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## Teacher Participation in Extracurricular Activities: The Effect on School Culture

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Teacher Participation in Extracurricular Activities: The Effect on School Culture

by

Mikayla Hensch

A capstone thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Masters of Arts in Teaching.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

#### Introduction

“What is the culture of our high school?” This is the question I posed to my yearbook students during my first year of teaching. As the new yearbook advisor, I was tasked with preserving the year and its culture, but first I needed to understand it. I wanted my students to help me to do so. There are many factors that contribute to a school culture as my students and I discussed after I asked that question. Administration, teachers, students, and the community all contribute to a school’s culture as do traditions, school pride, student attitudes, and involvement in extracurricular activities. I quickly realized in our discussion that I, as a teacher who spoke with students every day, had a huge opportunity to affect my school’s culture through the relationships I built, how I taught, and what I was involved with.

I have always been a person who is involved in extracurriculars. From the time I was three until I graduated from college I was in something extra. At the end of my freshman year of college, I knew I wanted to be a teacher after what felt like a long process of soul searching. I wanted to do something that was important, I loved working with youth, and I knew my talents in connecting with people could help me in contributing to a positive school culture one day, which I knew was incredibly important. While I was excited to share my passion for reading and writing with students, I also knew right away that I wanted to be a teacher who did more than lead classes. I knew I wanted to get involved and do all that I could to positively impact a school’s culture.

Extracurriculars and fostering a positive school climate are two things that are very important to me and this is why I have chosen my research question: *How does teacher involvement in extracurricular activities affect overall school culture in high schools?*

This chapter focuses on my personal journey to this research question. I explain why this topic is important to me and relevant to what I do. I then briefly define terminology necessary to the study and the rest of the thesis. Next, I explain the purpose and present the rationale for the importance of the specific research areas of the study. Finally, the chapter ends with a brief look at what is to come in the chapters that follow.

### **My Journey**

Growing up I was involved in many things. I played sports, played instruments, joined Girl Scouts, and was involved in church groups. By the time I got to high school, I was in so many activities that some weeks I had club meetings before school every day and sports practices after school every day. My days were thoroughly bookmarked with extracurriculars and I loved it. I played soccer, was a member of the track and field team, played the french horn, and was in student council, National Honors Society, yearbook, and link crew. In these different groups, I met many different people, learned valuable skills, and grew both mentally and physically. Everything I did, from student council to soccer, helped me find my path in life and has led to my research question.

By the time I entered college, I knew that I could not do as much as I did in high school and still maintain a job and keep my grades up. I had matured enough to know that I would not have the time to do it all. Still, my parents urged me to be involved in

something. They urged me to try a sport and ensured me that joining something would help me to meet new people and improve my overall college experience.

They were right. I joined the track and field team right away and in my sophomore year started a three-year term as a new student mentor where I worked with a small group of new freshmen to help them integrate into the campus.

During my freshman year, I quickly realized that my college had a split school culture. There were two distinct groups: those who participated in organized sports through the university and those who did not. I often felt like the two groups functioned so independently that there were two colleges within my campus. I made it my personal mission to help bridge this gap, strengthening the overall school culture. When I served as a new student mentor, I was one of four student-athletes in a cohort of forty people. I wanted both athletes and non-athletes alike to see that we had more in common than what separated us. I spoke often about the divide I noticed and tried my best to show both subsets of the school culture the similarities we all shared. This was the first time I was in a school that was so separated and my experience trying to make things better was one of the driving factors on why school culture and doing my part to create and maintain a positive one is so important to me. This experience was also a huge driving factor that led to my research question.

### **Professional Career**

When I arrived for the interview that would lead to my first full-time teaching job, I was ready to market myself. I had been told countless times that expressing interest in advising activities and coaching sports would make me more marketable to a district. I

still remember the look on my soon-to-be-principal's face when I told him that directly after our interview I was driving to a track meet of the high school team that I coached. I could tell he was excited that I was involved in extracurricular activities and I knew right away that I could find ways to be involved in extracurriculars if I was hired. During my interview, my soon-to-be-principal also took some time explaining the school culture to me. He walked me through the halls during passing time to see the students and how they acted, showed me the newly built theater, and walked me out to the brand new track and field. He connected my interests and potential extracurricular involvement to something that the school could offer me. As much as he wanted to find a good teacher, I also wanted to make sure that the school would be a good fit for me.

Fast forward to the spring of my first year of teaching English, I often found myself working late, stressing out, and frankly, crying. I loved my job, but I was trying to manage my first year of teaching with coaching track and advising a yearbook that would soon be distributed to over five hundred critical teenagers and their parents. I spent many nights leaving track practice to go home to grade papers and edit yearbook pages. It was around that same time that I was approached by a fellow teacher about helping with Link Crew. Link Crew is a program that pairs upperclassmen student leaders with incoming freshmen to assist them in the transition to high school. As a new teacher, I was targeted as being involved in extracurriculars and therefore was asked to help with another program in the school. While I ended up saying no to participating in the Link Crew, it really sparked an interest in me to study teachers and their involvement with both coaching and extracurricular clubs. Why was it that some teachers were so involved in

extracurriculars and others were not? Did my late nights at track meets and constant stress from the yearbook affect my students? Did my role as a coach and as an advisor help me build meaningful relationships? These questions swirled around in my head all summer.

Even today, I cannot imagine being a teacher without being an assistant coach for the track and field team and serving as the yearbook advisor. Based on my personal experience, I do believe my extracurricular involvement has helped me to foster meaningful relationships with students and therefore positively affect the overall school culture in which I am involved in. By helping students create the yearbook, I also have the unique opportunity to record and celebrate the school culture to be remembered for years to come. My extracurricular involvement has helped me meet new staff members and allowed me to see students in new ways outside of the classroom. All of my experiences as both a student and teacher have converged and led me to my research question: *How does teacher involvement in extracurricular activities affect overall school culture in high schools?*

### **Terminology**

It is important to understand what I mean by two specific terms that I will address often in this thesis.

#### ***Extracurricular Activities***

An extracurricular activity refers to something that falls outside of the school day that students participate in. This includes sports such as cross country and football, clubs such as Gay Straight Alliance and Robotics, theater productions, and much more.

Mahoney, Cairns, and Farmer (2003) provided a bit more context to what an extracurricular activity is by defining it as having clear identifying factors. These factors include voluntary student participation, a clear structure set by one or more adult leaders, and a requirement of effort by all participants (Mahoney, Cairns & Farmer, 2003). It is the structure set by adult leaders, and who these leaders are, that will be at the forefront of this study.

### ***School Culture***

A common definition of culture is the way of life of a group of people consisting of all customs, traditions, etc. that the group partakes in (Turner, 2011). School culture encompasses a school and all that the school is, stands for, and how members of that school feel about it. While many researchers use different terminology to explain similar concepts, this study will use the term *school culture* to designate all aspects of what a school is like for all participants and how participants feel about the school in which they attend or work at.

### **Purpose and Rationale**

In this specific study, research will be done into the connection of extracurricular involvement of teachers and the impact it has on school culture as previously stated. Previous research has been done on student involvement in extracurriculars and the impact it has on student engagement and school culture which will be thoroughly discussed in Chapter Two (Fatou & Kubiszewski, 2018; Fischer & Theis, 2014; Mahoney et al., 2003; Shernoff & Vandell, 2007; St. Amand, Girard, Hiroux, & Smith, 2017). Still, little has been done on the effect teacher involvement in extracurriculars has on this same

school culture in which both students and teachers inhabit. With this existing gap, this research seeks to add information to the extensive research on extracurricular involvement and school culture by adding a new perspective.

Along with researching and studying teacher involvement in extracurricular activities, this study also seeks to build connections between teacher involvement and school culture. A positive school culture and high quality teachers are both important factors in a school functioning and helping students find success, and therefore the teacher perspective must be studied in order to fully analyze a school's culture in relation to extracurricular activities. Because school culture is important and can have positive effects on many things, all aspects that affect it need to be studied and analyzed fully. This study seeks to gather and present information about teachers who involve themselves with extracurriculars, and therefore what effect it has on the overall school culture. The teacher perspective has been noticeably missing from previous discussions on extracurricular activities affecting school culture, and this study seeks to fill in these gaps.

### **Summary**

Chapter One explained both personal and professional explanations of the importance of the question: *How does teacher involvement in extracurricular activities affect overall school culture in high schools?* I explained my own connections to this topic stemming from my educational journey and journey as a teacher. Key definitions of both extracurricular activities and school culture were presented later in the chapter and then I presented a few of the many reasons why this topic is important to all other

stakeholders including other teachers, administrators, parents, and students. The explanations in this section described why the topic of study is important and where it falls professionally within larger conversations on school culture and extracurricular involvement.

Chapter Two will dive into the intricacies of teacher involvement in extracurricular activities using research and data. Extracurricular activities, teacher involvement, and school culture will be extensively reviewed and analyzed using existing research in each field. Chapter Three will outline the research paradigm, tools, setting, participants, procedures, and overall methodology used in the study. In Chapter Four the results of the study outlined in Chapter Three will be presented and discussed thoroughly to seek insight into the research question. Chapter Five will conclude the thesis with personal reflections, learnings, and will examine the study as a whole.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Literature Review

#### Introduction

This study revolves around teacher involvement in extracurricular activities and the effect this involvement has on school culture. The purpose of this chapter is to build connections between the three topics of this literature review: extracurricular activities, teacher involvement, and school culture. By seeking data and analyzing teacher involvement in extracurricular activities, this study will attempt to measure the effect it has on school culture and study the question: *How does teacher involvement in extracurricular activities affect overall school culture in high schools?*

The first section of this chapter will analyze extracurricular activities. This section is important in understanding student participation in extracurriculars and the benefits extracurriculars pose to students. The second section of this chapter will center on teacher involvement in extracurricular activities and what drives teachers to or not to participate. The third section of this chapter will focus on school culture. School culture is what is being measured in this study and therefore it is essential to analyze what school culture is, how it is created, and the impact it can have on a school.

#### Extracurricular Activities

This section focuses on extracurricular activities from the perspective of the student. The definition of extracurricular activities will be reviewed and then the section will delve into the student benefits of participating in extracurriculars and analyze the potential positive effects of relationships students make with their coaches and advisors.

### ***Definition***

Extracurriculars include activities that occur outside of the regular school day that are sponsored by a school. This can include sports such as football and hockey, clubs such as Spanish Club and National Honors Society, and other activities such as tutoring, theater, and leadership groups. In their study of education success through extracurricular participation, Mahoney et al. (2003) claimed that extracurricular activities have specific factors: students choosing to participate, structure set by an adult leader, and the necessity that participants must put in some sort of effort.

Shernoff and Vandell (2007) stated that extracurriculars are after-school activities that fall into several categories including: sports, arts, socializing, and academic enrichment activities. While the categories provide more context into what extracurriculars can be, it is important to distinguish two things from the definition. One, while most extracurriculars occur after-school, some meet before school; two, the categories they use do not include clubs, which is an important example of an extracurricular activity.

