

Looking at the
effectiveness of the
no pass no play
policy education
essay



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The school rule known as “ No Pass/No Play” policy was intended to motivate students to pass every class, or be disqualified from participating in most school-sponsored extracurricular activities. “ No pass” means nothing extra, as it relates to any after school UIL regulated functions: quite literally, that means no athletics, no school sponsored clubs or activities, no nothing, for students with failing grades including, the motivation to stay in school for minorities and underprivileged students.

So the question becomes, is it working? Is it accomplishing everything that it has set out to do? And are our students benefiting from this policy. Research has shown that the “ No Pass/No Play” policy has only made a slight positive effect. So the next question would be if it has only made a slight positive affect is the other ninety percent of the effect negative or does it provide no impact at all? How can this policy be revitalized so that students, teachers and coaches all reap the benefits.

Introduction

The objective of the “ No Pass/No Play rule is to send a powerful message to all involved parties; Parents, coaches, students, teachers and sponsors of all UIL activities: Academics come first and failure has consequences (Martin, 2009). And with the No pass no play policy, the consequences are swift. However, supporters as well as critics agree that student achievement is the primary goal.

The frustration of the NP/NP policy is overwhelming. And at smaller districts such as the one on the Southside in San Antonio an ineffective

implementation of the NP/NP policy or with no guidance as to how to

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implement the policy the results can be disastrous. Stated in any number of different ways, the main goal is this policy is student achievement. Therefore it would require teachers and maybe the assistance of counselors as well. In many school districts, the only person that is working to keep a student eligible is the elected sponsor or coach of a particular UIL organization. And most of the time it is after the facts so the only thing that the sponsor can do, is to talk to the teacher(s) that the student is failing their class in and ask for excessive make up work or ask if the teacher can “ do them a favor”. In some instances, when educators view reform demands as inappropriate, they are skilled in finding ways to temper or evade their effects. They may exclude low-achieving pupils from district assessments. . . . They may raise grades for students in danger of violating the no-pass, no-play rule in athletics. (Martin, 2009).

The policy has already been revised twice. In order for the policy to be effectively implemented, the district level needs to step in and assist the state with some guidelines these guidelines should include how the districts are going to include all other key players into the implementation progress to yield the academic success that the policy states that it is striving for.

Using the district where I am currently employed has assisted me in establishing the fact that there is a need to consider a reform to the No Pass/No Play policy in order to render it useful and fair to all that is affected by it.

Background Information

Historical Context of Policy

Recognizing that there is an inherent value of non-academic activities, traces as far back as the early days of Plato. More concretely, academics and athletics became directly entangled in the early nineteenth century. While athletics have historically been an integral part of human culture, they were not considered within the domain of the early school (High School Journal, 2002).

While early sports teams were viewed primarily as recreational groups, soon after the turn of the century educators began speculating that play was a vital part of the educational process. The education of the “ whole Child” was promoted by educators and the significance of non-academic participation activities was reevaluated (High School Journal, 2002).

As leading educators recognized the duty of the school extended beyond the classroom, a new attitude toward play emerged in the schools. Changes in school curriculums mirrored the new ideas of play, and the prevailing view in the early 1900’s believed participating in school activities resulted in children becoming better citizens. As athletes grew more visible than academicians, however, predictably support began mounting to fight the “ evils” of athletics.

Critics argued athletics detracted from the true mission of the school while athletic proponents asserted that extracurricular activities do more good than harm. As the debate raged onward, the schools experienced a rapid expansion of sports and extracurricular activities from the 1950’s through

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the 1970's. Sport's has always been a valued part of human culture; however, the past two decades have witnessed the explosion of their popularity. In direct correspondence with this enhanced exposure grew the antagonism toward sports among educators. Texas, for example, witnessed the construction of a multi-million dollar high school football stadium and coaches salaries nearly doubling those of teachers. The legislative response was quick and far reaching, sending the clear message that athletics must come secondary to academics (High School Journal, 2002).

In the mid-1980s, the public education of Texas underwent a number of reforms designed to improve student performance by raising the standards of achievement. The Texas House of Representatives enacted the forerunner of today's No Pass/No Play policy in 1984. Governor White appointed Dallas businessman Ross Perot to head up a commission to study public education reform in Texas. As a result of the study "No Pass No Play" was enacted as part of a series of reforms included in House Bill 72 (Stutz & Ayres, 2007),

The NP/NP policy is currently headed back to legislation because apparently some have found a loop hole in the policy. Students who are taking AP or Pre AP courses have exemptions that they would not have if they were taking regular courses. Also, some electives were exempt from the policy as well. Chairwoman Florence Shapiro is in favor of making the rule standard for all courses, which would mean students that are taking harder course, would be penalized if they dropped below a seventy percent. This could have an adverse reaction.

