared this belief, as well. Ms. Sims and Ms. Bond shared examples of students striving to earn athletic scholarships for college. Ms. Smith described teaching many students who dream about being the next star athlete. Mr. Arthur shared, “[K]ids still have aspirations or dreams that they can play college sports... They see the glamor of Division I on tv... That has to be a positive.” Mr. Fannigan shared a story of how two talented football players from a few years ago decided they did not want to do what the new coaching staff wanted them to do and they were eventually kicked off the team. “I have no idea what happened to them. But I know that they were a part of something one minute, and it kept their grades up,” stated Mr. Fannigan. In a study conducted by Carlson et al. (2005), findings suggest that students who participated in varsity athletics were more likely to have positive lasting effects through adulthood, including postsecondary education and full time employment. What this finding suggests is that discontinuation of athletic opportunities and activities may have longer lasting influence than what findings from this study reveal.

As findings were reviewed, I noticed a repetitive subject discussed by some of the participants that I did not plan to come across when I began the study. Many shared the details on the struggles that hinder some students from participating in extracurricular activities. These include transportation and working jobs after school. According to many of the participants, these two factors contribute to students not playing a sport or joining an extracurricular activity. Mr.

Allen stated, “Well then you start running into ride issues and kids not being able to get home.” Ms. Sims shared a similar thought. She mentioned transportation and work. “A lot of our kids have to work. A lot of our kids have responsibilities. They help with the bills, too.” Mr. Arthur stated, “Kids would rather just work. I’ve seen kids quit [sports] because the minimum wage has risen and kids would just rather work. What this finding suggests is that students may experience cognitive dissonance when trying to decide whether to compete in school activities or seek work to help support needs at home. Additional research is needed to fully understand this finding.

What these findings do suggest is that teachers perceived the reduction of extracurricular programs in a negative light. Teachers emphasized the importance of extracurricular activities for student motivation and engagement in school. The extracurricular activities that were dropped (tennis, swimming, wrestling, soccer, and JROTC) affected approximately 120 students at the time they were discontinued. In addition to this number of students, participants who were also affected include other members of the school community (teachers, parents and other students) who enjoy attending competitions. These competitions provide opportunities for teachers and families to support their students and provide encouragement. The current situation at Justice High School places primary emphasis on football and basketball, sports that can include up to 60 students. Although these sports are engaging, direct participation is limited. Participants perceived that by offering a diverse set of sports, students with different talents and abilities can be included, and they can benefit from the additional advantages of belonging to a team and learning self-discipline. The finding that some students, such as the former JROTC students in this study, still persisted toward graduation was important. However, it does not minimize the fact that teachers perceived their engagement and motivation in school suffered when those activities were cancelled. The fact that graduation rates remained consistent is an important finding also.

Additional research is needed to understand the quality of experiences of these students after activities were cancelled.

Implications

The purpose of exploring teacher perceptions of the influence of reductions in athletic activities/opportunities on student outcomes and engagement in school was to investigate the insights of participants for descriptions and deep understanding. Although the findings are not generalizable, the data revealed various implications (for practice, policy, and theory), which will be presented in the following section. Recommendations for future research will follow.

Implications for Practice

This study adds to understandings in the literature by providing teacher perceptions of the influence of reduction of athletics on student performance in school. Teacher perceptions were important for this study because they experienced student performance both before and after reductions to extracurricular activities. Findings from this study also add to the literature by providing a perspective of participation in extracurricular activities during a pandemic. By providing a rich description of “how” people experience extracurricular activities, this study expands understanding of extracurricular activity participation.

Additionally, this study provided findings for educators that reiterated the practice of providing students a comprehensive educational experience to prepare them for adulthood. When reviewing the mission and vision statements for numerous school districts, including Grand Public Schools, it is common to see keywords such as equity, excellence, and well-rounded experiences to be included in district goals. Many participants in this study shared perspectives suggesting that reductions to extracurricular activities were counterproductive to the district’s mission. They stated that this district strives to provide well-rounded experiences to students, and reducing athletic offerings and elective options (platforms for additional experiences) undermines

the mission of serving students. Ms. Sims shared, “If we just focused more on our kids,” and less on “some of these trainings [district initiatives], it would benefit our kids a lot better.”

