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High School Student Athletes: If Stress is the “Lock” is Communication the “Key”

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LS 400: Senior Capstone

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May 18, 2023

Abstract

The focus of this Capstone Project was meant to analyze the possible issues high school student-athletes may face academically as well as mentally while in school. This issue is important to note because there is an increase in students participating in sports and the offered school support should reflect the growing population. An argument that was found was the possible overlook of the mental well-being of the student-athletes if they are academically succeeding or are accomplished athletes. The primary stakeholder's perspectives chosen were current high school student-athletes because they can provide insight into the current issues that student-athletes face. Three themes emerged from an analysis of the data: 1) Providing student-athletes with tutors, study programs, and other resources for academic support. 2) Seasonal mental health and time management training for teachers. 3) The creation of an online platform where teachers and coaches can keep track of the student's grades, homework, tests, and schedules. Three action options have suggested the creation of an online platform for the streamlining of communication between teachers, coaches, and students. is argued to be the most effective way to achieve the goals of supporting high school student-athletes.

High School Student Athletes: My Testimony of What I Experienced

Growing up, I was exposed to sports from a young age, soon knowing I wanted to continue playing on teams. I began as a cheerleader when I was nine and then played softball at ten. During this time I was struggling in school, I was not completing homework, on tests and quizzes I would not finish them during the given amount of time, and I struggled with reading. Often I would stay late at practices as a way to get out of doing my homework. At a young age, just starting my learning journey I struggled to meet the expectations that were set for my peers. At the same time, I had received a diagnosis of an education delay that the school I was attending did not abide by. I was struggling to learn while my teachers watched, telling my parents I was simply not trying hard enough. Assuming the issue was how little time I spent on schoolwork, my mother pulled me out of softball. My softball career ended after two years, as I was being recruited for high school. As a low-income student, I wanted to pour my energy into my sports hoping that I would be able to attend a Catholic high school without having to pay the tuition. With softball out the window, my time was centered around school and cheerleading. I was pulled out of classes to go to Math or Reading labs where I worked one-on-one with aid, I was taken out of classes to complete tests and quizzes and I missed P.E. and music to work with teachers. The embarrassment I had felt knowing I was the only student who needed this extra help, along with the teasing my classmates had given me was nearly unbearable. Upon opening up to my cheer coach about this she reassured me that without the extra help, I would not be allowed to participate in cheerleading. After that, I worked hard to meet the requirements but never exceeded them. As I started to pick up the momentum of learning and catching up with my peers, my school decided the help I was receiving was not necessary. I was left to my own devices in sixth grade where everything got more intense. I had late nights where I did not sleep

until two in the morning trying to understand Spanish, attempting Math problems, and skimming through required readings. My struggle never stopped in academics, upon doing my best and putting in countless hours I would never understand Chemistry or Algebra.

I was frustrated with myself for not understanding the way my peers were, for not getting good grades, and for having to put in so much effort to only meet requirements. Cheerleading was what helped me through my frustration. Cheer was the only thing I felt I could do right, that I was good at and everyone knew I was passionate about. I received a full scholarship to a Catholic high school during my eighth-grade year, with the requirement of being on the cheerleading team. As I was passionate about this sport for years now, I was recruited by what I felt was the school of my dreams and had worked so hard to get to that point everything was falling into place. Until my family decided my grades were not adequate and attending a more academic-based school would help. I attended a public charter school that advertised its academic programs, where I continued to struggle academically.

I think that schools need to better support student-athletes to not only meet those academic requirements to participate in sports but to better support students' mental health in academic settings. Students can be passionate and find happiness in sports they participate in while being able to maintain good grades. There is little to no support for students like me who struggle academically, while academics are necessary for schools students should not be punished for the struggles they experience.

Literature Synthesis

What are the issues?

The demands placed on high school student-athletes to balance their athletic commitments and academic work can be overwhelming and stressful, leading to negative effects on their

academic, athletic, and mental health. Research indicates that high school student-athletes face difficult decisions in prioritizing their time, which can result in missed practices or games for academic demands or missed classes for athletic commitments. Additionally, high schools often provide minimal academic support to student-athletes, which can lead to burnout and a decline in motivation. This is particularly important given the significant academic demands required to maintain eligibility for participation in sports thus, it is important to better understand how schools can better student-athletes to help them balance their commitments and achieve success both academically and athletically.