Although it has been a few year since the NP/NP policy has been enacted, educators are still struggling to find statistics to validate its usefulness. While it has been controversial, after 25 years, it is apparently here to stay, making it important for parents, students, and coaches to understand it.

Key Policy Players

The predominant key policy players are the Governor of Texas, Florence Shapiro, chairwoman of the Senate Education Committee and Senator Kyle Janek, R-Houston, author of the bill. There are those who are also state representative officials who are key Policy players as well, the question then becomes whether or not this issue is important enough to them to make a decisive impact on having input on this issue. However, the superintendent and the school board would make good proponents to this policy, because they have the authority to ensure that this and similar policies are not just implemented but that the results that the policy is hoping for, are actually attained. Attainment and achievement in implementing this policy would also require that others be a part of the key policy players. Parents, teachers, coaches, sponsors and especially the school leaders can take a lead role in trying to revise any policy that is going to benefit students and their academic performance. But in order to ensure that most roads lead to student academic achievement, it would be beneficial if the process was set in place from those at the top. The processes and ideology behind this policy is to set and keep the standard for academic achievement. This policy affects school leaders in that the academic performance of the school is reflective of the leader themselves. On our campus, an overwhelming amount of those students that last in UIL sponsored activities, are those who are in honors

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classes and AP courses. Although that sounds logical, when a football team starts out with 40 and ends up with 15 to 20 students because lack of eligibility, then the policy is not working the way it was designed to work. Policy makers need to find ways through implementing policies to ensure that students are successful, not just coming up with policies that disallow certain events to transpire if a student does not live up to a certain academic expectation, but also what are some steps that we can take to make sure that he is successful.

Policy Implementation

The policy was mandated in 1984; however, as previously stated, there were more loop holes in it at that time. In the 90's is when most of the Texas schools as well as the district where I teach started to implement the NPNP rule more thoroughly. It may have been, in part, because schools were not as competitive as others and so they started looking at eligibility to keep them on a more even playing field. Whatever the reasons for the forced implementation on individual schools, our campus seeks to be in compliance by documenting those students that are ineligible to play a sport at the three week intervals. And the implementation was quick and swift. It sent a message that there was a problem with some students who were a part of extracurricular activities yet not passing their classes, yet it did not provide assistance to the schools that had struggling students.

The implementation does not really get past the coaches or sponsors who tell the students that they are no longer eligible to play due to the UIL regulation. However, the band director will make a concerted effort to get

some students to maintain their eligibility at the school where I teach. But that is only, in part, because part of her responsibility is to prepare her students for competition and also representing the school at various functions that they function.

Policy Affect

Our school district is made up of over 95 percent Hispanic. We have a high number of special education students as well as LEP. It is situated in a lower socioeconomic area, and the dropout rate is relatively high for the amount of schools that we have in our district. We have quite a few migrant workers from Mexico and while we enforce the absent policy, the district understands that some of the religious holiday's that are celebrated in Mexico are not celebrated in the United states, which means that there will be a higher rate of absences in some months with certain families. This has a direct reflection on student's grades and performance. Because whether they are capable of comprehending the assignment or not they are still lagging behind students that are present.

Some students who have younger siblings sometimes are required to watch their brother or sister, therefore sacrificing their desire to participate in sports. I believe that this policy affects our schools because we do not have a huge fan base when it comes to supporting UIL events, because by the time it is time to check for eligibility, quite a few students have already have become ineligible. Therefore, the school is not making money on games unless they host a tournament and rely on the other schools to bring in the crowd. Our parent teacher organization is not as well represented as it could

be, and we do not have a booster club at the present time. However as of August of 2010, our school along with three or four others including the only high school that we have for the district received a recognized status from the Texas Education Agency.

In speaking with, the superintendent of the South San Independent School District, one thing is evident, and that is he is a proponent for guidelines that will propel students to perform well in all areas of their academic. He stated that although the impact of the NPNP policy was in effect in 1984, it was felt in the district after the dynamics changed. With the closing of the military bases, many families moved on. The families that were left behind were generally retired military whose children already had graduated from high school. The school dropped down from a 5A school to 3A and the socioeconomic status dropped. Most of the students came from Mexico and their parents who still hold their same religious beliefs would allow some of their children to miss school on some of those religious holidays. Others are migrant workers that were only in the district for a short period of time. Although the dynamics of the district changed, one thing did not change, and that was the overwhelming desire that the student had to be a part of a team sport or organization. The NPNP policy kept the district with low numbers as far as eligibility. Although an abundant amount of students would come to participate, by the time the third or fourth game came around half became ineligible. At the beginning of the NPNP ruling, more teachers were more willing to work with sponsors but then people start abusing the privilege and teachers started standing up for the law. No pass, no tutoring equals no play.

