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Relationship Between Motivation and Students' Participation in Co-Curricular Activities in Public Secondary Schools in Matayos Sub-County, Kenya

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between student motivation and participation in co-curricular activities in public secondary schools in Matayos Sub-County, Kenya. School management plays an important role in both students' academic and co-curricular performance. However, despite ongoing efforts, students' participation in co-curricular activities in Matayos Sub-County remains low. Anchored on Glasser's Choice Theory (1988), the study adopted a descriptive correlational research design with a target population of 751 Form Three students, 69 coaches, 23 Games Heads of Department, and 23 principals. Students were selected through proportionate allocation and simple random sampling, while coaches, Games Heads of Department, and principals were targeted through census sampling. Data were collected using open- and closed-ended questionnaires and principal interviews. The instruments were piloted in two schools in a neighbouring sub-county, and reliability was assessed using the test–retest method. Quantitative data were processed using SPSS version 29, with descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation applied, whereas qualitative interview data were examined through thematic analysis. Motivation was positively associated with participation (r = .564, p < .001). Regression analysis showed that motivation accounted for 31.8 per cent of the variance in participation (R^2 = .318). Principal interviews described inconsistent formal reward practices, providing context for mixed ratings of motivational support. Higher motivation scores were associated with higher participation scores. The study recommends that principals formalise consistent motivational strategies to support student involvement in co-curricular activities. These findings provide context-specific evidence to inform school-level practices for strengthening motivation and increasing co-curricular participation among secondary-school students in Matayos Sub-County.

Keywords: Co-curricular activities, Management, Motivation, Secondary schools, Students' participation.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

School principals occupy a central position in ensuring that schools achieve their educational objectives through effective management of both academic and co-curricular programs. Educational leadership has always been a hierarchical concept which positions power and authority with school principals; in line with this, several studies have established that there is a relationship between the principal's leadership and management and the school's success in attaining its set goals (Bush, 2020). Management entails the engagement between individuals responsible for administering co-curricular activities and those involved in their implementation.

Records from the Matayos Sub-County Education Office (2023), presented in this study, show participation in selected activities such as volleyball, rugby and badminton. For example, the records indicate that in volleyball, 21 schools participated at the sub-county level in 2018 compared with three at the regional level and none at the national level. In 2023, 17 schools participated at the sub-county level, five at the county level, two at the regional level and none at the national level. Similar patterns are presented for other selected activities in the study. Furthermore, disciplines such as rugby and badminton are not offered in more than 60% of the schools. The contextual gap is particularly important because, although the available Matayos records demonstrate differences in participation and progression across competition levels, they do not explain the extent to which motivation is related to these participation patterns. The records provide evidence of the situation but do not establish whether differences in participation are associated with student motivation. Against this background, the study aims to determine the relationship between motivation and students' participation in co-curricular activities in public secondary schools in Matayos Sub-County, Busia County, Kenya.

Table 1 below shows the number of schools that participated in badminton (boys) from sub-county, county, regional and national levels in the years 2018, 2019, 2022, and 2023.

Table1: Indoor Games (badminton for boys)

Year	Sub-county	County	Regional	National
2018	4	2	1	0
2019	5	2	0	0
2022	4	3	0	0
2023	4	3	0	0
Total	17	10	1	0

***Source**: Matayos Sub- County Education Office (2023)*

Table 2 below shows the number of schools that participated in rugby at the sub-county, county, regional and national levels in the years 2018, 2019, 2022, and 2023.

Table 2: Outdoor Games (Rugby for Boys)

Year	Sub-county	County	Regional	National
2018	2	1	1	0
2019	2	1	1	0
2022	4	1	0	0
2023	4	2	1	0
Total	8	5	3	0

Source: *Matayos Sub- County Education Office (2023)*

Table 3 below shows the number of schools that participated in volleyball (girls) from sub-county, county, regional and national levels in the years 2018, 2019, 2022, and 2023

Table 3: Outdoor Games (Volleyball for Girls)

Year	Sub-county	County	Regional	National
2018	21	11	3	0
2019	20	9	4	1
2022	20	7	1	0
2023	17	5	2	0
Total	78	32	10	1

