THE PROMISE OF EXTRA-CURRICULAR CLUB PARTICIPATION FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

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Laura J. Hall – San Diego State University

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Post School Outcomes for Students with Autism

- NLTS-2 data indicate that only 21% of students with ASD secure full-time employment after high school.
- The lowest rate of employment of any disability category.
- Estimates are that over half of children identified with ASD have average or above average intellectual ability (CDC, 2014).

![Full-Time Employment (21-25 Year Olds)](image)

(NLTS2 Study; Roux et al., 2013)
CSESA Randomized Controlled Trial
Funded by IES

Center on Secondary Education for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder
Awarded to Kara Hume & Sam Odom
University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill

- 1,800 consented participants
- 547 adolescents with ASD
- 30 school districts across 3 states
- 60 schools – 20 Each in NC, WI, & CA
- Professional development and coaching provided to A teams in each school for 2 years
- Families included as key partners in process
Challenges Implementing Interventions with Students Included Full-Time in General Education

- Schedules are Full
- Focus on academics for college entrance
- Case managers have large case loads and do not know individual student needs very well
- Students without intellectual disability (ID) may not want to hang out with those with ID
- Students do not want to be singled out
Why Not Clubs?

Relatively few studies documenting effective naturalistic social interventions for high school students with ASD:

  - Designed clubs around the interests of 3 students with ASD & Implemented club intervention using a multiple-baseline design
  - Found that participant engagement and initiations with peers increased during the club intervention

  - Evaluated the use peer supports on the interactions and academic participation of high school 4 students with ASD using a multiple-baseline-across-participants design
  - Significant increases in peer interactions were evident for all four participants, as well as smaller increases in initiations
Foundational Literature


- Surveyed 143 special educators about their students’ participation in extracurricular activities

- Teachers reported that students rarely participate in school-based extracurricular activities (62%), and that students rarely express interest in becoming involved with such activities (47%)

- 74% reported that they didn’t consider it their responsibility to facilitate or monitor extracurricular activities

- The opportunity to practice social communication and functional skills (56%) was most commonly ranked as the most important benefit associated with participating in extracurricular activities
21st Century Skills Should Be a Focus for **ALL** Students

- All students can benefit
- U.S. Department of Education is focusing on “college and career readiness”
- Clear overlap in opportunity areas for students with ASD to work on
Research Questions

1. a) What is the content of the extracurricular high school clubs that attract student participants with ASD?
   b) According to the faculty advisors of these clubs, what is the stated mission or goals of these clubs?
2. a) How do students get involved in extracurricular clubs on high school campuses?
   b) Are there barriers to participation in extracurricular clubs for students with ASD?
3. What are the opportunities for peer engagement in social interaction during extracurricular clubs for students with ASD?
4. a) Do student participants in high school clubs have the opportunity to work on the 4C’s of 21st Century Skills in these clubs (Creativity, Critical Thinking, Collaboration, and Communication)?
   b) Are there barriers to working on 21st Century Skills during extracurricular club meetings?
5. What do students with ASD report about their experiences in high school clubs, including the experiences they value, the aspects they identify as challenges, and their preference for peer interaction?
A Mixed Methods Approach

“Mixed methods research has come of age. To include only quantitative and qualitative methods falls short of the major approaches being used today in the social and human sciences.”

- John W. Creswell, 2003, p. 4

- Through the use of a mixed methods approach, this exploratory study was conducted in the final semester of the Center on Secondary Education for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (CSESA) intervention period.

- Specifically, this research intended to explore the role that extracurricular clubs on high school campuses might serve for students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) who don’t have concurrent ID and who are expected to graduate with a diploma.
Data Collection Procedures

- EMAILED SURVEYS TO LISTS OF POTENTIAL SPECIAL EDUCATOR & CLUB ADVISOR PARTICIPANTS
- SCHEDULED AND CONDUCTED CLUB OBSERVATIONS
- SCHEDULED AND CONDUCTED STUDENT INTERVIEWS
- TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEWS FOR CODING, INPUT OBSERVATIONAL DATA, AND IMPORTED SURVEY DATA FOR ANALYSIS
Analysis

*Concurrent mixed methods triangulation design*
Participants

- **Special educators (N=34):**
  - Predominately female (76%), ranging in years of teaching experience from two to 33 years
  - All members of their school’s CSESA team
  - All work closely with students with ASD
  - Teachers credentialed to work with students that have both mild/moderate and moderate/severe teaching credentials were included in pool which was surveyed

