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**Attending Excellence:
Supporting Elite Athletes in Elementary School**

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LS 400: Senior Capstone

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Abstract

This Capstone Project aimed to investigate the school-related challenges and benefits of having a K-6th grade child who participates in travel or club level sports during the school year as an elite athlete. There was little to no relevant research literature on this topic, but I was able to navigate and build off of other formative research surrounding the main idea; excessive absences related to sports and extracurricular activities, and truancy. Based on the analysis of the data collected, I used what I had learned to formulate an action plan that responds to the challenges parents experience raising an elite athlete in a way that inspires, informs, or involves a particular audience. One of the biggest hurdles that elite student athletes and their parents have to deal with is truancy. The focus of this capstone project provided a solution for parents and elite student athletes to receive support from their elementary school when having to miss school for a competition or tournament.

Keywords: Truancy, Elite Athlete

**Attending Excellence:
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“One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight!” is what I constantly hear coming out of my six year olds mouth. Though she most certainly knows how to count higher than eight, she repeats the eight count. This eight count is referred to as a “cheer count”. A cheer count refers to a rhythmic cue to coordinate movements within a routine. (Sarah) Felicia, is my daughter, she is an elite all star cheerleader. I deliberately emphasize that she is an elite all-star cheerleader, because it differs from the more commonly known sideline cheerleading, which can be seen at football and basketball games, cheering on the home teams with simple dance routines and cheer chants. Elite all-star cheerleading is strictly competitive based; athletes have advanced skills and train extensively. All-star is a competitive, team-based performance sport. It incorporates aspects of tumbling, pyramids, stunts, cheer and dance to form a unique sport in which teams perform two and a half minute routines. My daughter competes all throughout the state of California from Sacramento, to Santa Clara, to Anaheim, to San Diego. She also competes out of state in places such as in Nevada, Texas, and Florida, just to name a few. Being an elite athlete is all fun and games, and according to my daughter, cheer is her “life”, but it comes with extensive prices to pay.

One, two!!!! There are too many expenses. Aside from the insanely expensive program tuition I pay for my daughter to cheer at an elite all-star level, there are also all of the expenses of participating in a traveling sport. The program my daughter cheers for is based an hour away from home, this was the closest organization surrounding us. She has practice three times a week; that is a minimum of 6 hours of driving every week. Getting her to practice is not only a

major time commitment, but the gas needed to get back and forth from practice is a major financial expense as well. My daughter's cheer program participated in twelve competitions this year. Of those twelve competitions, only one can be considered as a local competition. That would mean there are eleven competitions that would require travel expenses. This includes travel expenses and hotel accommodations. If there is a flight involved, this also includes rental vehicle expenses or the expenses of ride share applications. Lest be forgotten, the expenses of food during competitions. In all, there are extensive expenses with traveling sports, but they pale in comparison to the happiness it brings to my daughter's face.

One, two, three! Three, unexcused absences, unverified absences, or a combination of both, including unexcused tardiness surpassing thirty minutes, is all it takes to receive a truancy letter. A truancy letter is a written communication sent by a student's school, or school district, to the parents, or guardian, of the student. The truancy letter serves as a formal notification alerting the parents or guardians of their student's absences, and to take corrective measures to improve their students' attendance. A truant is defined by California Education Code Section 48260(a) as "a pupil subject to compulsory full-time education or to compulsory continuation education who is absent from school without a valid excuse three full days in one school year or tardy or absent for more than a 30-minute period during the schoolday without a valid excuse on three occasions in one school year, or any combination thereof, shall be classified as a truant and shall be reported to the attendance supervisor or to the superintendent of the school district." Truancy is also a crime in which the parents can be found guilty of California Penal Code 270.1(a) states "A parent or guardian of a pupil of six years of age or more who is in kindergarten or any of grades 1 to 8, inclusive, and who is subject to compulsory full-time

education or compulsory continuing education, whose child is a chronic truant as defined in Section 48263.6 of the Education Code, who has failed to reasonably supervise and encourage the pupil's school attendance, and who has been offered language accessible support services to address the pupil's truancy, is guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by a fine not exceeding two thousand dollars (\$2,000), or by imprisonment in a county jail not exceeding one year, or by both that fine and imprisonment." <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ai/tr/>

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight! I'll stop there so that I do not sound like a horrible parent for allowing my daughter to miss more than eight days of school thus far. But the reality is that she does have to miss school to be able to participate in the sport she loves. Don't get me wrong, I make sure that cheer does not negatively affect her academics. However, the fact of the matter is that participating in demanding sports does affect many parts of our lives.

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight! Eight, or more times, I have had to lie and come up with creative ways to assure my daughters absences are considered excused. One, two, three! I have received three truancy letters so far this school year, all because my daughter has missed more than three days of school in which the school deemed as inexcusable.

As an aspiring educator, I know the importance of school and education. As a parent, I also know how significant cheering at an elite level is for my daughter; as well as how participating in extracurricular activities can have so many positive benefits in the development of our youth as a whole. It takes a toll on me as a parent, physically and mentally, as I juggle and balance school and sports. But I, as a mother, and anyone as a parent, must do everything we can to ensure our children are encouraged to be their best selves in every capacity; academy,

physically, psychologically, socially, etc. I just wish there was a way to find a good balance between school and the extracurricular activities that we love. I wish schools would be more understanding in the extreme measures my daughter is taking to “go to college for free to cheer and learn” (Felicia, 6). Neither she nor I should be penalized for missing a few days of school to do something she is not just passionate about, but also extremely talented and skilled in, especially while still completing school work and being an honor student.

Literature Synthesis

Attending Excellence:

Supporting Elite Athletes in Elementary School

Every parent wants their children to be healthy and build healthy habits early in life. For a lot of parents, the way they encourage this is to have their children participate in sports. In addition to building a strong base for a healthy lifestyle, participation in sports has many other benefits. Various studies by Blomfield & Barber (2009), Cuff et. all (2017), Dilley-Knoles et. all (2010) Ishihara et. all (2020) show that participating in sports also positively affects academic achievement. In addition to the academic benefits that participating in sports has on youth, studies by Blomfield & Barber (2009) Feraco et. all (2022) and Langbein & Bess (2002) show that participation in sports in youth also has many developmental benefits. For all the benefits that athletic participation has, there are some negative aspects to it. Studies by Bloomfield & Barber (2009) and Langbein & Bess (2002) point out some negative developmental effects that athletic participation has on younger participants. And just as with issues of negative developmental effects, athletic participation can also have a negative impact on academics, as mentioned in a study by Dilley-Knoles et. all (2010). These positive and negative connotations must be taken

into account when deciding if a youth student should participate in athletics. To add to that, parents of talented athletes have many more factors to consider in regards to the consequences of more competitive athletics.