Therefore, it is essential to remember that extracurricular activities include activities “such as mentoring students, leading student organizations, and coaching teams” where teachers or other adults “are investing their personal resources into...extra-role time behavior” (Brown & Roloff, 2001, p. 453). This personal time can occur before or after school and involve activities such as sports, clubs, leadership activities, pep squads, drill teams, theater, school publications, musical groups, and more

that students choose to participate in outside of the regular school day (Frith & Clark, 1984).

### ***Student Participation Rate***

Every three years the Minnesota Department of Education surveys students across the state on various topics related to their education (“Minnesota Student Survey Reports,” 2019). In both ninth and eleventh grade, students are asked about the activities they participate in and the frequency of which they do so. By analyzing the results of eleventh grade students, it is clear that students participate in extracurricular activities at high rates. In 2019, 49.96 percent of students claimed that they participated in sports at least one or more days a week on average. To be even more specific, 28.4 percent of that 49.96 percent claimed that they participated five or more days a week. The survey shows that in Minnesota around half of students participated in sports at least once a week on a typical week, which is a significant percentage of the student population.

While sports are often the first thing thought of for extracurricular activities, clubs also serve students in different ways (Shernoff & Vandell, 2007; St. Amand et al., 2017). In the same Minnesota state survey, 29.98% of students responded that they participated in “school sponsored activities or clubs that are not sports, such as drama, music, chess or science club” once a week on a typical week, which shows that almost a third of students in the survey participate in clubs at their schools with at least some regularity. In addition to clubs and sports, a couple of other categories show student involvement such as academic programs and leadership activities (“Minnesota Student Survey Reports,” 2019).

It is clear from this survey that students participate in different forms of extracurricular activities. It is important to note that this is a statewide survey and these numbers are not representative or the same in all districts. Still, this survey shows that students are choosing to participate in extracurriculars and therefore this study is applicable and important to schools and the students and teachers who inhabit them. Students choose to participate in these activities for many reasons, but one of which is the vast array of benefits they can acquire.

### ***Benefits***

Extracurricular activities have clear benefits to students. In a blog for parents, the National Education Association (2017) stated, “extracurricular activities can provide new dimensions for learning and development, and offer students opportunities to further pursue the subjects they enjoy” (para. 9). More overarching benefits that have been studied include: increasing education aspirations, student motivation, relationship development with peers and adults, and an increase in school engagement (Fischer & Theis, 2014; Mahoney et al., 2003; Shernoff & Vandell, 2007; St. Amand et al., 2017). Many studies have examined student participation in extracurricular activities in different aspects, which will be further discussed.

**Immediate Student Benefits.** Some benefits to extracurricular participation can produce more immediate effects. In a study of extracurricular participation on individual motivation and school attachment, Fisher and Theis (2014) studied students in Germany. Their results did not definitively prove their hypothesis that extracurricular participation positively influences individual motivation and school attachment, but their results did

show that these two categories can be positively influenced depending on the quality of said extracurriculars (Fisher & Theis, 2014). This quality aspect was further echoed in a study where students weighed in on the quality of their extracurricular participation (Shernoff & Vandell, 2007). After analyzing feedback from students, Shernoff and Vandell (2007) found that students “were positively engaged and exhibited high intrinsic interest and concentrated effort particularly in sports and arts enrichment activities” (p. 899). Students reported other categories of extracurriculars lower showing that even the students themselves took quality and personal preference into account.

In another study on student participation in sports and school engagement, St. Amand, Girard, Hiroux, and Smith (2017), all teachers at the same school, noticed a sixteen-year-old boy “showed signs of disengagement” and did not ask for help, struggled with missing work, and seemed generally uninterested in school related tasks (p. 198). As a team, they worked with him and helped him become involved in extracurriculars. By the end of the study, the researchers found that he was more collaborative and his physical fitness improved. The researchers emphasized that the boy showed an increase in his relationships with peers and even made new friends (St. Amand et al., 2017). This case study shows how extracurricular involvement has the possibility to positively influence a student’s life.

**Long-term Student Benefits.** Along with more immediate effects on students, extracurricular participation benefits can also be long-lasting and produce effects later in the lives of students (Mahoney et al., 2003). In a long-term study, Mahoney et al. (2003) found that when students participated consistently in extracurriculars, positive

associations to their educational status and aspirations were linked. These long-lasting benefits provide a more overarching look at the positive aspects of extracurricular activities to specific students. It is also important to note that students also have a huge effect on overall school culture (Fatou & Kubiszewski, 2018; “Guiding Principles,” 2014, VanLone et al., 2007 ). Social and future-orientated students can positively affect a school culture, which will be further discussed in a later section of this chapter.

### ***Drawbacks***

A few issues arise when analyzing the benefits and uses of extracurricular activities in schools. The first of which has been previously mentioned, as Fisher and Theis (2014) found that the quality of extracurriculars plays a huge role in the effectiveness of the potential benefits. Factors that affect the quality of an activity in a negative way include: a lack of structure, the inability for students to socialize, the absence of challenges for students, and a lack of social support (Fisher & Theis, 2014; Shernoff & Vandell, 2007). In an activity with poor quality, which can occur in any of the ways previously listed, a student may not be receiving the benefits that they could be, if they are receiving any benefits at all.

In addition to the varying quality of extracurriculars, Frith and Clark (1984) discussed several other potential issues that arise such as students putting more effort into extracurriculars than their course work. While this can be the case, many schools have now adapted grade policies or grade point averages that students must achieve in order to participate (Frith & Clark, 1984). For example, the Minnesota State High School League has a policy that states that students must be “making academic progress toward

graduation,” in order to be eligible to participate in high school activities (“MSHSL Eligibility Brochure,” 2019). There can be issues with using this participation as incentive for academic performance, but in a system whose job is to “create a learning environment in which students can grow into well-rounded citizens” it is essential that students are practicing all skills including those both taught at school and in extracurricular activities (Frith & Clark, 1984, p. 327). One cannot occur without the other, which the Minnesota State High School League recognized in their mission statement and beliefs by stating that “academic priorities must come before participation in athletic or fine arts activities,” and participation in an extracurricular activity is a privilege (“About the Minnesota,” n.d., para. 6).

### ***Teacher Connections***

A key aspect that has not yet been discussed is the impact to students based on who leads the extracurriculars that they participate in. In the Minnesota Department of Education survey previously mentioned, there was a question that asked students about the extra activities they participated in and the frequency in which they develop trusting relationships with adults. In that survey, 89.7 percent of students responded that sometimes to very often they develop relationships with adults while participating in activities (“Minnesota Student Survey Reports,” 2019). Similarly, in the research of Mahoney et al. (2003), a benefit listed to extracurricular activities was the opportunity “to form positive relationships with peers and adults outside of the classroom” (p. 410). In addition to these two studies, a third study from Shernoff and Vandell (2007) found that students were more motivated in activities where adults were present. In fact, they found

that “after-school programs can be unique environments in which adult supervision and peer interaction are offered simultaneously, a combination likely to result in peak engagement and intrinsic motivation” (p. 900). It is clear that the presence of adults can have clear positive benefits on student motivation and in forming relationships.

While it is true that not all sports, clubs, and other extracurricular activities are run by adults who are also teachers, the benefits with adults previously stated provide strong opportunities for in-school effects if the adults who run these activities are also teachers in the school a student attends. The relationships built in extracurricular activities have great potential to affect what occurs in school, and a school’s culture, which will be further discussed in the next two sections of this chapter.

### ***Summary***

This section presented the definition of extracurricular activities, provided participation rates, outlined some of the many benefits to student participation, discussed potential drawbacks to extracurriculars, and analyzed the benefits that can occur with adults in these activities. This section is essential in understanding why students do and should participate in extracurricular activities if they are able. Understanding the research on students and extracurriculars is important background information and context to have in order to better understand how teacher participation in extracurriculars relates and how students and teachers in extracurriculars work together to affect the space they inhabit. The next section will further analyze teachers in respect to extracurricular activities. It will outline the reasons behind teacher involvement and provide more information on

extracurricular activities from a new perspective before moving to what is being measured: school culture.

### **Teacher Involvement**

Building from the previous discussion of extracurricular activities from the student perspective, this section will add the teacher perspective to the conversation and literature. This section will focus primarily on teachers and the reasons behind why teachers do or do not involve themselves with extracurricular activities. The sub-sections covered include: the teacher involvement rate, why teachers are involved, connections to the hiring process, potential benefits, and potential drawbacks.

#### ***Involvement Rate***

It is difficult to find rates of extracurricular involvement in teachers which is another reason why this study is so important. Some research on the topic does exist, including the work of Whiteley and Richard (2012). In their study of teacher participation in extracurriculars and teacher preparation time, they found that fifty-eight percent of teachers surveyed led extracurricular activities (Whitely & Richard, 2012). Still, this was only one district that they focused on. Another source from 2007-2008 that compiled data on beginning teachers for the National Center for Educational Statistics website, stated that around seventeen percent of beginning teachers coached a sport and twenty-eight percent served as a club or student group advisor (“Beginning Teacher”). Together these two percentages add up to forty-five percent which is comparable to the data of Whiteley and Richard (2012).

A third source that cites comparable percentages is in the work of Spiegelman (2018). In his report of teacher income, he found that around forty-four percent of teachers earned extra money from extracurricular activities in their schools (Spiegelman, 2018). Another study found that before they became principals, around thirty-one percent of principals were first coaches or athletic directors (“Schools and Staffing Survey”). Building from the previously listed data, this study will also provide needed statistics on how many teachers involve themselves with extracurricular activities, helping to fill gaps in the existing research on extracurricular activities and its connection to school culture.

### ***Why Teachers are Involved***

There are a multitude of reasons why teachers involve themselves in extracurricular activities (Winchester, Culver, & Camire, 2011). In their study of teacher-coaches, Winchester et al. (2011) identified three different teacher-coach profiles that provide insight into the reasons why teachers may go into coaching. The three profiles they identified were “The Rookie,” someone who is new and often gets a job that includes a coaching role, “The Varsity Athlete,” someone who was highly involved in a sport and wants to continue to be involved in it, and “The Veteran,” someone who has been teaching for awhile and steps up when there is a need (Winchester et al., 2011). Each of these profiles represents different reasons why a teacher may choose to coach, which can be extended to other extracurricular activities as well. Teachers may fall into an extracurricular role as a part of their job position when hired, teachers may really like, enjoy, or have personal experience in an extracurricular activity and want to be a part of

it, and teachers may step up to fill a role “to make sure the students [have] a team” (Winchester et al., 2011, p. 225).

