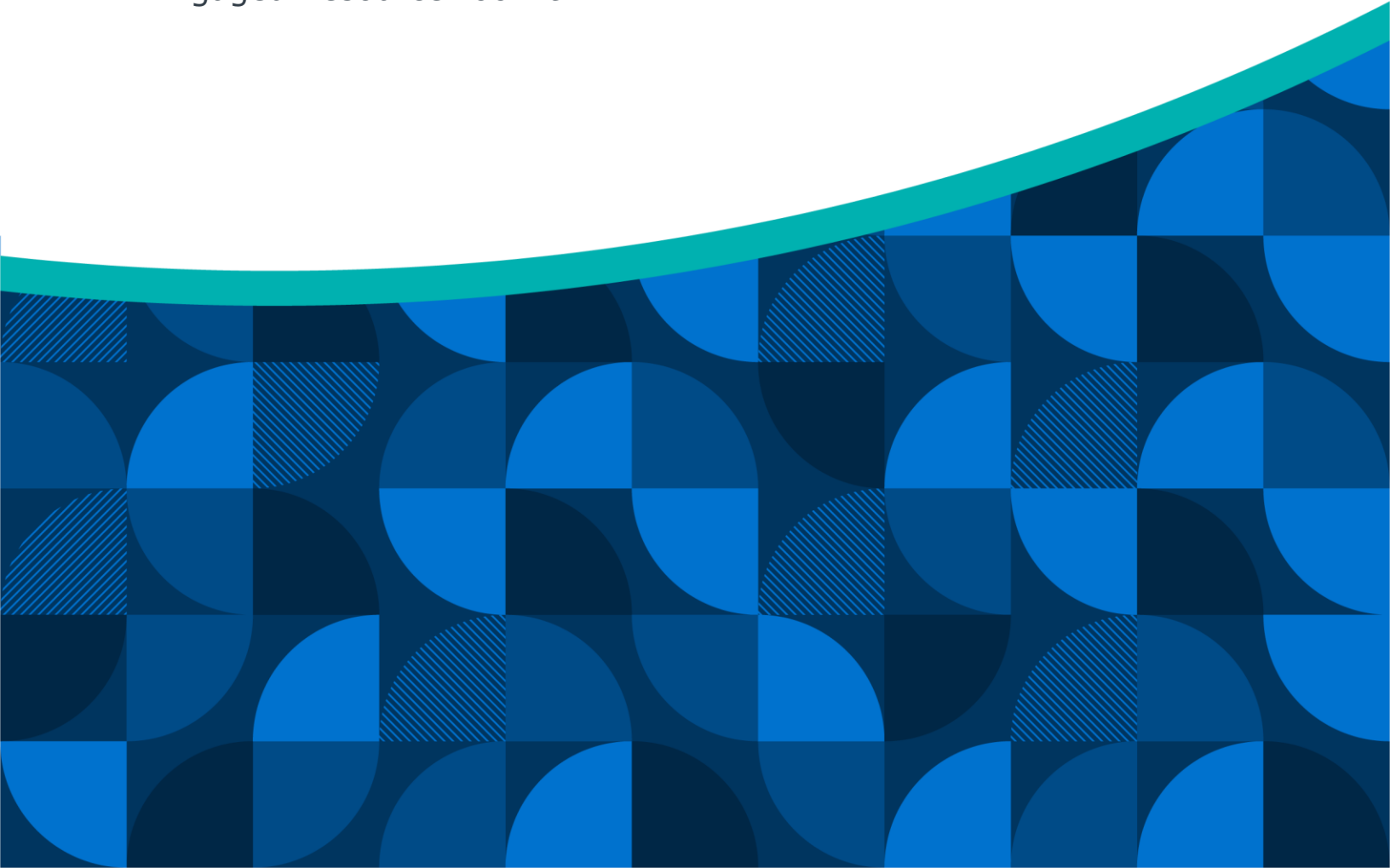




Supporting Schoolwide Engagement

Engaged Resource Toolkit



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Tools in this Resource Address The Following Diagnostic Activities:

- Our school provides and/or connects students with opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities (e.g., band, choir, recreational sports) and clubs aligned with their interests.
- Our school provides opportunities for all students to participate in schoolwide committees, councils, or listening groups that contribute to decision making on behalf of the school community.



Establishing and Communicating Extracurriculars




6 Reasons Students Don't Engage in Extra Curriculars

Use this guide to find ways to elevate student interest in offerings and communicate extracurriculars to all stakeholders. While there are many reasons students do not engage in extracurriculars the two barriers school leaders are often best positioned to address include lack of interest and lack of awareness.

Benefits of Extracurriculars on Behavior and SEL Skills


- ▶ Students participating in extracurricular activities report **higher levels of self-concept and self-worth.**
- ▶ Group social activities are known to help students **build team-work and communication skills.**
- ▶ Extra-curriculars help **foster relationships between students, the school, and local community.**

1 Lack of Interest

 Students may not participate if they don't find any extracurricular activities that align with their personal interests.