Athletes are classified as regular or elite based on their performance and achievements. An elite athlete is one who has reached the highest level of performance in their sport and is often recognized as the best (Oxford 2023). They have typically dedicated their lives to their sport and have honed their skills through vigorous training, practice, and competition. In contrast, regular athletes are those who participate in sports or physical activities for recreation, fitness, or personal enjoyment. While they may train and compete at a high level, they typically do not have the same level of dedication, skill, or achievement as elite athletes. Among the other differences between elite athletes and regular athletes is their training regimen, their access to coaching and equipment, and their level of competition. Elite athletes often have access to specialized training facilities, experienced coaches, and specialized equipment. Regular athletes may train on their own, or with a local team, and with a coach who may not be as educated, trained or experienced (American Psychological Association 2023).

In the state of California and in the MBUSD, a students' absences are not excused for missing school for a sport-related activity if it is not on behalf of, or representing a school in the district. For younger students in elementary, schools do not offer sports. Therefore, the child must be enrolled or signed up through a city league or outside organization. In middle school, only a couple sports are offered. Most times the games are scheduled after school hours. In highschool, a larger variety of sports are offered for students to participate in. Games are

scheduled outside of school hours, with the exception of a few. Students are always excused for missing classes for travel and warmup time. When the event is during the school day, students are also excused from school classes to warm up for competitions or games. There are times where the athletic event is not local and there is long-distance of traveling, or when the event is during the school day; students though absent from school, are excused, and not dinged for being absent from school. But what about those students affiliated in a sport outside of school? Not all sports are offered at the competitive level such as club and travel teams. This results in parents and students finding programs that compete at elite all-star levels. When those elite games, tournaments, or competitions arise during a school day, the student's absence is considered unexcused. Parents are placed in a difficult and uncomfortable situation. Parents may have to lie and make up excusable absences so that their child(ren), and themselves as parents do not have to deal with truancy repercussions. Truancy is an issue across the board for high school students. However in a study done by Bignell, Waddell & Cuffe (2017) truancy for highschool athletes is statistically lower than non-athletes as seen in the following table:

	Athletes	Boys Nonathletes	All	Athletes	Girls Nonathletes	All
Students	3,941	7,360	11,301	3,217	7,290	10,507
Student-years	7,907	13,344	21,251	6,453	13,395	19,848
Student-days	1,382,011	2,258,556	3,640,567	1,132,704	2,278,796	3,411,500
White	.49	.36	.41	.52	.31	.38
Asian	.20	.26	.24	.24	.26	.25
Black	.21	.22	.22	.14	.28	.23
Other	.11	.17	.15	.11	.16	.14
Grade 9	.28	.32	.31	.28	.29	.29
Grade 10	.26	.24	.25	.28	.24	.26
Grade 11	.24	.21	.22	.24	.22	.23
Grade 12	.22	.23	.23	.20	.24	.23
Both parents	.69	.54	.60	.70	.53	.58
Periods absent per day	.38	.65	.55	.38	.64	.56
Periods excused	.22	.28	.26	.27	.33	.31
Periods unexcused	.16	.38	.29	.11	.31	.25
Semester GPA	3.01	2.40	2.63	3.37	2.73	2.94

Notes: Statistics are calculated from administrative records spanning 10 SPS high schools over academic years 2008–2009 through 2011–2012. A student is considered an “athlete” in a given year if (s)he participates in at least one of the following sports on a school-organized varsity, junior varsity, or freshman team: baseball, basketball, cross country, football, golf, gymnastics, soccer, softball, swimming, tennis, track and field, volleyball, and wrestling. Six periods make up the standard school day. However, in the two most recent years, one school implemented a schedule with only five periods per day. Additionally, three schools added an additional study hall period twice a week in a number of the observed academic years, bringing the total possible periods absent to seven on these days. Observations from days with either one fewer or one additional period make up 2.4% and 5.3% of the data, respectively. Robustness checks demonstrate that our regression results are not sensitive to the particular class scheduling in these school years. (For example, our results will be robust to the inclusion of fixed effects for school-by-year-by-day-of-week, which cleans up much of the natural variation in absenteeism than may not be attributable to active sport.) GPA is measured on a standard 4.0 point scale. Students are “active” or “in-season” during district-defined periods when tournaments and regular training sessions may be held. Dropped from the analysis are students who transfer to another SPS school midway through an academic year (<1% of all athletes), and students who participate in multiple sports, contemporaneously (<1% of all athletes).

This study focused on high school students. Research needs to be done for truancy among elementary school aged athletes.

Why are Truancy Laws an Issue for Young Elite Athletes?

This research project aims to investigate the school-related challenges and benefits of having a K-6th grade child who participates in travel or club level sports during the school year as an elite athlete. One of the biggest hurdles that a child athlete has to deal with is truancy. In California, truancy is defined by the California Education Code Section 48260 as:

“(a) A pupil subject to compulsory full-time education or to compulsory continuing education who is absent from school without a valid excuse three full days in one school year or tardy or absent for more than a 30-minute period during the school day without a valid excuse on three occasions in one school year, or any combination thereof, shall be classified as a truant and shall be reported to the attendance supervisor or to the superintendent of the school district.”

Truancy laws exist to ensure that students attend school. On face value, this is for the benefit of the student to ensure they get a complete education. However, it is common knowledge that public schools are funded depending on attendance. Income taxes and property taxes are the main sources of funding for the public education system in California. There are many ways that determine how much each school district gets funding (insert education breakdown here). California is also one of a few states that uses attendance to distribute

funding. California uses average daily attendance, ADA, to determine how much funding each school district receives (CAPTA, 2023). Therefore, if a student misses school, the school district loses money. According to a letter sent to parents by the San Marino school district, the school district loses \$50 per day when a student is not in school (SMUSD). Part of the reason these truancy laws exist is to try to maximize the amount of funding schools can receive from the state.

These laws are also there for the benefit of the schools, in an effort to curb truancy and maintain funding. The simple existence of these laws are not going to curb truancy, they have to be enforced as well. But again, for scholars to be considered truant, they have to have a number of unexcused absences. And according to the California Code 48205 subsection a, scholars can only be considered excused for the following reasons: Notwithstanding Section 48200, a pupil shall be excused from school when the absence is:

- (1) Due to the pupil's illness, including an absence for the benefit of the pupil's mental or behavioral health.
- (2) Due to quarantine under the direction of a county or city health officer.
- (3) For the purpose of having medical, dental, optometrical, or chiropractic services rendered.
- (4) For the purpose of attending the funeral services of a member of the pupil's immediate family, so long as the absence is not more than one day if the service is conducted in California and not more than three days if the service is conducted outside California.
- (5) For the purpose of jury duty in the manner provided for by law.
- (6) Due to the illness or medical appointment during school hours of a child of whom the pupil is the custodial parent, including absences to care for a sick child, for which the school shall not

require a note from a doctor.