Beyond the already stated reasons, other reasons center around the teaching profession and wanting to provide the best learning environment and experience for students. In a survey of teachers, Whitely and Richard (2012) found that over ninety-one percent of teachers claimed that, “extra-curricular activities are important to offer at a school” (p. 10). Many teachers recognize the importance of extracurriculars and have the desire to positively impact the world, which leads to them doing all that they can to achieve that (Brown & Roloff, 2011). Similarly, Akin (2019) discussed how teachers often feel committed to an organization or school’s goals and therefore will give up personal time in order to help achieve them. This commitment directly relates to teachers doing what they can to positively impact the school culture in which they exist and work within.

In contrast to giving up personal time, other research suggests that teachers are more likely to participate in extracurriculars in the first place when they have more preparation time (Whiteley & Richard, 2012). Perhaps providing teachers with more preparation time could attract more teachers to participate in extracurricular activities.

**Extra pay.** In recent years teacher pay has become a common discussion to politicians, the news, and communities (Allegretto & Mishel, 2018). According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, the average teacher salary was \$60,483 during the 2017-2018 school year (“Estimated average annual salary,” 2018). In comparison to other professions with similar educational backgrounds, “in 2017 the teacher weekly

wage was \$1,137, \$339 or 23.0 percent less than the \$1,476 earned by other college graduates” (Allegretto & Mishel, 2018, p. 7). Beyond this weekly pay statistic, teachers made 18.7 percent lower than other professionals with the same education in 2017 (Allegretto & Mishel, 2018).

Because many teachers are seeking more money, extra pay is another reason driving teachers into coaching and advising. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, forty-four percent of teachers receive extra money for participating in coaching, advising clubs, and other extra activities within the school (Spiegelman, 2018). Teachers make an average of \$2,630 for these extra roles and activities (Spiegelman, 2018). This monetary gain is another factor to why teachers participate in extracurriculars.

**Hiring process.** During teacher interviews, a common question about a teacher’s interests beyond the classroom is asked by administrators (Tooms & Crowe, 2004; Winchester et al., 2011). Due to this, teachers can become more marketable if they “coach a team or advise a club” (“Seven Ways,” 2001, p. 6). The Council for Exceptional Children told teachers to get involved with extracurricular activities in order to see students in new ways and apply some of what is learned in extracurricular settings to the classroom (Tooms & Crowe, 2001). In the article, Tooms and Crowe (2001) stated that getting involved assisted teachers in marketing themselves and potentially finding employment.

While participating in extracurriculars can make a candidate more marketable, it is also something that administrators look at when deciding who they want to work in

their school (Tooms & Crowe, 2004). A common question asked in teacher interviews is “What activities would you like to participate in or lead that are outside of your classroom responsibilities?” (Tooms & Crowe, 2004, p. 52). Because it is a common question, it is a contributing factor to why teachers choose to involve themselves in extracurricular activities.

### ***Benefits to Teachers***

As discussed in the previous section of this chapter on extracurricular activities, the benefits to students from adult participation in extracurricular activities can also have positive effects on the adults as well. Students and adults have the ability to form new types of relationships and strengthen existing relationships when they engage in extracurricular activities (Mahoney et al., 2003; “Minnesota Student Survey Reports,” 2019; Shernoff & Vandell, 2007). While student-coach and advisor relationships can have huge positive effects on students, they can also positively impact coaches and advisors.

Student-teacher relationships play an important role in a student’s success, but also in a teacher’s ability to avoid burnout. A lack of student-teacher relationships can lead to discipline problems, which Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017) found to be one of the main factors of a teacher being motivated or not motivated to teach. In addition, because “being able to motivate students is an important dimension of the teacher’s identity,” building relationships in extracurriculars can have positive impacts to a teacher’s perception of themselves and their abilities (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017, p. 31).

In addition to bettering relationships and therefore their own ability to reach students in school, teachers can also use their connections from extracurricular activities

to promote school culture. This will be extensively discussed in the next section of this chapter, but it is important to note here that maintaining a school culture has been found to positively impact teachers as well as students (VanLone et al., 2019; Weiss, 1999).

When teachers involve themselves in extracurricular activities, they have the ability to not only positively impact students, but also positively impact the relationships they have with students, the school culture in which they work in, and their own perceptions of their abilities.

### ***Potential Drawbacks to Teacher Participation***

Because teacher participation in extracurriculars can have positive effects on both students and teachers, it is something teachers may feel driven to do. Due to this participation, teachers often take on more responsibilities and have less time for other things leading to potential drawbacks. Building from this, it is important to remember that teacher burnout is an unfortunate and serious problem in education (Brown & Roloff, 2011; Friedman 1991, Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Burnout was a term first used by Freudenberger (1974) to mean when a person is worn out and often feels like they have failed due to an overuse of energy. While this term can apply to people in many situations, due to the demands of the teaching profession it also clearly applies to teachers.

Many things contribute to this phenomenon including teachers participating in extracurriculars, or as Brown and Roloff (2011) called it: “extra-role time” (p. 453). In their article, Brown and Roloff (2011) defined “extra-role time” as “teachers who take on extra-role activities well into their personal evening and weekend time, such as mentoring

students, leading student organizations, and coaching teams” (p. 453). In this case, their term “extra-role time” equates to involvement in extracurricular activities.

In another study, Brown and Roloff (2001) found that teachers can become stressed from participating in extracurricular activities when they are not sticking to a strict schedule and finding balance. This lack of balance can lead to a conflict of roles in which teaching demands and the demands of extracurriculars work against each other (Figone, 1994). A similar study by Akin (2019) looked into teachers who have many responsibilities and found that oftentimes teachers are not concerned with their own inner peace, which shows when analyzing the Teaching and Learning International Survey. The survey found that the average number of hours United States teachers spend on extracurriculars is 3.6 per week (“Teaching and Learning,” 2013). These hours of extra work can lead to stress, lack of balance, and other potential negative consequences.

**Teacher Burn-out.** When teacher burn-out and stress occur due to extracurricular activities, there can be negative effects on students, teachers, and the school climate (Figone, 1994; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Potential negative effects include, but are not limited to: stress leading to lower teacher commitment rates, teacher retention leading to teachers leaving a school or even the profession, and teachers participating or taking on fewer things due to lack of time or energy (Akin, 2019; Brown & Roloff, 2011; Figone, 1994; Friedman 1991; Weiss, 1999). In addition, there can also be serious effects on students and the quality of education they receive when teachers are unable to perform both roles (teaching and coaching or advising) and give each an equal amount of interest and time (Figone, 1994). These are serious potential drawbacks to

teacher involvement in extracurricular activities and it is essential to “pay attention to both teacher stress and teacher job satisfaction because they may have serious negative or positive consequences, respectively, both for the teachers’ wellbeing and for the quality of education” therefore negatively impacting or even negating all the previous benefits of teacher involvement that were discussed previously in this section (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017, p. 16).

### ***Summary***

This section analyzed teacher involvement rates, the benefits from teachers participating in extracurriculars, the reasons behind why teachers involve themselves, and some potential drawbacks to involvement. Adding to all of this, the next section will focus on school culture, how it is created, and why having a positive school culture is important.

### **School Culture**

This section will build on the previous two sections and focus on what is being measured in the study: school culture. The topics of this section include a definition of school culture, why a positive school culture is important, how a positive school culture is created, and the potential benefits to both students and teachers.

### ***Definitions***

Because culture is such a wide-ranging term meaning all patterns, social connections, activities, and elements identifying a group, school culture then narrows that broad definition to all of which a school is, does, and stands for (Turner, 2011). School culture is a term that has been extensively studied. As such, many different terms have

been used interchangeably such as *school climate* and *school attachment* (Aldridge & Fraser, 2015; “Guiding Principles,” 2014; Hirishi, 1969). Before fully defining the way that *school culture* will be used in this thesis, it is essential to first analyze the other terms used to further understand all that *school culture* will encompass in this thesis.

**School Climate.** As noted by Johnson, Stevens, and Zvoch, (2007) school climate has many different parts to its definition. The U.S. Department of Education (2014) defined school climate as the ways in which a “school community creates and maintains a safe school campus; a supportive academic, disciplinary, and physical environment; and respectful, trusting, and caring relationships throughout the school community” (p. 5). In addition, school climate has also been used to mean the “personality of a school” (Johnson, Johnson, & Zimmerman, 1996, p. 5). Similarly, school climate has been used in studies to mean the “quality and character of school life” (Aldridge & Fraser, 2015).

**School and Student Attachment.** In addition to school climate, school attachment is also a term that has been used to encompass similar ideas. Hirschi (1969) used the term *school attachment* which “can be described as the affective bonds between students and their schools” (as cited in Fischer & Theis, 2014, p. 1778). In addition, student attachment and engagement is also a term that has been used to analyze the bonds between students and their schools (Fatou & Kubiszewski, 2018). In their study, Fatou and Kubiszewski (2018) identified three dimensions of student engagement and one of which was the affective bonds and therefore a student's perception of their school, which closely correlates with previous definitions.

**School Culture.** Because culture is such a broad term and can be used to encompass the many other terms previously stated, it will be used in this thesis (Aldridge & Fraser, 2015). School culture, therefore, encompasses a school and all that the school is, stands for, and how members of that school feel about it. This study will use the term *school culture* to designate all aspects of what a school is like for all participants and how participants feel about the school in which they attend or work at encompassing all definitions previously stated for *school climate* and *school attachment*.

### ***The Importance of Positive School Culture***

Because a positive school culture is critical to a student and their ability to be successful, the Department of Education released a guide for schools to improve and maintain exactly that (2014). In the foreword letter to the guide, the Department of Education (2014) stressed the importance of schools being safe in order for students to achieve great things as did Harding (2000) in his article on what to do to prevent violence in schools. Clearly, a positive school culture is important because a government department has spent time focusing on it and even went as far as to require states to include school culture data on school reports as passed by Congress in the Every Student Succeeds Act in 2015 (VanLone et al., 2019).

Building from this, several other studies have stressed the importance of a positive school culture. VanLone et al. (2019) stressed the importance of school culture in their guide of how to improve it and other studies have analyzed the importance of school culture in student achievement and teacher retention (Aldridge & Fraser, 2015; Johnson et al., 2016; Weiss, 1999).

### *How a Positive School Culture is Created*

Before diving into the many benefits to a positive school culture, it is important to discuss the ways in which it is created and withheld in a school. Based on guides written for schools, strong leadership teams, a schoolwide vision, systems to support staff buy in, consistent improvement of practices, tiered supports, and the encouragement of positive student behavior are some of the ways in which a positive school culture can be created and maintained (“Guiding Principles,” 2014; VanLone et al., 2019). Both of the previously cited literature also mentioned the way that a school can improve its culture is to make clear and conscious efforts to do so and to use evidence-based strategies, such as tiered supports to achieve it (“Guiding Principles,” 2014; VanLone et al., 2019). Another commonality between the guides and research was that clear and consistent rules and consequences for students were also essential in creating and maintaining a positive school culture (Johnson et al., 2016).