- ▶ See page 6 for practices on gathering student interest.

2 Lack of Awareness

 Lapses in communication can leave students unaware of extra-curriculars available in their school and when/where they occur.


- ▶ See pages 8-10 for help with communicating extracurriculars.

3 Time Constraints

 Inflexible afterschool commitments (i.e., jobs, sibling responsibilities) can make it difficult for students to participate in after-school offerings.


- ▶ Offer extracurricular activities during the school day.

4 Academic Priorities

 Heavy academic workloads or academic pressure can leave students with limited time to engage with extra curriculars.


- ▶ Ensure academic-focused clubs and activities are an option for students.

5 Transportation Concerns

 Students reliant on districtwide transportation or public transit to get home may not have an ability to get home if they stay after school hours.

- ▶ Provide students with a "late bus" option following after school meetings.

6 Financial Barriers

 While most school offerings are free to participate, unexpected expenses such as fundraising or materials can deter students.

- ▶ Communicate any potential expenses up-front with students and families.

Source: Blomfiel & Barber, "Performing on the stage, the field or both?" , 2009; Knifesend & Graham, "Too much of a good thing", 2012; Christison, "The Benefits of Participating in Extracurricular Activities", 2015

Collect Student Feedback and Interest Forms

Encourage teachers to use student interest surveys in each classroom to get to know students personal and academic interests. Encourage them to report out any trends in interests they see in their classroom. The first step to addressing why students are disengaged in your schools' extracurricular offerings is to understand the reasons why they may not participate and what interests them outside of school.

Benefits of Understanding Student Interests



Student interest surveys help teachers learn what motivates their students both academically and personally. When we know “**what makes students tick**”, it can help create school environments they see themselves and their passions in.

- ▶ **Identify popular trends between students** that could help establish common interests and opportunities for new extracurriculars.
- ▶ **Audit existing extracurriculars** to determine if offerings are still relevant to students.
- ▶ **Connect students with peers** that have similar interests to help promote peer relationships.
- ▶ **Detect reasons for disengagement** across each school year to ensure continuous engagement in extracurriculars.

Student Interest and Learning Survey

Student Instructions: Please read the following questions. Circle your responses and provide written answers on the lines provided.

Name: _____

1) When you grow up, what would you like to be? (i.e. lawyer, doctor, teacher, etc.)

Explanation: _____

2) What are your hobbies? What do you like to do for fun?

Explanation: _____

3) Are you involved in any after-school activities or sports? If so, what are they?

No Yes

Explanation: _____

4) What is your favorite ...

Movie? _____

Book? _____

TV Show? _____

Band or Music Artist? _____

5) If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would you go?

Explanation: _____

6) What is your favorite subject in school? Why?

Explanation: _____

7) What is your least favorite subject in school? Why?

Explanation: _____

8) What academic or personal goals would you like to accomplish this school year?



Sample Extracurricular Clubs and Programs

Use the example offerings on this page as inspiration for potential offerings in your school. Every schools' capacity for a wide range of extracurricular offerings will differ, but ensuring offerings align with your students' interests is most important.

Grades K-5 Examples

Extracurricular Name	Description
Morning Media and News	A student run news show where students deliver daily school, weather, and local news updates to the school community.
Jump Rope Club	Rappin' Ropes, a type of jump rope club, is a trick jump rope team that performs at community events like parades, at universities, and during halftime shows at sporting events. They perform tricks using ropes, hula hoops, and pogo sticks.
Summit Serves	Summit Serves is a community service groups that is open to all students and parents. They sponsor three projects annually that benefit their local community.
Chess Club	Chess club is open to all students interested in learning to play. They meet weekly and attend a few chess tournaments to compete against other elementary schools in their district.

Grades 6-8 Examples

Extracurricular	Description
Advanced Baking	This club is offered biweekly on Mondays during lunch where students can take their baking to the next level. Students learn new recipes and explore uncharted culinary territory!
Dance K-Pop Club	Offered once a week during lunch, students express and themselves to different music through a mix of R&B, rock, electronic dance, and jazz.
Young Writers Club	Meeting two a week afterschool, students brainstorm and share creative writing works. Students have the option of entering writing competitions in the Fall.
Band	In addition to a regular class in their schedule, band students meet for rehearsal and concerts.

Grades 9-12 Examples

Extracurricular	Description
Internation Academy of Student Leadership (IASL)	IASL is a student-led group that meets via zoom that gives students opportunities to advocate for themselves. Student participate in service-learning and student-led projects that address community concerns.
Best Buddies	Best Buddies International is a nonprofit organization establishing one-one-one friendships and inclusive living for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
DECA	Meeting once a week, DECA is a club for students interested in marketing. Students can compete in local and regional competitions.
Model United Nations	Meeting bi-monthly, Model UN focuses on topics in global affairs. A few times a year students practice research and debate skills to participate in local competitions.