The superintendent says that he is not upset at legislators with coming up with a strict law to enforce academic achievement. Like the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (state mandatory assessment) he feels as if legislators should have taken more steps to “ ensure that students arrive at our goals. If not, there will be consequences. Losing one student out of the academic arena because they could not play a sport is too many. He says, although everyone may not necessarily benefit from changing the NPNP policy, the policy was enforced to help the students anyway. If it is not yielding higher levels of academic excellence, then the purpose of the policy may need to be re-identified.

Currently the Superintendent has over 20 years of being in an administration position with South San Independent School District. He has been able to navigate and leverage the system is by having open communication with stakeholders, such as the school board and the community at large. Also by setting back and not pushing an issue, he allows the topic to be brought forth through other venues such as other supporters. It would work the same way if it was a policy that he did not support. He would just gather those administrative personnel who held the same ideology and take to softer forms of media, like the district website, newsletters or multiple forms of mail outs to parents.

Mr. Dee is data oriented as well, so although the proposal I have sounds beneficial, Implementation would have to provide data that shows the majority of the students will maintain their eligibility.

Although implementing a proposed addendum to the NPNP policy would not cost much, if anything, it would still require that teacher, students put in a few extra hours a week and a more intrusive system be developed to ensure that parents and coaches are communicating with student's and enforcing the tutoring guidelines that would be set up by the district. In the long run, this implementation could prove beneficial to all state schools that have the NPNP policy.

Policy Analysis Report

Policy Goals and Objectives

The goal of the No Pass/No Play policy, House bill 72, is to ensure that academic achievement takes precedence over athletics and other UIL sponsored activities that students may be a part of or are considering becoming a part of. The goal of the policy was established by the Texas Education Code and was orchestrated by the Senate in 1984. At the present there are sixteen other states that have implemented the No Pass/No Play Policy with thirty-two other states that have some type of conditional eligibility for extracurricular activities. Again, the initial goal of the policy was designed to motivate students to pass every class.

Indicators

Although the amount of students who initially have participated in UIL sponsored activities has raised, the amount that has held on to their eligibility after the mandatory grade check has declined. This would suggest that the goal of the No Pass/No Play policy in effect is working but it is having an adverse reaction as it relates to ensuring high academic standards for <https://assignbuster.com/looking-at-the-effectiveness-of-the-no-pass-no-play-policy-education-essay/>

player. The UIL sponsored activities are those extracurricular activities that are sponsored by the schools. If students are unable to participate in these UIL sponsored activities because they are lacking the appropriate grade or grades then clearly the implementation of the policy cannot be deemed as being successful.

Selection and Data Collection

Data was collected from all middle schools and one high school from the school district represented in the San Antonio area. Although some middle schools start at the sixth grade, only the seventh and eighth grade levels were selected as the focus for this study because sixth graders do not participate in as many UIL sponsored activities as do the upper grades levels.

Counselors from each of the represented school was asked to participate in a simple questionnaire about the recorded amount of students that participated in UIL activity and the amount that could not complete the activity due to inadequate grades over the past four school years. Students currently enrolled at the middle school level were also were given a poll in which students were asked if they heard of the No Pass/No Play policy and what it meant in relation to them being a part of a club or organization? This was done to indicate whether or not the need for change was within the policy or if the district just needed to ensure that the NP/NP policy was disseminated among all parents and students.

Collection of Data

Data was collected from all schools and viewed by a select group of volunteers, to include teachers and other counselors to perceive if a tally system would be the most feasible way to disseminate the data that was gathered.

After an examination of the data that was received, it was decided that only the past two years would be the object of research. This was due, in part because some of the counselors that came in new to the district were unable to obtain or retrieve records from years prior to 2008. Volunteers counted the amount of students that were ineligible to be a part of a UIL organization due to low academic scores.

The numbers that were gathered from the various schools were completed and the tally system was implemented as the best source for collecting data. A bar graph seemed to be the best venue for visual representation.

Analysis and Summary of Data

Middle School

An analysis of the data showed that at the beginning of the school year, there is on average over two hundred students that come out to participate in any UIL activity that is sponsored at the middle school level. The activities included for this study were sponsored events such as: football, volleyball and band for both the seventh and eighth grade and also identified the “ A” and “ B” teams as part of the statistics. Other UIL activities such as clubs and other organizations were not included in this data because some sponsors do

not abide by NPNP as they should and so the data would be considered subjective.

The results yielded that there was a decline in the number of those who were eligible to play by the second six weeks. The total amount that was eligible by the second week took a significant decline to just over one hundred students.

In the second year, the analysis showed that although there were slightly more students that participated in UIL sponsored activities in the first six weeks; there was an even more significant decrease in those who were ineligible by the second six weeks. Although this is a small statistical pull as it just relates to one school district and just using the last two years, it would be interesting to see if the same results were yielded in future statistic.

