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**ACADEMIC ENABLERS AND DANCE: A CORRELATION STUDY**

by

Kacey M. Burke

A Thesis

Submitted to the

Department of Psychology

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

In partial fulfillment of the requirement

For the degree of

Master of Arts

at

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Thesis Chair: Roberta Dihoff, Ph.D.

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## **Dedication**

*I would like to dedicate this to my parents, Joan and Rocky Burke*

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Roberta Dihoff and Dr. Terri Allen for their guidance and help throughout this research.

## **Abstract**

Kacey M. Burke  
ACADEMIC ENABLERS AND DANCE: A CORRELATION STUDY

2011-12  
Roberta Dihoff, Ph.D.  
Master of Arts in School Psychology

This study surveyed 24 teenagers who took part in extracurricular dancing to determine if there is a relationship between the number of hours they spent dancing and their levels of academic enablers. Academic enablers are qualities that have been identified to predict student academic success in school (DiPerna, 2006). This study addressed an ongoing debate among many parents: Does children's time-consuming involvement in extracurricular activities take away from their academic success, and how much is too much? The participants were asked to complete the Academic Competency Evaluation Scales (ACES) to determine their levels of academic enabling behaviors. They also were asked to fill out an additional questionnaire to determine the number of hours they spent dancing per week. The data was then analyzed, and a bivariate correlational analysis was performed. The results gave an  $r$  value (correlation coefficient) of -0.077. The levels indicate that, for this study, there was no relationship between the numbers of hours spent dancing per week and the level of academic enablers.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

Today it seems teenagers are involved in many different kinds of extracurricular activities, both physical and intellectual. Parents have become increasingly concerned about the potential for their teens becoming overstimulated. In short, parents worry that too many activities put too much pressure on their teens to keep up with both school and the activities, and that the negative aspects of these activities could outweigh the positives, as well as take away from academic work. Another common parental concern is that teens can devote too much time to certain activities, dancing being one of them. Specifically, parents worry that taking too many dance classes and engaging in too many dance-related activities (e.g., performances and extra rehearsals) will take away time and attention from such endeavors as advanced placement classes or college entrance examination preparation, with the potential for lost scholarship monies should the students not excel. Therefore, there is a clear need to identify if the parental concerns are justified or if the extracurricular activities actually boost learning.

Also, the findings of this study could open the door to more studies looking into other extracurricular activities to see which types have the strongest correlations to academic enablers, as well as to studies into why those particular activities tend to promote high academic enhancers. Researchers could also examine if there is still a positive correlation when the teens take part in multiple extracurricular activities.

#### **1.1 Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to see if there was a correlation between the number

of hours high school teenagers spent dancing at a local dance studio and the levels of academic enablers possessed by those teens. Although the study was correlational, the implications of this study are noteworthy. If the results of this study show a statistically significant positive correlation between the two variables, then it could pave the way for additional and more in-depth studies.

## **1.2 Hypothesis**

The question for this study is this: Do high school students who participate in more than four hours of dancing per week at local dance studios possess higher levels of academic enablers than teens who take fewer than four hours of dancing per week?

It was hypothesized that the more time teens engaged in dancing per week, the higher the ratings for academic enablers. Previous studies done on extracurricular activities have looked into links between participation in extracurricular activities and academic success.

## **1.3 Operational Definitions**

For the purpose of this study, “extracurricular activity” refers to an educational activity that is not part of the regular scholastic curriculum. Such activity may include, but is not limited to, sports (e.g. football, baseball, and tennis), youth leadership groups (e.g., scouting and 4-H), and intellectual clubs (e.g., debate team, drama club, and Odyssey of the Mind) that are not part of the required school activities and are offered before or after school hours. This study primarily is concerned with one particular extracurricular activity, dance.

Dance is the rhythmical movement of the body set to music. For this study,

“dance” will refer to formal dance that involves the learning and execution of different styles of structured dancing, each style having its own technique. These styles may include modern, jazz, tap, musical theater, ballroom, and ballet. Each of these styles has a set technique that is taught through explicit instruction, as opposed to recreational dance, which is free movement to music and done primarily in social settings, such as nightclubs, or at social events, such as weddings and proms.

Academic competence in this study is defined as “a multidimensional construct composed of the skills, attitudes, and behaviors of a learner that contribute to academic success in the classroom” (DiPerna & Elliot, 2000, p. 1). In the context of this study, academic skills are defined as “the basic and complex skills that are a central part of academic curricula in schools” (DiPerna & Elliot, 2000, p. 4).

Academic enablers are a set of qualities a student possesses that allow the student to better participate in and profit from academic instruction. These qualities include motivation, interpersonal skills, study skills, and engagement (DiPerna, 2006, p. 7).

Motivation in the context of academic enablers is intrinsic motivation, which is the willingness to engage in a particular activity because the individual wants to, as opposed to engaging in an activity as a way to escape or end something unpleasant, which is extrinsic motivation (DiPerna, 2006, p. 7).

Interpersonal skills are the ways in which people behave when interacting with others that produce positive reactions from others and operate to diminish negative reactions (DiPerna 2006, p. 10).

A set of cognitive and processing skills that help people to learn and incorporate

new information quickly are called “study skills” (DiPerna, 2006, pp. 9-10).

Engagement refers to the level of attentiveness and participation of students in the classroom, such as answering questions and note-taking (DiPerna, 2006, p. 9).

The Academic Competence Evaluation Scales Student form (*ACES-Student*) is a scale that was developed by James C. DiPerna and Stephen N. Elliot in 1998 to measure academic competence. In the context of academic competence, the developers of *ACES-Student* found that the skills and behaviors that seem to promote academic competence can fall into one of two categories, either academic skills or academic enablers. As such, *ACES-Student* is divided into two main sections: academic skills and academic enablers. *ACES-Student* contains 68 statements in response to which students are to rate how often they use the skill indicated in each statement, applying a five-point rating scale: never, seldom, sometimes, often, and almost always (DiPerna & Elliot, 2000).

#### **1.4 Assumptions**

The assumptions of this study are that the people who take part in the study and fill out the *ACES-Student* form are answering truthfully. Another assumption of this study is that the students are proficient enough in their reading level and/or understanding of the English language to be able to understand what is being asked in the *ACES-Student* and additional survey used in this study.

#### **1.5 Limitations**

This study took place at two local dance studios and as such is not indicative of a whole population. Also, this study did not measure levels of academic enablers in teenagers who did not participate in extracurricular dance. This study also only looked at

the relationship between extracurricular dance and academic enablers, and did not look at the relationship between any other extracurricular activities and academic enablers. In addition, the participants from this study were all recruited from within the same state and as such, are not indicative of the entire population of teenage dancers in the United States.