(7) For justifiable personal reasons, including, but not limited to, an appearance in court, attendance at a funeral service, observance of a holiday or ceremony of the pupil's religion, attendance at a religious retreat, attendance at an employment conference, or attendance at an educational conference on the legislative or judicial process offered by a nonprofit organization, when the pupil's absence is requested in writing by the parent or guardian and approved by the principal or a designated representative pursuant to uniform standards established by the governing board of the school district.

(8) For the purpose of serving as a member of a precinct board for an election pursuant to Section 12302 of the Elections Code.

(9) For the purpose of spending time with a member of the pupil's immediate family who is an active duty member of the uniformed services, as defined in Section 49701, and has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or has immediately returned from, deployment to a combat zone or combat support position. Absences granted pursuant to this paragraph shall be granted for a period of time to be determined at the discretion of the superintendent of the school district.

(10) For the purpose of attending the pupil's naturalization ceremony to become a United States citizen.

(11) For the purpose of participating in a cultural ceremony or event.

(12) (A) For the purpose of a middle school or high school pupil engaging in a civic or political event, as provided in subparagraph (B), provided that the pupil notifies the school ahead of the absence."

There are different types of penalties for truancy, for both students and parents. The student penalties are outlined by the California Education Code Section 48264.5 as:

“A minor who is classified as a truant pursuant to Section 48260 or 48261 may be required to attend makeup classes conducted on one day of a weekend pursuant to subdivision (c) of Section 37223 and is subject to the following:

(a) The first time a truancy report is issued, the pupil and, as appropriate, the parent or legal guardian, may be requested to attend a meeting with a school counselor or other school designee to discuss the root causes of the attendance issue and develop a joint plan to improve the pupil’s attendance.

(b) The second time a truancy report is issued within the same school year, the pupil may be given a written warning by a peace officer as specified in Section 830.1 of the Penal Code. A record of the written warning may be kept at the school for not less than two years or until the pupil graduates or transfers from that school. If the pupil transfers from that school, the record may be forwarded to the school receiving the pupil’s school records. A record of the written warning may be maintained by the law enforcement agency in accordance with that law enforcement agency’s policies and procedures. The pupil may also be assigned by the school to an afterschool or weekend study program located within the same county as the pupil’s school. If the pupil fails to successfully complete the assigned study program, the pupil shall be subject to subdivision (c).

(c) The third time a truancy report is issued within the same school year, the pupil shall be classified as a habitual truant, as defined in Section 48262, and may be referred to, and required

to attend, an attendance review board or a truancy mediation program pursuant to Section 48263 or pursuant to Section 601.3 of the Welfare and Institutions Code. If the school district does not have a truancy mediation program, the pupil may be required to attend a comparable program deemed acceptable by the school district's attendance supervisor. If the pupil does not successfully complete the truancy mediation program or other similar program, the pupil shall be subject to subdivision (d).

(d) The fourth time a truancy report is issued within the same school year, the pupil may be within the jurisdiction of the juvenile court that may adjudge the pupil to be a ward of the court pursuant to Section 601 of the Welfare and Institutions Code. If the pupil is adjudged a ward of the court, the pupil shall be required to do one or more of the following:

(1) Performance at court-approved community services sponsored by either a public or private nonprofit agency for not less than 20 hours but not more than 40 hours over a period not to exceed 90 days, during a time other than the pupil's hours of school attendance or employment.

The probation officer shall report to the court the failure of the pupil to comply with this paragraph.

(2) Payment of a fine by the pupil of not more than fifty dollars (\$50) for which a parent or legal guardian of the pupil may be jointly liable. The fine described in this paragraph shall not be subject to the assessments of Section 1464 of the Penal Code or any other applicable section.

(3) Attendance of a court-approved truancy prevention program."

Parents of children labeled as truants also face penalties. The civil penalties that a parent can face are outlined in the California Education Code Section 48293 as:

“(a) Any parent, guardian, or other person having control or charge of any pupil who fails to comply with this chapter, unless excused or exempted therefrom, is guilty of an infraction and shall be punished as follows:

(1) Upon a first conviction, by a fine of not more than one hundred dollars (\$100).

(2) Upon a second conviction, by a fine of not more than two hundred fifty dollars (\$250).

(3) Upon a third or subsequent conviction, if the person has willfully refused to comply with this section, by a fine of not more than five hundred dollars (\$500). In lieu of imposing the fines prescribed in paragraphs (1), (2), and (3), the court may order the person to be placed in a parent education and counseling program.

(b) A judgment that a person convicted of an infraction be punished as prescribed in subdivision (a) may also provide for the payment of the fine within a specified time or in specified installments, or for participation in the program. A judgment granting a defendant time to pay the fine or prescribing the days of attendance in a program shall order that if the defendant fails to pay the fine, or any installment thereof, on the date that it is due, or fails to attend a program on a prescribed date, he or she shall appear in court on that date for further proceedings.

Willful violation of the order is punishable as contempt.

(c) The court may also order that the person convicted of the violation of subdivision (a) immediately enroll or reenroll the pupil in the appropriate school or educational program and provide proof of enrollment to the court. Willful violation of an order under this subdivision is punishable as civil contempt with a fine of up to one thousand dollars (\$1,000). An order of contempt under this subdivision shall not include imprisonment.”

Parents face major fines if their child continues to be found as truant. However if the truancy continues, the parents also face criminal charges under California Penal Code Section 270.1 Subsection (a), which reads:

“A parent or guardian of a pupil of six years of age or more who is in kindergarten or any of grades 1 to 8, inclusive, and who is subject to compulsory full-time education or compulsory continuation education, whose child is a chronic truant as defined in Section 48263.6 of the Education Code, who has failed to reasonably supervise and encourage the pupil’s school attendance, and who has been offered language accessible support services to address the pupil’s truancy, is guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by a fine not exceeding two thousand dollars (\$2,000), or by imprisonment in a county jail not exceeding one year, or by both that fine and imprisonment.”

The legal penalties for truancy can be significant. However, according to Zhang (2004) “... it is not possible to reduce truancy rates solely by relying on parental prosecution, which does not have meaningful immediate or long-term impacts on truancy.” And according to Gleich-Bope (2014) “The problem of school truancy is truly a concern for schools, families, and communities across the country.” Historically, truancy has been linked to juvenile delinquency, drug use, and criminal activity. This is clearly not the case for athletes who are at risk of being labeled as truant due to missing school for their sport. So what can parents of young athletes do to avoid their child being labeled as truant?

What Has and/or Should Be Done? What does the literature say about how Parents Responded to or Dealt with Truancy Laws?