Also, athletic participation, as shared by participants, provides an array of positive experiences for students. These experiences include learning how to be a part of a team, opportunities to see what activities they like, involvement in a positive environment and away from negative influences, and skill building. Additionally, the chance to develop leadership skills and set goals are other positive attributes participants mentioned. Mr. Fannigan stated, “I know that it is the allocation of resources, putting them in the right places to give those kids the extra things in their lives that they need to also make them more successful in education.”

Implications for Policy

School leaders and policymakers are responsible for ensuring sound operational budgets in their schools. Often, budget shortfalls occur, and decisions have to be made regarding which items, programs and personnel to reduce. As mentioned in Chapter I, research has shown that extracurricular activities are often cut due to budget shortfalls (Bowen & Greene, 2012). Findings from this study support that understanding. The stories and details shared by the participants in this study will cause policymakers to reconsider some of the perceived benefits students receive from extracurricular participation before cutting programs.

Specifically, Vroom’s (1995) Expectancy Theory incorporates the concepts of *valence*, instrumentality and expectancy. These concepts explain that individuals are motivated on their perception of importance of effort, performance, and reward. If many students need athletic programs and extracurricular experiences to be the “carrots” that motivate them to attend school and to complete their work, there is a need for strong consideration of how to maintain motivation for students during times of financial shortfalls.

Implications for Theory

This theory was beneficial with providing a lens for understanding the interrelationship of choices and actions people make, the extent of their satisfaction, and the level of performance (Vroom, 1995). Although Vroom's (1995) Expectancy Theory initially described the relationship between individuals and their work, in this study, this theory was utilized to explain how high school students are motivated to participate in extracurricular activities and the phenomena of choice and satisfaction.

Six teachers who were at Justice High School when the reduction in extracurricular activities occurred were able to provide their perspectives on how the reductions affected high school students. Through data analysis of their stories, I discovered valence, instrumentality, and expectancy to be applicable when exploring teacher perceptions of the influence of reductions in athletic activities/opportunities on student outcomes and engagement in school.

After analyzing the data, five themes emerged: incentive, motivation, involvement, opportunities, rewards. Four of these themes (incentive, motivation, opportunities, and rewards) align with valence, instrumentality and expectancy. The theme of involvement, which was shared by many participants, stated student involvement with extracurricular activities motivates students on their academic outcomes and engagement in school. Consequently, the theme of involvement adds additional insight to Vroom's (1995) Expectancy Theory.

Recommendations for Future Research

Merriam (2009) concisely stated, "Basically, qualitative researchers are interested in *understanding the meaning people have constructed*, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (p. 13). My goal for this study was to explore, not generalize, the perceptions of teachers on the influence of reductions in athletic

activities/opportunities on student outcomes and engagement in school. By gathering the data through interviews, I was able to explore the phenomenon through the lens of six teachers at Justice High School. Additionally, observations and documents provided perspectives on how extracurricular activities influence students.

I propose three suggestions for future research based on the findings in this study. One is to replicate this study at another high school that has experienced a reduction in extracurricular offerings to compare findings. This would provide additional data for comparison of similarities and differences to this study.

My second suggestion would be to interview high school students to gain their perspectives on the influences of the reduction in athletic activities/opportunities on their experiences during high school. They are the ones who are directly impacted on program reductions. Their stories could provide beneficial data for further understandings regarding how reductions in athletics/activities influence their experience in high school.

My third suggestion would be to interview site administrators of a school that experienced extracurricular reductions. Their administrative perspective could provide data that helps to explore how reductions influence high school students. For this study, administrators were not included since none of them met the participant criteria of being at the site when reductions were implemented in 2015-16.

Another area for future research involves the two themes of incentive and motivation found in this study. Understanding student perspectives of incentive and motivation could provide valuable insight into how to structure school experiences in ways that enhance student learning. This study also took place during one of the most unprecedented times in education, a global pandemic. It is not clear how the pandemic influenced the findings of this study.

Additional research is needed in the post pandemic future regarding important incentives and motivations that encourage students for success.

Chapter VI Summary

This chapter discussed the research questions through the lens of Vroom's (1995) Expectancy Theory. The research questions presented in Chapter VI discussed the following: the reduction of many extracurricular activities led to a loss of motivators and incentives to students, finances played a role in the reduction of activities, a decline of student outcomes (academic attainment and course completion) resulted from cutbacks, student engagement was negatively affected, extracurricular activities served as motivators for students, and incentive and motivation, according to Vroom's (1995) Expectancy Theory, addressed why student athletes are motivated to persevere in their efforts.

