

Laidlaw Scholars – Extracurricular School Programme

Title Group 1 - Beyond Extracurricular: Establishing the Evidence Base for Co-curricular Interventions in Educational Equality

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Aim Understand the impacts of various types of co-curricular program and how co-curriculars can most effectively promote student equality, growth, and wellbeing.

SDGs
SDG3: Good Health and Well-Being
SDG4 - Quality Education
SDG10 - Reducing Inequalities

Research Question:

How can co-curricular activities promote student skills and well-being?

Objectives (List Three)

- 1) Conduct a literature review on studies of co-curricular programs by week 2.
- 2) Interview 5 co-curricular coordinators across the UK to collect qualitative data on program effectiveness by week 4.
- 3) Produce an academic article assessing the equalizing potential of co-curricular programs.

Rationale (250-500 words)

Education has deep intrinsic value in allowing students to broaden their aspirations and talents, improve their physical and emotional wellbeing, develop social capital, and engage with the world as critical subjects capable of aesthetic appreciation and democratic action in their societies. Indeed, these characteristics can even be thought of as essential components of high-quality education, rather than merely as purposes for which education can be used (Apple *et al.*, 2022). However, the spontaneity and responsiveness to pupils that are necessary for this form of instruction are highly limited by time constraints as well as sociocultural and economic factors that limit pupils' participation (Pane *et al.*, 2015). These inequalities also impact the instrumental value of education as a source of employment opportunity. For instance, roughly 7% of class inequality in England can be ascribed directly to educational inequality (Hobbs, 2016). The causes of this inequality are

multifaceted, but a major one is the system of catchment areas, in which children are assigned to a state school that their parents prefer among those within a given radius of their location, and state school funding is allocated based on how many students attend. . The catchment area model creates cascading effects of decreasing school quality as families choose to send their children to already well-funded schools. Because of the dire consequences of unequal education for overall equality and student wellbeing, we will be investigating solutions that use extracurricular programs.

We want to know about the impact of co-curricular programs of different types (school versus student organized, teacher-led versus externally led, academic versus non-academic) on student performance and general wellbeing in schools in Oxford and across the United Kingdom.

Significance: This matters so that we can alleviate socioeconomic inequity between regions and communities within the UK, which has been causally linked to academic performance. Student performance has been linked to student engagement in several studies (Fredricks *et al.*, 2004), so finding ways to address a lack of student engagement could prove useful for addressing these long-standing inequalities, some of which are linked directly to mortality (Brimblecombe, Dorling and Green, 2020).

Evidence:

These works have been chosen in accordance with our three main needs for background information: understanding the purpose of education, the role of extracurriculars, and the relationship between education and socioeconomic structures. We have focused on the work of Biesta, as well as the research of social capital scholars, in addressing the first objective. For the second objective, we focused on the qualitative studies of youth development presented in *Why Afterschool Matters* (Nelson, 2016). For the third, we focused on literature covering the limitations of the educational process where there are preexisting social inequalities (Davalos *et al.*, 1999) and institutional constraints (Pane *et al.*, 2015). We also investigated literature covering the relationship between educational performance and non-academic outcome inequality (Hobbs, 2016). Since the relationship between education and social outcomes is a primary focus of our study, we focused on this, though we also investigated background demographic issues in the city of Oxford for context on research we do there (Brimblecombe, Dorling and Green, 2020). For context on the processes that reproduce educational inequality, we examined a mathematical overview of how state schools raise money and individuals of different income levels determine what schools they will attend, to help us predict what resource constraints schools will face and anticipate the effects of different policies (Fernández, 2001).

References:

Apple, M.W. *et al.* (2022) 'Reflections on contemporary challenges and possibilities for democracy and education', *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 54(3), pp. 245–262. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220620.2022.2052029>.

Biesta, G.J.J. and van Braak, M. (2020) 'Beyond the Medical Model: Thinking Differently about Medical Education and Medical Education Research', *Teaching and Learning in Medicine*, 32(4), pp. 449–456. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10401334.2020.1798240>.

Brimblecombe, N., Dorling, D. and Green, M. (2020) 'Who still dies young in a rich city? Revisiting the case of Oxford', *The Geographical Journal*, 186(2), pp. 247–258. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/geoj.12336>.

Davalos, D.B., Chavez, E.L. and Guardiola, R.J. (1999) 'The Effects of Extracurricular Activity, Ethnic Identification, and Perception of School on Student Dropout Rates', *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 21(1), pp. 61–77. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0739986399211005>.

Fernández, R. (2001) 'Sorting, Education and Inequality'. Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network. Available at: <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=257840> (Accessed: 15 July 2025).

Hobbs, G. (2016) 'Explaining social class inequalities in educational achievement in the UK: quantifying the contribution of social class differences in school "effectiveness"', *Oxford Review of Education*, 42(1), pp. 16–35.

Nelson, I.A. (2016) *Why Afterschool Matters*. Rutgers University Press. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.36019/9780813584966>.

Pane, J.F. *et al.* (2015) *Continued Progress: Promising Evidence on Personalized Learning: Executive Summary*. RAND Corporation. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/j.ctt19w724m> (Accessed: 15 July 2025).

Contribution:

We will, by engaging directly with stakeholders, including parents and extracurricular practitioners, gain an understanding of the academic performance and welfare impacts of various interventions, controlling for existing inequalities and confounding variables.

Stakeholder Mapping:

Identify at least three key stakeholders for your research. Stakeholders are people/groups who are affected by your topic or can help with your research.

Stakeholder	Why they're relevant to your topic	How you'll engage them	What you need from them
1. Teachers	Observe students' academic lives, often facilitate extracurricular activities.	Interviews and quantitative data on their assessments of program performance.	Survey responses and interview time.
2. School leaders	Aware of student performance on a macro-level and of institutional constraints on extracurricular activities.	Interviews and quantitative data on their assessments of program performance.	Survey responses and interview time.
3. Parents	Aware of students' comprehensive environment and of cultural factors impacting performance.	Interviews and quantitative data on their assessments of program performance.	Survey responses and interview time.

Consider:

- Experts (professionals, academics with specialist knowledge)
- Affected groups (people/organizations experiencing the issue)
- Decision-makers (those with power to implement change)
- Implementation partners (organizations that could help deliver solutions)

NB: While school pupils are a key stakeholder, we do not have permission to work directly with them. You can research about them through other stakeholders.