Why student-athletes are struggling

High school athletes combat continuous stressors involving sports, academics, and personal lives. More specifically, student-athletes experience high demands in different areas of their lives such as academic, athletic, and social (Gayles & Baker, 2015). The existing research that has been conducted on how student-athletes are struggling is mainly focused on collegiate athletes (Cosh & Tully, 2015). Unlike other students, high school athletes face additional demands such as time and effort across multiple parts of their lives. Students are expected to take required classes, complete coursework, and keep up with fast-paced classes. The possibility of failure to reach academic standards and maintain the minimum grade point average would end with consequences of losing the opportunity to participate in athletics. In addition, athletes spend time practicing and training for their sports, along with traveling and competing in games. Athletes report a struggle with maintaining a healthy schedule between academic demands and sports programs, further when deciding what to prioritize (Cosh & Tully, 2015). These strenuous decisions often force students to choose one of the two over the other. Students either miss practices and games for the sake of

academic demands or missing classes, assignments/exams, or learning opportunities for the sake of games, practices, or training (Cosh & Tully, 2015). Due to this demand for time, student-athletes do not have additional time to engage in social activities or events. Unfortunately, schools bear little support in helping students strengthen academic growth by only encouraging athletes to maintain eligibility requirements (Broughton & Neyer, 2001). With the high demands of these athletes, their academic development gets pushed aside when prioritizing athletics.

High school student-athletes may face additional pressures as they begin thinking about college athletics. Some athletes decide to continue their sport, seeking out colleges that cater to their desires and plans. When scholarships and contracts are involved, these athletes begin to take into consideration how serious they are about their desired sports. Their Senior year of high school will be shaped around this sport, how they can get scholarships, possibly contracts, and offers to play on a college level. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) programs have various requirements that differ from college programs throughout the country. This additional academic pressure these athletes experience put more stress on academic standing, grade point average, and test scores. While academic pressure can help students become more motivated, this additional pressure along with pressure to perform exceptionally in sports can negatively impact students' self-confidence.

How can we better support student-athletes

Student-athletes can benefit from school support, along with outside organization resources. A study indicated that when student-athletes met with mentors and set up weekly along with daily, schedules to assist with time management they had increased awareness of how they should time manage (Sheets, 2022). More findings in a questionnaire given to research participants showed that

these student-athletes would use the calendar and mentor system throughout their academic careers (Sheets, 2022). This research concluded that with the right tools and guidance, these students not only experienced less stress but felt more supported by their school in their decision to participate in sports. Schools need to provide additional support for their athletes to find a balance between academic performance and athletic performance.

These athletes are highly susceptible to experiencing mental illnesses along with burnout. In the adolescent years, people begin experiencing mental health disorders for the first time, being able to identify and recognize these disorders (Kessler et al., 2005). Upon these discoveries with the chance that students who go through these hardships seek guidance and support from adults around them, student-athletes turn to their coaches. Athletes spend a large amount of their time around teammates and coaches, coaches being role models. A study found in a survey given to 190 high school sports coaches, that the odds coaches would offer additional support to one of their athletes with depression were twice as large when compared to the coaches who were not aware of any support their school provided to these athletes (Kroshus & Herring, 2019). When the survey questioned coaches on the topic of anxiety in student-athletes, the results found that the odds of coaches offering support to athletes were slightly lower for every year that increased in a coach's age (Kroshus & Herring, 2019). At the end of this survey study, participants self-reported difficulties in supporting student-athletes such as, not feeling confident in identifying student-athletes that are struggling, athletes not disclosing their concerns to coaches, not feeling that their role as coach qualifies them for supporting athletes, and there are no resources they know of to refer the athlete to (Kroshus & Herring, 2019). At the end of the study, researchers concluded that with proper training and resources coaches can be better prepared for athletes when this barrier is apparent (Kroshus & Herring, 2019). If schools partnered with mental health professionals such as clinically trained

sports psychologists to work with, train, and consult coaches on the topic of mental illness in adolescents these coaches would have a better chance of successfully aiding students (Kroshus & Herring, 2019). Schools provide multiple resources such as how to organize schedules, support from adults in athletes' lives like coaches, and providing mentor/mentee programs to help guide student-athletes on their concerns.