- **Club advisors (N=38):**
  - Club advisors were half male and half female, with a range of one to 34 years of experience in the classroom.
  - Served as extracurricular club advisors at 18 CSESA schools in San Diego
  - Responsible for organizing, and supervising, extracurricular activities
  - Not familiar with CSESA
## Participants

### Table 1

**Student Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Club</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>% in General Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harry*~</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Stage Crew Club</td>
<td>Member</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courtney*~</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Girls Learn International</td>
<td>Member</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke*~</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Video Game Club</td>
<td>Founder/President</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyrese*~</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Movie Club</td>
<td>Founder/President</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steven*~</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>International Club</td>
<td>Leadership Team</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus*</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Cyber Security Club</td>
<td>Founder/Vice President</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roberto~</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Star Wars Club</td>
<td>Member</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stefana~</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Tabletop Game Club</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* indicates student who was interviewed as part of the study  
~ indicates student who was observed as part of the study
Instruments

- **Special Education Teacher Extracurricular Survey:**
  - Distributed to special educators in regard to their students with ASD and participation in clubs
    (response rate – 38%)

- **Extracurricular Club Advisor Inventory:**
  - Distributed to club advisors to gain more detailed information about the clubs that they manage, as well as the participation of students with ASD in their clubs
    (response rate – 9%)
Instruments

Club Observation Sheet:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Code:</th>
<th>Club:</th>
<th>Activity:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>Start Time:</th>
<th>Primary observer:</th>
<th>IOA observer:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persons in classroom (start / end)</th>
<th>Club Setting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General educators:</td>
<td>FULL All students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special educators:</td>
<td>SM: 2 to 7 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraprofessionals:</td>
<td>IN: Individual student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with ASD:</td>
<td>NST: No structured activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Students in Club:</td>
<td>GN: Gone from room</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interval and Time (circle bell ring)</th>
<th>Observe at :50 and circle (momentary time sampling)</th>
<th>Social Behaviors: From Focus to:</th>
<th>Social Behaviors: To Focus from:</th>
<th>Did Focus initiate?</th>
<th>Club Setting Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Int.</td>
<td>End Time</td>
<td>21st Century Skill Focus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0:50</td>
<td>CRE CT COL COM</td>
<td>P SWD GE SE</td>
<td>P SWD GE SE</td>
<td>Y N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1:50</td>
<td>CRE CT COL COM</td>
<td>P SWD GE SE</td>
<td>P SWD GE SE</td>
<td>Y N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2:50</td>
<td>CRE CT COL COM</td>
<td>P SWD GE SE</td>
<td>P SWD GE SE</td>
<td>Y N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3:50</td>
<td>CRE CT COL COM</td>
<td>P SWD GE SE</td>
<td>P SWD GE SE</td>
<td>Y N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4:50</td>
<td>CRE CT COL COM</td>
<td>P SWD GE SE</td>
<td>P SWD GE SE</td>
<td>Y N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Observational Inter-observer Agreement

- IOA was assessed for point-by-point agreement during 20% of observation sessions, and was balanced across students (one IOA session each)

- The overall inter-observer agreement between observers was 98.6%, ranging from 96.4% (Tabletop Game Club) to 99.6% (Girls Learn International Club)

- 21st century skill focus IOA: creativity (98%), critical thinking (100%), collaboration (99%) and communication (98%)

- Club format IOA was 100% across all four settings (full group, small group, individual activity, and no structured activity)
Instruments

Student Interview Protocol:

(1) Would you describe for me the types of things that you like to do in your free time?
(2) How did you find out about the club?
(3) Did you choose to join the ________ club?
(4) Do you like participating in this club?
(5) What is the best part about being in this club?
(6) Has your case manager ever talked to you about clubs or activities on campus?
(7) What is the hardest part about being in a school club?
(8) Do you ever skip club meetings?
(9) Do you feel like there is anything stopping you from joining clubs that you want to join?
(10) Do you think there is anything that can, or should, be done to address these barriers to joining clubs?
(11) In this club, do you talk to your peers about the activities you are doing?
(12) Do you have any friends in the club you’re in?
(13) Are you involved in any other clubs besides _________?
(14) If you could start a school club, what would it be?
Q 1a- What is the content of the extracurricular high school clubs that attract student participants with ASD?