### **1.6 Summary**

The findings of this study can be used by parents of teenagers looking to start a rigorous dancing schedule. They can help parents to be better informed when deciding if the time commitment to dancing could potentially help or hinder children scholastically. Also, this study could open the door to many more studies that look into academic enablers and extracurricular activities with such questions as “Is there a correlation between extracurricular activities and levels of academic enablers?” or “Do certain extracurricular activities promote academic enablers more than others?”

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

In their 2004 article, Alivernini and Lucidi weigh in on the pros and cons of after-school homework programs and extracurricular activities. They suggest that after-school homework programs, although beneficial to a student's learning, can minimize parental involvement in the schooling process, and they suggest ways to incorporate parental involvement into the child's academic experiences. They also state that extracurricular activities do provide room for parental involvement and socialization, but they warn that too much extracurricular activity can impede the student's ability to get schoolwork done (Alvernini & Ludici, 2004). The resulting dilemma faces parents when deciding if it is in their children's best interest to participate in extracurricular activities. A common concern to parents is that their children's extracurricular activities may take up too much time, leading to a slipping in academic achievement. However, according to Kennedy (2008):

The marriage of academics and athletics specifically is a component of high school that drives the school year and in some instances sets the tone for the remainder of the school year. The importance in challenging students athletically as well as academically seems to be an attitude that is disappearing, and this is disappointing. (p. 38)

A number of studies and articles take a close look at students' involvement in extracurricular activities and discuss the effects of academic success, as well as the success of academic enablers and their impact on academic achievement.

Academic enablers have been defined as a set of characteristics or attitudes possessed by people that promote learning. The enablers identified are study skills, motivation, interpersonal skills, and engagement. According to DiPerna (2006), when these enablers are paired with quality instruction, they will lead to growth of the individuals' academic skills, which will in turn lead to increased academic achievement. In addition to promoting academic achievement, motivation, interpersonal skills, and engagement also play major roles in teens' success in extracurricular activities, and that participating in these extracurricular activities helps to build these enabling behaviors, which, in turn, are useful in the classroom setting (Rubin, Bommer, & Baldwin, 2002; Mahoney, Cairns, & Farmer, 2003; Zaff, Moore, Papilo, & Williams, 2003; Luthar, Shoum, & Brown, 2006; Anderson, 2008; Schafer, Simpkins, Vest, & Price, 2010). Also, the intensity of activity and duration of time one participates in an activity appear to encourage educational success (Fredericks & Eccles, 2002; Zaff, Moore, Papilo, & Williams, 2003; Gardner, Roth, & Brooks-Gunn, 2008).

## **2.1 Engagement**

In a study looking at levels of engagement (identified as an academic enabler) among elementary school students, Greenwood, Horton, and Utley (2002) found that students engaged in inappropriate behavior about a third less of the time than they did being engaged in academic responding and task management, which are both desirable form of academic engagement. Overall, they found that high-achieving students were less likely to engage in inappropriate behavior than were lower achieving students (Greenwood, Horton, & Utley, 2002). Busseri, Rose-Krasnor, Willoughby, and Chalmers



(2006) found that youths who participate in extracurricular activities, particularly those who participated in more than one activity at a given time, exhibit fewer risky behaviors and more positive interpersonal skills than those who do not participate in extracurricular activities. By diminishing inappropriate behaviors and externalizing behaviors, participation in extracurricular activities may be considered to boost the level of engagement in classrooms and, in turn, boost academic success.

Reports show involvement in extracurricular activities links to a lower high school dropout rate among high risk teens (Mahoney & Cairns, 1997; Mahoney, 2000). It also appears to decrease antisocial patterns in the high risk teens, but only when the teens' clusters of friends also were involved in extracurricular activities (Mahoney, 2000). Gender appears to play a role since Mahoney and Cairns (1997) found that at-risk teenage boys are more likely than at-risk girls to participate in extracurricular activities and, as a result, are less likely to drop out of school than their female counterparts. In addition, most of the at-risk youths who participated in extracurricular activities during high school and who then went on to graduate high school were less likely to be arrested in their young adult years than those who did not (Mahoney, 2000). Another finding is participation in extracurricular activities leads to diminished externalizing behaviors, which includes drug use (Darling, Caldwell, & Smith, 2005; Fredericks & Eccles, 2006). Of note is that involvement in sports-related activities shows the highest rates of delinquency and drug use among those extracurricular activities (Darling, Caldwell & Smith, 2005; Metzger, Crean, & Forbes-Jones, 2009).

## 2.2 Motivation

Motivation plays a big role in teenagers' achievements in their extracurricular activities (Dawes & Larson, 2010; Gao, Lee, Xiang, & Kosma, 2011), as well as their academic success (Diperna, 2006; Goodman et al., 2011). Researchers point out how intrinsic motivation seems to play a large role in the perceived success of teenagers (Dawes & Larson 2010; Gao, Lee, Xiang, & Kosma, 2011). Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2002) talk of motivation not as single facet but as a construct with many different mechanisms; they speculate four main faces of student motivation: self-efficacy, attributions, intrinsic motivation, and achievement goals. They advise teachers to take into consideration these different facets of motivation and how they all work together when they teach or create an intervention for a student (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002).

Intrinsic motivation rather than extrinsic motivation has been associated with academic achievement (Diperna, 2006; Goodman et al., 2011). Intrinsic motivation refers to a person's own willingness to take part in an activity for his or her own benefit, whereas extrinsic motivation refers to the willingness to take part in the activity, driven by the desire to stop something unpleasant from continuing (Diperna, 2006; Goodman et al., 2011). An example of intrinsic motivation would be teens studying hard for a test because they want to get good grades. Extrinsic motivation would be studying hard for a test to avoid getting yelled at by parents for receiving a low grade. Another example of intrinsic motivation would be a teen wanting to join the football team because the teen likes playing football, whereas extrinsic motivation would be joining because the teen does not want to be bullied in school anymore. Goodman et al. (2011) found that

intrinsic motivation, when mediated by effort, is a strong indicator of high academic performance.

In a study examining mediation of children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and their academic achievement by academic enablers, Volpe et al. (2006) found, “Results of these analyses indicate that after controlling for the influence of prior achievement, ADHD influences motivation, which in turn influences study skills to promote academic achievement” (p. 47).

Motivation plays a major role in the success of teenagers’ achievements in their extracurricular activities (Dawes & Larson, 2010; Gao, Lee, Xiang, & Kosma, 2011), as well as their academic success (Diperna, 2006; Goodman et al., 2011). Dawes and Larson, 2010; and Gao, Lee, Xiang, and Kosma, 2011, point out how intrinsic motivation seems to play a large role in the perceived success of teenagers.