Unfortunately, nothing has been done to address the truancy issues for young athletes. There has been no support from the schools in regards to excusing absences due to sports participation. And nothing has been done by the state in regards to truancy laws. One of the simplest ways to address the issue of truancy among K-6 athletes is to make an amendment to California Education Code 48205(a), which would include sports participation as a valid reason to excuse an absence. As easy as this sounds, this is an action at a state level, which could take a considerable amount of time to accomplish. There is a way that this issue could be resolved at a school district level. If school districts would offer independent studies packets to young athletes that miss school, and excuse those absences caused by those sports, it would allow for the young athletes to continue their education, while mitigating unexcused absences/truancy, all the while preventing the school district from losing money due to said truancy. This would be the ideal solution as it would be beneficial to the scholar/athlete, the school, and the school district.

Conclusion

Children and adolescents that participate in extracurricular activities are more likely to succeed academically, develop social skills, learn discipline and responsibilities, amongst many other benefits. Elite athletes enjoy these many benefits of participating in extracurricular activities but also have to deal with the repercussions of missing school due to participation in

their respective sports. Missing excessive school can lead to being labeled as a truant. Being labeled as a truant can not only affect the athlete/scholar, but also can have legal repercussions for the parents. Truancy also negatively affects school funding. These potential issues can most easily be resolved on a state level with adding sports participation to the list of valid reasons to excuse an absence. The issues can also more effectively be resolved by providing athletes/scholars that miss excessive school for their respective sports with independent study packets and excusing those absences. This resolution benefits the athlete, scholar by allowing them to continue their education out of school. It would benefit the school by lowering the amount of unexcused absences/truancy. It benefits the parents by preventing the potential legal problems of having a truant child. Finally it would benefit the school district by maintaining funding that would have been decreased by the unexcused absences/truancy.

Method

This Capstone Project aimed to investigate the school-related challenges and benefits of having a K-6th grade child who participates in travel or club level sports during the school year as an elite athlete. There was little to no relevant research literature on this topic, but I was able to navigate and build off of other formative research surrounding the main idea; excessive absences related to sports and extracurricular activities, and truancy. Based on the analysis of the data collected, I used what I had learned to formulate an action plan that responds to the challenges parents experience raising an elite athlete in a way that inspires, informs, or involves a particular audience. One of the biggest hurdles that elite student athletes and their parents have to deal with is truancy. The focus of this capstone project provided a solution for parents and elite student athletes to receive support from their elementary school when having to miss

school for a competition or tournament.

Context

Being amongst the only of its kind within a sixty mile radius, Forever Cheer Elite All Stars is located in Holli-Valley, California. It is in the central part of California, approximately thirty-five miles southeast of Sea Coast, California. Forever Cheer Elite All Stars a competition-based program. It is a rigorous and prestigious cheer organization, offering their athletes the most experienced coaches, and intense training regime. Athletes practice a minimum of three times per week, this does not include additional tumbling practices and clinics offered throughout the week. Attending additional tumbling classes and specialized clinics are a key element in growth in an elite athlete's greatness. Forever Cheer's competition season is composed of an average of twelve to fourteen competitions throughout the season. Forever Cheer competes at mostly California events and a few travel (outside of California) competitions per year. While the program is based on competition, Forever Cheer feels that their organization exists to build self-esteem, confidence, work ethic, leadership, healthy lifestyle habits, and friendships that will last a lifetime.

Located along the Pacific Ocean, Star Academy Elementary School is located on the southern edge of Sea Coast, California. Star Academy aims to build strong, collaborative relationships to fuel a diverse, inclusive community committed to lifelong learning. Their vision is to empower global citizens to build meaningful lives and community.

Participants and Participant Selection

There were a total of twelve elite athlete parents that participated in a poll. The twelve participating parents included eight female mothers, and four male fathers. Along with a total of three elite athlete parents, two female mothers and one male father, that participated in a questioned interview and shared their personal experiences with the struggles that come with having an elite athlete in elementary school. Lastly, one interview was conducted with an elite athletic head coach who is the right-hand to the owner. Each participating parent has first handedly experienced a lack of support from their school pertaining to their child being involved in a rigorous elite athletic organization. Each parent has been threatened with truancy letters, and relate to the hardships encountered for having an elite athlete scholar. As for the organization owner and coach that was interviewed, she had the experience of having coached a prestigious competitive cheer team at a public middle school for the school. The school cheer athletes were given no moral support. However, because the cheer team was affiliated and represented the school, scholars were excused from school whenever they had an out of town competition.

Parent 1: Jesse: A parent to a first-grade girl who attends Star Academy Elementary School, and has been a participating elite athlete for Forever Cheer Elite All Stars for two seasons (two years). Jesse and his daughter live in Sea-Coast, which is about forty miles south of Holli-Valley. Driving, the commute typically takes at minimum, an hour, depending on traffic conditions.

Parent 2: Monica: A parent to a fourth-grade girl who is an elite athlete for Forever Cheer Elite All Stars. Monica is also an educator for Salad Bowl Unified School District in Salad

Bowl, California. Salad Bowl is thirty miles away from Holli-Valley, with an approximate forty to forty-five minute driving distance.

Parent 3: Roxy Joy: A parent to a third-grade girl who attends Virgencita Catholic Private School, and is an elite athlete with the Forever Cheer Elite All Stars organization. Roxy Joy lives in Garlic World and also happens to be a public school teacher in the Garlic World Unified School District . Garlic World is a nearby city surrounding Holli-Valley. Roxy and her daughter reside approximately twenty to thirty minutes away from Forever Cheer Elite All Stars.

Elite Coach and Parent: Armani: Armani is a parent to a first-grade girl who attends Star Academy Elementary School, and cheers for Forever Cheer Elite All Stars. Armani also happens to be one of the head coaches, and the right hand for the owner of Forever Cheer Elite All Stars. She has been partnered with Forever Cheer, helping operate the program for ten seasons (ten years), going on her eleventh season (eleventh year). With twenty-plus years of cheer experience under her belt, Armani has coached at the city recreation level, middle and high school, and as elite all star level. Armani also worked as a classified employee for Sea Coast Unified School District, and operated the competitive cheer team at Kodiak Middle School, a school within the Sea Coast Unified School District.

Researcher

I am a current student at Cal State University of Monterey Bay majoring in Liberal Studies with a minor in Human Development and Family Science. I have begun my journey as an educator, as a co-teacher at a private school in the Bay Area. I also happen to be a retired elite athlete and a high honor roll scholar, having graduated top in my high school class. Most

importantly, I am a parent to an amazing, sweet, intelligent, six year old little girl who is talented beyond measures for her age. My daughter is an elite all-star cheerleader on one of the six teams that Forever Cheer has to offer, she is also an honor roll student at Star Academy Elementary School.