Another common aspect of what is needed to create a positive school culture lies within the relationships and relational trust that exists (Fatou & Kubiszewski, 2018). In a study of school climate, Adams, Ware, Miskell, and Forsyth (2016) identified and studied three norms of a school with a positive school culture. They stated that trust in students, student trust in teachers, and a student’s perception of academics were three things that are important to a school and its positive culture, highlighting the importance of relationships in creating a positive school culture.

The Minnesota Department of Education Student Survey also had an entire section on student-teacher relationships, emphasizing the importance of relationships in

promoting a positive school culture (“Minnesota Student Survey Reports,” 2019). While many of the aspects to creating and maintaining a school culture remain theoretical, there are common themes that can be pulled including relationships and a conscious effort of a school to focus on and improve the culture that exists.

### ***Positive School Culture Benefits***

While both subgroups of teachers and students work together to create a school’s culture, they also benefit from the culture if it is a positive one (“Guiding Principles,” 2014; Johnson et al., 2016; VanLone et al., 2019). The benefits to students are often at the forefront of studies involving school culture, but it is important to remember that “positive school climates lead to positive outcomes for staff, including job satisfaction and reduced stress and burnout” (VanLone et al., 2019, p. 45). Both students and teachers, among other groups, have the potential to benefit from a positive school culture.

**Benefits to Students.** There are benefits to students when they are in a school with a positive school culture. One of which is the connection between school culture and the ways in which students are engaged in their schools (Fatou & Kubiszewski, 2018). In their study, Fatou and Kubiszewski (2018) analyzed school culture and student engagement. Though their results could not produce causality between the two, they stated that there are associations between positive school climates and students being engaged, which was also stated by the Department of Education (“Guiding Principles,” 2014). When students are more engaged in their curriculum and in what a school has to offer, including extracurricular activities, there are many other benefits that can positively

impact students as was thoroughly discussed previously in the Extracurricular Activities section in this chapter. These findings are the driving factor of this study.

In addition to engagement, there can also be positive effects on a student's future orientation from a positive school culture. In a study of the two topics, Johnson et al. (2016) analyzed three topics they believed fell under school culture and the effect the three had on how a student views the future. The three topics they identified were: support in schools, clear rules and consequences, and parent involvement. They found that the presence of the three topics "provided reports of a higher future orientation" (Johnson et al., 2016, p. 1582). Based on these findings, another effect of a positive school culture is that students will have a more positive outlook of the future.

Beyond this, there are also large scale benefits to all students who are in schools with positive school cultures such as "higher motivation and improved social and behavioral outcomes for students" (VanLone et al., 2019, p. 40). Student safety is another such benefit ("Guiding Principles," 2014). Based on the well-known work of Maslow (1970), in order for people to achieve their very best, they must first have other needs met; one of which is safety. When there is a positive school culture where student safety needs are met, students will feel physically and emotionally safe and can therefore achieve more and at higher levels.

In addition to safety, there are also benefits academically to students when there is a positive school culture (VanLone et al., 2019). When students are in schools with positive school cultures, there can be positive associations with their academic performance (Goddard, Goddard, & Kim, 2015; "Guiding Principles," 2014; VanLone et

al., 2019). Because academics are at the core of the school system, this is an important benefit that cannot be ignored.

**Benefits to Teachers.** In addition to benefits to students, “a positive and healthy school climate also contributes to positive outcomes for teachers and staff” (VanLone et al., 2019). Positive school cultures can impact a teacher’s self-efficacy or their perception and judgment about their ability to teach (Aldridge & Fraser, 2015). In addition, positive school cultures can also contribute to lower teacher burn-out, which is a serious issue that was discussed in the Teacher Involvement section of this chapter (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017).

As well as self-efficacy and lower levels of teacher burn-out, teachers benefited from a positive school culture. In a study of first-year teachers, Weiss (1999) found that “first-year teachers' perceptions of school leadership and culture and teacher autonomy and discretion shape the extent of their willingness to do their best work, to commit to teaching as a career choice again, and to plan to stay in teaching” (p. 869). Because of the serious issues related to teacher burn-out analyzed in the previous Teacher Involvement section to this chapter, these potential benefits, or drawbacks if a school has a negative school culture, are important to not only students but the teachers in a school as well.

It is important to note that there is a clear lack of research in the connections between teacher involvement in extracurriculars and school culture, proving why this study is needed and adds new insight to both topics. Many studies, previously discussed in the chapter, claim that teachers both teachers and student involvement in extracurricular activities contribute to a school culture, but little research exists on

teacher involvement in extracurricular activities and how it specifically impacts a school's culture. For this reason, and the many other reasons explained in the previous two chapters studying the question: *How does teacher involvement in extracurricular activities affect overall school culture in high schools?* is essential in including and analyzing all perspectives.

### ***Summary***

This section analyzed school culture. Discussions of what it is, how it is created, and why it is important all were included in order to better understand all that the term *school culture* is and represents in a school. School culture is an important aspect to this thesis and what is being measured in the study, so it is essential that it is understood in the context of existing literature.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter provided a look at the extensive literature that exists within the three identified subtopics of this thesis: extracurricular activities, teacher involvement, and school culture. The extracurricular activities section focused on what extracurriculars are, why they are important to students, and what some of the benefits are to students who participate. The teacher involvement section centered on adding the teacher perspective to the discussion, analyzing why teachers involve themselves in extracurricular activities or do not participate. This section also discussed some of the benefits and drawbacks to teacher participation. In addition to the two sections focusing on students and teachers in extracurricular activities, the final section of this chapter analyzed school culture. The school culture section focused on a broader definition of school culture, why it is

important, how to create it, and what the benefits are to both students and teachers. The school culture section also touched on existing gaps in the field of study and why adding the perspective on teacher involvement of extracurriculars is essential in fully analyzing a school's culture.

All of these sections and discussions of existing literature work together and combine to form the research question of this thesis: *How does teacher involvement in extracurricular activities affect overall school culture in high schools?* It is important to understand all of these subtopics in order to better understand how this study and research focus fits into existing research, existing literature, and seeks to fill gaps in that same research.

The next chapter will provide more specifics into the study, methodology, and research location. Using Chapter One and Chapter Two as a framework, Chapter Three presents a specific method of study in order to seek answers to the research question: *How does teacher involvement in extracurricular activities affect overall school culture in high schools?*

## CHAPTER THREE

### Research Methods

#### Introduction

This study was developed to measure school culture with respect to teacher involvement in extracurricular activities and seek answers and insight into the research question: *How does teacher involvement in extracurricular activities affect overall school culture in high schools?*

School culture is an important aspect to a school and can have a huge effect on both the students and staff who inhabit it (“Guiding Principles,” 2014; Johnson, Pas, & Bradshaw, 2016; VanLone et al., 2019). This study was carefully designed in order to fully gauge the culture in a school in respect to teacher participation in extracurriculars from the perspective of teachers who are or are not involved in extracurriculars. This chapter outlines the study by introducing the research methods, setting, participants, tools, and procedures. After this chapter, the next will thoroughly analyze the data gained from the study before a full discussion in Chapter Five.

#### Research Paradigm and Method

The research paradigm chosen for this study was a mixed methods approach involving both quantitative and qualitative data. A mixed methods approach was chosen in order to have statistical and explanative data in order to fully explore the research question from all angles (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In order to fully gauge school culture, all teachers of the school were reached and given the opportunity to participate in

the study to get a large data set to examine for patterns. In this way, the study was quantitative.

In addition to the quantitative aspects of this study, the study also had opportunities for teacher participants to answer questions with personal responses and narratives, which made it more qualitative. This is also an essential aspect of the data collection in a mixed methods approach in order to have explanation and more thorough insight into the perspectives of the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This also allowed participants space to elaborate and explain their perspectives on a specific topic or question. A mixed methods approach was chosen in order to fully explore the research question from all angles (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

To summarize, this research method was chosen because both methods, that being quantitative and qualitative, provide different types of data, and the combination of the two provided for more thorough and robust data that could better address the research question (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Due to the combination of the data types “more insight into a problem is to be gained from mixing or integration of the quantitative and qualitative data” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 213). Because school culture is such an important aspect of a school, and teachers are also so essential to a school’s success, as much data as possible was gathered and analyzed in order to fully address the research question from all possible angles.

As such, it is also important to note that part of the methodology for this study centers around it being a case study of one specific school. All teachers surveyed are from one high school and one school district. While the study provides useful information

that can be applied to similar situations, the data represents one school and the teachers in only that school's perspectives.

### **Setting**

The setting of this study was a high school in a second-tier suburban community of the Twin Cities in Minnesota. The south-metro community of around thirty-five thousand people is diverse and full of traditions both in and out of the school setting. The specific setting of this study was the high school in the previously described community. Approximately 1,200 students attend the high school and it has been open for almost sixty years.

In the school, the student body is around sixty percent White and has a growing Latino population. Around twenty-three percent of the student body identified as Hispanic or Latino in 2019. Around thirty-three percent of students are on free and reduced lunch. In addition, ninety percent of students graduate and the vast majority claim that they care about their grades ("Minnesota Report Card," 2019). The staff is experienced and around eighty percent have advanced degrees. The student to teacher ratio is twenty to one ("Minnesota Report Card," 2019).

### **Study Participants**

The participants in this study were the teachers of the previously described high school. All teachers in the high school had the opportunity to participate in the survey as it was sent out to teachers via a high school teachers email list. At the time of the survey there were around sixty-five teachers working in the school. Thirty-eight teachers, or around sixty percent of teachers participated and submitted the survey. The teachers who

participated were diverse in terms of years teaching with twenty-one percent in their first five years, twenty-nine percent in years six through ten of teaching experience, around ten percent in years eleven through fifteen, thirteen percent in years sixteen through twenty, eighteen percent in years twenty-one through twenty-five and around eight percent had been teaching for over twenty-five years.

The survey was anonymous and there was not a way to tell some characteristics of teachers surveyed. Some overall characteristics of the teacher cohort at this high school can be shared to offer more perspective on the study participants. The staff at the high school surveyed is around ninety-four percent white, around one percent Hispanic or Latino, around three percent Asian, and around one percent two or more races (“Minnesota Report Card,” 2019). In addition, around seventy-eight percent have advanced degrees (“Minnesota Report Card,” 2019).

### **Tools**

This study was conducted using a Google Forms survey which can be viewed in Appendix A. The survey can also be accessed by going to [bit.ly/teachsurvey2020](https://bit.ly/teachsurvey2020). Because school culture is such an all encompassing term meaning all that the school is, stands for, and how members of that school feel about it, it is essential to gather as much data on the topic as possible to accurately reflect a school’s culture. As such, the survey used was sent to all the teachers within the high school using their school district emails.

A Google Form survey was selected because of the district’s familiarity and experience in using the tool. The teachers surveyed in this study have used Google Forms previously on many different occasions. The structure of a Google Form is

straightforward and simple for survey participants to complete. Google Form surveys also allow for different types of questions to be asked allowing for statistical and explanative data as previously discussed in this chapter.