Conclusion

With little research done on this issue of high school athletes experiencing academic struggle along with what resources are available, there has yet to be an answer to how schools can better support these students. Students experiencing these strenuous demands are held to different standards as both students and athletes. Being subjected to burnout and mental illness student-athletes having accommodations to better support them through those barriers is necessary. With more resources available to student-athletes the struggle to achieve academic success will be more achievable for adolescents.

Method

High School student-athletes are in constant motion from the demands of as many as six or seven high school classes to their commitment to practicing and competing for their sports teams. Students are constantly dealing with the struggles of balancing school work while keeping their physical involvement steady. How can high schools better support their student-athletes so they can perform better in their studies while still maintaining a strong commitment to their sports?

Context

Salad Bowl High for interviews along with a survey.

Salad Bowl High's Demographics 2022: Hispanic/Latino 74.4%, 17.0% White, 2.9% Two or more races, 2.1% Asian, 1.4% Filipino, 1.0% African American, 0.3% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and 0.1% American Indian or Alaska Native.

Participants and Participant Selection

We sought out high school student-athletes in various sports and conducted interviews as well as surveys about their experiences.

The student-athletes that participated were 15 students on the school swim team or club swim. (Some played other sports)

On average the participants were high school seniors.

Researcher,

I grew up playing sports from K-12 while struggling with academics, being told I need to make time for everything if I want to participate in my sports. There was no help offered, at a young age I had to try and time manage more than my peers. In a similar aspect, I was a high school student and understood the demands that are made as a student and an athlete. As a difference, I'm not in high school any longer, I did not attend the schools or have the same teachers or coaches in my life who might make the accommodations. Being mindful that they are experiencing different situations and maneuvering life differently than I had or am. Everyone has different experiences and different ideas, along with beliefs and goals. What one person thinks could help them as students another person may disagree.

Participants

15 student-athletes participated in this study. The group participants were invited to participate because of their relevant experience or expertise.

Semi-Structured Interview and Survey Questions

Interview Questions:

1. How would you describe your experiences being a student-athlete? What do you see as the benefits of being a student-athlete? What about the challenges? What are you most concerned about when it comes to your athletics and school?
2. What is currently being done by your high school to address the challenges that accompany being a student-athlete, by whom, and what are the strengths and weaknesses of these efforts?
3. What do you think should be done by your high school to better support student-athletes?
4. What do you think are some challenges or barriers to your high school being able to better support student-athletes?
5. Is there anything else that you would like to say about your current experiences being a student-athlete and/or improving the experiences of high school student-athletes?

Survey

1. What school do you attend?*

2. What grade are you in? *

Freshman

Sophomore

Junior

Senior

3. What is your GPA? (Overall)*

2.0 - 2.5

2.6- 3.0

3.1 - 3.6

3.7 - 4.0

4. What high school sport/s do you participate in?*

5. Which sports do you participate in travel and/or club teams?*

6. How many hours do you dedicate to your schoolwork weekly? Ex: Homework*

- 1-3 Hours
- 3-5 Hours
- 5-10 Hours
- 10+ Hours

7. How many total hours do you dedicate to your sport weekly? Include both high school/ club commitments Ex: Practice, games tournaments *

- 1-3 Hours
- 3-5 Hours
- 5-10 Hours
- 10- 15 Hours
- 15+ Hours

8. How do your teachers help support your Athletics?*

- Are they flexible with your schedule?
- Do they communicate with your coaches?
- Do they provide academic support?
- Do they encourage time management?
- Do they celebrate your athletic achievements?

9. How do your coaches help support your Academics? *

- Do they encourage good study habits?
- Do they communicate with teachers?
- Do they monitor academic progress?

