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If Stress Is the Lock Is Communication the Key

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Final Capstone Write-up

“Supporting our Student Athletes”

LS 400

Riley Romero

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 stakeholders perspectives chosen were current high school student-athletes because they are able to 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.

Carlos had always loved the water. As a child growing up in a small village near the coast of Mexico, he spent most of his free time swimming in the ocean. However, life was not easy in his village. His parents struggled to make ends meet, and Carlos often had to go without basic necessities like food and clean water. Despite the hardships, Carlos always had a positive outlook on life. He dreamed of one day making a better life for himself and his family. So when his parents made the difficult decision to move to the United States, Carlos was excited about the opportunity to experience a new culture and pursue his dreams. When he arrived at his new school, Carlos was filled with both excitement and nerves. He was excited to start a new chapter in his life, but he was also nervous about starting high school in a new country.

The first few weeks were tough. Carlos struggled to understand the language and the customs of his new peers. He often felt like an outsider, disconnected from the community around him. Despite the challenges, Carlos found solace in his love for water polo. He had played the sport back in Mexico and was excited to try out for the school's team. The tryouts were tough, but Carlos impressed the coach with his speed and agility in the water. He was overjoyed when he found out that he had made the team. However, he quickly realized that balancing sports and academics would be a challenge. Carlos had to work harder than ever before to keep up with his classes. He would often stay up late studying after practice and wake up early to finish his homework. Sometimes he felt like giving up, but he knew that he couldn't let his teammates down. In addition to his academic struggles, Carlos also faced social challenges. He was one of the only students in his school who spoke Spanish as his primary language, which made it difficult for him to connect with his peers. He often felt like an outsider and struggled to find his place in this new environment. Carlos refused to let these challenges defeat him. He was determined to succeed in both his academics and sports. He spent most of his afternoons practicing with the team, which left him with little time to work on his studies. However, he knew that he needed to put in extra effort to catch up. With the help of his teachers, Carlos slowly but surely began to improve in his studies. He would stay after class to ask for help, and he worked tirelessly to catch up on the material he had missed.

Carlos was determined to succeed, not just for himself, but for his family. As the weeks and months went by, Carlos began to thrive in his new environment. He made friends on the

team and in his classes, and he started to feel like he belonged. He was proud of his achievements both in the pool and in the classroom. Carlos' hard work paid off. He was soon recognized as one of the top water polo players in his school, and he was even scouted by college coaches. But even more importantly, Carlos had found a new sense of belonging and purpose. He had overcome the challenges of being an immigrant child in a new country, and he had shown that with hard work and determination, anything was possible. As he graduated high school with honors, Carlos knew that his journey was far from over. He was excited to see what the future held, and he was grateful for the opportunities he had been given. Carlos knew that he would always be proud of where he came from, but he was also proud of the person he had become in his new home.

Physical activity is essential for the healthy growth and development of children. It not only helps in building strong bones, muscles and joints but also plays a crucial role in maintaining a healthy weight, improving mental health and cognitive function. High school student-athletes face a unique set of challenges when it comes to balancing academic performance with their athletic pursuits. These challenges can often lead to stress, anxiety, and a lack of motivation, which can negatively impact their academic performance. However, there are several strategies that schools can employ to help support student athletes and promote academic success. One of the most important strategies is to provide academic support services specifically tailored to the needs of student athletes. These services may include tutoring, study groups, time management workshops, and academic advising.

Why is it an Issue/Opportunity?

Schools should be looking for new methods that can help support our student athletes as they continue their life long journey of living a healthy lifestyle. Movement and “play” is a necessity to building relationships, and healthy habits. The American Heart Association (AHA) finds that 1 out of every 4 children do not get enough exercise to maintain a healthy lifestyle. The rise of an opportunity to ask students athletes who are in highschool on how their schools support them and how they can improve. A study done in 2012 by the Los Angeles School district, sampled over 35,000 students and found a significant correlation between the GPA of Student athletes and non-students athletes. They found that students who are in sports had a boasted GPA score of .55 to .74 to their GPA compared to students who were not in any sports at all. This study further supports the claim that exercise benefits one's learning capacity and problem solving skills.

What Has and/or Should Be Done?