Peer relations also can aid in motivation in school performance (Wentzel & Watkins, 2002), which is an example of how the enablers work together to promote learning. Wentzel and Watkins (2002) postulate collaborative learning is an effective means of promoting motivation in scholastic achievement. Pairing students together to complete a task that they will each be graded on individually can promote motivation to do well because of the students desire to avoid rejection (Wentzel & Watkins, 2002). They also suggest collaborative learning as an effective method for promoting social skills in students with special needs:

It is reasonable to assume that preparing higher achieving partners to engage and encourage peers with ADHD to participate in the problem-solving process might

improve the quality of their social interactions and ultimately foster an opportunity for children with ADHD to profit from collaborative peer learning. (Wentzel & Watkins, 2002, p. 372)

### **2.3 Interpersonal Skills**

Involvement in extracurricular activity has been associated with maintaining old friendships and making new friendships, which in turn will lead to better interpersonal skills and a stronger peer support system (Rubin, Bommer, & Baldwin, 2002; Mahoney, Cairns, & Farmer, 2003; Zaff, Moore, Papilo, & Williams, 2003; Anderson, 2008; Schafer, Simpkins, Vest, & Price, 2010). Interpersonal skills that are picked up as part of participation in these activities, as previously indicated, also serve as enablers to academic success (Wentzel & Watkins, 2002). Participation in extracurricular activities has been associated with increased adjustment (Fredericks & Eccles, 2002; Mahoney, Cairns, & Farmer, 2003; Fredericks & Eccles, 2006), as well as academic benefits (Gifford & Dean, 1990; Mahoney, Gifford, & Dean, 1990; Mahoney, Cairns, & Farmer, 2003; Fredericks & Eccles, 2002; Fredericks & Eccles, 2006). Gilman, Meyers, and Perez (2004) suggest the use of structured extracurricular activities as a way of getting teens who are isolated involved in the school and also interacting with their peers to help them build social skills. These academic benefits, though, seem to taper off as the involvement in activities reaches a high level, which indicates there is a plateau indicating how much involvement is academically beneficial (Fredericks & Eccles, 2002).

## **2.4 Additional Benefits of Extracurricular Involvement**

In their review of a National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, Feldman and Matjasko (2005) determined that, of the teens interviewed, 70 percent of them indicated they were participating in one or more extracurricular activities at the time they were surveyed. White and Gager (2007) identified extracurricular activities youths were most likely to engage in are sports, band/music/choir, and then academic or hobby clubs, respectively. They also found that most youths in the study who did participate in extracurricular activities participated in religious groups, followed by sports teams, and then private lessons (White & Gager, 2007). Participation in one extracurricular activity--academic, creative, service, or leadership--has been indicative that high school students will be more likely to participate in other extracurricular activities (Anderson, Huston, Schmitt, Linebarger, & Wright 2001; Dumias, 2006).

Furthermore, involvement in athletic activities was correlated to involvement in leadership and service activities, but not academic or creative activities (Anderson, Huston, Schmitt, Linebarger, & Wright 2001). In addition, they found doing paid work resulted in a diminished likelihood of engaging in extracurricular activities (Anderson, Huston, Schmitt, Linebarger, & Wright 2001).

Gender does play a role in the effects of extracurricular activities on self-esteem. Males tend to benefit more in the realm of self-esteem than do girls in all activities except musical ones. Involvement in musical activities seems to raise self-esteem in girls but has the opposite effect on boys (Steitz & Owen, 1992). Girls who participate in extracurricular activities are more likely than girls who do not participate to graduate

from college within six years of graduating high school (Troutman & Dufur, 2007).

It has been speculated that socioeconomic status plays a role in determining if a teen would be inclined to participate in extracurricular activities (McNeal, 1999). White and Gager (2007) also identified socioeconomic status as a strong indicator of the likelihood of participation, or actual participation, in extracurricular activities, stating that youths of lower socioeconomic households were less likely to participate in activities than were youths of higher socioeconomic households (McNeal, 1999; White & Gager, 2007). Conversely, McNeal's study in 1999 suggested teens coming from families that were of exceptionally high socioeconomic status were less likely to participate in extracurricular activities (McNeal, 1999). Other factors that have been identified as preventing teens from engaging in extracurricular activities include coming from a lower socioeconomic environment, coming from a school that possesses a problematic climate, and living in an area where teens do not feel safe (McNeal, 1999).

Implications of the benefits of participation in extracurricular activities have been investigated in long-term studies as well, and results indicate that there is a link to success in higher education as well. These studies have found that involvement in extracurricular activities in high school links to higher college aspirations and self-expectations (McGaha & Fitzpatrick, 2010).

## **2.5 Negative Trends**

Larson, Henson, and Moneta (2006) state, "Youth in faith-based activities reported higher rates of experiences related to identity, emotional regulation and interpersonal development in comparison with other activities" (p. 849). Not all activities

were of equal influence, though: “Sport and arts programs stood out as providing more experiences related to development of initiative, although sports were also related to high stress” (Larson, Henson, & Moneta, 2006, p. 849). Gilman, Meyers, and Perez (2004) and Anderson (2008) suggest the use of structured extracurricular activities as a way of getting teens who are isolated involved in the school and interacting with their peers to help them build social skills.

One study of note by Melnick, Sabo, and Vanfossen (1992) did not find any significant relationship between participation in extracurricular activities and standardized test scores, however, citing the participation in extracurricular activities does not have any effect on test scores. However, in their 1999 study, Cooper, Valentine, Lindsay, and Nye reported participation in extracurricular activities was associated with a seven percent increase in standardized test scores, which disputes the 1992 study findings. Also, links have been made to specific activities and their educational implications; Hunt (2005) found that involvement specifically in hobby or vocational clubs was negatively associated with school grades, as well as education expectations, while Dumias (2006) reported that children who played sports in elementary school reported gain in their reading achievement test scores from grades one to grades three. Also, with regards to sports, self-efficacy was found to be a predicting factor in success in sport activities (Cetinkalp & Turksoy, 2011).

## **2.6 Implications for Interventions**

DiPerna (2006) indicated that, when staging an academic intervention, academic enablers should be considered in the planning process to lead to a more effective

intervention. In order for academic enablers to be efficient, one must understand different learning models and how they overlap with academic enablers (Keith, 2002). Knowing which enabler is most crucial at a particular grade will help school psychologists and teachers create tailored interventions that will promote an enabler when it is decidedly most important to learning (Keith, 2002). Also, it is important to consider how the different enablers work together; if two have little to do with each other, then an intervention aimed at promoting both enablers may be more successful than an intervention that seeks or promotes one or another of the enablers individually (Keith, 2002).

Some specific pathways of academic enablers in academia already have been mapped out. Jenkins and Demaray (2010) found there are significant relationships between motivation and study skills in reading ability and achievement in reading. They also identify study skills as promoting higher reading scores on standardized tests (Jenkins & Demaray, 2010). In identifying specific pathways and relationships among academic enablers and learning, DiPerna, Volpe, and Elliot (2001) found there is a direct pathway between study skills and reading/language arts achievement as students progress from primary to intermediate schools. They also found that the pathway from engagement and reading achievement seemed to decrease alongside students' progress from primary to intermediate schools (DiPerna, Volpe, & Elliot, 2001).