- Do they provide academic resources?
- Do they set academic goals for you?
- Other:

10. As a high school athlete, how would you rate the impact of the following: *

Significant Positive Impact

Positive Impact

Neutral

Somewhat Negative

Negative

Time Management-

Stress-

Academics-

Time for Social Interactions, friendships, and/or socializing-

Physical Health-

Mental Health-

Time Management-

Stress-

Academics-

Time for Social Interactions, friendships, and/or socializing-

Physical Health-

Mental Health-

(Optional) Do you want to elaborate on anything above?

Procedure

Participants were interviewed. All interviews were done in small groups or individually. For the participants that it was not possible to interview in person, they were invited to complete a phone interview or paper and pencil survey of the same questions. Face-to-Face interviews took less than one hour, were audio-recorded (with participant consent), and took place where the practices were held. A semi-structured interview format was used for face-to-face interviews, which allowed for follow-up questions to be asked. All interviews/surveys were scheduled at the convenience of the interviewee and took approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Results

For this Capstone Project, 15 High School student-athletes were interviewed to see what they think could be done to better support high school student-athletes so they can perform better in their studies, while still maintaining a strong commitment to their sports. This is important because students are constantly dealing with the struggles of balancing school work while keeping their athletic involvement steady. Based on an analysis of the data and the relevant research literature three themes emerged (see Table 1). Evidence-based decision-making required

evaluating each potential Action Option by the following criteria: Time Required; Reach; and Effectiveness. The time required to incorporate these actions will be done by the staff and coaches and will vary depending on the action itself. The reach describes how many people will be affected by this change. Effectiveness addresses how well these actions can be performed in schools. Based on the evaluation of each Action Option an action will be recommended and justified.

Table 1

Evaluation of Action Options

Actions	Time Required	Reach	Effectiveness
Providing academic/athletic support	Medium	Low	High
Seasonal mental health and time management training	High	High	Low
Online Communication platform for easy communication	High/ Low	High	High

<p>between teachers and coaches</p>			
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Providing academic/ athletic support

Our schools can have support in place which includes tutoring, study halls, and other resources that would help athletes balance their academics and sports commitments. Through our interviews, we asked how many hours weekly you spend on schoolwork per week. We found that (13.4%) spend 1-3 hours; (35.7%) spend 3-5 hours; (14.3%) spend 5-10; (35.7%) spend 10+ hours. On the other side, we asked the same students how many hours they spend dedicated to their sports per week. We found (7.1%) Spend 1-3 hours; (0%) spend 3-5 hours; (42.9%) spend 5-10 hours; (42.9%) spend 10-15 hours; (and 14.3%) spend 15+ hours. Athletes spend most time practicing and training for their sports, along with traveling, and competing in games. Athletes reported a struggle with maintaining a healthy schedule between academic demands and sports programs, furthermore when deciding what to prioritize (Cosh & Tully, 2015). Much of what academic support requires is a teacher or coach to provide such support. We asked the student-athletes questions regarding how their teachers support their athletics. We found (78.6%) say teachers are flexible with their schedules regarding games and tournaments,(50%) provide additional academic support, and (78.6%) provide help with time management. From the findings, we can see that the amount of time teachers spend communicating with their coaches is very little. We flipped the question asking the student-athletes how their coaches support their academics: (42.9%) stated their coaches encourage good study habits, (57.1%) say they monitor their academic progress, (7.1%) say they have been provided additional academic support, and

(28.6%) say their coaches set academic goals for their athletes. Similarly, the communication between the teachers and coaches is very low with both falling under 20%. Effective communication between teachers and coaches can provide a positive atmosphere for the student to perform at their best. This would require a medium level of time commitment from both the coaches and teachers, and be able to reach a high level of students, as well as be very effective in improving both the students' academics and athletics.