Informing Parents of Extracurricular Offerings

Below are email templates that school leaders can use to notify parents of the extracurriculars available to their students. Sending this email at the start of the school year or new quarter may be most effective.

Initial Email from Principal

SUBJECT: Accessing Information on Available Extracurriculars at [*School Name*]

EMAIL:

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I hope this email find you well! It is with great excitement that I share some wonderful news regarding our school's continuous efforts to create an inclusive and engaging educational experience for our students.

We have recently updated our school [*homepage/website/app*] to include a dedicated section for extracurricular activities. This is designed to provide you with comprehensive information about extracurricular offering available at [*School Name*]. You can access this information here: [*insert link*].

On this page, you will find details about our various activities, including descriptions, schedules, locations, and contacts. We encourage you to browse through the available options and discuss them with your child to help them make informed choices that align with their interests and aspirations.

Participating in extracurricular is a great way for students to dive deeper into their interest, socialize with their peers, and build helpful leadership skills they can carry throughout their lives!

Should you have any specific questions about a particular extracurricular activity, or your student is interested in creating their own, please do not hesitate to reach out.

We appreciate your continued involvement in your child's educational journey and look forward to creating an engaging environment for them to thrive!

Best,

Principal Name

Introduce Student Interest in New Extracurricular

Below are email templates that school leaders can use to encourage staff to support an extracurricular in which students have expressed interest by volunteering to become the staff member advisor.

Initial Email from Principal

SUBJECT: Creating a [*Name of extracurricular*] at EAB Middle School!

EMAIL:

Dear Staff,

As we continue to strive to further support our students and creating a welcoming and engaging school, I am excited to bring to your attention a wonderful opportunity for our students that aligns with our commitment to increase student engagement.

We are in the process of establishing a [*Insert name of new extracurricular*]. This new offering is based directly on student interest; therefore, we decided to create this new opportunity to make sure all students feel they can join a club/group/social event that is aligned with their interests.

To ensure the success and sustainability of this new offering, we are seeking a teacher or staff advisor. Your participation in sponsoring this extracurricular will greatly contribute to the growth and success of our students seeking this new opportunity to engage with our school community.

Advising can take various forms, such as mentorship, organizing materials, or helping schedule meetings—but volunteering your time to guide and inspire our students is most important. Extracurriculars can vary in frequency, but a recommended 45 min -1 hour meeting, once per week or bi-weekly meeting is encouraged.

If you are interested in advising the [*Insert name of new extracurricular*] or have any questions or suggestions, please feel free to reach out at your earliest convenience.

Thank you for your continued dedication to supporting our students and further developing their interests.

Best,

Principal Name

Introduce New Extra Curricular Offerings

Below are email templates that school leaders can use to notify parents of a new extracurricular offering in the school.

Initial Email from Principal

SUBJECT: New Extracurricular Opportunities for Your Child!

EMAIL:

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I hope this email find you well! It is with great excitement that I share some wonderful news regarding our school's continuous efforts to create an inclusive and engaging educational experience for our students.

We are delighted to announce the introduction of a new extracurricular opportunity – *[Insert Extracurricular Name]*. This initiative is aimed at providing an additional avenue for students to explore their passions, gain new skills, and engage in a supportive and inspiring community outside of the classroom.

The *[Extracurricular Name]* will offer student the chance to *[brief description of the activity, its objectives, and benefits]*. The formation of this group originated directly from student feedback, so we look forward to filling this gap for our students. We believe this initiative will contribute to the development of our students, but also foster teamwork, creativity, and a sense of accomplishment.

We invite your child to participate in this new program, which is open to *[grade levels or other criteria]*. The *[Extracurricular Name]* will be held on *[day(s) of the week]* from *[start time to end time]* at *[location]*.

If your child is interested in participating, please complete the attached permission slip and return it by *[deadline]*. For any inquires or further information, please reach out to *[Extracurricular Advisor Contact Info]*.

Looking forward to this new offering and the positive impact it will have on your child's educational journey!

Best,

Principal Name



Creating Schoolwide Student Committees/Councils



Promoting Student Voice in the Classroom

Use this page to learn more about the different ways your school can further promote student voice in the classroom and the impact it has on students.

Types of Student Voice in the Classroom

Type of Voice	Description	Student Role or Example
Formal	Applies to established systems, leadership, and/or governing processes	Participate in student committees, write letters to legislators, or lead student organizations.
Informal	Teachers invite student ideas and opinions regularly, with less obligation to act on the student ideas	Participate in school surveys; share opinions about current events.