Finding a way for elementary public schools to provide support for elite athletes is important to me. However, there are obstacles and barriers that exist that limit the schools to do so. Such as the California Legislative Information, under the California Education Codes and laws, truancy, defined as “a student missing more than thirty minutes of instruction without an excuse three times during the school year must be classified as a truant and reported to the proper school authority (CA Ed Code 48260(a). Meaning that my daughter’s school is not allowed to excuse her absences when having to miss school due to a cheer competition. As a parent, this puts me at risk for legal repercussions if my daughter misses excessive school. These legal entities consist of parent/ guardian mandated meetings, and court hearings resulting in fines, or other penalties imposed by the court (CA Ed Code 48260(a).

We all have biases; the most insidious are those of which we are unaware or unacknowledged. I realize I must be mindful of my own biases, and remain respectful of everyone's stand. I also feel I stand on both spectrums of my research. As an educator, I know the importance of a scholar's attendance. However, I come from a background of academic success, while being an elite all star athlete. There is a balance to be able to sustain both academics and sports at an elite level. I also firmly believe that schools should conduct the same process for emergency Independent Studies, as for when an athlete has to miss school for a sports function. In my case, my daughter's elementary school does not offer any sort of sports

programs. And being that she is at an elite level, I have to find an organization that can cater to her prestigious attributes. A scholar's attendance is crucial for public schools to receive funding. These state fundings are necessary ...

Semi-Structured Interview and Survey Questions

POLL QUESTION:

What is the best resolution for supporting elite athletes when missing school?

- Excuse absences by providing independent study packets
- Established school sponsored sports and athletics
- Homeschooling

PARENTS OF ELITE ATHLETES SURVEY QUESTIONS:

1. What do you know about school sponsored sports in elementary schools?
2. What do you know about elite athlete scholars in elementary school?
3. What do you see as the challenges that elite athletes in elementary school may encounter?
4. Has your child encountered any hardships being an elite athlete in elementary school? If so, what were the hardships, and how did they affect your family, and stance in school?
5. What is currently being done to address the challenges elite athletes and their parents may encounter by their elementary school - and what are the strengths and weaknesses of these efforts?
6. What do you think should be done about elite athletes in elementary school missing excessive days of school for their sport's competitions, tournaments, etc?
7. What do you think are the challenges to doing something about having elementary schools encourage their scholars to achieve excellence in an elite athlete status?
8. Is there anything else that you would like to say about support for elite athletes and/or the improvement of schools supporting elite athletes and their families?

COACH OF AN ELITE ORGANIZATION:

1. What do you know about elite athletes in elementary school?
2. What do you see/ know about the challenges that elite athletes in elementary school may encounter?
3. Have any of your elementary aged athletes and their families encountered hardships concerning school?
4. Do you as a coach/ an elite organization owner support your elementary aged athletes? If so, how so? If not, are there any ways you can think of to begin to support your elementary aged athletes?
5. What do you know about truancy ed codes and laws?

According to the CA Ed Code 48260(a) “ A student missing more than 30 minutes of instruction without an excuse three times during the school year must be classified as a truant and reported to the proper school authority.”

6. What do you think should be done about elite athletes in elementary school missing excessive days of school for their sports’ competitions, tournaments, etc?
7. What do you think are the challenges to doing something about having elementary schools encourage their scholars to achieve excellence in an elite athlete status?
8. Is there anything else that you would like to say about support for elite athletes and/or the improvement of schools supporting elite athletes and their families?

Procedure¹

participants were recruited based on their interactions and involvement and personal experiences of having an elite athlete in elementary school. I was strategic when recruiting the participants, I wanted to get feedback on how some parents who were also educators felt about the issue. I also purposely chose to interview the head coach of an elite organization so that I could conduct a well rounded research.

1

I had sent out a message on “GroupMe”, which is the application my daughters coaches and team uses to communicate with parents, and briefly explained my Capstone project. Then I proceeded by sending out a poll survey. Based on the results from the poll, I conducted a list of questions. These questions were sent out individually to each chosen participant via email and text message. They were asked to respond with their personal experiences of having an elite athlete in elementary school, and what they thought would be a great way for elementary schools to best support their elite students.

Data Analysis

Transcribed interviews and the survey poll data were coded and analyzed for emergent themes.

Results

For this Capstone Project, a few parents of elite athletes, as well as an elite athlete coach and organization owner were interviewed to see what they think could be done to improve support in elementary schools. This is important because of the strict California truancy education codes and laws. This is important to elite athletes and their families because they may need to miss school due to sporting events such as tournaments and competitions. Elite athletes are at high risk for being categorized as truants for missing school. Truancy, in summary, is defined as “a student missing more than thirty minutes of instruction without an excuse three times during the school year must be classified as a truant and reported to the proper school authority.” (CA Ed Code 48260(a)). Therefore, if an elite athlete scholar misses an excessive amount of school, parents risk legal repercussions. These legal entities consist of parent/guardian mandated meetings, and court hearings resulting in fines, or other penalties imposed by the court. 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: Principal Collaboration -Make Change; Independent Study Agreement Packet; and TikTok -Cultivating a Supporting Community. The accessibility describes how easily accessible the pertaining personnel has to each specific action plan that can accommodate both the elite athlete and their elementary school. The funding describes the limitations and barriers that conflict with school funding. Lastly the sustainability describes how easily sustainable it is for each action plan to take charge and or remain in place. Based on the evaluation of each Action Option an action will be recommended and justified.

Table 1

Evaluation of Action Options

	[Accessibility]	[Funding]	[Sustainability]
[Principal Collaboration -Make Change within the School]	Low	Low	High
[Independent Study Agreement Packet -Students will do	Medium	High	Medium

<p>their school work so that the schools can receive funding]</p>			
<p>[TikTok -Cultivating a Supporting Community, -Foth a change in Truancy policies and laws.]</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>High</p>

Principal Collaboration

Depending on the available access elite parents have with their scholars school site principal, the accessibility may vary. In many cases school principals have hectic calendar schedules and are constantly being pulled in many different directions to attend to school related issues. The principal may wish to not associate with any project or action planned that is not sent by, prioritized, or arranged by their pertaining school district or board.

