



FACT SHEET FOR EDUCATORS #3 - EXTRACURRICULAR SCHOOL ACTIVITIES AND EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS

Fall 2006

The Rural Youth Education Study

The Rural Youth Education Study, conducted by the Pennsylvania State University, is following students in several school districts located in rural areas across Pennsylvania. Details about the RYE Study can be found by going to the project web-site (address on back). This fact sheet uses the first wave of data collected from both 7th and 11th grade students during the 2004/2005 school year. It focuses on the relationship of student participation in extracurricular school activities to their educational aspirations.

What are the Student's Educational Aspirations?

Many of the students in both grades of the RYE study want to attend four years of college or more after they graduate from high school. In fact, 63.2% of 7th grade and 67.9% of 11th grade students aspire to this level of education. In addition, 13.8% of 7th grade students want to attend a two year technical/trade or community college, while 23% plan to attend high school or less. Nearly 20% of the 11th grade students aspire to attend a two year technical/trade or community college, and 12.5% want a high school education or less. Clearly, the majority of students in both grades plan on some type of post secondary education, which is promising for rural communities. Future waves of data will reveal whether these students have been able to achieve their educational aspirations.

RYE Study - Fact Sheets Available

The RYE Study researchers are committed to disseminating the results of the study to those who are interested and who can make use of the results.

Additional Fact Sheets can be requested by contacting RYE researchers and visiting the RYE Study Website (see back page).



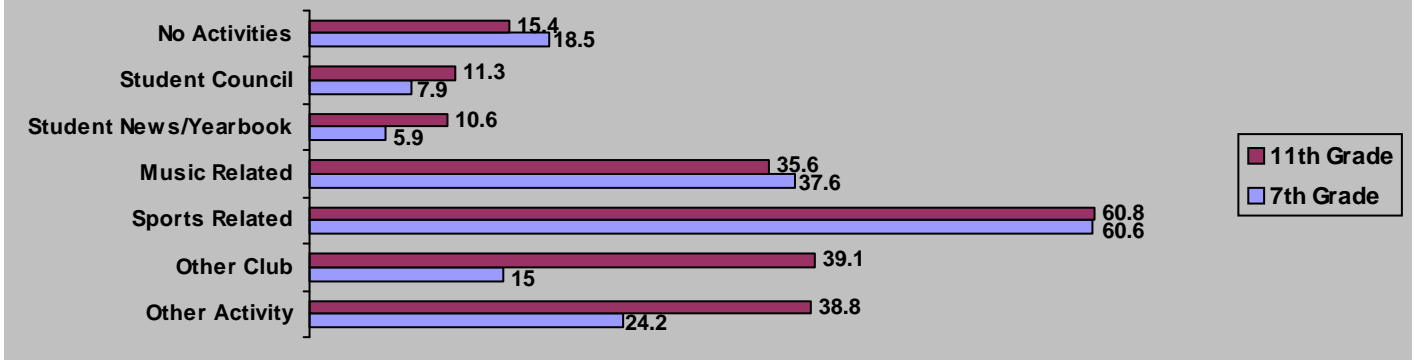
In What School Activities Do Students Participate?



Having interesting and engaging extra curricular school activities can help youth who have a predisposition towards risk taking behavior channel their energies into pro-social activities. The types of activities in which youth are involved through school sponsorship provide opportunities to become competent in an area of interest, build confidence, provide opportunity for competition, and support the development of important character traits that will help guide future behavior. In addition, involvement in pro-social activities helps youth develop skills such as goal setting and leadership, and is associated with better grades, higher educational goals, better school attendance and higher self-esteem.

The students in the RYE Study were asked if they participated in a variety of school related activities, and Figure 1 (next page) describes their participation. The majority of the students in the RYE Study participate in some activity. Participation in sports related activities is the most frequently reported, followed by music related activities. Students in the 11th grade, with the exception of music related activities, report a greater percentage of participation. This difference in the percentage of involvement between grades may reflect a difference in activities offered between middle school and high school. However it should be noted that 18.5% of the 7th grade students and 15.4% of 11th grade students do not participate in any activity.

Figure 1. Percentage of 7th and 11th grade students who participate in school activities



How Does Participation in School Activities Relate To Educational Aspirations?

Figures 2 and 3 describe the educational aspirations of both 7th and 11th grade students for those who participate in some activity and those who do not. A greater percentage of students in both grades who do not participate in extra-curricular activities aspire to a high school education or less. For both 7th and 11th grades, comparisons between each type of extracurricular school activity and educational aspirations reveal that students who participate in school activities have higher educational aspirations than those who do not participate. This is evidence that the students surveyed in the RYE Study benefit from participating in extra-curricular school activities, and that these activities are an important part of the educational experience.

Figure 2. 7th grade student educational aspirations by participation in school activities

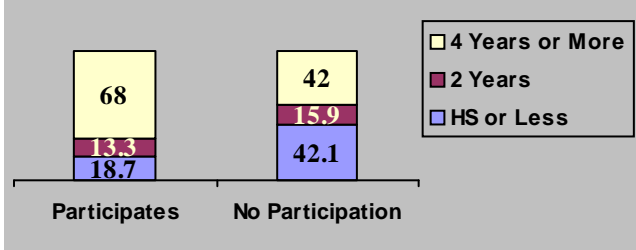
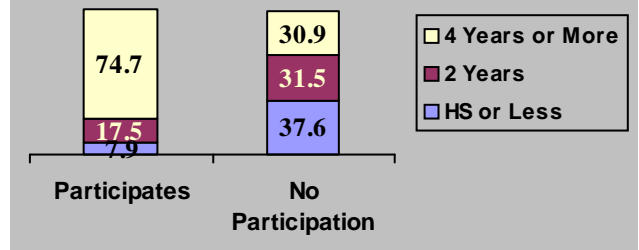


Figure 3. 11th grade student educational aspirations by participation in school activities



Non-participation in school activities may indicate that these students already are disengaging from school or that they have higher demands placed on them at home. The most frequently cited barrier for 7th grade students who do not participate is that they have other responsibilities. For 11th grade students who do not participate, the greatest percentage cited not being interested as a barrier, followed by having other responsibilities. Even though the percentage of students who do not participate in school activities is relatively small, the benefits of participation suggest that all students need to be encouraged to become involved, especially among high school students.

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More information about the RYE Study can be found at the following website:
<http://fipa.aers.psu.edu/RuralYouthEdProject.htm>

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