- Special Educators reported a wide variety of activities and interests:
  - video gaming (15)
  - table games (8)
  - animation (7)
  - dance (5)
  - sports (5)
  - food (4)
  - movies (4)
  - computers/technology (4)

- Areas of interest reported by both staff and students center heavily on technology, such like video games, computer-based activities, and film. There was also agreement on art/animation, “fandom”, reading, and table top games.
Q 1b- According to the faculty advisors of these clubs, what is the stated mission or goals of these clubs?

Club advisors were asked to provide club goals or mission statement, 43 statements were collected from 38 participants

- The most frequently listed missions for clubs were:
  - to practice skills (21)
  - to have fun (19)
  - to make friends (18)
  - to broadening student perspectives (13)
  - to grow interest/knowledge in a particular area (12)
  - to serve the community (8)

- These goals seemingly align with the concept of utilizing club contexts for students to practice 21st century skills, including social communication skills.

- 58% of club advisors reported that their club currently served at least one participant with ASD
Q 2a- How do students get involved in extracurricular clubs on high school campuses?

- Most students \((n=5)\) reported that Club Day events were the way that clubs are promoted at their schools.
Q 2a- How do students get involved in extracurricular clubs on high school campuses?

- Courtney and Steven mentioned that club activities are promoted in the daily or weekly school announcements.

- Harry and Jesus found out about their clubs through flyers and/or posters placed around the school to promote club events.

- Half of the students interviewed (Courtney, Steven and Jesus) expressed that a staff member at their school was integral in the process of joining their club.
Q 2a- How do students get involved in extracurricular clubs on high school campuses?

- How often do you promote opportunities to get involved in clubs to students with ASD?
  - Club Advisors:
    - 32% never, or seldom, do
    - 26% sometimes do
    - 44% often or almost always do
  - Special Educators:
    - 3% seldom do
    - 21% sometimes do
    - 76% often or almost always do.

- Special educators are more likely to promote club activities to students with ASD than club advisors.
Q 2b- Are there barriers to club participation for students with ASD?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Barriers to Club Participation</th>
<th>Special Educators (N= 34)</th>
<th>Club Advisors (N= 38)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students are not interested in participating</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social challenges that might arise in extracurricular settings deter students from joining</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation is not available if student participates in extracurricular activities</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students do not know how to go about joining activities</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are unaware of extracurricular opportunities that exist at school *</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barrier</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities offered at my school don’t match student interests</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student schedule doesn’t allow for participation</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students may be bullied in extracurricular settings</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extracurricular activities are not welcoming to students with ASD</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- “Parents afraid”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- “No extra staffing provided to support”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- “Not enough staffing or parent assistance”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- “We are not allowed to access which students have an IEP. I don’t know how I would market to these students.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- “Aides are not paid/available for after school activities”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- “A challenged student may need supervision/support to participate and benefit from this activity”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- “I’ve no idea why they do not participate. No need or no want?”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Barrier which was also mentioned by student participants in the study
Q 2b - Are there barriers to club participation for students with ASD?

- Staff view **lack of student interest** (and family support) as barriers to participation, along with:
  - Transportation
  - Social Challenges
  - Students “don’t know how” to join

- 30% of Special Educators “disagree” that they themselves are aware of all of the club offerings available at their school
Q 3- What are the opportunities for peer engagement and social interaction during extracurricular clubs for students with ASD?

• Of 34 Special Educators, 27 mentioned that **social skill development** was among the most important reasons for students with ASD to participate in clubs.

• “My students with ASD have experienced improved or increased peer interactions since joining a school-sponsored extracurricular activity”

  - 75% “strongly agree” or “agree”
  - 21% were “undecided”
  - Only 1 participant (3%) rated that they “disagree”
Q 3- What are the opportunities for peer engagement or social interaction during extracurricular clubs for students with ASD?

- The average percentage of intervals in which students engaged with others socially, across all participants, was 62%

- This ranged from engagement in an average of 43% of measured intervals (Courtney-GLI) to 92% of measured intervals (Luke- Video Game Club)

_Interviewer:_ Why is it easier to talk to others in a club than at lunch, for example?

