

# Extracurricular engagement and the effects on teacher-student educational relationship

Gareth Sutton

*College of Education, Health and Human Development, University of Canterbury, New Zealand*

## Abstract

The literature reviews aims to investigate the effects that extracurricular activity engagement by teachers has on the teacher-student educational relationship. The review concludes that there are positives and negatives for the teacher-student educational relationship when teachers and students engage in extracurricular activity. It cautions about some of the commitments required for teachers to engage in extracurricular work.

**Keywords:** *Teacher, Educational Relationships, Teacher-Student Relationship, Engagement.*



Journal of Initial Teacher Inquiry by [University of Canterbury](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Permanent Link: <http://hdl.handle.net/10092/11452>

## Introduction

Time is a precious commodity for teachers. Often teachers are expected to spend more of their time outside of the classroom, engaging in extracurricular activities (Bailey & Colley, 2014). Teachers can at times be judged by the volume of extracurricular activities they engage in (Shulruf, Tumen, & Tolley, 2008). All of these activities come with additional time commitments. There are numerous relationships that sit within an educational context, all of which are complex. The teacher to teacher, teacher to student, and teacher to parent, are all examples of educational relationships teachers engage in (Griffiths, 2014). These relationships support a teacher's ability to work within a collaborative space; within a profession that can be isolated. Extracurricular activity can be defined as undertakings that students participate in, that are removed from prescribed education related activities "such as hobbies, social groups, sporting, cultural or religious activities and voluntary or paid work" (Thompson, Clark, Walker, & Whyatt, 2013 p. 136). Teachers have to manage extracurricular education in schools with limited time availability. This can support stronger teacher – student relationships, but it can also create issues for the teacher.

The aim of the literature review is to investigate the effects that extracurricular activity engagement by teachers has on the teacher - student relationship. There has been limited literature on this topic within the New Zealand educational context, thus the majority of the literature will be drawn from an overseas context to parallel with the New Zealand education system.

## Teachers as extracurricular participants

Whiteley and Richard (2012) suggest that there is a direct correlation between teachers' access to preparation time for developing classes and teachers' participation in extracurricular activities. They conducted a qualitative study investigating whether or not teachers who have a full teaching load were willing to volunteer to participate in extracurricular activities. The study concluded that over 70% of teachers did not have sufficient preparation time. This made their workloads unmanageable and thus they struggled to engage with extracurricular activities. The teachers wanted to engage in extra activities, but felt they were overloaded with time and work commitments.

Fredericks and Eccels (2006) established that students who participated in extracurricular activities were more academically successful than students who did not engage with extracurricular activities. This finding has implications for teachers supporting students in their learning. It could be suggested that if teachers have time scheduled in the teaching programme to engage with and promote extracurricular activities with their students, then there would be two benefits. One, it could enhance the teacher student relationship. Two it could lead to enhanced academic achievement for all students (Camacho & Fuligni, 2015).

One effect that can come from teachers who engage with too much extracurricular activity is burnout syndrome (Saiari, Moslehi, & Valizadeh, 2011; Whitely & Richard, 2012). Burnout syndrome has been defined as having three dimensions; physical, mental and emotional exhaustion, (Maslach & Pines, 1984 cited in Saiari et al., 2011). Teachers

have a range of abilities to handle stress and heavy workloads. For those teachers who do not cope well with heavy workloads and stress, there can be negative impacts on their teacher-student relationship such as limiting their contact time with students (Saiiari et al., 2011). The authors also suggest that teachers who are able to control their emotions are less likely to suffer from burnout syndrome. They give the example of a sports teacher being one of the best equipped teachers at grappling with burnout syndrome (Saiiari et al., 2011). They suggest this is due to such teachers enjoying the benefits of employing different social skills when they are exposed to seeing many people within assorted contexts throughout their day. The authors did not make any comments in regards to the differing personalities and coping strategies of sports teachers.

How teachers cope with the workload of engaging in extracurricular activity directly affects the relationship they develop with their students (Saiiari et al., 2011; Whitely & Richard, 2012). An example is that student's experience joy and happiness at seeing their sports teacher even before the class begins if they have engaged in or seen that teacher engaging in extracurricular activity with other students. In a New Zealand context Macfarlane (2004) explores this same notion in his work on *manaakitanga* and *whanaungatanga*. *Manaakitanga* is developing an ethic of care for students and *whanaungatanga* is sharing common interests and values (Macfarlane, 2004). Extracurricular activity provides a platform to establish meaningful relationships with students (Macfarlane, 2004). The literature suggests that if teachers are able to cope with the added time pressures that comes with engaging in extracurricular activity there can be positives for the teacher-student relationship such as leading to greater communication levels between teachers and students. Similarly, if they do not, it can have negative connotations for the teacher to student relationship such as teachers lacking the ability to build rapport with students which can be vital to learning (Eccles, Barber, Stone & Hunt, 2003; Saiiari et al., 2011; Whitely & Richard, 2012).