Can Be Either Formal or Informal

Type of Voice	Description	Student Role or Example
Instructional	Applies to class environment, instructional materials, research topics, or assignment criteria.	Choose the format to complete an assignment (i.e., video or essay); lead your meeting; or determine a class project of interest in the community.
Cultural	The perspectives represented through class materials (texts, web-based, speakers) and opinions reflect the diversity of the study body and our global society.	Choose work (presentations, texts, books, music, etc.) created by individuals who reflect their sense of self and community.
Evaluative	Student give feedback that is used to effect changes in future decisions related to school.	Complete perception surveys about the instructional setting and teacher effectiveness to impact school decisions



Increases Students' Effort and Persistence

Students who have a voice in school are 7 times more likely to be academically motivated than students who do not believe they have a voice.



Improves Students' Feelings of Self-Worth

According to a 239 school, 14 state study, student voice leads to an increased likelihood of feelings of self worth and personal purpose in school.

Source: John & Briel, "Student Voice: A growing Movement within Education that Benefits Students and Teachers", 2017

Considerations for Establishing Student Committees/Councils

Use this section to learn more about establishing school-level student committees; a formal way to promote student voice.

“Including students or their perspectives in governing bodies actively engages students in the education system”

Committees, a formal way of encouraging student voice, allows students to be more involved in the decision-making process of school initiatives, programs, and learning. Engaging in student perspectives helps generate important feedback and creates a sense of ownership that can lead to a better school environment for students.

For school-level committees, partnering with students can help improve culturally sustaining education practices and select curricula and instructional materials that are most relevant and engaging to their various communities. Students can help teachers be more proactive with aligning their practices and materials with student interests.

Governor Elem. Spirit Committee

This committee is a collaboration of students and staff who are committed to the celebration of school spirit. They develop programs, fun events, and are devoted to enhancing the overall school experience for students.

Consider including families or teachers in school committees

Falcon Middle School Student Council

Extracurricular activity open to all students to help share students' ideas, interests, and concerns with teachers and school principals. The help raise funds for schoolwide activities, community projects, and lead school reform.

Open committee participation to all students who are interested

▶ Pros of Creating Committees

- Empowers students to make decisions and engage in issues that are important to them.
- Fosters leadership development.
- Enables students to gain experience with democracy, administration, and communicating with administrators.
- Fosters open conversation between students and adult decision-makers
- Gives students equal power to adult decision makers, if voting occurs.

▶ Cons of Creating Committee

- Sometimes engages only a select group of students.
- Leaves the possibility that committee/council activities are limited in responsibilities by school or faculty advisors.
- May create additional responsibility for supervising staff member.
- Students may have minimal influence if unable to vote/are not fully considered in decision-making

Using Student Voice to Adjust Schoolwide Initiatives

Greenville County Schools (SC) adjusted their district-created SEL curriculum with the help of their high school students due to difficulty in finding any secondary SEL curricula from which the students received value.

Case Study:  Greenville County Schools, SC
Inspire | Support | Prepare

1 Gather Student Feedback

First, Greenville County Schools collected input from students at their high school through focus groups and student surveys. Students shared that they felt the current SEL curriculum was immature and not meeting their social-emotional needs.

2 Create SEL Committee to Implement Changes

Following this feedback, the high school formed a committee of 10-12 students and 8-10 teachers to begin redesigning the SEL curriculum. This committee’s goal was to create a curriculum that resonated well with students and amplified the students’ point of view while also meeting district SEL goals and priorities.

3 Initiate SEL Curriculum Redesign

Teachers initiated this process by aligning new curriculum topics with the CASEL framework and the Profile of South Carolina graduate. While the goal was to amplify student voice throughout this process, this step ensured the outcome was beneficial to student progress and met their state standards required for graduation.

4 Develop New Lessons with Small Groups

After teachers presented the new curriculum topics the SEL committee gathered for a summer workday to workshop new lessons under each topic. The topics included skills like empathy, conflict resolution, and building relationships. See below the outline of their summer workday and key details to consider when replicating.

Summer Workday Schedule	
9:00am	Arrivals, announcements
9:15am	Group discussion on goals
10:00am	<i>Small Groups Work on Lesson Content</i>
12:00pm	Lunch
1:00pm	<i>Small Group Lessons Presented to Larger Group</i>
2:30pm	Lesson Feedback Provided
3:30pm	Lesson Adjustments Implemented

Students decided which committee teacher they wanted to work with to encourage comfortable conversation.

Students believed these lessons should be taught by a teacher they knew, so staff changed schedule to have students be taught by a teacher they already had.

Coming out of small groups, the whole committee was able to decide which lesson aspects would work and suggest adjustments.

5 Launch New Curriculum

Finally, teachers began using the new student-developed SEL lessons with students about 2-3 weeks into the new school year. SEL progress will be monitored at the end of each quarterly through additional student surveys.

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.