General education students have been found to exhibit academic enablers more frequently in both self-reports and teacher reports than at-risk students and students with disabilities (Elliot, DiPerna, Moroch, & Lang, 2004); however, it appears that students



with disabilities exhibit more academic-enabling behaviors than at-risk students (Elliot, DiPerna, Moroch, & Lang, 2004). Researchers postulate the difference could stem from students with disabilities usually being involved with services that are aimed at maximizing academic-enabling behaviors as these students struggle academically, despite their motivation and engagement (Elliot, DiPerna, Moroch, & Lang, 2004). In a study examining mediation of children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and their academic achievement by academic enablers, Volpe et al. (2006) found, “Results of these analyses indicate that after controlling for the influence of prior achievement, ADHD influences motivation, which influences study skills to promote academic achievement” (p. 47).

## **2.7 Other Influences**

Christenson and Anderson (2002) note the importance of academic enablers and their part in academic achievement but also state, “Missing from the picture is the influence of the context and the development and applications of students’ academic skills” (Christenson & Anderson, 2002, p. 378). They look at the importance of outside factors on the development of the academic enabling behaviors, such as the home environment, and propose a theory that encompasses these contextual influences in their approach to intervention (Christenson & Anderson, 2002).

In 2002, when scrutinizing the literature concerning academic enablers, DiPerna and Elliot identified several limitations. They acknowledged that much research has been done in looking at individual academic enablers and their impact on academic achievement, but they suggest more research needs to be done looking at the

combinations of different enablers and what effects those various combinations have on academic achievement (DiPerna & Elliot, 2002).

Parental involvement also is a factor in the effects of extracurricular activities on teens. Legacé-Séguina & Caseb (2008) reported that, as parental pressure increased, the general well-being of the students, as well as the students' perceived academic competency, also increased, and when there was increased parental support, the teens' perceptions of their academic competence likewise increased. Fletcher, Elder, and Mekos (2000) found parental involvement in extracurricular activities was identified as an important factor in determining if a child would stick with an activity as well. In their 2006 study, Luthar, Shoum, and Brown indicate far more important than the amount of time spent engaging in extracurricular activities and academia was the parental attitude toward achievement, both academic and in the students' activities.

Participation in extracurricular activities appears to promote, interpersonal skills, motivation, and engagement, which are three of the four different enabling behaviors identified that promote better learning and thus academic achievement. It can be postulated, then, that under the right circumstances, extracurricular activities can boost academic enablers, and in doing so, actually promote academic success. The questions then become if more time spent engaging in extracurricular activities lead to higher academic enablers, or if it can be too much of a good thing.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methods**

The amount of literature on the positive academic implications from participation in extracurricular activity, as well as the information showing links to high levels of academic enablers to academic proficiency, suggests a logical step to examine is if a relationship exists between participation in extracurricular activities and the levels of academic enablers. Specifically, this study seeks to discover if the amount of time spent engaging in a particular activity has an impact on academic enablers. Dance was the chosen activity for the purpose of this experiment as participation in the performing arts activities has been shown to have more positive outcomes than other forms of activities (Larson, Henson, & Moneta, 2006; White & Gager, 2007).

#### **3.1 Participants**

Participants for this study were high school-aged students recruited from two dance studios in New Jersey. Posters were placed on bulletin boards at both studios, as well as announcements made by the faculty during the classes, to advertise the study. To be eligible to participate, all participants had to obtain parental consent if they were under the age of 18. Participants also had to be able understand the English language in order to be able to participate in the study. There were a total of 24 participants, 14 who spent more than five hours in dance classes each week, and there 10 who spent fewer than five hours a week in dance classes. The total number of hours the participants spent dancing ranged from one hour per week to 13.5 hours per week.

### 3.2 Materials

The Academic Competence Evaluation Scales (ACES)-*Student* was used in this study to measure participants' academic skills and academic enablers. The student version of ACES indicates that it is to be filled out by a student as a self-survey, as opposed to the ACES-*Teacher* version, which is to be filled out by a student's teacher. The ACES-*Student* form consists of two main sections: academic skills and academic enablers. The academic skills portion of the ACES-*Student* form is aimed at measuring academic competence.

The development of ACES started in 1996 by James DiPerna and Stephen Elliot, but the student form was not started until 1998 (DiPerna & Elliot, 2000). ACES-*Student* was standardized alongside the ACES-*Teacher*, and both were pruned and primed together so as to maintain consistency between the two forms (DiPerna & Elliot, 2000).

When examining the reliability of ACES, one must know that three different methods were utilized: internal consistency, test-retest stability, and inter-rater agreement (DiPerna & Elliot, 2000). Inter-rater agreement pertains to the ACES-*Teacher* version, is not pertinent to the present study, and will not be discussed. Internal consistency (coefficient alphas) for the academic skills portion of ACES-*Student* was measured at 0.94, and coefficient alphas for the academic enabler scales were 0.96. The internal consistency of the subscales ranged from 0.83 to 0.96 (DiPerna & Elliot, 2000). These high scores indicated that the scales are highly reliable.

Test-retest reliability scores on the academic skills and academic enabler scales of the ACES-*Student* were 0.81 and 0.82, respectively. These scores were recorded from a

subsample of 27 students from the standardization sample (DiPerna & Elliot, 2000). Fewer than three to five points were the variances in the mean raw scores on the academic skills and academic enabler scales of the ACES-*Student* from Test 1 to Test 2 (DiPerna & Elliot, 2000). This result was impressive, considering there was potential for there to be 116 points of variance on the academic skills scale and 164 points of variance on the academic enablers (DiPerna & Elliot 2000).

DiPerna & Elliot acknowledge that the validation process of a scale is not complete upon the publication of the scale but rather is a continuous process (2000). Having said that, they also state, “There is substantial evidence to support the conclusion that scores from the ACES teacher and ACESstudent forms have a strong relationship with external criteria commonly used when considering students’ academic functioning” (DiPerna & Elliot, 2000, p. 108).

The ACES-*Student* form was developed to measure academic competence. In the context of academic competence, the developers of ACES found that the skills and behaviors that seem to promote academic competence can fall into one of two categories, either academic skills or academic enablers. As such, ACES-Student is divided into two main sections: academic skills and academic enablers. From these two main sections, the ACES-*Student* form is broken down into more subsections; the academic skills section is further broken into reading/language arts skills, mathematic skills, and critical thinking skills; and the academic enablers are further broken down into interpersonal skills, engagement, motivation, and study skills (DiPerna & Elliot, 2000). These subsections were developed as they were determined to be the most predictive factors in academic

competence (DiPerna & Elliot, 2000). The ACES-*Student* form consists of 68 questions that are to be answered on a five-point rating scale ranging from “never” to “almost always.” Examples of questions that are found on the academic skills portion of ACES-*Student* include “I understand what I read,” “I correctly solve math problems in my head,” “I take notes in class,” and “I like to learn new things” (DiPerna & Elliot, 2000).