Additionally, Chapter VI discussed the implications of this study and recommendations for future research. Implications for practice discussed the reduction of athletic opportunities was counterproductive to the mission of the school district as the district strives to provide well-rounded experiences. Implications for policy reviewed how school leaders often have to make budgetary decisions, which many times athletic opportunities are the first to be reduced. If athletic participation is the main reason for many students to engage and participate in school, the reduction of extracurricular activities may need to be scrutinized more closely in the future.

Lastly, this chapter provided recommendations for future research. The first recommendation is to replicate this study at another high school with similar extracurricular cutbacks to identify any similarities and differences to this study. The second suggestion would be to interview high school students to hear from those directly impacted by such reductions. The third recommendation would be to interview site administrators. My fourth recommendation

would be to examine the categories of incentive and motivation on high school students to increase student performance.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Interview Questions.

Athletic Involvement and Influences on High School Students: A Qualitative Case Study

Interview of _____ Date _____

Location _____

Can you please tell me why you chose teaching as a profession?	
How long have you been teaching, and what major changes in education have you experienced during this time?	
Just 5 years ago, this district implemented a reduction in extra-curricular athletic opportunities for students. What is your perception of this change?	
How has this change influenced students in your classroom?	
What influence, if any, has the reduction of athletic opportunities had on the culture or climate of this school?	
What is your perception of the influence of athletic opportunities for students in this school?	
What changes would you make, if any, to opportunities for extra-curricular participation for students at this school?	
What is your perception of the value, if any at all, of providing extra-curricular opportunities?	
What are the challenges related to providing extra-curricular opportunities?	
Is there anything about the reduction in athletic opportunities, or its influence on students or teaching you would like to add?	

APPENDIX B

Principal Letter

Head Principal- Justice High School

Dear Principal:

In fulfillment of required research of students in Oklahoma State University's Doctorate of Education program, I am requesting your permission to access six high school teachers at Justice High School.

During the fall of 2020 I would like to begin conducting research that will consist of data collection by means of forty-five minute audio-recorded interviews of teachers (via Zoom), observations of the student body, and document analysis. No direct interviews will be conducted with high school students. If needed I can provide a copy of my research proposal as well as a copy of my approved Institutional Review Board application.

Recruitment of teachers will consist of you providing me teacher names and emails of those who have taught at JHS for five or more years. With these names I will send out an email that explains the study and asks their consent to participate.

Potential participants will be informed the information they give in the study (such as recordings) will be private and stored anonymously. Their names will not be linked to the data in any way. Additionally, the information that they give in the study will be handled confidentially. Information will be assigned a code pseudonym. The list connecting names to this code will be kept in a locked file. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, this list will be destroyed. Participant names will not be used in any report.

I will collect information through interviews, observations, and field notes. This data will be stored on password protected technology devices only available to me. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, the code list linking names to study pseudonyms will be destroyed no later than 30 days after the completion of the study. The audio/video recording will be transcribed. The audio/video recording will be kept as part of the study records until no longer useful (approximately one year from today).

Follow-up interviews may be conducted to verify credibility. Additionally, member checks of the transcribed interviews will be sought to validate the emerging findings of those interviewed. No risks are anticipated in the participation of this research. Data gathering and analysis should be completed no later than Spring 2021.

Please let me know if you have any questions. Thank you in advance for your support.

Kevin C. Garcia

APPENDIX C

E-mail Invitation for Study Participation

Dear Public School Educator:

My name is Kevin Garcia. I am working on my dissertation at Oklahoma State University towards a doctorate in School Administration. I am currently an Assistant Principal. I have taught ten years and have served as an Assistant Principal for seven years.

As a former coach and high school athlete, I have a deep interest in the role and influences high school athletics may have on our students. The Deputy Superintendent of your district has given me access to conduct this study in the district. I am looking for public school educators to participate in this study. Your participation would include one 45 minute recorded interview, and one direct observation of your interactions with high school athletes, and one possible 45 minute follow-up interview. My goal is to collect data from public educators who work with high school athletes and witness athletes' experiences.