Source: *Matayos Sub- County Education Office (2023)*

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework:

The study is guided by William Glasser Choice Theory 1988. The theory views most behaviour as chosen and directed toward satisfying five basic needs: survival, love and belonging, power, freedom, and fun. Applied to school activities, co-curricular activities may help students meet these needs through safe participation, friendship and belonging, achievement and recognition, choice of activities, and enjoyment. When students see activities as meeting needs that matter to them, they may be more motivated to participate. Teacher encouragement, peer support, and opportunities to choose or take leadership roles can help create conditions that support this motivation; students may be more willing to participate.

The theory therefore informs the study's examination of motivation as a factor associated with participation. It also helps frame how school experiences—such as inclusion, opportunities to make choices, and chances to develop skills—may relate to students' willingness to take part. The study's

descriptive-correlational design can identify an association between motivation and participation, but it cannot establish that motivation causes participation.

The theory has limits for this study. Its focus on students' needs and choices does not fully account for barriers such as inadequate facilities, school timetables, costs, or gender-related expectations. These conditions may also affect participation. In addition, because this study uses a descriptive-correlational design, it can establish whether motivation and participation are associated, but it cannot show that motivation causes participation. Choice Theory therefore guides the interpretation of the relationship rather than proving a causal explanation.

Empirical Review

Motivation and Students' Participation in Co-curricular activities

Motivation correlates with leadership. Effective leaders set examples, provide guidance, encourage those they lead and provide unambiguous instructions. Veeraiah and Ghavifekr (2022) investigated management practices for co-curricular activities in primary schools within Teluk Intan and underscored student motivation as a pivotal psychological factor that determines the level and consistency of learner engagement. The study established that when pupils view co-curricular programs as enjoyable, purposeful, and connected to their personal talents and aspirations, their intrinsic motivation strengthens and results in regular participation. Conversely, the findings indicated that inadequate motivational support, absence of feedback, and failure to involve students in planning co-curricular events create a sense of disconnection that reduces enthusiasm and leads to sporadic involvement in clubs, sports, and other activities. However, the study's Malaysian primary-school context differs from the present study of Form Three students in public secondary schools in Matayos Sub-county.

Oke and Ichima (2020) examined principals' management strategies for imparting values through co-curricular activities in six Unity Schools in Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory. Using a descriptive survey of teachers and senior secondary students, they found that respondents associated co-curricular activities with values such as patriotism, integrity, self-discipline, communal responsibility, and empathy. They also identified planning, organisation, supervision, and evaluation as key management strategies. Although the article discusses student interest and recommends encouragement and award schemes, it does not directly test motivation or its influence on participation. The study therefore offers insight into school management and value development, while leaving the relationship between motivation and participation open for further study. Its Federal Unity School setting also differs from the public secondary schools in Matayos Sub-County, Busia County,

Riram and Lhungdim (2020) examined girls' participation in co-curricular activities in Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs) and Government Upper Primary Schools (GUPS) in East Siang District, Arunachal Pradesh. Using a descriptive survey, they found that girls in KGBVs participated more actively overall than girls in GUPS. The authors recommended that teachers and head teachers encourage girls' participation, including through rewards and incentives. These recommendations point to the potential role of school support, although the study did not test motivation or specific motivational factors as determinants of participation. The study is relevant to the present research because it addresses girls' co-curricular participation and school encouragement. Its Indian upper-primary context and comparison of KGBVs with GUPS differ from the present study's focus on students in public secondary schools in Matayos Sub-County, Busia County, Kenya.