By providing these services, schools can help student athletes manage their academic workload and develop the skills they need to succeed in the classroom. Research has shown that academic support services can have a significant impact on the academic performance of student athletes. For example, a study by Kim and Cruz (2020) found that academic support programs improved the grade point average (GPA) of student athletes by an average of 0.33 points. Similarly, a study done By Watson and Kim (2018) found that academic support programs improved the retention rates of student athletes by 10%. Another strategy that schools can use to

support student athletes is to provide flexible scheduling options. Student athletes often have demanding schedules, with practices and games taking up a significant amount of their time. By providing flexible scheduling options, schools can help student athletes balance their academic and athletic commitments. For example, schools may offer evening or weekend classes, or allow student athletes to take online courses that can be completed on their own schedule. Research has shown that flexible scheduling can have a positive impact on the academic performance of student athletes. For example, a study by Slomkowski and associates (2017) found that student athletes who had access to flexible scheduling options had higher GPAs than those who did not. Schools can help support the academic performance of student athletes by fostering a culture of academic excellence. This can be accomplished by recognizing the academic achievements of student athletes, promoting a positive attitude towards academics among coaches and athletic staff, and providing incentives for academic success, such as academic scholarships or recognition at athletic events.

Research has shown that a culture of academic excellence can have a significant impact on the academic performance of student athletes. For example, a study by Stevenson and colleagues (2015) found that student athletes who perceived a strong culture of academic excellence within their athletic department had higher GPAs. Research has shown us that student athletes obtain higher scoring grades compared to non-student athletes. Historically since the 1970s the number of young students who do not exercise has doubled, the rate of obesity has skyrocketed in the United States. One of the main reasons for the rise in childhood obesity is the availability of unhealthy food choices. Fast food restaurants and convenience stores are ubiquitous in many areas, and these foods tend to be high in calories, sugar, and fat. Additionally, many children are consuming more sugary drinks than ever before, such as soda and fruit juices. Another factor is the sedentary lifestyle that many children lead. Technology has made it easier for children to spend more time indoors and less time engaging in physical activity. Video games, computers, and smartphones are all contributing to a decrease in physical activity. The combination between unhealthy eating habits and lack of physical activity is the leading cause for the decline in our nation's overall physical health. Data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey show that the prevalence of obesity among US children and adolescents was 18.5% in 2015-2016. Overall, the rate of obesity among adolescents (12-19 years) 20.6% and school-aged children (6-11 years) 18.4% was higher than among preschool-aged children (2-5 years) 13.9%. School-aged boys (20.4%) had a higher prevalence of obesity than preschool-aged boys (14.3%). Adolescent girls (20.9%) had a higher prevalence of obesity than preschool-aged girls.

Abjua (2019). Teachers can play a significant role in supporting student athletes' success both inside and outside the classroom. Here are some things teachers can do to support student athletes. Teachers should understand that student athletes have additional responsibilities, such as training and competition, that can affect their academic performance. Therefore, teachers should work with student athletes to develop a schedule that accommodates their academic and athletic commitments. Teachers can provide academic support by offering tutoring, study groups, and flexible deadlines for assignments. They can also work with student athletes to develop study plans. It's essential that student athletes feel included and valued in the classroom. Teachers should encourage student athletes to participate in class discussions and group activities, which

can help them feel more connected to the class and improve their academic performance.\ Felce (2018).

Schools play a critical role in supporting the success of student athletes. By providing academic support, physical training resources, mental health services, and financial assistance, schools can help student athletes achieve their full potential both academically and athletically. These resources and programs can help student athletes balance their academic and athletic responsibilities, maintain their physical and mental health, and achieve their goals.

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 are able to perform better in their studies while still maintaining a strong commitment to their sports?

Context

We will be seeking student athletes in various sports and will conduct interviews as well as surveys pertaining to their experiences.

Salad Bowl High for interviews but possibility of additional schools on survey.

Participants and Participant Selection

Interviews are being scheduled

Survey was sent via email to John Devine: sports reporter and writer for Monterey Herald to possibly have him post survey on social media (response pending)

Researcher

Question 1.

Bailey: 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 manage more than my peers.

Dani: I began playing sports at the age of 5 and continued to do so until I graduated high school at 18. During this time period I juggled school alongside sports. Many times there were commitment conflicts that occurred and I received little to no help to rectify this.

Question 2.

Bailey: 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.

Dani: The clique is that hindsight is 20/20 and looking back on my student athletic years this still stands. I appreciate the responsibility that was instilled due to these two responsibilities, but some of the stress could and should have been alleviated by the teachers as well as coaches in my life at that time

Question 3.

Bailey: Being mindful that they are experiencing different situations and maneuvering life differently than what 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.

Dani: Because each individual is so complex there is no one solution that will fit all. But, there should be a system in place that they can vent these frustrations and a basis for where they can seek help.