There was also further research conducted during individual interviews that showed that 6 of the 8 elaborated even more that they found it difficult to think of all of the aspects of stress. Most answered on the paper that they experienced somewhat neutral stress on the survey, but when asked verbally about the challenges of being a student-athlete during the interview, many stated that they do experience an increase in stress. Juggling their classes and sports is incredibly tiring for them and they also stated some symptoms of burnout. At times if they are so tired they will choose to not do homework and just miss the points. They also explained that they are extremely tired during school and it causes them to not pay attention in all of their classes. But there was also the universal opinion that athletics was a huge positive in many ways as well and would consider not participating in sports.

[Need to explain the evaluation of this action option in your table - explain why you rated it the way that you did in the table for your three criteria?]

Seasonal mental health and time management training

The amount of time students spend in the classroom and dedicated to their athletics is not only tolling on the physical body but also can be a big contributor to mental health issues. Schools can offer mental health support to student-athletes, including counseling services and resources to help them manage stress and anxiety related to their academic and athletic

responsibilities. We asked students how they would rate the impact of the following questions from significantly positive to negative: (35.7%) say it hurts their time management; (57.1%) say the negative impact on their stress levels;(35.6%) say being a student-athlete has a negative impact on their mental health. If schools partnered with mental health professionals such as clinically trained sports psychologists to work with, train, and consult coaches on the topic of mental illness in adolescents these coaches would have a better chance of successfully aiding students (Kroshus & Herring, 2019). Our action would involve a seasonal mental health and time management training run by the coaches or staff who are trained and knowledgeable in mental health issues, and who can teach ways to balance commitments. The time required would be very low and only require one training per season for their student-athletes. The reach would be high, knowing that all teams would require their players to attend meetings. Finally, the effectiveness is very high, showing students techniques to implement in their daily lives can make a drastic difference in their students' overall health both physical and mental.

During the interviews, a few of the participants stated that they face a higher level of stress because at Salad Bowl High School all classes have make-up days on Fridays. In many cases, due to their athletics, they often miss more than one class and have to decide which class they will be able to attend so they can make up assignments. The only other option is if they are unable to make up all of their missed class materials they will have to come in for Saturday school. That impacted their stress because that is even less time they have free to do other things. They lose even more of the very little time they have because of the school and athletics commitment.

Online Communication platform for teachers and coaches

Student-athletes having to balance both school work and athletics is very difficult. Teachers and coaches need to be informed about how their students are performing in both the classroom and in their sports. After analyzing our data we found that (14.3%) communicate with the students' coaches, and (14.3%) say coaches have reached out to their teachers. From this finding, there is a clear direction to improve the communication between students, teachers, and their coaches. The creation of an online platform shared between the school, teachers, and coaches that cross-references the test days and games days for students. The students will then be able to see when they have tests and make accommodations based on the schedule. The teachers will be able to pick the most productive day to test. The coaches will also be able to have direct contact with the teachers in case they need to address a certain student's needs. Optimal communication for each student will allow for a system that both teachers and coaches can rely on. Schools bear little support in helping students strengthen academic growth by only encouraging athletes to maintain eligibility requirements (Broughton & Neyer, 2001). The platform would allow for observation of the progress of a student. This in turn will give the staff the opportunity and knowledge to attend to each student's needs. This program only works if the teachers and coaches use it consistently, and would require a high time commitment. The reach is high given that all students would be monitored through the program. The effectiveness is high allowing for a clear understanding of the academic and athletic state of each student.

Conclusion

The three action options can positively change high school student athletes' experiences. Out of the three options described above, our recommendation is option 3. Option three's main focal point is communication between teachers and coaches, to provide seamless sharing of data

regarding the student. The creation of the program would allow all schools to adopt and implement with tools at hand. The implementation of this program will allow for collaboration between teachers and coaches and can help build a cohesive and supportive school community. By sharing information and resources, teachers and coaches can work towards a common goal of helping students reach their full potential. Delivering an effective communication system can ensure that important information is shared between teachers and coaches, reducing the likelihood of miscommunication and misunderstandings. This can lead to better relationships between teachers and coaches, as well as with students and parents. When teachers and coaches communicate effectively, they can identify and address issues that may be hindering a student's performance. By working together, they can develop a comprehensive approach to support the student's academic and athletic success. By improving communication between teachers and coaches, parents can stay informed about their child's academic and athletic progress. This can increase parent engagement and involvement in their child's education, which can have a positive impact on student success

Concessions.