Rintaugu et al. (2021) investigated competitive co-curricular involvement among secondary school learners in Kenya's Central Region and identified student motivation as a central determinant of engagement. Grounded in Zero-sum and Developmental theory, the study revealed that students who join sports, music, and drama activities driven by personal interest, talent realisation, and internal satisfaction show stronger self-concept and more consistent participation. The authors further highlighted that external incentives such as acknowledgement, prizes, and peer encouragement also enhance learners' commitment to training and competitions. The findings indicated that limited motivational support, coupled with academic pressure and socioeconomic challenges, lowers students' perception of the value of co-curricular involvement and leads to reduced engagement. Despite these insights, the study was grounded in zero-sum theory and developmental theory, unlike the present which was guided by Glasser's Choice theory. The study also focused on competitive involvement rather than general student participation.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study used a descriptive correlational research design to assess the relationship between student motivation and participation in co-curricular activities in Matayos Sub-County, Kenya. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2023), a correlational research design allows researchers to analyse relationships among several variables within a single study and investigate how the variables, either individually or in combination, relate to other variables. The quantitative component described student motivation and participation in co-curricular activities and examined the relationship between these variables. This design was appropriate because the study measured existing conditions without manipulating student motivation or participation. Qualitative responses were analysed thematically and used to provide context for interpreting the survey findings, including principals' accounts of motivational practices in their schools. Pearson's correlation and regression analyses were conducted to assess the quantitative relationship between the variables. Given the correlational nature of the study, the results indicated associations between motivation and participation rather than a causal relationship.

The study was conducted in Matayos Sub-County, Busia County, Kenya. The target population comprised 751 Form Three students, 69 coaches, 23 Games Heads of Department and 23 principals. Principals were involved in the study because of their crucial role as school managers in ensuring that their schools participate in and benefit from co-curricular activities. Game Heads of Department were selected because their role involves overseeing and working closely with teachers in charge of various co-curricular activities, while coaches were included because they are responsible for implementing and supervising these activities. Form Three students were selected because they had spent more time in school than Form One and Form Two students, giving them greater exposure and the necessary information pertaining to co-curricular activities.

Kothari (2004) describes sampling as the selection of a representative group of items from which to conduct a study. The study employed purposive sampling to select 23 principals, 69 coaches and 23 Games Heads of Department. According to Andrade (2021), purposive sampling is based on the researcher's judgement in selecting the most useful units for a study. The sample size for students was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table, resulting in a sample of 338 students. Proportionate sampling was used to distribute the sample among the schools according to their respective student populations in relation to the total student population in Matayos Sub-County. Subsequently, students were selected through simple random sampling using a ballot technique, giving each population member an equal opportunity for selection.

The study employed questionnaires and semi-structured interviews for data collection. These instruments were designed to complement each other by capturing both quantitative and qualitative data related to the influence of motivation on student participation in co-curricular activities in Matayos Sub-County. Questionnaires were administered to Games Heads of Department, coaches and Form Three students because they enabled the researcher to collect information from a relatively large number of respondents. The questionnaires comprised five sections designed to gather information aligned with the research objectives. Section A included demographic questions to collect background information from each participant, while Sections B to E comprised items derived from the study objectives and presented using a four-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Respondents' attitudes and opinions on the issues under investigation were assessed using a Likert scale. The interview schedule consisted of open-ended questions guided by the research objectives, while its semi-structured design allowed the researcher to explore responses further and seek additional explanations.

Instrument validity was determined by examining whether the questionnaire effectively measured the selected management practices and students' participation in co-curricular activities. Content validity was achieved through supervisors' review and judgement of the instrument, based on their expertise in the field. The supervisors assessed the relevance, clarity, wording and adequacy of the items in measuring the study variables. Their feedback was used to revise ambiguous items, remove irrelevant items and improve the coverage of each construct. Construct validity was evaluated by determining the extent to which the questionnaire items reflected the underlying study constructs. DeVellis and Thorpe (2021) emphasise the importance of factor analysis in examining the structural properties of measurement scales. The suitability of the data for factor analysis was assessed using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity.

The reliability of the research instrument was evaluated using the test-retest technique. Surucu and Maslakci (2020) define reliability as the degree to which an instrument produces consistent results across repeated administrations. Accordingly, the same questionnaire was administered to the same group of students twice, with a one-week interval between the administrations and under similar conditions. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was then used to correlate the two sets of scores and determine the consistency of the questionnaire items. A reliable instrument would yield a correlation coefficient approaching 1, indicating consistency between the two administrations. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.7, which meets the acceptable threshold of 0.70 according to Mugenda and Mugenda (2012). This approach helped minimise errors and enhance the reliability of the research instrument.