As previously stated, the survey used in this study involved a mixed methods approach. The survey had a variety of question types including both Likert scale questions and short answer questions. The survey included three-parts with different types of questions about school culture, extracurricular activities, and teacher participation in extracurricular activities. To advance to the third part of the survey on teacher participation in extracurricular activities, teachers were asked a yes or no question which stated: Are you currently or have you ever been involved in extracurricular activities at this school? If teachers answered yes, they would proceed to the final section of the survey. If teachers answered no, they would end the survey and be able to submit. Some of the questions were multiple choice (Likert scale questions and regular multiple choice) and others required a short response. This survey took participants approximately ten minutes to complete. A sample copy of the teacher survey can be found in Appendix A.

### **Procedures**

The procedures for this study were simple and straightforward in order to provide participants with clear instructions. The procedures were clearly explained to teachers before participation. To carry out the research, a survey link was sent to staff via their district email. Along with the survey, staff members also received an introduction letter explaining the study and its purpose. A copy of the introduction letter can be found in

Appendix B. It is important to tell participants the purpose of the study, and that was why the introduction letter was sent to all teachers (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Staff had two weeks to complete the survey before responses were disabled, which was explained in the introduction letter. Teachers received one reminder email one week after the survey was initially sent to attempt to combat response bias.

### ***Timeline***

Teachers were sent the survey via their district emails on Monday, May 4th. They received the reminder email on Monday, May 11th, one week after the day it was sent and one week before the survey was closed. The survey was then closed on Monday, May 18th at 11:59 p.m., allowing teachers two weeks to complete the survey within their busy schedules. To close the survey, responses were disabled and anyone who tried to access it would get a message stating: “The form Teacher Survey is no longer accepting responses.”

### **Data Analysis**

Data was analyzed using a Google Sheets document generated from the surveys used in the study. This document was used to analyze the data for patterns, commonalities, and general conclusions. In addition, Google Forms, the system used to create the survey, creates graphs from responses. These graphs served as visual aids to analyze the data gathered from the surveys. These graphs and all survey results are fully explained and discussed in the next chapter of this thesis.

### **Survey Approval**

There were several institutions that I needed to earn approval from in order to conduct my survey.

### ***Institutional Review Board***

Due to the nature of the study involving human participants, I earned approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) before starting my research as it is mandated by federal regulations. Though the risk to participants was small, it was essential that I earned this approval and went through all necessary steps to protect those who participated in my study (Hamline IRB, 2019). Participants responded to the survey anonymously with no collection of emails. Participants were also told in both the Introduction Letter (See Appendix B), and on the first page of the survey (See Appendix C) that the survey was anonymous and could be stopped at any time. Participants also had access to the IRB Approved Consent form in both the Introduction Letter and on the first page of the survey.

### ***School Approval***

In addition to earning approval through my University, approval was also granted by the school in the study. First, I talked to the principal of the school and gained written approval via email. Next, I reached out to the district's Superintendent and also gained approval via email and phone call. Both parties allowed me to move forward with my study and send it to teachers in the high school.

The Superintendent identified one survey section: School Culture, which he recommended changing and in order to honor those wishes and get approval, I made the changes to my final survey. The first question of my survey had initially asked "How

would you describe the culture of this high school?” and then I had a couple of Likert Scale questions that asked about teachers feeling respected by their peers and students. The Superintendent suggested that I change the questions to be more general, so the Likert Scale questions were removed and the question: “What makes a school culture positive?” was put in place of the previous question. The Superintendent requested these changes to ensure that the principal of the school was protected and that the high school in question was not poorly referred to depending on responses. These changes did impact my study’s ability to accurately measure the school’s culture, but I was still able to garner valuable data from the changes and the rest of the survey.

### **Summary**

This chapter outlined the study and all aspects of it including the research methods, setting, participants, tools, and procedures. This chapter is essential in understanding the study before analyzing its results. To review, this study was carried out using a mixed-methods survey that was filled out by teachers in a suburban Minnesota high school with a student population of around 1,200 students. The next chapter, Chapter Four, will analyze the data and results of the study fully. Chapter Five will wrap up this capstone with a full discussion of the research question and study.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Results

#### Introduction

This study took place in a suburban high school in Minnesota. As described in the previous chapter, all teachers in the high school were emailed the survey link and given two weeks to participate if they chose to. The survey featured multiple types of questions and was organized into three main sections: School Culture, Extracurricular Activities, and Teacher Involvement in Extracurricular Activities. Within these three sections, teachers had the opportunity to answer multiple choice questions, questions using the Likert Scale, yes/no questions, and free response questions. Through the collection of this data, I sought to find the answer to the following question: *How does teacher involvement in extracurricular activities affect overall school culture in high schools?*

#### Survey Basics

At the time of the survey there were around sixty-five teachers working in the school. Thirty-eight teachers, or around sixty percent of teachers participated and submitted the survey. The survey was organized into three main sections as previously stated. To advance to the third part of the survey, teachers were asked a yes or no question which said: Are you currently or have you ever been involved in extracurricular activities at this school? If teachers answered yes, they would proceed to the final section of the survey on Teacher Involvement in Extracurricular Activities. If teachers answered no, they would end the survey and be able to submit. Of the thirty-eight teachers who took the survey, twenty-three (or around sixty percent) answered yes and therefore answered

the questions in the final section of the survey. To see the survey questions, see Appendix A.

To present the data gathered from the survey, the responses were thoroughly read and analyzed. The results will be presented and sorted into the three sections of the survey: School Culture, Extracurricular Activities, and Teacher Participation in Extracurricular Activities. Within those larger results categories, the data will be further sorted into themes that emerged from the data. The rest of this chapter will present the data from each of the three sections and theme by theme within those sections. The following chapter, Chapter Five, will analyze and draw conclusions from the data presented here.

### **School Culture**

While school culture was assessed in many places of the survey, the first part specifically focused on it in the questions asked. All teachers surveyed responded to these questions and in their responses clear themes emerged. The themes that emerged and that will be presented next are: relationships, leadership, and a clear consensus on teacher impact on a school's culture.

#### ***Relationships***

A clear majority of teachers surveyed cited relationships as a factor in what makes a school culture positive. Of the thirty-eight responses, nineteen responses centered on relationships in some capacity. Many of the responses to the question "What makes a school culture positive?" focused on relationships and communication between all members of a school community. Some of these responses used language such as, "good

relationships between teachers, between students, and between teachers and students,” and “strong positive relationships between students and school staff.” Relationships and their importance came up often throughout the survey and will be explained further in this Chapter.

### ***Leadership***

A second key theme from the School Culture section of the survey was leadership. Six surveyed teachers or around sixteen percent, mentioned administration and other school leaders as a factor leading to a positive school culture. While this study focused on teachers and students primarily, it is important to remember that all members of a school community, including leaders of that school, play a part in its culture. “Good leadership,” collaboration of students, teachers, and admin,” and “strong administration,” were just some of the responses given to fit this theme.

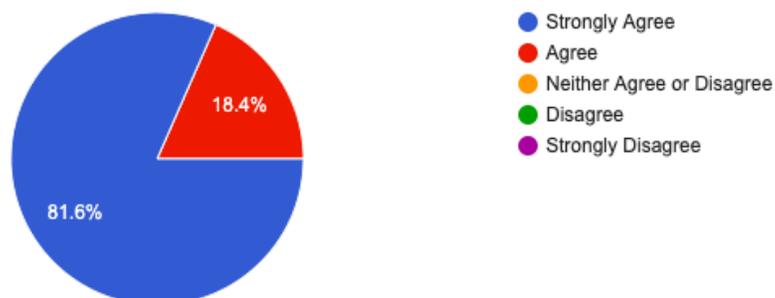
### ***Teacher Impact on a School’s Culture***

The final theme that materialized out of the first section of the survey was a clear consensus that teachers as a group impact a school’s culture. Of the thirty-eight teachers surveyed, thirty-one, or around eighty-two percent, chose Strongly Agree when responding to the statement “Teachers impact a school’s culture.” What makes the consensus even stronger is that the remaining seven chose Agree (see Figure 1 below). To build and support that, in a free response question where survey participants had the opportunity to list anything that makes a school culture positive, sixteen, or around forty percent, discussed teachers on their own. It is clear that teachers themselves know that they impact a school’s culture.

*Figure 1. Results from Question Two of School Culture Section*

## 2. Teachers impact a school's culture.

38 responses



## **Extracurricular Activities**

Building from the first section of the survey on School Culture, there were several questions that assessed extracurricular activities and teachers ability and willingness to engage in them. The questions in this section of the survey on extracurricular activities were important because all survey respondents had access to these questions. While only those who answered yes to the previously described gateway question went on to the final survey section, all teachers who took the survey had the opportunity to answer questions about why they are or are not involved and what would perhaps encourage them to get more involved (see Appendix A for the survey). The results here can be sorted into a few themes: reasons to participate, time constraints on participation, and monetary constraints on participation.

### ***Reasons to Participate***

Teachers cited similar reasons for extracurricular participation with the most common response being building relationships and connections. Building relationships

was a common theme throughout the survey, but especially used as a reason why those who are involved do what they do. Ten respondents talked about relationships in some capacity influencing their decision to participate. Some of the answers included language such as, “it’s fun to build relationships with students outside of the classroom,” and it “is another good way to connect with students.”

Another common reason to participate was a stated passion for the sport or club. Many teachers wrote about loving the sport or activity they coached or advised and that their love was a factor in their participation. Teachers wrote responses such as, “I love the sports that I coach,” and “this was an activity that I participated in when I was in high school.” An interesting note is that of the teachers who cited passion or experience, all were referencing sports and not clubs. In other words, those who stated a passion had influenced their participation were talking about sports exclusively. No one surveyed mentioned a love or passion for a club influencing their participation.

Building from relationships and passion, another theme, though not as frequently stated, was pressure to participate from outside sources such as a student need, peer teacher pressure, or administrative pressure. A few of those surveyed mention that they were “asked by a colleague,” “highly encouraged by the administration,” or “asked by administration.” One teacher also mentioned that an extracurricular role was a part of their initial employment and another teacher stated, “when I was a newer teacher, I got asked to be on all the committees and I felt like I had to say yes.” While outside pressure was not cited often as, it is important to note that some teachers felt outside pressure to

participate in extracurricular activities and were not motivated by building relationships, connections, or a personal passion (the previously discussed themes on this topic).

### ***Time Constraints on Participation***

In opposition to the reasons why teachers participate in extracurriculars, there were also several stated reasons why they did not. One of the most prominent themes of the entire data gleaned from the survey was that time constraints impacted one's ability to participate in an extracurricular activity. Over seventy-five percent of surveyed teachers cited time, and more specifically a lack thereof, as a reason prohibiting them from participation. Some of the responses surrounding time included language such as, "not enough available time," "honestly, I just don't have time," and "time restrictions." It was clear from those surveyed that not having enough time was the largest and most common factor affecting participation.