Participants

We will invite 15 student athletes to participate in this study. This group of prospective participants is being 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 Questions:

Q1. What school do you attend? *

Q2. What grade are you in? *

Freshman

Sophomore

Junior

Senior

Q3. How many sports do you participate in?*

1

2

3

Q4. What sport/s do you participate in? *

Q5. What season/s are they in? (Check all that apply)*

Fall

Winter

Spring

Q6. How many hours do you dedicate to your school work at home weekly? Ex: Homework*

1-3 Hours

3-5 Hours

5-10 Hours

10+ Hours

Q7. How many hours do you dedicate to your sport weekly? Ex: Practice, games tournaments *

1-3 Hours

3-5 Hours

5-10 Hours

10+ Hours

Q8. What is your GPA? (Overall)*

2.0 - 2.5

2.6- 3.0

3.1 - 3.6

3.7 - 4.0

Q9. 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

Q10. 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:

Q11. Do you struggle with time management while in season?*

Yes

No

If yes, does it affect your (check all that apply)*

Ability to maintain stress

Academic performance

Athletic participation

Social Interactions (Outside of school/sports)

Physical Health

Mental Health

None of the above

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

If you answered "yes" to anything above in what ways can your educators better support you?*

If you answered "yes" to anything above in what ways can your coaches better support you?

Procedure

Participants will be interviewed. All interviews will be done in small groups . When it is not possible to interview participants in person, they will be invited to complete a phone interview or paper and pencil survey of the same questions. Face-to-Face interviews will take less than one hour, be audio-recorded (with participant consent), and take place where their practices are being held. A semi-structured interview format will be used for face-to-face interviews, to allow for follow-up questions to unclear, interesting or unexpected responses. All interviews/surveys will be scheduled at the convenience of the interviewee and should take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Data Analysis

Transcribed interviews were coded and analyzed for emergent themes.

Results

For this Capstone Project, High School student athletes were interviewed to see what they think could be done to better support high school student athletes so they are able to 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 between teachers and coaches	High/ Low	High	High

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 sport commitments. Through our interviews we asked how many hours weekly do you spend on school work 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; (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 do your teachers support your 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 on 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 to 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 and neutral stress on the survey, but when asked verbally of the challenges of being a student athlete during the interview, many stated that they actually do experience an increase in stress. Juggling their classes and sports is incredibly tiring for them and they also stated some symptoms of burnouts. That 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 significant positive to negative: (35.7%) say it has a negative impact on their time management; (57.1%) say 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 in 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 to 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 personal 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 Friday. 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 are able to make up assignments. The only other option if they are unable to make up all of their missed class materials they will have to come in for Saturday school. That really 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 with 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 that is shared between the school, teachers, and coaches that cross references the test days and games days for students. The students then will 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 individual 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 on the progress of a student. This in turn will give the staff the opportunity and knowledge to attend to each individual 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 the 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 for 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 in regards to 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 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.

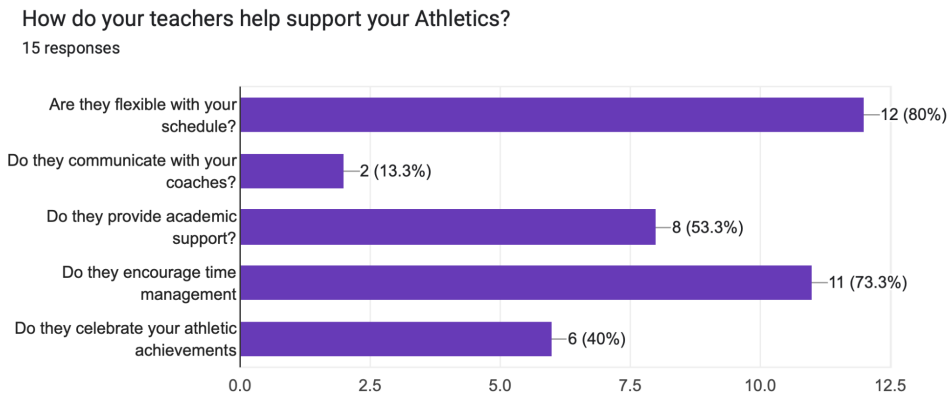
Potential negative outcomes

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 with granting their coach the ability to look 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.