High School

The data for the high school students revealed that although there are larger numbers of participants in all of the UIL activities, they lost even more students to ineligibility than did the middle school level. And again, this sample was taken at the first six weeks of school for gathering eligibility and then again at the end of the first six weeks to see how many still maintained their eligibility.

Because there is only one high school in the district and it just underwent some major population changes, the amount students that participated in UIL activities dropped from 2008 to 2009. However, in looking at the results

of the analysis for the second year, there is still a large number of students who were not eligible by the second six weeks.

Evaluation Report

The data that was retrieved from the questionnaires that were distributed to the middle and high schools, although taken from a lower socioeconomic area, is valid and should be considered applicable in most schools that are labeled as Title I funded. This research took into consideration the types of remediation that were given to students at the third week intervals.

Middle school student are aware of the procedures that are taken if they do not meet the academic requirements to continue on in their extracurricular activity. However, once the chain of events occurs that lead them down the road to failing a class, they are not sure how much they need to do or if they can do enough to bring their grade up in time to remain eligible to participate in an extracurricular activity.

House Bill 72, the NPNP policy, which is stipulated in the districts handbook as TEC Education CODE 33. 081, is very much so being enforced in the district. However, the intent of this objective is not being enforced which is to ensure that student's are achieving high academic standards.

Recommendations

The reason for improvement of this policy, would be to bring both the academics and eligibility policy together not only to continue ensuring academic success, but also to include more UIL participants in that number.

In order to do this, school staff should shoulder the responsibility for ensuring that students maintain their eligibility (Harrison, 2004).

One of the biggest stakeholders in this policy is the parents. They usually don't find out that their child is ineligible to participate in an activity until they go to the function. Once coaches find out is on the team, they should immediately talk with the parents and let them know that the students will be required to turn in weekly progress reports that are signed by each teacher. If the student is not making adequate progress in a given class the coach needs to make a follow up call. The teacher should be calling to inform the parents of the possibility of failing and the coach should do the follow up on the student losing their eligibility to participate.

The progress report should be done in triplicate form so that the coach/sponsor, teacher and the office gets a copy of the progress report. Also it should have a place to notate whether or not the student needs tutoring.

This process would ensure that all parties are informed, it will also put the academic responsibility back in the student's hands and the coach/sponsor would not feel obligated at the end of the six weeks to try and talk a teacher into a 70 when the student is operating at a 55.

After interviewing the superintendent, he appeared to be willing to make some subtle changes to the NP/NP policy. The recommendations for the new implementation are as follows:

Coaches meet with students and parents and explain to them the new NPNP guidelines and how it will be implemented at the school. Parents will be asked to sign a form stating that they understand the policy and how it is used in the school.

Counselors will issue grade sheets to all students that are a part of UIL sponsored activities.

Grade sheets will go out every week at the beginning of UIL sponsored activities

Students will have sheets signed by teachers.

In order to play students must have parent or guardians signature in order to play in game,

If student is failing in any week, coach contacts parents.

Students are required to go to tutoring if they are not passing

Teachers will be responsible for tutoring and documenting that the grade sheets went out in a timely fashion. If students do not come in for tutoring, teachers will make documentation and a phone call will be made to student's home.

Teachers will keep a log of when students come to tutoring and turn in at the end of each week. This will also be beneficial for teachers, as tutoring is mandatory and funds are allotted for teachers.

Coaches can go to counselor to check on the progress of student. Currently, coaches can look on Texas Grade Book and access student's grades.

However, the coach will then have to visit the perspective teachers and discuss the student's grades. With this procedure the coaches only need to go to one place to determine if the student is fulfilling the requirements of the contract.

Students need to be responsible for all paperwork that needs to be turned in.

Conclusion

The positive effect of participating in extracurricular activities has been well documented in many researches. It builds self-esteem, builds teaming, coping, as well as socialization skills. However, some students that are endanger of failing often wait too late to do anything about it, and then try to rely on the coach or sponsor to fix the situation.

Some teachers have become weary of trying to help coaches keep their players on the field or court because they wait until the last week or so of school before they force their players to go to tutoring. A few coaches and other UIL club sponsors feel that their job is to get their player to play even if they are failing way beyond reprieve. However, that does not stop them from coming to talk to the teacher " to see if there is anything the student can do". When the fact of the matter, they had the whole six weeks to encourage their student, but definitely by the time progress reports come out.

On the flip side, teachers use the fact that their student is playing sports or in a club to encourage them to keep their grades up. Educators have long

acknowledged that children learn best when they are interested.

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Extracurricular activities are the driving force behind many children's interest in attending school and their feelings of being a community member. These elements are essential to conducting a productive learning environment. In education, adults make decisions regarding the best interests for children. We must be careful not to lose touch with what is the life and heart of a school (High School Journal, 2002).

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