Within this larger category of time being an issue, many teachers cited some specific challenges associated with time including: family obligations, living far from the school, and teaching in general already taking too much time due to grading and planning. By far, the most common specific challenge stated was family obligations. Of the twenty nine who cited time as restraint, around half of them, or fourteen respondents, mentioned children or family obligations affecting their time and therefore ability to participate. Some of the language used by those surveyed included, "I have too much to do for my own family," "my first year teaching I had a 5 week old baby, now 4 years later, I have twins," and "I have a high school aged daughter who is very active in her own activities." It is clear that those with families especially do not have enough time to

balance their parenting responsibilities with involvement in extracurricular activities, and when pressed with a choice, family was the priority.

### ***Monetary Constraints on Participation***

Though not cited nearly as much as time as a barrier to participation, monetary compensation was also a common theme. Over twenty percent of those surveyed mentioned payment in some capacity. Some mentioned higher pay could encourage them to get more involved, while others mentioned that the pay was too low in the first place to get them involved. Some responses said, “pay is too low for the amount of hours that are required,” and “pay is always an incentive.” The responses that mentioned money made it clear that the pay was low and that higher pay could incentivize more to become involved.

What was made abundantly clear in this section of the survey was that teachers understood that participating can lead to stronger relationships, but that there were serious and important barriers that prohibited this. It was also clear that teachers have busy lives outside of school and that most do not have the adequate time to devote to extracurricular activities with their other responsibilities and home lives.

### **Teacher Participation in Extracurricular Activities**

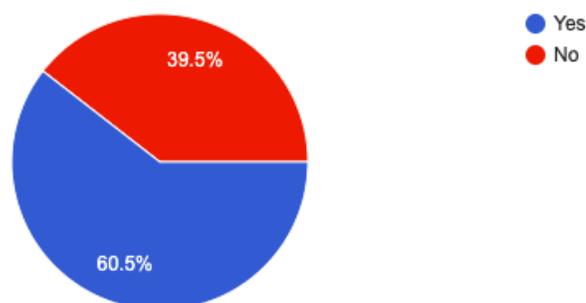
The last and final part of the survey centered on teachers who were currently involved or had been involved in extracurricular activities at the school in the study. Those who were not currently or had never been involved in extracurricular activities ended their survey participation before the final section. Therefore twenty-three of the thirty-eight participants completed this final section (see Figure 2 for a graph of the

results of the gateway question and to see how many teachers advanced to the final section). This final survey section was the longest and had many opportunities for those surveyed to explain responses and bring in person examples and stories. In all of the free response questions several repeating ideas arose including: decreased involvement in extracurricular involvement over time, recognition of the positive and negative effects of extracurricular activity participation in the classroom, and awareness of the positive and negative impacts on a school's culture.

*Figure 2. Results of the Gateway Question*

5. Are you currently or have you ever been involved in extracurricular activities at this school?

38 responses



### ***Decreased Involvement in Extracurricular Involvement Over Time***

While many teachers were explaining their extracurricular activity involvement and what roles they currently or previously held, there was a repeating pattern that represented a decrease in participation over time. Around forty-five percent of participants described a decrease in their involvement as they advanced further in their careers. Many teachers surveyed were involved in much more early in their careers before they had families. One of the ways this theme was detected was due to the past

tense verbs that were used in addition to teachers clearly stating that they were no longer involved in what they used to be. For example, one participant wrote that they “headed up the Creative Writing Club... and co-ran the GSA,” while another stated, “I was a varsity coach at one time.” These results matched with a previous section where time constraints and family life were repeatedly cited as a barrier to participation. As teachers became more experienced, their ability to be involved and therefore their involvement decreased.

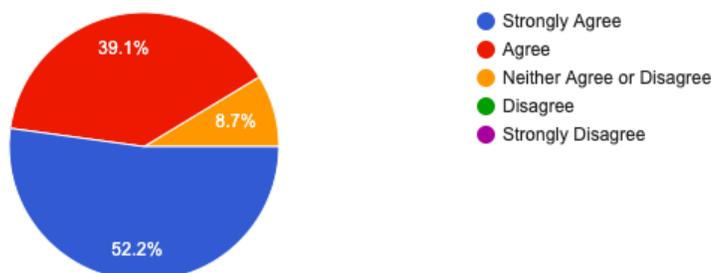
### ***Positive Effects of Extracurricular Activity Participation in the Classroom***

Later in the survey, teachers were asked about both positive and negative effects of extracurricular activity in the classroom and how that participation impacts a teachers ability to teach. When responding to the statement, “Coaching and/or advising clubs positively affects a teacher’s ability to teach in the classroom,” twelve said Strongly Agree, nine said Agree, and two selected Neither Agree or Disagree. None of the teachers selected Disagree or Strongly Disagree (see Figure 3).

*Figure 3.* Results from Question Three of Teacher Participation in Extracurricular Activities Section

3. Coaching and/or advising clubs positively affects a teacher's ability to teach in the classroom.

23 responses



Beyond the Likert Scale question, teachers were given an opportunity to further explain, where a solid theme arose. As discussed previously, relationships and the impacts they can have were mentioned by almost eighty percent of those surveyed. Those surveyed talked about seeing students in new ways out of the classroom, getting to know more students, and how furthering strong bonds can have impacts in the classroom. Many teachers wrote about the way they have used relationships they have made in a sport or club to better their classroom community or improve a student's educational experience.

One response that stood out stated, "Students respond better in my class because they know I care. This is developed often times outside of school. This also carries over to other students." This teacher made it clear that relationships made in extracurriculars have helped students know that they are cared about which helps all students. Echoing that same idea, another response said, "Students can see their teachers in more than one context. It helps them relate more as a human being and strengthen their connection. Then, if students need more help, they are more willing to engage." From these two responses and all the others with similar sentiments, teachers related first-hand

experience of how relationships built in extracurricular activities positively impacted their ability to teach in the classroom.

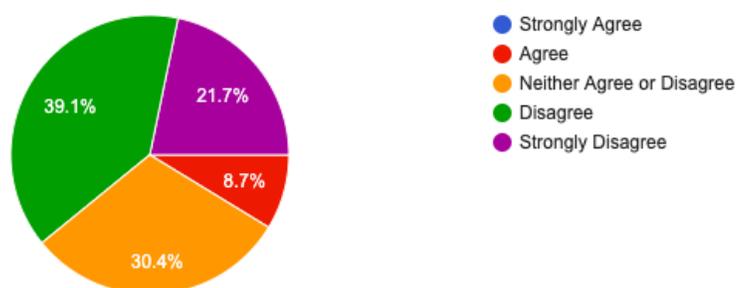
### ***Negative Effects of Extracurricular Activity Participation in the Classroom***

Building from the positive effects of extracurricular activity participation in the classroom, there was also a question about the negative effects. When responding to the statement, “Coaching and/or advising clubs negatively affects a teacher’s ability to teach in the classroom,” five said Strongly Disagree, nine said Disagree, seven stated that they Neither Agree or Disagree, and two said they Agree. This data was much more diverse than the previous section (see Figure 4).

*Figure 4.* Results from Question Five of Teacher Participation in Extracurricular Activities Section

5. Coaching and/or advising clubs negatively affects a teacher's ability to teach in the classroom.

23 responses



While some teachers who chose Strongly Disagree and Disagree echoed many of the things discussed with Figure 3, those who chose the other Likert Scale question options cited balance issues. A common response centered on extracurricular participation negatively impacting a teacher’s classroom when they are not able to

properly balance both of their roles. For example, one surveyed teacher said, “Some coaches can not find a healthy balance between teaching and coaching and often spend too much time on the latter and their professional and student learning becomes the casualty.” To echo this same idea, another teacher wrote:

“I think that coaching/advising clubs can negatively affect a teacher's ability to teach IF the teacher does not have good time management skills. If they are only dedicated to the sport or activity, the classroom lessons can get put on the back burner and may not be as great/strong of a lesson. I will admit that there are times after a late night coaching soccer, the next day my lessons at school usually aren't great.”

A third response that resounded this stated,

“I assumed that coaching would enhance my classroom teaching because of relationships blah blah, but for me that ended up being completely not the case. Once I stopped coaching, I found that I had more time to develop a more enriching curriculum as well as time for myself, which in turn led to me being better in the classroom in every facet of the job.”

It is clear that depending on the teacher's responsibilities, doing too much can negatively impact a teacher's ability to teach and can have negative impacts on students.

In addition to balance issues, another commonly stated negative impact was a reverse of the relationship theme that had been previously discussed. A few teachers noted that if a negative experience or relationship is established in an extracurricular activity, it can carry over to the classroom and cause twice the damage. Some responses

stated, “In other instances coaches aren't respected on the field because they are inexperienced, are not producing successful teams, etc. and this carries over into the classroom and is projected onto them as teachers,” and “it could negatively affect a teacher’s ability to teach in the classroom a negative relationship occurred within the sports season.” With such a high number of teachers surveyed citing relationships at some point in their responses, it must also be made clear that if those relationships are not positive then the many possible benefits of relational trust will not occur.

### ***Impacts on a School’s Culture***

Putting all of the previously discussed data together to get at the heart of this study, the final few questions of the survey focused on how and if teacher participation in extracurricular activities impacts a school’s culture. There was a clear consensus that survey participants liked when teachers were involved in extracurricular activities though participants understood that this was not possible for all teachers (see Figure 5). Many teachers went on to explain that while a good thing, they knew participation was not possible for all teachers due to time constraints and other factors. Echoing a previously discussed theme, that teachers have busy lives outside of their teaching jobs and prioritize their families.

*Figure 5.* Results from Question Seven of Teacher Participation in Extracurricular Activities Section

7. Select the most appropriate response to the following question: How do you feel about teachers coaching sports and/or advising clubs? (Feel free to provide additional commentary in the "Other" option)

23 responses



Building from this clear consensus, when asked “Do you believe teachers who are involved in extracurricular activities impact a school's culture?” one-hundred percent of the surveyed teachers said yes and almost all went on to explain that relationships and connections built in extracurricular activities can positively impact a school. Some of the key responses here stated, “being involved is another way to build relationships with students,” and “sure, any relationships you can build helps kids feel more like they belong.” Overall some of the common themes of relationships, respect, and shared experiences play an important role in extracurricular activities and their ability to impact culture.

Another common theme here was that extracurricular activities can provide ways for teachers to see students in new ways. Many teachers explained that some students are one way in the classroom, but are a different way when participating in extracurricular activities. Teachers seeing more sides of students, and students seeing more sides of a teacher can be a beneficial thing. Some responses that echoed this said, “they see the

students in a different environment and are able to shape mindsets in a different way” and “they know the students in a different environment and teachers put an emphasis on being a student and an athlete/participant.”

