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Georgia Center for Educational Renewal
"Committed to Closing the GAPS"

RESEARCH YOU CAN USE NOW!

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GOOD LUCK

If you decide to implement this program, please let the Georgia Center know. If you are interested in this program, but feel you need additional advice or support, please contact Dr. Charles Reavis at the Georgia Center for Educational Renewal at careavis@georgiasouthern.edu or call 912-681-5719

Background Note: Governor Sonny Perdue has identified raising SAT scores as one indicator that Georgia's schools are improving. He plans to use increases in SAT scores to market Georgia to businesses that might move to our state.

Research: The College Entrance Examination Board (which is responsible for the SAT) commissioned a study to identify factors associated with increases in SAT scores, which was published in February, 2005. One of the researchers is the chief research scientist for the College Board, Dr. Howard Everson. The study included 484,494 students who took the SAT exams. The researchers considered 21 factors that might influence SAT scores. Among these factors were number of honors courses taken, high school GPA, number of AP exams, socio-economic levels of parents, and education levels of parents. Also included in the study were number of extracurricular activities participated in for at least 3 years. A highly sophisticated statistical modeling procedure was utilized to analyze these data.

Findings: These researchers found that participation in extracurricular activities contributed to increases in SAT scores as much or, in many cases more than any of the other factors. The results were particularly strong for minority students. These results clearly diminish other findings that have been reported which associate achievement with parental income and/or level of education. Additionally, participation in extracurricular activities is something that schools have the possibility of increasing – they are school “alterable variables” - as opposed to level of parental income that is not. The researchers summarized their findings by writing, “...participation in extracurricular activities appears to be one of the few interventions that benefit low-status, disadvantaged students-those less well served by traditional educational programs-as much as or more than their more advantaged peers.” They also note that their findings regarding the benefits of extracurricular activities for minority students mirrors a study reported in the Harvard Educational Review in 2002. Other studies have found benefits on academic achievement for those minority students who are engaged in the school, which also tends to support the findings reported here.

Implications:

1. Conduct a survey of how many students participate in at least one extracurricular activity.
2. Survey students who do not currently participate in an extra-curricular activity to identify activities they might wish to participate in. My office can help in planning and interpreting such a survey.
3. When hiring new teachers learn if they could/would lead an extracurricular activity that might appeal to disengaged students.
4. Appeal to community civic groups and/or clubs that might be willing to sponsor an extracurricular activity (Bass Masters, for example that might be interested in sponsoring a fishing group?)
5. Consider extracurricular activities that might lead to a job in the future (a gardening club that might lead to a job in landscaping?).

Don't give up about getting your most disengaged students involved in an extracurricular activity – if a violin teacher can get inner-city students excited about learning to play classical music, as depicted in a recent Hollywood movie, *Music of the Heart*, then anything is possible!!!