The study's objectives guided the data analysis. After data collection, the researcher checked all questionnaires for completeness and accuracy. Only fully completed questionnaires were considered valid for analysis and included in the final dataset. The collected data were organised into quantitative and qualitative categories. Qualitative data obtained from open-ended questions and interview schedules were analysed thematically. The researcher categorised and indexed responses into common themes and emerging patterns to generate meaning and interpretation. Quantitative data from closed-ended questions were coded and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 29. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations, were used to summarise demographic information. Inferential statistics were used to test the study hypotheses. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to establish the strength and direction of the

relationships between the independent variable and students' participation in co-curricular activities. Simple linear regression analysis was conducted for the independent variable separately to determine its predictive influence on students' participation.

Ethical requirements were observed throughout the study. Because the study involved minors, permission from school principals was considered sufficient, given their responsibility for the students. The researcher took steps to prevent any actions that could harm participants. To ensure informed consent and voluntary participation, respondents received a clear explanation of the study objectives in a consent letter. They were informed that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Respondents were also instructed not to include their names or the names of their institutions on the questionnaires to ensure confidentiality. The completed questionnaires were securely stored in a locked cabinet for one month, pending data analysis.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students Responses

Table 4 presents students' perceptions of motivational strategies implemented within their schools to enhance participation in co-curricular activities.

Table 4: Item-Level Summary: Student Motivation (Students)

Item	SD (%)	D (%)	U (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean
The school principal encourages students to engage in co-curricular activities	19.2	10.5	2.9	37.3	30.1	3.49
There are variety of sporting events at the school	34.8	28.3	6.9	23.2	6.9	2.39
The school principal avails required facilities	29.6	22.6	8.4	26.6	12.8	2.70
Allocating time for games	9.6	10.7	7.4	38.4	33.9	3.76
Involvement in co-curricular activities is made attractive to students	30.8	18.1	7.2	26.1	17.8	2.82
Students who excel in co-curricular activities are offered scholarships	44.6	13.8	5.1	18.1	18.5	2.52

Source: *Field Data (2026)*

The findings reveal a mixed pattern of motivational support within schools. The highest-rated item was allocation of time for games (M = 3.76), with over 72% of students agreeing or strongly agreeing. This suggests that structural scheduling support is a strong motivational component within schools. Adequate time allocation may signal institutional commitment, thereby encouraging participation.

Principal encouragement also recorded a moderately positive mean (M = 3.49), with approximately 67 per cent agreement. This indicates that relational motivation, through verbal encouragement and administrative endorsement, is present and influential. This finding is consistent with Konold et al. (2018), who established that student support and a positive school climate are positively associated with student engagement. This suggests that supportive relationships between school administrators, teachers and students can create an enabling environment that encourages students to participate actively in school activities, including co-curricular programs.

However, several structural motivational components were rated low: Variety of sporting events recorded the lowest mean (M = 2.39), with 63.1% disagreement. This suggests limited diversification of activities. Scholarship provision also recorded low endorsement (M = 2.52), with 58.4 per cent disagreement, indicating minimal formal academic or financial incentives tied to co-curricular excellence. Availability of facilities (M = 2.70) and making involvement attractive (M = 2.82) also recorded moderate dissatisfaction.

Coaches Responses on Student Motivation

Table 5 presents coaches' perceptions regarding student motivation in co-curricular activities. The items assess intrinsic motivation, diversity of activities, recognition mechanisms, scholarship incentives, and leadership involvement.