With success in meeting with the school principal, elite athlete parents can voice their concerns. Upon emphasizing the importance elite level sports have on scholars, parents can request help from their principal to work hand in hand. Parents of elite athletes can work alongside their principal to collaborate effective strategies promoting ways the school can support elite athletes when they miss school for competitions and tournaments. These ideas

can be implemented on a statutory trial and error basis, until the best practical solution benefits the elite athlete scholar, their family, and the school. If there is no possible solution in which the school can agree and accommodate with

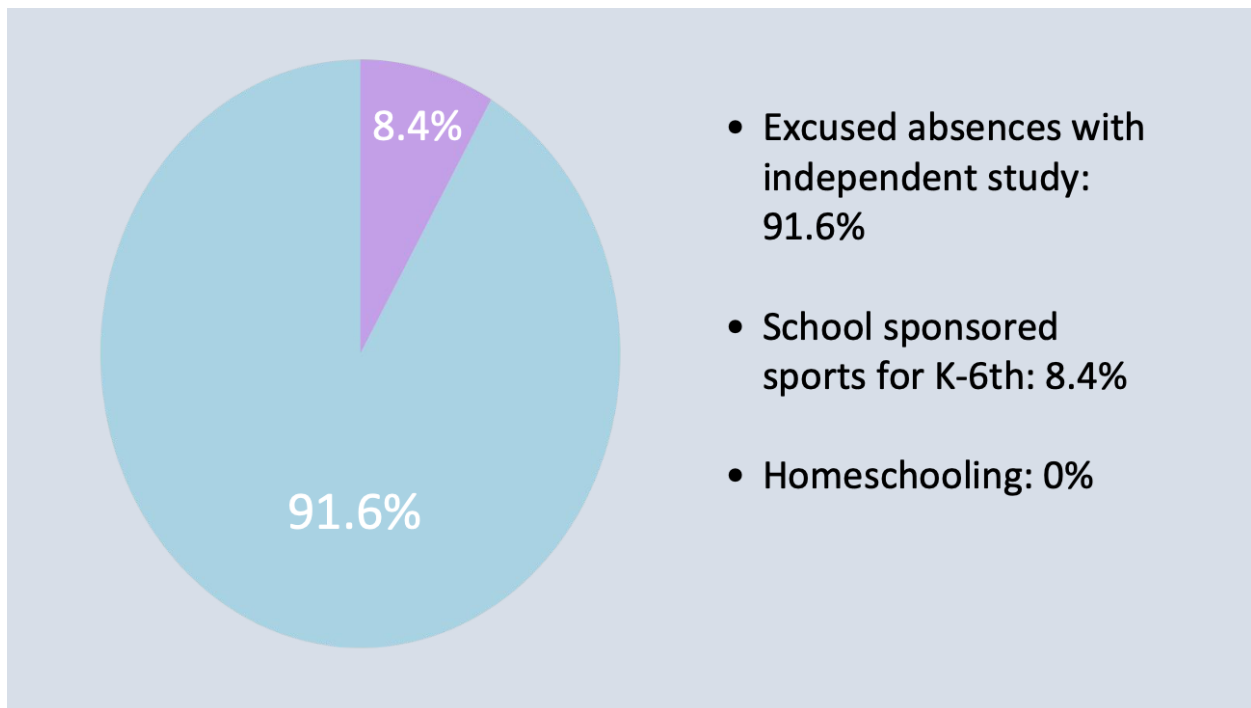
Independent Study Agreement Packet

As part of this research project I conducted a survey of elite athlete scholar parents to determine what would be the best option for their children in regards to truancy. There were three options presented during this survey.

One of the options was homeschooling. If an elite athlete is homeschooled, it would be impossible for them to be categorized as a truant. However, this comes with all the downfalls of homeschooling such as the lack of social interaction, the possible low prioritization of academics, and the possible low quality education relative to that a typical school can provide. There are also all the logistical issues involved with homeschooling. Homeschooling received 0% of the votes during the survey.

Another option given in the survey was the establishment of school sponsors sports for elementary grade athletes. This option sounds like the ideal solution for the issue at hand. However this option is easier said than done. For one, there are exponentially more elementary schools than there are middle schools and highschools, which already have school sponsored sports. Would elementary schools compete against each other? Would the athletes from different schools in a single region or district come together to make a single team? How and where would the teams compete? There are many more questions than answers with this option, which is why it only received 8.4% of the votes.

The last option given during this survey was excusing absences of athletes when they miss school to participate in their respective sport, while providing them with independent study packets to ensure they continue their education. This option received 91.6% of the votes during the survey. Parents found this to be the most desirable as it is the easiest option on the surface. It allows athletes to continue to participate in the sport they love, all the while continuing their education with the independent study packets. Add this to making absences for participating in extracurricular activities excusable, and parents do not have to worry about the potential of truancy and the repercussions associated with it. On the surface this seems like the easiest solution. However, the school or school district needs to be willing to participate in this and provide the independent study packets, and must be willing to excuse those absences. If the schools or school districts are not willing to excuse those absences, parents will be forced to lobby for change to truancy laws so they do not affect their athlete scholars.



TikTok

I created a TikTok video as part of this research project. The purpose of this video is to bring awareness to the issue of elite athletes being at risk of being considered truant for competing in the sport they love. The video was also made to help parents of elite athletes, who face the same truancy risks, to connect with each other and come together in an effort of making a difference. Whether that difference is at a school level by implementation of independent studies packets for athletes who miss time to compete in their sport, or whether the difference is at a state level by lobbying legislature to make changes to truancy laws. The video begins by highlighting an athlete's love and dedication to their sport. It then educates the audience on the reality of truancy laws and the legal consequences both athletes and parents may face. It ends with an encouragement to those in similar situations to come together and strive to make changes that will make it easier for young athlete scholars to succeed in both their academic and athletic careers, without the worry of truancy and the possible ramifications associated with it. These changes can be made at a school or school district level by the incorporation of independent study packets as mentioned earlier, or changes at a state level by lobbying legislature to make changes to truancy law. For example, amending California Education Code 48250(a), which stipulates what can be considered an excusable absence, to include participation in extracurricular activities, would eliminate the issue of truancy among elite athletic scholars. In all, this video was designed to raise awareness and connect those who are facing the issue of athletic scholar truancy.

Conclusion

Recommendation.

I firmly believe that the options I came up with are reasonable to approach, take action, and fulfill. Each option would be in support of elite athletes, and would severely impact elite athletes and their families. Each option would allow elite athlete scholars to remain engaged in their academics, while excelling in their elite sport, and continue benefiting their pertaining school to avoid funding issues. However, out of the three options, I highly recommend that creating a free and accessible platform, such as TikTik, to spread awareness of the issue would serve as the best and most practical action option. Due to the data regarding parents feeling uncomfortable and embarrassed about their situation, and feeling like they were alone in this matter, parents did not feel confident, nor open to talk about the truancy subject. I think creating a TikTok would be the best option, as it would cost nothing to run the application, and it is free for others to access the application. Educating families of elite scholars, and bringing awareness of the California truancy education codes, and the severnes of legal repercussions that parents may be charged with. The creation of the TikTok account would bring together a safe community, in which together can make a greater impact and make a difference in truancy education policies at the state level.

Concessions.

By not collaborating directly with the principal of the pertaining elite athletes school, it can create friction and potentially burn bridges, and make for an uncomfortable environment

for elite athletes and families. Parents and their elite athletes can potentially feel like they have a target on their back, and may feel like their credibility would be lost.