_Courtney:_ Because at lunch you like ... there's like all these people around campus and you don't even know who is who, or what is what, or what anyone's talking about. Versus, like in clubs, it kind of narrows down your options, so you, like, know everyone's tastes or likes better. You can talk about things and know what to talk about.
Q 3- What are the opportunities for peer engagement or social interaction during extracurricular clubs for students with ASD?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Courtney Girls Learn International</th>
<th>Luke Video Game Club</th>
<th>Tyrese Movie Club</th>
<th>Steven International Club</th>
<th>Roberto Star Wars Club</th>
<th>Stefana Tabletop Game Club</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Interactions (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any initiations</td>
<td>15 (0-35)</td>
<td>68 (50-80)</td>
<td>37 (30-45)</td>
<td>60 (55-65)</td>
<td>32 (25-35)</td>
<td>63 (60-70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any interactions</td>
<td>43 (5-70)</td>
<td>92 (85-95)</td>
<td>45 (35-55)</td>
<td>67 (55-80)</td>
<td>52 (40-65)</td>
<td>72 (65-80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student i/r with typically-developing peer</td>
<td>25 (0-50)</td>
<td>67 (60-95)</td>
<td>18 (5-30)</td>
<td>60 (55-70)</td>
<td>45 (30-65)</td>
<td>67 (65-70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student i/r with peer with ASD</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>32 (5-55)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>33 (30-35)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>13 (0-40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student to general educator</td>
<td>12 (0-20)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>32 (25-40)</td>
<td>33 (25-40)</td>
<td>10 (0-20)</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student to special educator</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>12 (0-20)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>27 (25-30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typically-developing peer i/r with student</td>
<td>35 (5-60)</td>
<td>75 (60-90)</td>
<td>18 (5-30)</td>
<td>50 (45-60)</td>
<td>47 (35-70)</td>
<td>65 (55-75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer with ASD to student</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>32 (0-55)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>27 (20-35)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>13 (0-40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General educator to student</td>
<td>22 (5-35)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>28 (20-35)</td>
<td>28 (20-35)</td>
<td>13 (10-20)</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special educator to student</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>13 (0-25)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>25 (25-25)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q 3- What are the opportunities for peer engagement or social interaction during extracurricular clubs for students with ASD?

- Full and small group activities provide students with the opportunity to communicate with others as part of a structured activity.

- This is helpful when arranging natural opportunities for social communication practice to take place.

### Summary of Observational Data Across Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Courtney Girls Learn International</th>
<th>Luke Video Game Club</th>
<th>Tyrese Movie Club</th>
<th>Steven International Club</th>
<th>Roberto Star Wars Club</th>
<th>Stefana Tabletop Game Club</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Club Format (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Group</td>
<td>77 (30-100)</td>
<td>95 (85-100)</td>
<td>33 (0-100)</td>
<td>88 (85-95)</td>
<td>62 (0-95)</td>
<td>0 (0-0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Groups (&gt;7)</td>
<td>23 (0-30)</td>
<td>0 (0-0)</td>
<td>67 (0-100)</td>
<td>7 (0-15)</td>
<td>33 (0-100)</td>
<td>97 (90-100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual work</td>
<td>0 (0-0)</td>
<td>0 (0-0)</td>
<td>0 (0-0)</td>
<td>0 (0-0)</td>
<td>0 (0-0)</td>
<td>0 (0-0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No structured activity</td>
<td>0 (0-0)</td>
<td>5 (0-15)</td>
<td>0 (0-0)</td>
<td>5 (0-15)</td>
<td>5 (0-15)</td>
<td>3 (0-10)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q 4a- Do student participants in high school clubs have the opportunity to work on the 4C’s of 21st Century Skills in clubs?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary of Observational Data Across Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21st Century Skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courtney Girls Learn International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke Video Game Club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyrese Movie Club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steven International Club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roberto Star Wars Club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stefana Tabletop Game Club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M: 17% (range: 0-43%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M: 22% (range: 3-45%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M: 38% (range: 8-62%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M: 73% (range: 37-93%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average percentage of intervals and range, across all six observed club settings: critical thinking (M=17%, range: 0-43%), creativity (M=22%, range: 3-45%), collaboration (M=38%, range: 8-62%) and communication (M=73%, range: 37-93%).
Q 4b- Are there barriers to working on 21st Century Skills during extracurricular club meetings? If so, what are these barriers?

- If a student with ASD wanted to participate in the extracurricular activity that they supervise, would you be willing to embed strategies to support that student during the activity?
  
  - 82% of club advisors responded yes
  - 18% responded yes, if it required minimal additions to their current role

- Would you be willing to embed strategies that would support 21st century skill development for all students during the activity meetings?
  
  - 97% of club advisors responded yes
  - 3% responded no
Q 5- What do students with ASD report about their experiences in high school clubs?