Table 5: Item-Level Summary: Student Motivation (Coaches)

Item	SD (%)	D (%)	U (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean
Students are highly motivated to participate in co-curricular activities	5.1	30.5	11.9	39.0	13.6	3.25
There are a variety of sporting events are offered to school	3.4	10.2	10.2	61.0	15.3	3.75
Students who excel in co-curricular activities in school are awarded trophies and certificates	16.9	11.9	16.9	42.4	11.9	3.20
Scholarships are offered to those who excel in school	33.9	30.5	15.3	11.9	8.5	2.31
The school principal accompanies students during co-curricular competition	15.3	32.2	22.0	23.7	6.8	2.75

Source: *Field Data (2026)*

The findings indicate a mixed but moderately positive perception of student motivation among coaches. The strongest endorsement was recorded for the variety of sporting events offered (M = 3.75), with 76.3 per cent agreement. This suggests that, from the coaches' perspective, schools provide diversified activity options capable of attracting student interest. This resonates with the Republic of Kenya (2020), which opines that schools should take into consideration the offering of a wider range of co-curricular activities in order to tend to diverse student interests and needs. Overall student motivation recorded a moderate

mean (M = 3.25), with over half (52.6%) agreeing that students are highly motivated. However, a notable proportion (35.6%) expressed disagreement, indicating variability in motivational climate across schools.

Recognition through trophies and certificates recorded a moderate mean (M = 3.20), with 54.3 per cent agreement. This suggests that symbolic rewards are present but not universally strong.

In contrast, scholarship provision recorded the lowest mean (M = 2.31), with 64.4 per cent disagreement. This indicates that formal financial incentives for excellence are largely absent or limited. Similarly, principal accompaniment during competitions recorded a relatively low mean (M = 2.75), with nearly half (47.5%) expressing disagreement. This suggests limited visible leadership involvement during competitive events, which may reduce symbolic motivational reinforcement.

Games HoDs Responses on Motivation Strategies

Table 6 presents Games Heads of Department (HoDs)' perceptions regarding motivational strategies that influence students' participation in co-curricular activities.

Table 6: Item-Level Summary: Student Motivation (Games HoDs)

Item	SD (%)	D (%)	U (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean
The school principal motivates students after participating in co-curricular activities	17.6	29.4	5.9	41.2	5.9	2.88
Most of the rewards given after participation in co-curricular activities are academic oriented	0	17.6	23.5	47.1	11.8	3.53
Rewards given encourage the students to participate in co-curricular activities	29.4	11.8	11.8	41.2	5.9	2.82
There is a wide range of co-curricular activities that students can engage in	5.9	41.2	0	47.1	5.9	3.06
Students voluntarily participate in co-curricular activities	5.9	35.3	0	41.2	17.6	3.29
Students are well rewarded after participating in co-curricular activities	5.9	41.2	5.9	35.3	11.8	3.06

Source: *Field Data (2026)*

The findings reveal a mixed assessment of motivational structures from the perspective of departmental leadership. The majority of the respondents endorsed the statement that rewards are academically oriented (M = 3.53), with nearly 59 per cent agreement. This suggests that recognition systems may prioritise academic-linked incentives, such as certificates or commendations during assemblies.

Hitchcock et al. 2024 indicate that although school administrators motivated students in different forms, some motivational rewards had no direct impact on developing an individual talent in that particular co-curricular activity, implying that more efforts were academically oriented because most of the rewards were for developing students academically. Such rewards were likely to increase students' academic performance. Students' voluntary participation recorded a moderately positive mean (M = 3.29), indicating that intrinsic motivation may play a meaningful role in engagement.

However, principal-driven motivational practices were rated lower. The statement that the principal motivates students after participation recorded a mean of 2.88, with 47 per cent disagreement. This suggests that post-event recognition and visible administrative reinforcement may not be consistently practised. Similarly, perceptions that rewards effectively encourage participation (M = 2.82) indicate moderate scepticism regarding the motivational strength of existing reward systems. A study by Riram (2020) also stated that, for the overall development of girls, head teachers and teachers have to motivate them through offering various rewards and incentives, which will enable them to come forward in different activities.

Principals' responses corroborate this pattern. While several principals emphasised encouragement, structured reward systems appeared limited; Principal 2 acknowledged that *"there is no motivational scheme set in place,"* suggesting the absence of formalised incentive structures. Others indicated that recognition is largely symbolic and informal, such as acknowledging performance during assemblies. A study by Kelbiso 2019 recommends that rewards and incentives should be structured and given to the respective participants of co-curricular activities at the end of a semester and /or a year in order to develop their interest to participate.