It is also important to note that relationships can be either positive or negative. A few teachers surveyed explained that not all teachers should participate in extracurriculars if they do not have the passion or drive to do so. Some also stated that negative experiences in a sport or club can carry over and negatively impact a school’s culture. While this is important to keep in mind, this idea was mentioned much more sparsely than positive relationships leading to positive impacts on a school’s culture.

### **Call for More Participation**

While it did not exactly fit into one of the three categories of the survey, one sentiment that kept popping up was a call for more participation for teachers to engage in extracurricular activities.

Several survey takers seemed to be asking for more participation from teachers to both lighten their own loads and strengthen the school’s community. A response on this topic stated,

“I know it is not possible for every teacher to get involved. . . but I think it is possible for every teacher to work at one game, dance, music event, etc. during the year. I have noticed that many of the teachers who are already involved. . . are the ones who take part in helping with events. It would be nice if all teachers participated at least once during the year.”

Another response that stuck out stated, “unfortunately, we do not have enough teachers that want, or can, get more involved. The ratio was much higher when I started here and you could see the connections in the hallways.” A third said, “I don’t think it is possible to all teachers to do an activity, but I think more should be involved,” and then went on to explain how new teachers are often bombarded with extra responsibilities and called for veteran teachers to help. Comparing these responses and the viewpoints of more veteran and newer teachers shows some disconnect and a juxtaposition of viewpoints, which will be further analyzed in Chapter 5.

### **Conclusion**

The previously discussed results helped to provide an answer to the research questions: *How does teacher involvement in extracurricular activities affect overall school culture in high schools?* The results were presented in an organized fashion that correlated with the three sections of the survey which were: School Culture, Extracurricular Activities, and Teacher Participation in Extracurricular Activities.

Overall, the theme of strong relationships among teachers and students contributing to school culture was the most frequently cited. There was also a clear consensus that teachers impact a school’s culture. Relationships and a passion for the activity were often cited as reasons to participate in extracurricular activities, while time constraints and monetary issues were cited as barriers to participation. The data also showed a decrease in participation over time and cited relationships as having a positive impact on a teacher’s ability to teach. Balance issues and negative relationships were also a common thread as a way that extracurricular participation can have a negative impact in

the classroom. Overall though the personal experiences shared by teachers surveyed showed a general consensus that participation in extracurricular activities is a good thing for teachers, students, and a school's culture, but is not always possible for all teachers to participate.

In this chapter I presented the results of my data collection. In Chapter Five I will discuss my major findings, their implications, and suggestions for further research.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Conclusions

#### Introduction

In this study I attempted to answer the question: *How does teacher involvement in extracurricular activities affect overall school culture in high schools?* Through a specifically designed study, survey data was collected from teachers of a high school in Minnesota. This chapter will conclude the study by presenting its major findings, implications for teachers and administrators, limitations, suggestions for further research, and end with a conclusion of the entire study and personal reflections.

#### Major Findings

In the last chapter I presented data from my survey using numbers, percentages, direct quotes, and themes that emerged. The data I collected offered many teacher perspectives on how or if involvement in extracurricular activities impacts a school's culture. There were clear patterns that arose and that will be further analyzed here.

The major finding from this study was that relationships are developed and strengthened through teacher involvement in extracurricular activities. Additionally, teachers shared that the relationships developed through participation in extracurricular activities positively impact a school's culture. These findings can be directly linked to Culturally Responsive Pedagogy which seeks to, "facilitate and support the achievement of all students. In a culturally responsive classroom, effective teaching and learning occur in a culturally supported, learner-centered context, whereby the strengths students bring to school are identified, nurtured, and utilized to promote student achievement"

(Richards, Brown, Forde, 2007, p.4). Teachers stressed the importance of seeing students in new ways and creating deeper relationships through extracurricular activities, which can be used to enhance what occurs within a school during the school day. Teachers stressed that their involvement assists them in better knowing their students and therefore teaching to each individual student. Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995), who coined the term Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, stated in an article, “culturally relevant teachers utilize students' culture as a vehicle for learning,” which is exactly what my data showed (p. 161). Teachers use extracurricular activities to better learn about their students, which positively impacts their entire schooling experience and the culture of a school through the relationships built.

While the data showed that teachers believed extracurricular involvement was an important way to strengthen relationships and school culture, many lacked the time or ability to participate. Teachers described being torn between doing what is good for students and school communities, and what is right for themselves and their families to avoid burn-out.

According to the data, there appears to be a sort of impossible circle in which teachers know that participating in extracurricular activities is a positive thing for themselves, students, and a school's culture, but they cannot always participate. My data echoed the internal battle some teachers have as they strive to be culturally responsive teachers. Ladson-Billings (1995) stated, “[teachers’] personal investment in good practice must not be overlooked” (p. 163). In other words, teachers know what is good for

students and for creating positive school cultures and their perspectives, but that investment takes time.

The data showed that younger teachers sense discrepancies between the investment of new versus more veteran teachers. There are gaps within my study that could be further addressed, such as exploring what teachers in a school engage in extracurricular activities and which do not with regards to age and years teaching.

### **Implications for Teachers and Administration**

Implications for teachers and administration can be sorted into two themes: suggestions for how to get more teachers involved in extracurricular activities and advice for how to use teacher involvement in extracurricular activities to improve school culture.

#### ***Ways to Get More Teacher Participation in Extracurricular Activities***

In analyzing survey results, it was clear that teachers see the value in extracurricular participation, but some do not have the time or ability to do so. Keeping this in mind, there are some things that could be done to improve participation including extra pay for extra involvement, fewer classroom responsibilities for additional involvement, providing opportunities for modified involvement, and special considerations made for new teachers.

**Extra Pay for Extra Involvement.** Several teachers cited extra pay as a potential incentive to participate more. Increasing pay could incentivize more teachers to take on coaching or advising roles or even help them spend more time making these programs stronger, developing important relationships with students while doing so. In a profession

where lack of adequate pay is a highly discussed topic, making sure that teachers are paid adequately for the extra work they do is important.

**Fewer Classroom Responsibilities for Additional Involvement.** In addition to or instead of extra pay, fewer classroom responsibilities could also attract more teacher participation. Fewer classes or class sections to teach could help lessen the load of teachers involved in extracurricular activities. Smaller measures could also be considered, such as eliminating a duty hour for teachers involved. Instead of having a hall rove duty or study hall duty, extracurricular involved teachers could devote extra time to getting ahead on grading and planning or spend time working on plans for their extracurricular activities. This could prove beneficial in lessening the stress on highly involved teachers.

**Modified Involvement.** Due to time constraints and other barriers to extracurricular participation, another idea is to allow modified types of involvement. All teachers cannot fully devote themselves to coaching or advising a club, but it would be easier for all teachers to find a modified way to get involved. Some examples of modified involvement include: taking tickets at an event, helping with a dress rehearsal, attending a club event or sporting event, chaperoning a school dance, etc. There are so many positive impacts that teacher involvement can have, and school's encouraging or even requiring modified involvement could provide a way to be involved even on a smaller scale. While the positive impacts would not be as great as full-time involvement, it would provide busy teachers a way to still see their students in new ways, form stronger connections, and positively impact a school's culture.

**New Teacher Considerations.** In the data gleaned from this study, several newer teachers listed a high rate of extracurricular involvement, and a few of these newer teachers even wrote about the differences between new and veteran teachers' involvement. It is important to get new teachers involved, but districts and specific schools need to be careful about how much they are requesting or asking newer teachers to do. A specific recommendation would be to limit the amount of extracurricular coaching and advising roles that new teachers can take on during their initial years of teaching. The amount of involvement could then increase as teachers become both more experienced in the classroom and in their sport or activity.

When teacher burn-out and stress occur due to extracurricular activities, there can be negative effects on students, teachers, and the school climate (Figone, 1994; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Stress on new teachers may also result in them leaving the field of teaching early. School leadership needs to be careful that they are not overloading teachers with extracurricular roles too early in their career.

### ***Ways to use Teacher Involvement to Better School Culture***

When teachers are involved in extracurriculars, the relationships developed are likely to enhance both student and teacher experiences, thereby impacting school culture at large. To explain further, I will break this into two sections: relational trust and recruiting students.

**Relational Trust.** Using the relationships built between teachers and students in extracurricular activities in a positive way can be a powerful tool in enhancing a school's culture. There are endless ways to do this, but one that I suggest is putting students in

classrooms with teachers they know from extracurricular activities, when possible. For example, if a student has a strong relationship with a football coach who is also a science teacher, putting that student in that teacher/coach's class could bring about a positive influence on both that student and the rest of the students in the class. Another way to use relationships is for teachers who do not have students in an extracurricular activity to reach out to teachers who do. For example, a teacher who is struggling to connect with a student could reach out to that student's theater director in order to better support that student and use a positive relationship to engage them. Both of these examples have the power to strengthen a school's culture because it enhances overall relationships within a school and can improve difficult relationships that can enhance entire classroom and school communities.

**Recruiting Students.** I would also suggest that teachers who are involved in extracurricular activities recruit students from their classrooms into the extracurricular activities they themselves are involved in. Extracurricular activities have clear benefits to students such as increasing educational aspirations, student motivation, relationships between peers and between peers and adults, increased in school engagement, and increased opportunities for students to pursue things that they like (Fischer & Theis, 2014; Mahoney et al., 2003; Shernoff & Vandell, 2007; St. Amand et al., 2017). Teachers can use their personal involvement and the relationships they form with students in the classroom to encourage students to get involved in extracurricular activities. Teachers recruiting students into extracurricular activities can have a positive impact on a school's culture because it helps all students to find passions, meet new people, and see what a

school has to offer. I suggest that teachers and school communities use teacher participation in extracurricular activities as a recruitment tool in encouraging students to get involved.

### **Limitations**

There were several issues that impacted my study, including COVID-19, my dual role as a teacher and researcher, response bias, and requests by leadership. These issues are important to discuss as they potentially affected study results and provide additional areas where future research can be done.

#### ***COVID-19***

The most unforeseen challenge of my study was the global pandemic of COVID-19 and its impact across both K12 school systems and higher education. The high school at the center of this study terminated in-person classes starting in March. This affected my ability to meet with administration to get my survey approved, meet with my review team, and move forward with the implementation of my survey. My meetings had to be moved to a virtual setting and much of the communication I wished to do in person was held over email, phone calls, or video calls.

In addition, I had initially planned on surveying both teachers and students in the high school, but due to COVID-19 and how difficult it would have been to gain parent approval with no in-person school, the student survey was eliminated completely. This had huge impacts on the amount of data I received and my ability to measure a school's culture as perceived by students.

### ***Dual Role as a Teacher and Researcher***

Along with my role as researcher and administrator of my survey, I am also a teacher, coach, and club advisor in the district. This had the potential to affect the teachers, who are also my coworkers, who took the survey potentially impacting survey results. Teachers could have felt a loss of anonymity due to me knowing them personally, although some could have provided more thorough answers because they knew me and had a relationship with me.