- Several students with ASD started their own club (Tyrese, Luke, and Jesus) and others were members of their clubs’ leadership team (Stefana, Steven)

- All of the students considered club meetings highlights of their week, and felt that clubs were fun

- All students appreciated or enjoyed the opportunity to connect and communicate with like-minded peers in club settings

- Several students felt their club experiences would lead to or influence a career path in a related area
Q 5- What do students with ASD report about their experiences in high school clubs?

*Interviewer:* Do you think that students who aren't in clubs should get involved?

*Steven:* I really think they should. They really enhance your [school] experience. It gives you some stuff to do if you're not involved with a group of friends already. It gives you something to do during a lunch time, and gives you more involvement. You can learn new things that you probably wouldn’t learn about in your classes.
Q 5- What do students with ASD report about their experiences in high school clubs?

_**Interviewer:**_ What do you think is the hardest part about being in a school club?

_**Jesus:**_ I guess the leadership position, because you get to realize it's a lot of responsibility. Like, we had some meetings recently and the president, I think he was in charge of the calendar, but he didn't update it, and since I was one of the leaders, I don't know... I guess the club advisor was kind of disappointed, because I was also a leader, so I was supposed to be doing that, like maybe helping him a little bit more. It's a big responsibility.
Summary of Major Findings

• Clubs Match Interest Areas of Students with ASD
  - Some students with ASD are already participating!
  - Students are even starting their own clubs

• Students May Need Help Getting Involved in Clubs
  - Special educators report that they frequently promote club opportunities to their students with ASD, but these students often require an additional “push”
  - Club day events
  - Advertisements
  - Being invited to participate by a trusted staff member
Summary of Major Findings

• **Clubs Provide Natural Opportunities for Social Communication**
  
  - Frequent opportunities to communicate with their peers (68%)
  - The format of clubs (large and small group activities) promote interaction
  - Centered around topics of interest
  - Club advisors report prioritizing activities which promote interaction

• **Clubs Provide Opportunities for 21st Century Skill Building**

  During observed club meetings, 21st century skills were being worked on relatively frequently.
  - Critical Thinking (17%)
  - Creativity (22%)
  - Collaboration (38%)
  - Communication (73%)
Summary of Major Findings

• **Students Value Clubs for a Variety of Reasons**
  - Safe spaces for making friends
  - Connects them with a group of peers and staff members who share interests
  - Supports an enhanced sense of school community that is difficult to create when communication is a challenge
  - Practice skills or participate in activities not offered in content area classes

• **Clubs Can Shape Future Career Plans**
  - Club experiences can contribute to the formulation of post-secondary goals
  - Give students the chance to practice non-content specific skills that are relevant to being a member of the workforce
Implications for Practice

- Schools should **consider the opportunities** that all students, but particularly those with disabilities, have to explore and learn about extracurricular opportunities on campus.
  - Are teachers well-versed in the school’s club offerings? Do they have a list?
  - Do special educators discuss extracurricular opportunities with both students with ASD and their parents throughout the year?
  - Is there a Club Day event, and is it well promoted to special education students?

- Clubs should be widely promoted to students with ASD, as they offer **valuable opportunities for all students to practice social communication and build 21st century skill competencies**—regardless of club topic

- Clubs could become places where **naturally reinforcing interventions** are embedded
  - Club advisors should be given opportunities to collectively brainstorm strategies for helping their clubs serve students in new and innovative ways.
Implications for Future Research

- A larger and more geographically diverse study should be conducted in order to determine whether or not this type of participation by students with ASD in clubs is a phenomena unique to southern California.

- Including students with ASD who don’t participate in club activities to determine the root cause of their non-participation and identify additional barriers to participation.

- Extending this research to other extracurricular settings, such as sports teams, religious youth groups, student council-type organizations, or Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts.

- An intervention study designed to embed strategies to increase 21st century skills within club settings would be valuable, and might utilize the curriculum designed for use in schools from P21.
Closing Thoughts

- This study provided additional evidence that extracurricular activities offer both meaningful experiences for students and spaces in which their social communication skills can be fostered.

- The content of the clubs are important in order to draw student interest, but there’s also a lot of opportunity for them to practice communication and 21st century skills within clubs.

- It’s important to consider how club environments might be enhanced by formalizing these opportunities for students to practice additional, transferable skills within them.

- This study adds to a growing body of evidence that extracurricular activities are under-utilized by special educators as a place where meaningful growth can take place.
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