### **3.3 Additional Survey**

In addition to completing the ACES, participants also answered a brief questionnaire about the hours per week they spent dancing at the dance studio. This questionnaire asked for the age and grade level of the participant so as to make sure that the participant met all of the inclusion criteria. The survey also made sure to discern between the number of hours the participants spent dancing at the studios per week and the amount of time each participant spent at the studios per week. From these results, the participants were categorized into two groups, those who danced for more than five hours per week and those who engaged in fewer than five hours per week. The additional survey can be seen in Appendix A.

### **3.4 Design**

This experiment utilized a bivariate correlational design. The variables considered for this study were the number of hours participants spent dancing per week and the academic enabler scores that were tabulated from participants’ responses on the ACES-*Student*. A bivariate correlation analysis was performed.

### **3.5 Procedure**

Each participant was first asked to have a parent/guardian fill out a parental

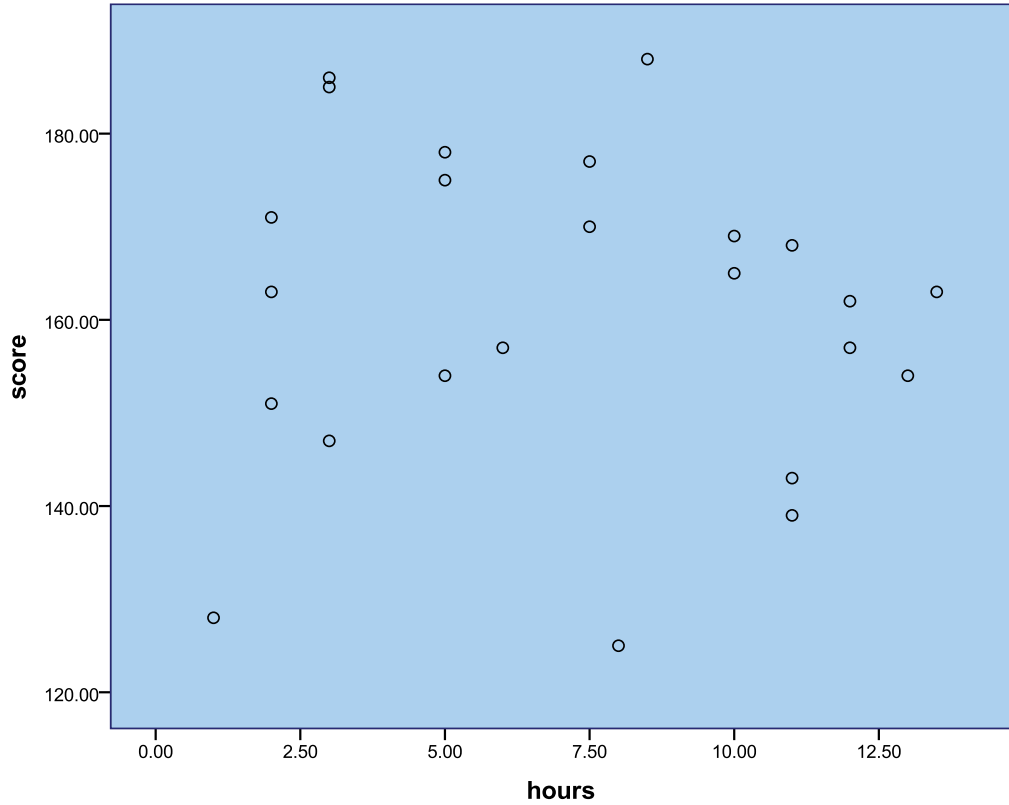
consent form. This step was not necessary if the participant was over 18 years of age. After the consent form was submitted, the participants were then given a packet that contained the additional survey and the ACES test. This survey asked about the amount of time the participant spent at the dance studio and other information, among it, inclusion information. Participants were asked to complete both tests, and then upon completion, return the packet to the researcher via a pre-addressed postage-paid envelope. Upon receipt, the researcher tabulated the individual scores on the ACES surveys by adding each participant's responses in each category (DiPerna & Elliot, 2000). That process gave a raw score for each individual academic enabler. Then to tabulate the raw scores for the total level of academic enablers, all the scores from each enabling category--social skills, motivation, engagement, and study skills--were totaled. There also was a section of the ACES survey that looked at the participants' academic skills, particularly language arts, math, and critical thinking. The scores for each academic skill were tabulated by adding together the responses for each skill, and then a raw total academic skill score was calculated by adding the language arts, math, and critical thinking scores together. For the purposes of this study, the information from the academic skills section was not used during statistical analysis. According to DiPerna & Elliot (2000), high school students whose raw academic enabler scores fell between 130 and 176 were considered to be "competent" in their academic enabling skills. Those whose scores ranged from 176 to 190 were considered advanced in their academic enabling skills.