The implementation of this program will allow for collaboration between teachers and coaches and can help build a cohesive and supportive school community. By sharing information and resources, teachers and coaches can work towards a common goal of helping students reach their full potential. Delivering an effective communication system can ensure that important information is shared between teachers and coaches, reducing the likelihood of miscommunication and misunderstandings. This can lead to better relationships between teachers and coaches, as well as with students and parents. When teachers and coaches communicate

effectively, they can identify and address issues that may be hindering a student's performance. By working together, they can develop a comprehensive approach to support the student's academic and athletic success. By improving communication between teachers and coaches, parents can stay informed about their child's academic and athletic progress. This can increase parent engagement and involvement in their child's education, which can have a positive impact on student success

Limitations.

Implementing a new program would be costly, in both financial resources and time. Depending on the structure and complexity of the software, it would determine the cost as well as the training required. Regulating staff, parent, and student communication can raise some privacy concerns regarding the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Acts (FERPA). We would need to redirect our approach to how we execute the methods and elements of the program. With the increased communication between teachers and coaches, there may be a risk of information overload for the staff. They may become overwhelmed by the volume of information and communications, which can lead to missed messages or important information. Implementing this new online program would help teachers and coaches communicate about their students and has many potential benefits. However, schools and districts must carefully consider the potential drawbacks and challenges to ensure that they can successfully implement and maintain the online program.

Potential negative outcomes

One of the main negative outcomes that could come from using this platform is that coaches would have access to the athletes' grades. This could cause a potential privacy concern

for the students by granting their coach the ability to look at and share private information. To make the online platform it would cost a lot of money to create, and if it is not used that would be a major cost that was for a waste. This platform can work if students, teachers, and coaches are all in agreement and willing to use the website.

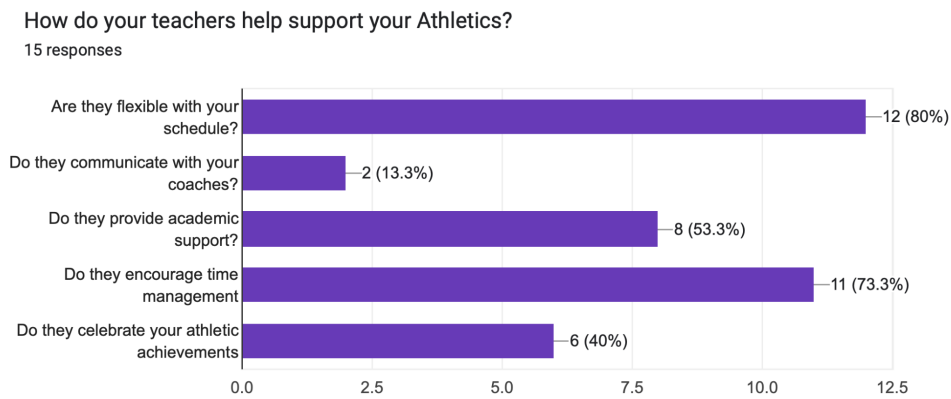
Conclusion

The reason for our continued support for the online platform is that it will be accessible on any electronic device. This makes it incredibly accessible to everyone so that they can access it at almost any time. Another advantage of this option is that it has so many layers to it. This online tool can be used in so many ways. Coaches can have better communication with teachers and vice versa. This also opens the door for students to have the ability to set up meetings and check their teacher's schedule and make accommodations in advance. This will also cultivate an environment in which students will have the ability to exercise good time management but be supported by their schools to conduct this responsibility. Teachers will also be able to see when a lot of their student population will be out due to sports and plan activities, lessons, and tests on days that take into account the student's availability as well.