By not having an independent study agreement in place for elite scholars to benefit from when missing school due to a sporting event, the scholar can potentially fall behind in their academics. Additionally, it creates a conflicting barrier with elite athlete parents, as they are put in a sticky situation; they can either risk legal repercussions due to truancy laws, or they can lose their credibility as a person by having to lie to school personnel about the truth of their elite scholars absences. Lastly, schools lose out on funding if the elite athlete scholar does not have an excusable absence; having an excused absence allows for the athlete scholar to receive an independent study agreement and maintain their success academically.

Limitations.

The implementation of the TikTok account can be hard to manage at first. It could take the account creator time to learn how the application works. The TikTok account could also potentially take a while to grow its followers. With the lack of followers, it would lack views, likes, and shares, which would result in little to no publicity. No publicity could result in no comments within the posts, which would make it difficult to cultivate a community. No community would mean that it would be difficult to bring the issue to the state level, which would not make a supportive change for elementary aged elite athlete scholars and their families.

Potential negative outcomes.

Finding and creating creative content may be difficult to gravitate to the desired audience. Not targeting the desired audience, could result in cruel, vulgar comments, hateful

and hurtful language, and potential threats. This kind of negativity can scare, and keep families of elite athletes quiet, and not fight for truancy changes.

Conclusion.

The creation of using a social media platform can reach an exponential amount of stakeholders, not just within a small town or city, not just within the state of California, but touch base across the country, and abroad. Though there is possibility of others not agreeing with the importance of educating the world on truancy education codes, and the effects it has on elite athletes and their families, that should not supreme the impact it would have on those special scholars with elite talent.

Action Documentation and Critical Reflection

The focus issue of this Capstone project was to bring awareness of the lack of support that elementary schools offer their elite athletes and their families. Elite athletes miss school to participate in sporting events, such as cheerleading competitions, and tournaments. These missed school days are not considered excused. Excused absences as specified in California Education Code 48205 are as follows: 1. Personal illness or injury. 2. Quarantine under the direction of a county or city health official. 3. Medical, dental, optometric or chiropractic services. 4. Attendance for funeral service for a member in the IMMEDIATE family. 5. Exclusion for failure to present evidence of immunization. 6. Exclusion from school because the student is either the carrier of a contagious disease or not immunized from a contagious disease. 7. Attendance at naturalization ceremonies. 8. Spending time with a member of the pupil's immediate family, who is an active duty member of the uniformed services and has been called

to duty or is on leave from or has immediately returned from deployment to a combat zone or combat support position. 9. Pupils in Grade 7 or 8 who leave school with prior approval of the principal or designee to obtain confidential medical services. The pupil is to return a copy of the medical professional's appointment verification form. 10. Upon written request of the Parent/Guardian, prior approval of the Head of School and pursuant to Board policy, a student's absence may be excused for additional reasons. Reasons to include: appearance in court, observance of a religious holiday or ceremony, attendance at religious retreats, attendance at a funeral service for someone who is not a family member, family emergencies, appearance at School Attendance Review Board meeting, and high school shadow days. Under these specified excused absences, none are in relation to a scholar missing school on behalf of being a participant in a sports program or organization. Because of this, elite athletes risk being categorized as truants. A major component of this has to do with the California Education Codes, encompassing a focus on truancy. Under the California Education Code 48260(a), a student missing more than thirty minutes of instructional time without an excuse three times during the school year must be classified as a truant and reported to the proper school authority. Due to these education codes, parents of elite athletes risk legal repercussions if their child misses excessive school.

Upon understanding the main focus of this issue accumulated by parents conversing during my daughters team practices, it occurred to me that many of us undergo the same level of stress when it comes to our children's schools not being supportive. I sent out a quick survey to gather more information on what they would like accomplished in our elite athletes schools to promote support. Of the twelve parents that responded to the poll, 91.6% of the parents

would like to see elementary schools support their elite athletes by allowing sporting events, such as competitions and tournaments, to be deemed excusable paired with an independent study packet. 8.4% of parents who participated in the poll, suggested that school sponsored sports could be a resolving solution. I also sent out a questionnaire to a total of three parents of elite athletes, some of these parents were educators, and one even had their scholar attend the same school as my daughter. I also sent out a questionnaire to one coach from an elite organization. These questions asked a variety of thought provoking questions such as their personal experiences and their knowledge of the support, or lack thereof, that elementary schools have or do not have towards elite athletes. I also included questions that allowed the participants to engage in the actions and outcomes they would like to see.

In conclusion, according to the conversations I overheard, the poll, and the questionnaire, parents thought they were alone in how they felt about schools not being supportive of their elite athlete scholars, and assumed they were the only ones in the position of having to come up with creative, excusable absence scenarios to avoid truancy threats. There were also a few parents who were unaware of the severity of truancy education codes and laws, and their repercussions. A few option actions emerged from my data and research such as my eager to interview the Principal at Star Academy Elementary, and collaborate with her to generate ideas, and develop a solution or concept to have elite athletes absences deemed as excusable. I also wanted to propose an independent study packet agreement that would coincide with the excused absences so that elite athlete scholars can remain successful in their academics. Being rejected for an interview with the Principal and having no success with presenting my independent study agreement, I decided that I would take action on social

media. I decided TikTok would be a great platform to get started as it is free, and therefore easily accessible to EVERYONE. My goal is to bring awareness as to how truancy impacts the families of elite athletes. Hoping to cultivate a supporting community of elite athletes and their families, with the end goal of this community to bring forth a change to the truancy policies at a state level.

Action Research Project Documentation and Reflection

I sent out a poll style survey, interviewed three parents of elite athletes, and a head coach of an elite cheer organization. I sent out the poll via GroupMe which is the application that Forever Cheer uses to communicate between coaches, parents, and athletes. The interviews were conducted either via email or by text. I was surprised that even the parents who homeschool their children, did not vote homeschooling as the best practical option for elite athletes. My first action plan which consisted of working alongside my daughter's school principal to generate ideas, and develop a solution or concept to have elite athletes absences deemed as excusable was never given a chance. The principal wished not to partake in my Capstone project, and asked that I keep her identity concealed. Therefore my proposed action plan of implementing an independent study agreement was also not given an opportunity to be presented. I needed to think of a way to get the message out. TikTok was the answer. A platform where I could inform, educate and bring together parents of elite athletes, coaches, and elite athletes themselves. Together we have a louder voice to bring awareness of the lack of support elementary schools give their elite athlete scholars. Together we are stronger and can work towards a change in truancy policies and laws at a state level. Parents of elite athletes have

shown less embarrassment about their elite athlete scholars' truancy records. They have been more open about their struggles when speaking to other parents who may potentially have the same issues. Parents who were unaware of the current California truancy policies showed empathy, and were encouraging. The coaches of Forever Cheer Elite All Stars also vetoed in doing their best to find more local competitions to attend, and will try to minimize travel days for non-local competitions. I wish I knew more about the extremes it takes to take an action plan to the state level so that I could have created avenues that would get to the end goal of making a change in California truancy policies. I learned that not everyone is comfortable being involved in making a change, especially at the extremes of taking action to the state level.

