

# An Examination of the Extracurricular Activity Participation, Social Skills, and School Engagement of Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders

Sean Wachsmuth

Dr. Timothy J. Lewis, Dissertation Supervisor

## Abstract

Students with EBD have difficulties both academically and socially and experience poor outcomes compared to their peers with and without disabilities. Extracurricular activities are positively associated with improved academic performance, social interaction with peers and adults, and school engagement. The availability of extracurricular activities and the benefits associated with them make participation a potentially valuable addition to current interventions for students with EBD. The present study surveyed 80 students with EBD and 41 typical students about their involvement in school and community-based extracurricular activities as well as their social skill use and level of school engagement. Results supported previous research reporting that students with EBD participate in extracurricular activities at similar rates to typical students. Further, students with EBD who report participation in extracurricular activities scored higher on measures of social skills and school engagement than students with EBD who do not report participation. This study provides initial evidence that extracurricular activity participation may provide an avenue for students with EBD to improve behaviors related to academic performance, generalize and maintain skills they learn through social skills training programs, and increase their engagement with school which is a key component in reducing dropout. Limitations are presented along with implications for future research and practice.