## Student educational outcomes

Eccles et al., (2003) investigated the consequences of engaging in extracurricular activity for students. One key finding was that if students see teachers or know they are engaging in extracurricular activity, then those students can see that those teachers are a part of the bigger school community (Eccles et al., 2003). This has the effect of initiating better rapport and engagement with students. Macfarlane (2004) also recognises this as supporting a culturally responsive way of working. This proposes that teacher engagement in extracurricular activities supports better student academic outcomes by demonstrating the importance of relationships on student learning (Eccles et al., 2003; Camacho & Fuligni, 2015; Macfarlane, 2004).

Students can be the beneficiaries from themselves and teachers engaging in extracurricular activities, provided it is within certain contexts. For example, participation in organised extracurricular activity can potentially benefit young people from migrant backgrounds, whose families have little insight into their new school system, (Camacho & Fuligni, 2015). Camacho and Fuligni (2015) have investigated the role of extracurricular involvement in immigrant families in America. Their results suggested organised extracurricular activity was especially important for youth in immigrant families because it provides them with community experiences that can help to

raise academic achievement and engagement. Although the study was conducted within an American context, it can have pertinence to the New Zealand educational context because New Zealand has a growing immigrant population in schools (Smeith & Dunstan, 2015).

## Teachers as relationship negotiators

One of the professional relationships that teachers have to deal with when interacting with extracurricular activity is negotiating with parents. This educational relationship can have both negative and positive connotations for the teacher-student relationship dependent upon how the teacher reacts and interacts with the parents (Smoll, Cumming, & Smith, 2011). For example an effect of this is when teachers engage positively with parents in youth sport "It can provide an educational medium for the development of desirable physical and psychological characteristics, such as learning to cope with the realities that they will face in later life" (Horn, 2011, p 13). Parents can be a valuable resource to support the teacher-student educational relationship (Smoll et al., 2011). The sporting domain is where the interaction between parents and teachers takes place frequently. The more organised sport becomes, the more parental involvement increases (Smoll et al., 2011). Teachers need to have the skills to negotiate relationships with parents, the students and wider family members (Smoll et al., 2011).

## Conclusion

There are ever increasing pressures on teachers to engage with activities that lie outside of their assigned teaching workload (Bailey & Colley, 2014). Teachers who engage in extracurricular activities and promote them to their students have strong relationships within student work; students feel like they belong to a community and are therefore more likely to open up and engage with their teachers. Higher engagement has been correlated to having higher academic achievement (Camacho & Fuligni, 2015). It could be suggested that if students are engaging in these extracurricular activities, then teachers who equally engage will also benefit because, like all educational relationships the process is a reciprocal learning process. There are three key findings that have come from the critical literature review. Students and teachers, both benefit from time spent in extracurricular activities. There are positive impacts on student learning and the relationships between the students and teachers. However, teachers are facing increased time pressures in their jobs. The more crammed teacher schedules become, the less time teachers have to engage in educational relationship building. Teacher burnout is recognised as a risk in expectations for extracurricular engagement.

## References

- [1] Bailey, G., & Colley, H. (2014). "Learner-centred" assessment policies in further education: putting teachers' time under pressure. *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, 67(2), 153–168.
- [2] Camacho, D., & Fuligni, A. (2015). Extracurricular Participation Among Adolescents from Immigrant Families. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 44(6), 1251–1262.
- [3] Eccles, J. S. Barber., Bonnie L. Stone, Margaret Hunt, James. (2003). Extracurricular Activities and Adolescent Development. *Journal of Social Issues*, 59(4), 865.

- [4] Fredricks, J. A., & Eccles, J. S. (2006). Is extracurricular participation associated with beneficial outcomes? Concurrent and longitudinal relations. *Developmental Psychology*, 42(4), 698–
- [5] Griffiths, M. (2014). Educational Relationships: Rousseau, Wollstonecraft and Social Justice. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 48(2), 339–354.
- [6] Horn, T. S. (2011). Enhancing Coach-Parent Relationships in Youth Sports: Increasing Harmony and Minimizing Hassle. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, 6(1), 27–32.
- [7] Macfarlane, A. (2004). Strategies for teachers. In *Kia hiwa ra! Listen to culture. Maori students' plea to educators*. Wellington: NZCER.
- [8] Maslach, C., Pines, A. (1984). *Experiencing Social Psychology: Readings and Projects* by Alfred A. KNOPE, Inc., USA,
- [9] Saiiari, A., Moslehi, M., & Valizadeh, R. (2011). Relationship between emotional intelligence and burnout syndrome in sport teachers of secondary schools. *3rd World Conference on Educational Sciences - 2011*, 15, 1786–1791.
- [10] Shulruf, B., Tumen, S., & Tolley, H. (2008). Extracurricular activities in school, do they matter? *Children and Youth Services Review*, 30(4), 418–426.
- [11] Smeith, G., & Dunstan, K. (2015). *Ethnic population projections: issues and trends article*. Retrieved August 13, 2015, from [http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse\\_for\\_stats/population/estimates\\_and\\_projections/ethnic-pop-projections-issues-and-trends.aspx](http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/population/estimates_and_projections/ethnic-pop-projections-issues-and-trends.aspx)
- [12] Smoll, F., Cumming, S., & Smith, R. (2011). Enhancing Coach-Parent Relationships in Youth Sports: Increasing Harmony and Minimizing Hassle. *International Journal of Sports Science and Coaching*, 6(1), 13–26.