Capstone Parent Questionnaire

1. What do you know about school sponsored sports in elementary schools?

Parent 2: Elementary schools do not offer sports for their students.

Parent 3: I know that public school sponsored sports play a crucial role in the development of a child. Yet, in my experience there is a lack of school sponsored sports at the elementary level. Most school sponsored sports start at the middle school/high school level. This leaves the elementary schools at a disadvantage.

2. What do you know about elite athlete scholars in elementary school?

Parent 2: Elementary Schools do not offer or support elite athletes nor do they offer scholarships.

Parent 3: Most elite athletes that are current elementary school students struggle to keep a balance between school work and sports. Elite athletes dedicate many hours a week to their sport and the school work often gets put on hold. Students also have more recurring absences. This also affects their learning growth.

3. What do you see as the challenges that elite athletes in elementary school may encounter?

Parent 2: Elite athlete students face truancy due to their absences.

Parent 3: The major challenges that I see elite athletes face are time to complete work, lack of rest and absences due to competitions.

4. Has your child encountered any hardships being an elite athlete in elementary school? If so, what were the hardships, and how did they affect your family, and stance in school?

Parent 2: Elite Athlete students face truancy and independent studies are not offered. There is no support to help them achieve in their academics. The absences are marked un excused.

Parent 3: My child has absolutely encountered hardships. Homework is always the toughest thing. My daughter has to complete a reading passage everyday along with math. This affects my family because it causes stress and anxiety in the home. My daughter cries because she feels left behind and often time must stay inside for recess to catch up on her missing assignments. This in turn has also made an impact on her placement. She is below grade level in math, but cannot attend math intervention after school because she has cheer.

5. What is currently being done to address the challenges elite athletes and their parents may encounter by their elementary school - and what are the strengths and weaknesses of these efforts?

Parent 2: There is nothing being done to address this issue. Both parents and elite athlete students are not supported but they face truancy and parents face legal repercussion.

Parent 3: In my own experience there has not been anything done to address the challenges. Students are still required to perform at the same level as their peer and are still required to turn in all assignments. There is no support when the student has gone home to make up for lost time.

6. What do you think should be done about elite athletes in elementary school missing excessive days of school for their sport's competitions, tournaments, etc?

Parent 2: I think schools should be more aware of these Elite Athlete students. These kids are well rounded students, who thrive to do their best and represent their team and school. If schools do not offer such opportunities for students to excel in sports they should be encouraged and supported in any way. We are trying to keep kids busy to keep them out of trouble. This keeps our community safer. These elite athlete students are also learning life long lessons.

Parent 3: I believe that schools could utilize online resources. For example, a teacher can open up zoom and have the student login if available. This would benefit the student by having them be somewhat present and at the minimum listen to what the class is working on. Students are already familiar with the online platform, so this is something that is doable. I also encourage the use of google classroom to submit work and communicate with the students. The workload can be uploaded and students could work on it instead to waiting upon return.

7. What do you think are the challenges to doing something about having elementary schools encourage their scholars to achieve excellence in an elite athlete status?

Parent 2: We need to provide positive encouragement inside and outside our elementary schools. Give student athletes school packets to do school work during their absences. Allow elite tournaments, competitions to be excused.

Parent 3: I do see challenges, especially with teachers. Teachers do not want to assign more work and therefore are less likely to put forth the effort in addressing these needs.

8. Is there anything else that you would like to say about support for elite athletes and/or the improvement of schools supporting elite athletes and their families?

Parent 2: It takes a community to raise a community. These elite student athletes work so hard and they go out representing our community.

Parent 3: I think schools should embrace a student athlete and excuse any absences that have to do with a sport. The students social and emotional well being are just as important as academics and when a student/parents feel supported everyone is more likely to work in a team effort.

Critical Reflection

Beginning the semester, I was excited and eager entering my LS: 400 *Senior Capstone* course. I had done well in previous semester courses, and felt prepared. When it came time to discuss important Educational topics with my Capstone professor, Dr. PW, I was encouraged to pursue this topic (elite athletes in elementary schools). I left her office lost and confused because I felt my topic was not as severe nor would make an impact on others. Because of how I was feeling, it took me some time to get rolling with narrowing my focus.

Due to closed off private practices at my daughters cheer gym, I communicated primarily via text and the GroupMe application with other parents. I received feedback from parents, concerns were fluttering, some felt anxious and nervous to take part in my capstone project. This made me concerned on how I was going to collect data. However, other parents showed interest, and supported me. This allowed me to begin the writing portions, plugging in research, data, and getting my project to flow.

As I was finding my rhythm for the flow of my project, I had health related issues, and a drastic life changing situation which put me in a halt. I struggled to continue my work on my project. Fortunately, I had the support of my professor, and with her flexibility, guidance, and encouraging conversations, I was able to complete my project. I had an awakening moment, and realized my topic was very important. The whole reason why my professor had encouraged me to proceed in my project was because it was personal to me, for my daughter. My drive and dedication to my living children was what I needed to make it to the end.

Synthesis and Integration (Individual)

Attending California State University, Monterey Bay (CSUMB) straight out of high school in 2011, and dropping out pregnant in 2012, returning as a single divorced mother of two, my journey as an undergraduate scholar at CSUMB has been an accumulation of twelve long, challenging, overwhelming, and stressful years full of many experiences. Upon my return in 2019, I maximized my efforts, and allowed CSUMB to mold me into the profound aspiring educator I am today. The required Liberal Studies (LS) MLOs, the classes and coursework, this Action Research Project, and the support of my professors equipped me in my professional development. MLO 1: Developing Educator, has prepared me with the confidence needed to think critically, write, and speak in a professional manner. All crucial developmental factors in the skills needed to be a successful educator. In addition, MLO 4: Social Justice Collaborator, has given me the disciplinary knowledge, community engagement skills, and reflected practices to cultivate a role as conscientious and socially aware educator. I was able to collaborate with relevant stakeholders to champion for change, fairness, and flexibility within the scope of elementary school truancy codes, and elite athlete scholars and their families. In all, I believe I have the power to make an impact in the lives of not only my future scholars, but their families as well. As long as I continue learning, I will have the fundamental skills necessary to provide a high level of education to my future scholars. I will encourage my scholars to pursue their passion in extracurricular activities, such as elite level sports. Allowing them the flexibility to miss school on occasion due to sporting events, and providing them with schoolwork they can complete so that they can remain successful scholars.

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