## Chapter 4

### Results

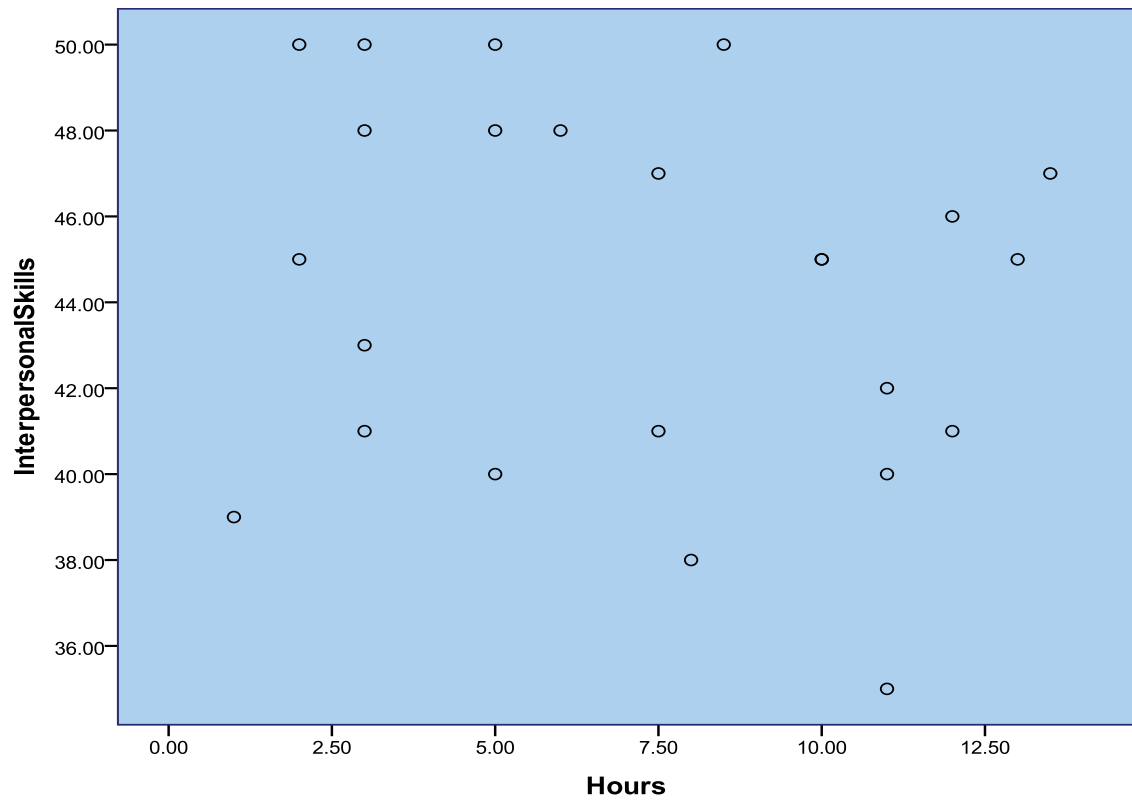
The results of the surveys were tabulated, and a bivariate correlation analysis was run. The number of hours dancing and the individual raw academic enabler scores were the variables examined for this analysis. In order for the results of this study to be considered statistically significant, the results must have yielded a significance level of 0.05 or lower. With a significance value of 0.719, the results of this study are not statistically significant. A correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) from 1 to 0.5 is considered a strong positive correlation between variables, and a correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) from -1 to -0.5 is considered a strong negative correlation between variables. The results of this study indicate that there is no relationship between the number of hours participants spent dancing per week and their total raw academic enablers' scores, given that  $r = -0.077$ . Figure 1 is a representation of the results.





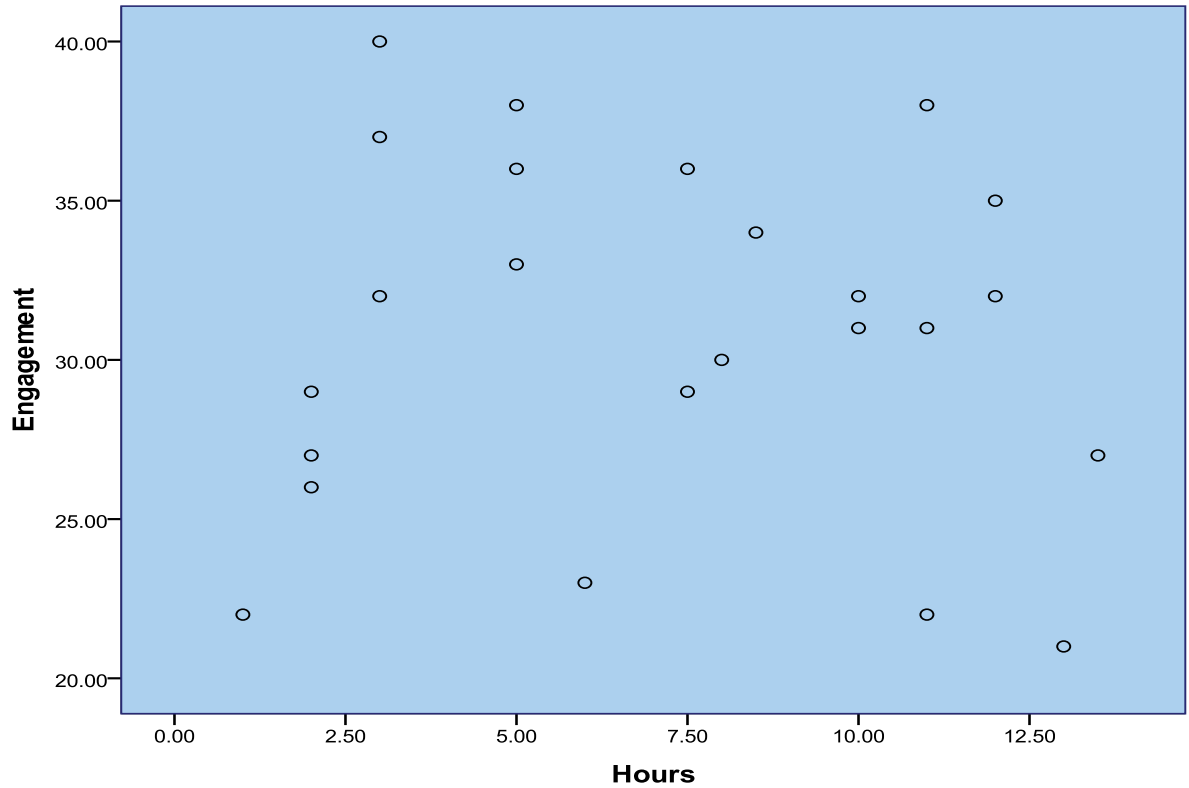
**Figure 1: Total Scores Scatter Plot**

Next, correlational analyses were performed on the participants' scores for each of the academic enablers individually to determine if there was any correlation between any of the academic enablers individually and the number of hours the participants spent dancing per week. For interpersonal skills and the number of hours dancing,  $r = -0.918$ , indicating that there is a negative relationship between the two variables; however, this relationship is slight, too slight to be considered significant. Figure 2 shows the data for interpersonal skills and number of hours spent dancing.