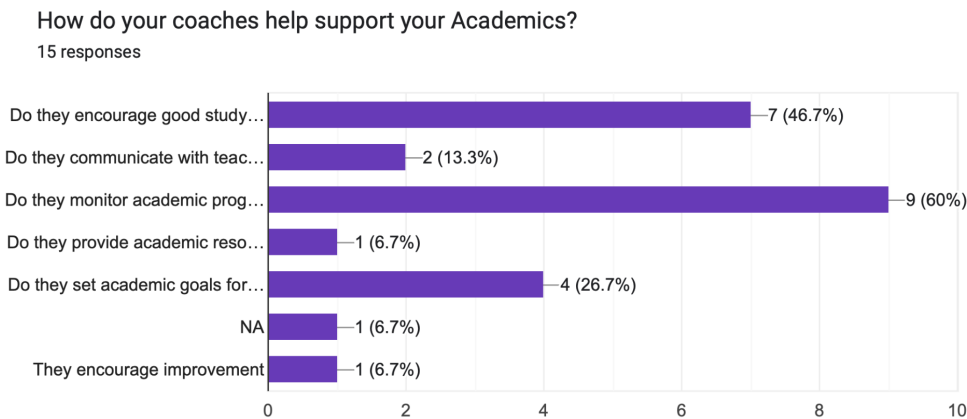
The reason our continued support is for the online platform is because it will be accessible on any electronic device. This makes it incredibly accessible to everyone so that they can access it at almost any time. Another advantage of this option is that it has so many layers to it. This online tool 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 teachers 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 students 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. The data we collected in the interviews and surveys, we found three action options. Option 1: Providing 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 creating 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.

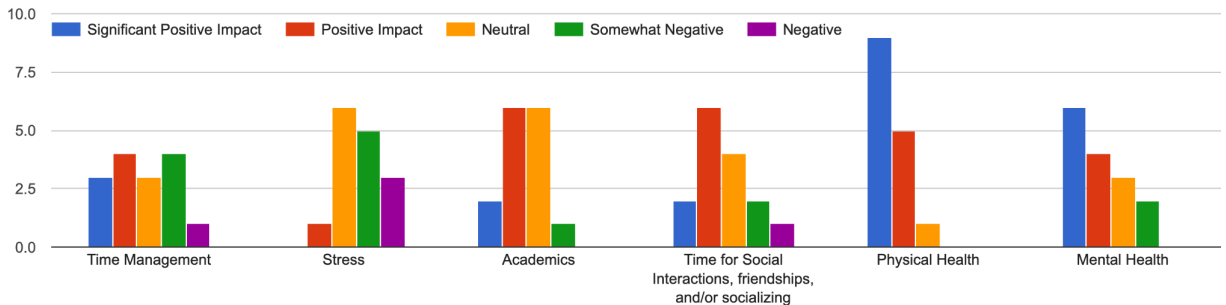


Data collection taken from the student athletes regarding their teacher involvement within their athletics.



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

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



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

We researched how high school 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 their academic standings we analyzed where students would be possibly struggling. In retrospect of 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, 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 and also claimed to have low stress in season when asked verbally of 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 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

Engaging in this project has enlightened me on the potential actions schools can take and the diverse options available to students. Consequently, I have acquired the knowledge and determination to strive towards offering students greater opportunities for success in various facets of their lives, extending beyond academics alone. It is crucial to address the challenges faced by student athletes who bear the weight of expectations in both their sports and academics, often lacking adequate support from their teachers and coaches. This imbalance takes a toll on their mental well-being. Throughout my project, through interviews and surveys, I have witnessed the immense pressure these students endure in their pursuit of excellence in both sports and academics. Therefore, there is a pressing need to reassess the creation of these expectations and identify resources that can be provided to high school athletes should they encounter difficulties. Accommodations for students encompass a broad spectrum, ranging from individualized education plans (IEPs) typically associated with diagnosed learning delays or disabilities, to the newfound awareness of accommodation options available for student athletes. Previously, my teaching experience predominantly revolved around IEPs; however, I have now come to realize that student athletes also have access to a range of accommodations that can support their academic success. By establishing a system that promotes open communication and readily provides student support, we can enhance the academic performance and overall athletic pursuits of student athletes.

Synthesis and Integration

Acquiring the necessary knowledge to analyze data accurately and develop an action plan to address prevalent issues in high schools has challenged my abilities and pushed me to test my potential. This action project has instilled in me a greater passion for addressing the pressures placed on students, who are often driven by high expectations without adequate support and guidance. I have come to realize that there is no such thing as a "basic student" in education, as each student faces different circumstances and obligations in today's society. Factors such as sports, extracurricular activities, leadership roles, internships, and more add immense pressure to their lives. It has become evident to me that if students are struggling with mental health and academics, something within the system is not working as it should. Additionally, there is a lack of resources available to high school students facing these challenges. Looking ahead, I envision taking further steps to become the professional educator I aspire to be. I recognize the need to expand my knowledge of available resources for students, as schools often lack sufficient accommodations. Understanding what is currently accessible and what is not will be vital in providing effective support. I am committed to continuing my learning journey, seeking ways to better support my future students and meet their individual needs. As an educator, I see myself as a guide in their learning process. Therefore, understanding my own limitations, as well as the steps I can take to accommodate students with disabilities, student athletes, individuals facing mental health challenges, students dealing with trauma, and more, will be a top priority.

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