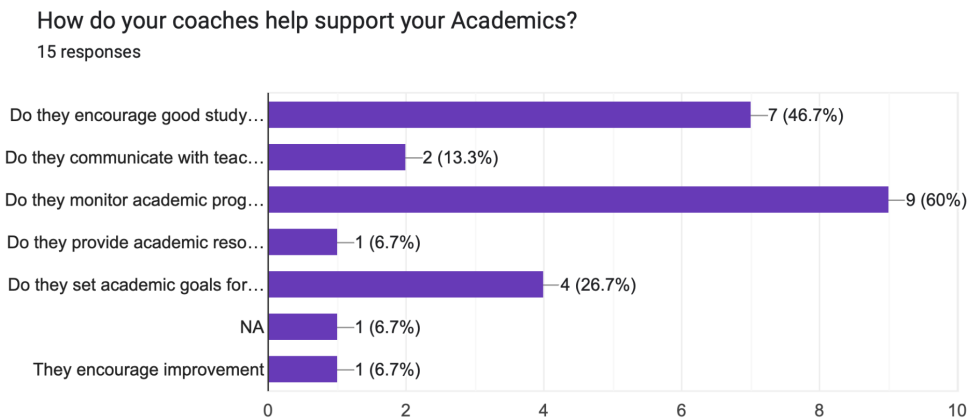
Action Documentation and Critical Reflection

For our capstone project, we focused on how high schools can better support their student-athletes so they are performing academically while also maintaining their commitment to their sport/s. To better understand the issue we interviewed 10 high school student-athletes as well as had 15 survey participants. From the data we collected in the interviews and surveys, we found three action options. Option 1: Provide student-athletes with tutors, study programs, and other resources for academic support, Option 2: Provide seasonal mental health and time management training, and Option 3: the creation of an online platform where teachers and

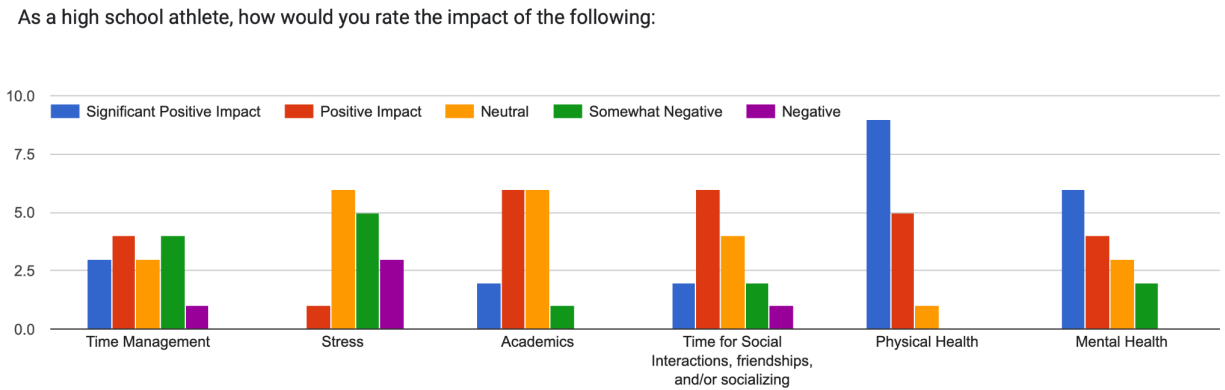
coaches can keep track of students' grades, tests, and schedules. After analyzing the time required, reach, and effectiveness of these actions the creation of an online platform was concluded to be the most effective and the highest reach to help students. Furthermore, the creation of this online platform keeps teachers and coaches in connection to collaborate on how to better support their students.



Data collection was taken from the student-athletes regarding their teacher involvement in their athletics.



Data collection is taken from the student-athletes, regarding their coaches' involvement in their academics



Data collection regarding the student’s impact on being an athlete scaled from “significant positive impact” to “negative” impact.