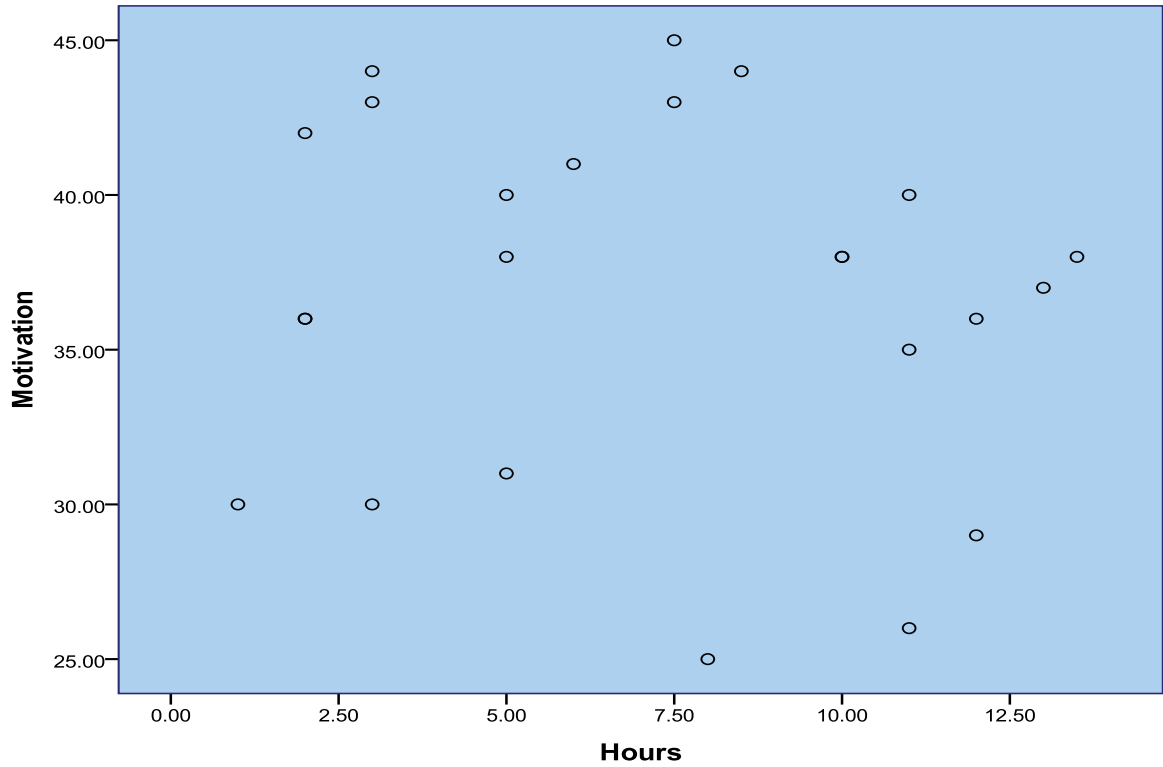
**Figure 2: Interpersonal Skills Scatter Plot**

The results for the analysis done of the engagement raw scores and the number of hours spent dancing were  $r = -0.7$ . These results also show that there is a negative relationship between the engagement scores and the number of hours spent dancing per week, but the relationship is so slight that it is not considered statistically significant. The results are indicated in Figure 3.



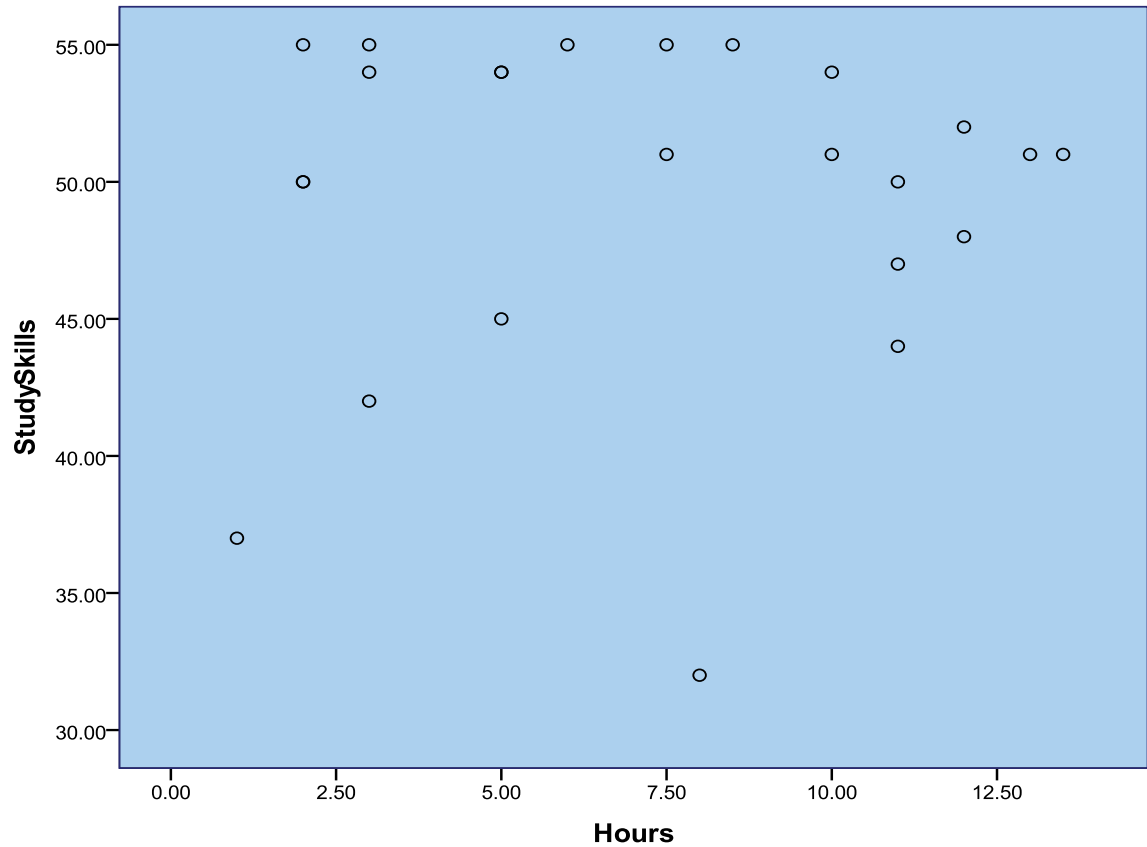
**Figure 3: Engagement Scatter Plot**

The analysis of motivation and the number of hours spent dancing yielded an  $r$  value of  $-0.119$ , which indicates negative correlation between the variables, and yet again, results are not enough to be considered significant. Figure 4 shows these results.



**Figure 4: Motivation Scatter Plot**

When the study skills results were analyzed by the number of hours the participants spent dancing,  $r = 0.845$ , indicating that there was a slight positive correlation between the two variables, but it was so slight that it is not statistically significant. The results of the analysis are shown in Figure 5.



**Figure 5: Study Skills Scatter Plot**

For each analyses that was performed on the data, the results came back with a slight correlation, but nothing was strong enough to indicate a clear relationship between any of the variables, and they were unable to be considered statistically significant. The implications of these findings are further discussed in Chapter 5.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine if there is a relationship, whether negative or positive, between the number of hours high school students spent in extracurricular dance and their levels of academic enablers that have been seen to indicate academic success (DiPerna & Elliot, 2000; DiPerna, 2006). It was hypothesized that as the number of hours participants spent dancing increased, so would their level of academic enablers. Participants were recruited for this study from two dance studios, both in the state of New Jersey. Participants had to be of high school age and obtain parental consent in order to be included in the study. Participants were asked to complete two surveys: the *ACES-Student* and an additional survey aimed at finding the number of hours the participant spent dancing in one week. There was a total of 24 participants whose numbers of hours spent dancing ranged from one hour per week to 13.5 hours per week. A correlational analysis was performed on the results of the two surveys.