The limited variety of sporting events reported by students may also reflect resource constraints previously acknowledged by principals, including the need to limit participation to selected activities due to financial and infrastructural limitations.

Relationship Between Motivation and Participation

Pearson's correlation and simple linear regression analyses were employed to examine the relationship between student motivation and participation in co-curricular activities using the Composite Motivation Score and Composite Participation Score.

Table 7: Pearson Correlations Between Student Motivation and Participation

Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r)	0.564
P- Value	<0.001
N	250

***Source**: Field Data (2026)*

The findings reveal a strong, positive and statistically significant association between student motivation and participation ($r = 0.564$, $p < 0.001$). This correlation coefficient indicates that increased perceived

encouragement, recognition, reward systems, diversity of activities and supportive leadership are associated with higher student participation in co-curricular activities.

Table 8: Regression Model Summary

R	R^2	SE
0.564	0.318	0.68828

Source: *Field Data (2026)*

The regression model yielded a correlation coefficient of R = 0.564, indicating a strong positive relationship between student motivation and participation in co-curricular activities. The coefficient of determination (R^2 = 0.318) shows that motivation explains 31.8 per cent of the variance in participation. This represents a substantial proportion of explained variance in behavioural research contexts, suggesting that motivational climate is a powerful determinant of student engagement.

This implies that nearly one-third of differences in participation levels across students can be attributed to differences in encouragement, recognition, reward systems, diversity of activities, and supportive leadership practices.

The standard error of the estimate (SE = 0.68828) indicates the average deviation of observed participation scores from the predicted regression line. Compared to previous models, this lower standard error suggests improved predictive precision.

Table 9: Model Significance (ANOVA)

Model	SS	Df	MS	F	p
Regression	54.67	1	54.67	115.40	<0.001
Residual	117.49	248	0.47		
Total	172.15	249			

Source*: Field Data (2026)*

The ANOVA results indicate that the regression model examining the effect of student motivation on participation is statistically significant, $F(1, 248) = 115.40$, $p < 0.001$. The regression sum of squares (54.6) represents the portion of variation in participation explained by motivation, while the residual sum of squares (117.49) reflects unexplained variation attributable to other factors not included in the model.

The large F-statistic (115.40) demonstrates that the explained variance is substantially greater than the unexplained variance per degree of freedom. The associated p-value (< 0.001) confirms that the model fits significantly better than a model with no predictors. Substantively, the F-statistic is notably higher than those for supervision, teacher training, and resource allocation. This reinforces the earlier conclusion that motivation is the most influential single institutional predictor of participation within this study.

Table 10: Regression Coefficients

Predictor	B	SE	β	T	p
Constant	1.82	0.16	_	11.35	<0.001
Motivation	0.56	0.05	0.56	10.74	<0.001

***Source**: Field Data (2026)*

The regression coefficients indicate that student motivation is a strong and statistically significant predictor of participation in co-curricular activities. The unstandardized coefficient (B = 0.56) shows that for every one-unit increase in the composite motivation score, participation increases by 0.56 units, holding all other factors constant. This represents a substantial practical effect.

The standardised coefficient (β = 0.56) confirms a strong effect size. In standardised terms, a one standard deviation increase in motivation is associated with a 0.56 standard deviation increase in participation. This is the highest standardised coefficient observed among all predictors examined in the study, indicating that motivation exerts the strongest influence on participation. The associated t-value (t = 10.74, p < 0.001) demonstrates that the effect of motivation is highly statistically significant. The magnitude of the t-statistic further reinforces the robustness of the predictor.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: The study concludes that student motivation is positively and significantly associated with participation in co-curricular activities. Students with higher motivation scores tended to report higher participation. The regression model accounted for 31.8 per cent of the variation in participation, indicating that motivation is an important correlate, while other factors also contribute. Principal interviews identified inconsistent formal reward practices as a concern. Because the study used a correlational design, these findings establish an association but do not show that motivation causes participation.

Recommendations: The study recommends that school principals should formalise consistent motivational strategies (establishing a documented reward system including trophies, certificates, scholarships, and public acknowledgement of achievement on a termly basis) to support student involvement in co-curricular activities.

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