Action Research Project Documentation and Reflection (Group)

We researched how high student-athletes can be better academically and mentally supported by their schools. We interviewed and surveyed 15 high school student-athletes with questions regarding the support they already receive from their coaches and teachers. Along with their mental health, impact on social interactions, and academic standings, we analyzed where students would be possibly struggling. In retrospect collecting the data, we inferred that the stress levels of the students would be high. On the contrary, most of the student-athletes that we interviewed made points that they were able to manage their stress, directly due to participating in a sport. When choosing how to collect our data we found that interviews alone would not reach enough stakeholders and would take up the majority of our time researching. We then

decided that to collect as much data and reach as many students as we could, putting together a survey was our best option. When we ended up with much more specific information about our stakeholders, as opposed to what we would have collected in only interviews. The data was very interesting to analyze. The survey highlighted a lot of the students and how they truly enjoyed their sport and were able to maintain a great GPA while in season. However, the results from the interview did not correlate with what the students were expressing within the interviews. The students who participated in interviews also claimed to have low stress in season when asked verbally about the challenges of being an athlete they responded that the main challenge was stress. They stated that having so little time in the day as well as having a lot of homework they experienced high levels of stress. One thing that we wished we would have known from the start was how little research there is regarding this topic. It was incredibly difficult to find any research relating to any difficulties student-athletes face due to participating in sports. This caused us to begin to create data on the topic. We created surveys, conducted interviews, and created an online portal to find an answer to this question. When thinking of what needed to change, I reflected on my own experience with being a high school student-athlete, connecting what issues I faced and finding out that they are still prevalent in today's schools. I found myself striving for change in our school system, noticing my effort increasing due to the topic at hand.

Critical Reflection (Individual)

In doing this project I learned how many resources are available due to technology. In today's society and with new generations, technology has been seen as something that can be negative. From this project, technology has become more of a tool that can aid teachers, coaches, and students. As a future teacher, I'm learning there needs to be flexibility in teaching, and a collaborative process for students because of individual needs. There is a spectrum of

accommodations for students such as IEP and now student-athletes have been exposed to the options for academic success. In my experience in teaching and being in the classroom majority of accommodations are seen as IEPs and need diagnosis of learning delays or disabilities but now seeing what accommodations can be regarding student-athletes is more accessible. With the implementation of a system where communication is valued and encouraged along with student support being more accessible, student-athletes can perform better academically and in their athletic endeavors. In doing this project I learned more about what schools can do, and what options are available for students, and in doing so learned how to work towards giving students more opportunities to be successful in multiple aspects of their lives, not just academically. Working towards change in the aspect of student-athletes not having all the pressure in both sports and academics with so little support from teachers and coaches. It is taking a toll on athletes' mental health, having an overwhelming amount of expectations, and I wandered through this project with interviews and surveys, how much these students can take with the overwhelming amount of pressure to excel in academics and their sport. There needs to be a change in how those expectations are created and what resources can be provided for high school athletes in the chance that they begin struggling.

Synthesis and Integration (Individual)

My development in doing this project, and the course itself has exposed me to a process of research I am not familiar with. I had experienced for the first time the process of investigating, designing, and collaborating on a topic that can leave an impact on people. Understanding more of what goes on in the classroom and specifically what goes on in high school settings was something that I had not yet learned about. In interviews and surveys that

were conducted, getting an understanding of what goes on and what is accessible to students was something that I valued as a future educator. Gaining the necessary knowledge to accurately analyze data and formulate an action plan on how to solve the standing issue in high schools has caused me to test myself in what I can accomplish. I think this action project has caused me to have more of a passion for these issues where students are pushed and brought to these high expectations without the thought that they are learning and growing but still need guidance. I've realized that the 'basic student' does not exist in education where a student is committed to a school. There are different circumstances and aspects in students' lives in today's society where there is immense pressure put on students whether that be sports, extracurricular activities, leadership, internships, etc. This project has pushed me to look at high school students as more than a student, that there is something not working if these students are having trouble with mental health and academics. Along with the lack of resources students have in high school with these issues at hand.

The next step that I see myself taking to be a professional educator that I want to be is to gain more knowledge in resources for students. There is a lack of accommodations presented in schools and a better understanding of what is available and what is not is something that I need to understand. There is endless knowledge available. I want to continue learning how I can better support my future students and accommodate their personal needs because I see my role as someone who guides them in their learning journey. Knowing what I can and cannot do, and what steps I can take in accommodating students with disabilities, student-athletes, students experiencing mental illness, students with trauma, etc. is what I want to seek.

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