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Possible Future Research Topics

(1) Do entrepreneurship classes and programs really produce entrepreneurs?

Recently, there has been an emergence of entrepreneurship programs and courses in college curriculums. According to Judith Cone, Vice President, Entrepreneurship at the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, “more than 2,000 college and universities in the United States, about two-thirds of the total, now offer a course in entrepreneurship.” Some schools even offer minors or master’s degrees in entrepreneurship and others have created entire centers devoted to entrepreneurship. Despite a growing emphasis on entrepreneurship and the increased prevalence of such university programs, there has been little research on the effectiveness of these programs in fostering entrepreneurship skill. Research is needed to address the following questions: Can such skill even be taught? Do entrepreneurship classes really foster entrepreneurship skills, or do the classes simply attract those students with large endowments of entrepreneurship skill? Do these students actually go on to become entrepreneurs?

(2) The impact of physical education classes and school-sponsored athletic programs on child obesity rates

According to a survey conducted by Opinion Research Corporation International, “only about 25 percent of students attend physical education classes daily.” Moreover, many school systems are cutting or scaling back their athletic programs to address budget shortfalls. These facts are particularly troubling in light of the recent obesity epidemic facing the nation. Both child and adult obesity rates have skyrocketed over the last 30 years and, according to the National Center for Health Statistics, “in 2003-04, 17.1% of children and adolescents 2-19 years of age (over 12 and a half million) were overweight, and 32.2% of adults (over 66 million) were obese.” These trends lead to the following research questions: To what extent has the availability (or lack thereof) of physical education classes and school-sponsored athletic programs contributed to this disturbing trend? Could we address this national health crisis by putting more emphasis on athletic programs and physical education in the classroom?

(3) The impact of “pay-to-play” programs on labor market outcomes of students

As school systems across the nation are faced with shrinking budgets and are looking for ways to scale back, many are turning to extracurricular activities for the answer. While some districts have eliminated these activities all together, beginning in the late 70s, many school districts began implementing so-called ‘pay-to-play’ programs to fund extracurricular activities. Pay-to-play programs require students to pay a fee, typically ranging from \$75 to \$100 per student, in order to participate. While popularity of these programs has grown in recent years, they have been met with considerable controversy. Opponents argue that the programs are discriminatory against students from financially disadvantaged backgrounds, who are likely to derive the largest benefit from their existence. States such as California and New York have even gone so far as to make fees for extracurricular activity participation illegal. While there is debate over the existence of these programs, there is currently little evidence to address the following questions: To what extent do program fees reduce participation in activities? Do such programs discriminate against low income families? Do program fees lead to negative later-life consequences for students?

(4) The impact of year-round schooling on students’ academic achievement

Last year 22 Wake County, NC elementary and middle schools were converted to year-round calendars, where students are placed in one of four “tracks” that rotate between classes and three week vacation breaks. The year-round schedule allows schools to accommodate more students than tradition schools. It is therefore one way to address exponential growth and over-crowded schools. In Wake County, the new calendar has been met with fierce opposition. In fact, the debate has gone as far as the State Supreme Court. Year-round schooling is not unique to Raleigh. According to the National Association of Year-

Round Schooling, roughly five percent of students nationwide attend a year-round school. While the associated costs and benefits of such calendars have been hotly discussed, there is currently little economic evidence to lend support for either side of this debate and evidence from the education field is mixed. While some studies suggest students on year-round schedules fare better than that their traditional calendar peers, other studies have found no significant connection between year-round schooling and academic achievement. Further research is therefore needed to address the impacts of year-round schooling.