The results of the analysis indicate that there is no relationship between the number of hours participants spent dancing per week and the participants' levels of academic enablers, thus disproving the hypothesis that was the premise of this study. When delving further to investigate if there were any relationships between the individual academic enablers (motivation, interpersonal skills, engagement, and study skills) and the number of hours spent dancing, the data again proved no statistically significant relationships existed. What can be inferred from these findings is that amount of time a

teenager spends dancing does not have any significant effect on his or her academic enablers.

The findings from this study diverge from the findings of previous similar studies. Previous studies have indicated that participation in extracurricular activities leads to better interpersonal skills, which in turn serve to enable academic success (Rubin, Bommer, & Baldwin, 2002; Wentzel & Watkins, 2002; Mahoney, Cairns, & Farmer, 2003; Zaff, Moore, Papilo, & Williams, 2003; Anderson, 2008; Schafer, Simpkins, Vest, & Price, 2010). From those results, one might infer that the longer one spends participating in extracurricular activities, the more opportunities there are to develop social skills. The results of this study, though not disagreeing with the previous studies, do not indicate that dancing for more hours per week, which would indicate more opportunities for socializing with peers in the time spent in dance class, has an impact on the individuals' social skills. The results do not mean that participation in extracurricular dance does not promote social skills, but they do indicate that the greater the time spent participating in extracurricular dance does not have an impact on the degree of social skills possessed by the participant.

Also, this study does not support the theory set forth by Fredericks and Eccles (2002) that academic benefits from participation in extracurricular activities plateau when participation in extracurricular activities reaches high levels. As there was no significant relationship seen between the numbers of hours spent dancing and the level of academic enablers in participants of this study, a plateau was not evident. A plateau would have indicated there is a relationship between the variables at some point.

The results of this study do seem to support the findings of Melnick, Sabo, &

Vanfossen's 1992 study indicating involvement in extracurricular activities was not significantly related to participants' scores on standardized tests. Their study tended to indicate that the success of the participants on the standardized tests was independent of their involvement in extracurricular activities, and their study supports the findings of the present study that indicates participants' level of academic enablers are independent from the number of hours they spend dancing. Both studies point in the direction that involvement in extracurricular activities and the academic success of participants are separate entities.

One limitation of this study was the sample size. The sample for this study contained only 24 participants, which is a rather small sample size. The results from a larger sample size may have shown a relationship that might exist but is not evident in the smaller sample. Another limitation about the sample for this study is that the participants were all from the same state. Although the two studios that were used for recruiting participants were not in adjoining communities, both were in the same state and within a 100-mile radius. This sampling is not representative of the entire population of teenagers who participate in extracurricular dancing. Future studies should examine a larger, more diversified sample.

Other limitations of the present study to be taken into consideration when conducting further similar studies include that no baseline measurements were taken, a self-report survey was used, and only one extracurricular activity was examined. In the current study, no relationship was seen between the variables considered, but had a



baseline measure been taken of teenagers who do not participate in extracurricular dancing, a comparison could have been done between the scores of the teens who did dance and the scores of those who did not dance.

Future studies may also want to consider additional surveys that are not self-report surveys. The *ACES-Student* is a self-report survey, and as such, the personal views of the participant may have informed their responses in the current study; participants who were not fond of school could have scored themselves low, and those who enjoyed school may have scored themselves high. In order to prevent personal opinions in the data, future studies could use not only the *ACES-Student*, but the *ACES-Teacher* as well. Having the *ACES-Teacher* filled out would include a third party who sees the participants in their academic classes, which could be helpful in obtaining more accurate data.

Also, the current study concentrated only on extracurricular dance and its relationship to academic enablers; other extracurricular activities may yield different results when looking for a relationship to academic enablers and therefore should be taken into consideration in future studies. In addition, teenagers who participate in multiple extracurricular activities may produce different results from those who participate in only one extracurricular activity. This difference in number of activities seems an important factor to consider since participation in one extracurricular activity seems to be indicative that high school students will be more likely to be involved in other extracurricular activities (Anderson, Huston, Schmitt, Linebarger, & Wright 2001;

Dumias, 2006). Investigations also could compare the relationships between physical extracurricular activities and academic enablers, and between intellectual extracurricular activities and academic enablers.

Other limitations that should be taken into account in future studies include looking into what age the teens were when they started dancing. Teenagers who have just started dancing may have different results from those who have been dancing for long periods of time. The motivation behind the participants' involvement in extracurricular dance could be something that future studies might want to take into consideration (i.e., Did they join to be with friends? Did they join because a parent wanted them to? Did they join because they liked to dance? Or did they join to meet some sort of requirement?). Another variable to investigate in future studies is how involvement in extracurricular activities is perceived by teens' parents and peers, going along with what Christenson and Anderson suggest as the importance of external factors on the development of academic enablers in their 2002 study (Christenson & Anderson, 2002).

Although the results of the present study did not produce significant results, the information gathered from this study opens up many doors for further studies. In many ways, this study paved the way for future studies and gathered data that would indicate direction for larger, more detailed studies to pick up where the present study leaves off.

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**Appendix A**  
**Additional Survey**

Participant #

Age:

Sex: M F

Grade: 9 10 11 12

What high school do you currently attend?

**Please circle your answer**

How many hours per week do you spend at your dance studio?

- |   |             |
|---|-------------|
| 1 | 4           |
| 2 | 5           |
| 3 | More than 5 |

\*If answered more than 5, how many total hours? \_\_\_\_\_

How many classes do you take at the studio in one week?

- |   |             |
|---|-------------|
| 1 | 4           |
| 2 | 5           |
| 3 | More than 5 |

\*If answered more than 5, how many total hours? \_\_\_\_\_



How many dance classes do you take in one week?

- |   |             |
|---|-------------|
| 1 | 4           |
| 2 | 5           |
| 3 | More than 5 |

\*If answered more than 5, how many total hours? \_\_\_\_\_

How many hours per week do you spend dancing at the dance studio?

- |         |                   |
|---------|-------------------|
| 1 hour  | 4 hours           |
| 2 hours | 5 hours           |
| 3 hours | More than 5 hours |

\*If answered more than 5, how many total hours? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you participate in any other extracurricular activities besides dance?

Yes No

If yes, what other activities?

On average, how many hours per week do you spend on extracurricular activities besides dance.

- |         |                   |
|---------|-------------------|
| 1 hour  | 4 hours           |
| 2 hours | 5 hours           |
| 3 hours | More than 5 hours |

\*If answered more than 5, how many total hours? \_\_\_\_\_

What grades would you say you normally receive in school?

Mostly As

Mostly Cs

Mostly Fs

As and Bs

Cs and Ds

Mostly Bs

Mostly Ds

Bs and Cs

Ds and Fs