If you agree to be a participant with this study, your information, responses and identity will be kept confidential. If you decide to be a participant, please respond to this email and I will follow-up with dates and times that will work with your schedule. If you wish to opt out, please reply OPT OUT to this email. My email is kevin.garcia@okstate.edu and my cell is 405.234.0872.

Yours in education,

Kevin C. Garcia

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent Form

ATHLETIC INVOLVEMENT AND INFLUENCES ON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS:

A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

Background Information

You are invited to be in a research study that explores athletic involvement and influences on high school students. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study. Your participation in this research is voluntary. There is no penalty for refusal to participate, and you are free to withdraw your consent and participation in this project at any time. You can skip any questions that make you uncomfortable and can stop the interview/survey at any time.

This study is being conducted by: Kevin C. Garcia, School of Educational Studies, Oklahoma State University, under the direction of Dr. Kathy Curry, College of Education, School of Educational Studies, Oklahoma State University.

Procedures

If you agree to be in this study, your participation will consist of:

- being available for a virtual (Zoom) interview containing questions related to high school athletes, lasting approximately 45 minutes
 - being available for a possible follow-up interview, up to 45 minutes
 - being observed (up to two times) interacting with high school athletes
- With COVID-19, classroom observations (in-person observations) for this study will comply with local and state guidelines. The observer will:
- be observing at a distance greater than six feet at all times
 - wear a face mask at all times and no physical contact will be made with the participants
 - follow current mandates of the school district including taking body temperature daily and monitoring for any COVID-19 symptoms

Compensation

You will receive no payment for participating in this study.

Confidentiality

The information you give in the study (such as recordings) will be private and stored anonymously. This means that your name will not be linked to the data in any way. Only the researchers will know that you have participated in the study. The researchers will not be able to remove your data from the dataset once your participation is complete.

APPENDIX D

The information that you give in the study will be handled confidentially. Your information will be assigned a code pseudonym. The list connecting your name to this code will be kept in a locked file. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, this list will be destroyed. Your name will not be used in any report.

We will collect your information through interviews, observations, and field notes. This data will be stored on password protected technology devices only available to the researcher. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, the code list linking names to study pseudonyms will be destroyed no later than 30 days after the completion of the study. The audio/video recording will be transcribed. The audio/video recording will be kept as part of the study records until no longer useful (approximately one year from today).

Contacts and Questions

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human research participants at Oklahoma State University has reviewed and approved this study. If you have questions about the research study itself, please contact the Principal Investigator at 405-234-0872, kevin.garcia@okstate.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer or would simply like to speak with someone other than the research team about concerns regarding this study, please contact the IRB at (405) 744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu. All reports or correspondence will be kept confidential.

Statement of Consent

I have read the above information. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have my questions answered. I consent to participate in the study.

Indicate Yes or No:

I give consent to be audiotaped during this study.

Yes No

I give consent to be contacted for follow-up in this study or future similar studies:

Yes No

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX E



Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: 07/29/2020
Application Number: IRB-20-328
Proposal Title: Athletic Involvement and Influences on High School Students: A Qualitative Case Study

Principal Investigator: Kevin Garcia
Co-Investigator(s):
Faculty Adviser: Kathy Curry
Project Coordinator:
Research Assistant(s):

Processed as: Exempt
Exempt Category:

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in 45CFR46.

This study meets criteria in the Revised Common Rule, as well as, one or more of the circumstances for which continuing review is not required. As Principal Investigator of this research, you will be required to submit a status report to the IRB triennially.

The final versions of any recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are available for download from IRBManager. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be approved by the IRB. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI, adviser, other research personnel, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any unanticipated and/or adverse events to the IRB Office promptly.
4. Notify the IRB office when your research project is complete or when you are no longer affiliated with Oklahoma State University.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact the IRB Office at 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu.

Sincerely,
Oklahoma State University IRB

VITA

Kevin C. Garcia

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Dissertation: ATHLETIC INVOLVEMENT AND INFLUENCES ON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

Major Field: School Administration

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Education in School Administration at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in December, 2021.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Education in Education Administration at University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond, Oklahoma in 2009.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts in English at University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska in 2001.

Experience:

Interim Principal at Heronville Elementary, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 2021.

Assistant Principal at César Chávez Elementary, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 2020.

Manager of Certified Personnel (Human Resources), Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 2019.

Assistant Principal at C. Haskell Elementary, Edmond, Oklahoma, 2016-2019.