### ***Response Bias***

Response bias can almost always impact data in studies like this one. The survey I made was emailed to teachers using a preset teacher email list the district uses. Teachers then self-selected to take the survey which inevitably ended up in some teachers not taking the survey at all. This led to a response bias where “if non-respondents had responded, their responses would have substantially changed the overall results” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 157). The reminder email sent two weeks before the survey closed served to attempt to combat this phenomenon, but there was no way to effectively and ethically ensure that all teachers in the school filled out the survey. As such at the time of the survey there were around sixty-five teachers working in the school. Thirty-eight teachers, or around sixty percent of teachers participated and submitted the survey, and therefore around forty percent of teachers did not participate which definitely impacted the results. I wonder if some teachers who do not participate in extracurricular activities did not take the survey when its topic was explained in their Introduction Letter (see Appendix B).

### ***Leadership Recommendations***

Another limitation was the requirement to change survey questions requested by my district's Superintendent. The Superintendent recommended changing questions within the School Culture section in order to grant approval. The first question of my survey had initially asked "How would you describe the culture of this high school?" I also had included Likert Scale questions that asked about teachers feeling respected by their peers and students. The Superintendent suggested that I change the questions to be more general, so the Likert Scale questions were removed and the question: "What makes a school culture positive?" was put in place of the previous question. The Superintendent requested these changes to ensure that the principal of the school was protected and that the high school in question was not poorly referred to depending on responses. These suggestions may have impacted my study's ability to more deeply measure the school's culture.

### **Further Research**

Building from the limitations that were just discussed, there are several areas in which more research can be done. The areas I identified for further research are missing student and staff perspectives, investigating other schools, and further studying differences between different groups of teachers.

### ***Adding Missing Student and Staff Perspectives***

Some of the major remaining questions surrounding my survey center on the student and other staff (non-teachers) perspectives on the subject. As previously discussed due to COVID-19, students were unable to be surveyed leading to a gap in the

measurement of school culture. Also, my study focused on teachers which leaves out other important stakeholders in a school community such as paraprofessionals, administrative assistants, administration, and support staff. As such, important perspectives on a school's culture were noticeably absent (the most noticeable being students). It is difficult to measure a school's culture without all members of that school offering opinions and perspectives, and therefore there is a need for more research on teacher involvement and its effects on school culture. A replication of this study could be useful, but instead of surveying teachers, it could survey students to find out their perspectives.

### ***Investigating Other Schools***

As mentioned in Chapter Three, this study is a case study of one high school and its teachers. This leaves a lot of room to investigate other schools for similarities and differences. More research is needed with perspectives of teachers in other districts and other schools. Providing more information could strengthen, or dispute, my data adding more useful information to the conversation.

It would also be interesting to study schools who have different policies surrounding extracurricular activities. For example, there are some schools that require teachers to be involved in modified ways as was discussed as an idea in the implications section of this chapter. Some schools require teachers to sign up for events like taking tickets at a game or chaperoning a school dance. Studying schools with different levels of teacher extracurricular involvement could lead to new ideas, results, and perspectives which would be useful.

### ***Studying Differences between Different Groups of Teachers***

A third and final area where more research could be done centers on examining different groups of teachers. There was much in my data about new teachers and veteran teachers and how each group participated and felt about participation. A call for more participation from veteran teachers by new teachers also appeared in my data. There is space for more research to be done on the perceptions of new teachers and veteran teachers and how those compare and contrast. More research on which groups of teachers participate in extracurricular activities and why they do so could prove informative and useful to educational discourse.

### **Conclusion**

This study attempted to answer the question: *How does teacher involvement in extracurricular activities affect overall school culture in high schools?* This study was important because it provided new insights into a topic where little research has been done. Research has been done on students and extracurricular activities, but little exists on teachers and extracurricular activities and furthermore how their involvement impacts a school's culture.

In order to create positive school experiences for students and teachers, it is essential to study and analyze all aspects that contribute to a school's culture and therefore success. Teacher participation in extracurricular activities has the potential to positively impact a school's culture through relationships made between teachers and students, as the data showed, and that is why this study is so important to all educational stakeholders. By looking at the results of the study and analyzing the data patterns,

stakeholders in education can see teachers' perspectives and use the data to make changes in extracurricular participation if needed and better utilize the teachers who do participate. This study also provides a strong starting point for other studies with similar topics centering on extracurricular involvement and school culture.

As a teacher, coach, and club advisor, my prior experience led me to my research question and passion for this topic. One moment in particular stands out to me. In my first year of teaching I was trying to better understand the culture of the school I worked in, and asked my students: "what is the culture of our high school?" I wanted to best serve my students and first wanted to understand how the students perceived their school. After conducting my study and writing this thesis I better understand how intricate and complex that question was because so many different things contribute to a school's culture and affect it. By studies like this one that analyze new aspects of schools and their culture, we can find more ways to create positive school cultures so when the question "What is the culture of our high school?" is asked, it can be easy to answer because the school's culture is so good.

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## Appendix A

### Survey

#### **School Culture**

1. What makes a school culture positive? (Free Response)
2. Teachers impact a school's culture. (Likert Scale: Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree)

#### **Extracurricular Activities**

Extracurricular Activities include:

School sponsored sports and school sponsored clubs (such as Marching Band, GSA, Student Council, Yearbook, National Honors Society, Spanish Club, etc.)

Thank you in advance for your responses and insights.

1. How long have you been teaching? (Multiple Choice)
  - 1-5 Years
  - 6-10 Years
  - 11-15 Years
  - 16-20 Years
  - 21-25 Years
  - 25+ Years
2. If you are currently involved in extracurricular activities (coaching and/or advising clubs), describe why you are involved. (Free Response)
3. If you are not currently involved in extracurricular activities (coaching and/or advising clubs), describe why you are not involved. (Free Response)

4. Whether or not you are involved in extracurricular activities, what would encourage you to become more involved? (Free Response)

The following question is a gateway question. Your selection will determine the survey path to follow.

5. Are you currently or have you ever been involved in extracurricular activities at this school? (Yes or No)

### **Teacher Involvement in Extracurricular Activities**

Thank you in advance for your responses and insights.

1. Describe your extracurricular involvement at this school. What coaching and/or advising roles have you held and for what duration? (Free Response)
2. Based on your previously described involvement, what influenced you to coach and/or advise? Describe the reasons why you took a position as a coach or advisor. (Free Response)
3. Coaching and/or advising clubs positively affects a teacher's ability to teach in the classroom. (Likert Scale: Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree)
4. Explain your response to question 3 (include personal stories, examples, and any needed explanation): (Free Response)
5. Coaching and/or advising clubs negatively affects a teacher's ability to teach in the classroom. (Likert Scale: Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree)
6. Explain your response to question 5 (include personal stories, examples, and any needed explanation): (Free Response)

7. Select the most appropriate response to the following question: How do you feel about teachers coaching sports and/or advising clubs? (Feel free to provide additional commentary in the "Other" option)

I think all teachers should be a coach and/or advise a club.

I like when teachers coach sports and/or advise clubs, but it is not necessary or possible for all teachers.

It does not matter to me if teachers coach sports and/or advise clubs.

I do not like when teachers coach sports and/or advise clubs, but some still should if they want to.

I do not think teachers should be coaches and/or advise clubs.

Other...

8. Based on what you selected for question 7, describe and explain your selection. (Free Response)
9. Do you believe teachers who are involved in extracurricular activities impact a school's culture? Explain. (Free Response)
10. Are there any other thoughts, comments, or stories you have on teacher participation in extracurricular activities and/or how that participation affects school culture? (Free Response)

Thank you for your participation.

## Appendix B

### Survey Introduction Letter

I am emailing you because I am currently working on my Master's Degree. To complete my degree, I am doing research on teacher participation in extracurricular activities and the effect it has on school culture. To study this, I am administering a survey to all Simley teachers.

**Survey Information:** It is a three-part survey that includes different types of questions about school culture, extracurricular activities, and teacher participation in extracurricular activities. Some of the questions are multiple choice and others require a short response. Please write as much as you want to for the short response questions. I appreciate any and all insight (whether brief or extensive) you are able to provide. This survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete (survey link is below).

**Survey Purpose:** The findings of this research will provide beneficial information that will hopefully help others who are doing work on the subject and assist me in writing and publishing a final paper. The research is public scholarship and the abstract and final product will be cataloged in Hamline's Bush Library Digital Commons, a searchable electronic repository. It may be published or used in other ways, such as in conference presentations or published in research journals.

**Survey Consent and Participant Protection:** To protect participants in the study, this survey is anonymous and completely voluntary. It can be stopped at any time. There are no negative consequences for choosing not to do the survey or for stopping it once it has been started. Your email will not be collected and your identity will remain completely anonymous. If you have further questions about consenting to this study please look at the PDF attached to this email. Note that you do not have to sign this consent form and send it to me. It is just attached for your reference. By clicking "Next" on the first page of the survey your consent will be given.

**Survey Link and Timeline:** If you choose to, please complete the survey by May 18th. I will send a reminder email in one week on May 11th, and then one last reminder one day before the survey closes if needed. Click [here](#) for the Survey Link. It can also be found at [bit.ly/teachsurvey2020](https://bit.ly/teachsurvey2020)

Thank you so much for your support. I know this is a crazy time and I am extremely thankful for your insights, thoughts, and experiences that will be shared through the survey.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Mikayla Hensch

[henschm@isd199.org](mailto:henschm@isd199.org) | 651-306-7904

English Teacher and Yearbook Advisor

Assistant Track and Field Coach

Simley High School

## Appendix C

## First Page of the Survey

Responses cannot be edited

## Teacher Survey

This is a three-part survey that includes different types of questions about school culture, extracurricular activities, and teacher participation in extracurricular activities. Some of the questions are multiple choice and others require a short response. This survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

The survey is being conducted to complete a Capstone Thesis at Hamline University by Mikayla Hensch. The findings of this research will provide beneficial information that will hopefully help others who are doing work on the subject and assist the researcher in writing and publishing a final paper. The research is public scholarship and the abstract and final product will be cataloged in Hamline's Bush Library Digital Commons, a searchable electronic repository. It may be published or used in other ways, such as in conference presentations or published in research journals.

To protect participants in the study, this survey is anonymous and completely voluntary. It can be stopped at any time. There are no negative consequences for choosing not to do the survey or for stopping it once it has been started. Your email will not be collected and your identity will remain completely anonymous.

If you have further questions about consenting to this study please click this link:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Gpw\\_AZ0VLSfk01J3mu6ui25i2KDPJgcS/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Gpw_AZ0VLSfk01J3mu6ui25i2KDPJgcS/view?usp=sharing)

By clicking "Next" you are consenting to participate. Thank you for your participation.

\* Required