



# The Effects of Mandatory Study Hall on the Academic Performance of Student- Athletes

Anthony Van Gessel

University of Notre Dame John Paul II Catholic High School



## BACKGROUND

John Paul II Catholic High School is located in Tallahassee, Florida. During the 2010-2011 school year, the school served 120 students in grades 9-12. Because of the small size of the school, a large percentage of students participate in athletics. Out of the 120 students at the school, 89 (74.2%) played at least one sport, 52 (43.3%) played at least two sports, and 23 (19.1%) played three sports. Unfortunately, because practices began immediately after school, athletes were not able to take advantage of after-school academic or club opportunities. In order to allow these students this opportunity, the school established a mandatory study hall for all athletes beginning the fall of 2011.

## CURRENT STUDY

While the effect of athletic participation on academic performance has been widely debated (Videon, 2002), there have been many previous successful academic interventions geared towards athletes (Goldman, 1994; Jones, 1986; Manning, 1990).

### Purpose Statement

The purpose of this action research project was to examine the perceptions of the effect of a study hall on the academic performance of student-athletes.

### Research Questions

1. What is the perception of the impact study hall has on the academic performance of student-athletes?
2. What are stakeholder perceptions of the implementation of study hall?

## METHOD

This study was a within-group quasi-experimental design. Students ( $n = 77$ ) filled out a survey about study hall. A subset of students ( $n = 10$ ) participated in a focus group. Coaches that proctored ( $n = 10$ ) completed the survey and an interview. Teachers who worked with athletes during the study hall ( $n = 5$ ) participated in a focus group. The survey contained both quantitative Likert-scale questions and open-ended qualitative questions. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the quantitative survey data completed by coaches and student-athletes, and qualitative data was transcribed and classified.

## FINDINGS

The surveys, focus groups, and interviews revealed two main points. 1) The study hall helped students academically. 2) There were aspects of the study hall that needed to be improved. The focus groups and interviews were similarly enlightening. Despite some recommendations, there was overwhelming support from students, teachers, and coaches for the continuation of study hall.

Qualitative Survey Answers Students	
Response	Text Segments
Positive: Homework Completion	54
Negative: Noisy Environment	33
Positive: Help From Teachers or Students	23
Positive: Time To Study	10
Negative: Ineffective Supervision	10
Recommendation: No Assigned Seats	10
Recommendation: Shorter Amount of Time	8
Negative: Too much time	8
Positive: Study Hall Allowed Club Participation	5
Recommendation: Stricter Consequences	5
Negative: Not Enough To Do	4

## FINDINGS

- 71% of students strongly agreed or agreed that study hall helped their performance in school.
- 69% of students strongly agreed or agreed that study hall helped them complete homework assignments
- 80 % of coaches strongly agreed or agreed that study hall helped student performance in school.
- 90 % of coaches strongly agreed or agreed that the study hall helped students complete homework assignments.
- 80 % of coaches strongly agreed or agreed that study hall was a good use of time.

“The last couple of years we couldn’t get help even if we needed it because practice was right after school. Now we can go to teachers and get help”  
– JPICHS student-athlete.

## DISCUSSION AND EXTENSION

While the quantitative data demonstrates support for the study hall from both students and coaches, the qualitative data more clearly illuminates this support while also pointing out the need for improvements in the study hall. This support was clearest in the student focus group where the ten students unanimously supported an extension of the study hall into the 2012-2013 school year. The need for improvements is understandable since this was the first year of the study hall. A code of conduct and clear expectations, a change in venue from the gym, and greater oversight by the athletic director will all help to make study hall more effective in the future. The inclusion of achievement data would further strengthen future studies.