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A COMPARISON OF THE EFFECTS OF AFTER-SCHOOL  
EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS ON  
STUDENT GPAs IN ONE MIDDLE TENNESSEE HIGH SCHOOL

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**A Comparison of the Effects of After-School Employment and Socioeconomic Status on Student  
GPAs in one Middle Tennessee High School**

**A Field Study**

**Presented to the**

**Graduate and Research Council of**

**Austin Peay State University**

**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements**

**For the Degree**

**Educational Specialist**

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Dr. J. Gary Stewart  
Major Professor

**Prepared by**

**Kristin Nicole Averitte**

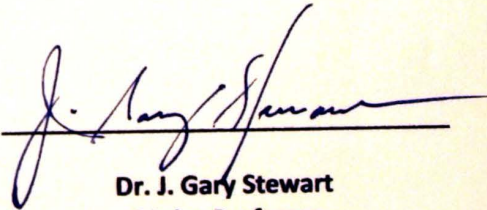
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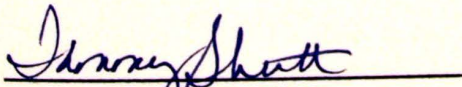
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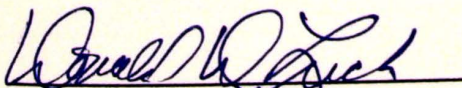
To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Field Study written by Kristin Nicole Averitte entitled "A Comparison of the Effects of After-School Employment and Socioeconomic Status on Student GPA's in one Middle Tennessee High School." I have examined the preliminary copy of this paper for form and content and recommend it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Education Specialist.

  
Dr. J. Gary Stewart  
Major Professor

We have read this Field Study  
and recommend acceptance:

  
Dr. Tammy Shutt

  
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## DEDICATION

This field study is dedicated to my husband and my parents. To my parents, Cathy and Steve and my step-father Doug, who have always given me the guidance and support to endure any task that I have ever set out to accomplish and to my husband, Brandon, who continually gives me the love and support to achieve all of my hopes and dreams, I dedicate this Field Study with an abundance of love to you all.

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performance may be predicted by a community's overall socioeconomic status (SES) and by other factors that are more closely correlated with SES, which include parent involvement in their children's education or perhaps the parents past educational successes (Toukoushian & Curtis, 2005).

### *Statement of the Problem*

According to Toukoushian & Curtis (2005), high school students are suffering academically due primarily to the amount of hours they engage in after-school employment. Additionally, socioeconomic status may add to the problem of low academic achievement. Many researchers have concluded that socioeconomic status factors, such as parent education and income, are strongly related to student outcomes at all levels of education (Toukoushian & Curtis, 2005). The accountability and pressure



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are so many people who are worthy of praise when it comes to the completion of this Field Study. I have been so fortunate to have so many cheerleaders that have helped me through this long process. My family, friends, colleagues, and mentors have certainly helped me to achieve this great accomplishment. I want to thank my advisor and Committee Chairperson, Dr. Gary Stewart, for his continued support throughout this process. He has always had an open door and been willing to listen to the countless hours of my frustrations during the study. I sincerely appreciate his expertise in helping me to successfully complete this Field Study. To my other committee members, Dr. Tammy Shutt and Dr. Donald Luck, I am sincerely thankful for your time and expertise in helping me to complete the study. I would also like to thank Dr. Neil Dortch for helping edit my paper over and over as well as Mrs. Beth Walker who has also read through my Field Study countless times. Dr. Paul Nicodemus helped me with my statistics in the study and I could never thank him enough for accepting me like one of his own students and spending so much time with me during the analysis and writing of Chapters 4 and 5. I am eternally grateful to Cathy and Steve and my Step-father Doug for their love and support over the years; you all have instilled in me the work ethic required to complete this task. I am forever thankful for the qualities that you have instilled in me. Thank you to my husband, Brandon, who has been the one that has listened to me during desperate moments when I felt as if I could not write anymore. He was always there to cheer me on and encourage me to continue. Brandon has showed me the utmost love and support through this process and I sincerely appreciate the sacrifices that he has made in order to allow me to accomplish my goals. To everyone who has helped me through this

process I want to express my deepest love you all and sincerely appreciate everything that each and every one of you has done in order to help me successfully complete this Field Study. It has been a long journey yet one in which I have learned so much about myself.



## ABSTRACT

KRISTIN NICOLE AVERITTE. A Comparison of the Effects of After-School Employment and Socioeconomic Status on Student GPAs in one Middle Tennessee High School.

This study analyzed the effect of student employment status, socioeconomic status, grade level, and gender on student achievement for 297 students in one Middle Tennessee High School. The purpose of the study was to determine whether or not student academic achievement based on student grade point average (GPAs) were impacted as a result of after-school employment. Analysis of Variance and t-tests were used to determine if student achievement was significantly impacted by student employment status, socioeconomic status, grade level or gender. Based on the ANOVAs and t-test it was determined that none of the factors had any significant affects on the levels of student achievement as determined by student grade point averages (GPAs).

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## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, research indicates a national concern over low achievement among high school students due to after-school employment, which has increased interest in the relationship of work intensity and school achievement (Singh, Chang, & Dika 2007). High school success is comprised of several components that help provide a platform for both academic and nonacademic accomplishments (Marsh & Kleitman, 2005). After-school employment, socioeconomic status, and gender are three main factors that affect student achievement within the classrooms of American high schools. High school students engage in numerous hours of after-school employment, thereby limiting the amount of time spent on academic preparation. Higher levels of student performance may not be caused by a community's overall socioeconomic status (SES) but by other factors that are more closely correlated with SES, which include parent involvement in their children's education or perhaps the parents past educational successes (Toutkoushian & Curtis, 2005).

### *Statement of the Problem*

According to Toutkoushian & Curtis (2005), high school students are suffering academically due primarily to the amount of hours they engage in after-school employment. Additionally, socioeconomic status may add to the problem of low academic achievement. Many researchers have concluded that socioeconomic status factors, such as parent education and income, are strongly related to student outcomes at all levels of education (Toutkoushian & Curtis, 2005). The accountability and pressure

for public schools to achieve has increased to the extreme that administrators, teachers, and stakeholders have begun to implement innovative ways in which to help students succeed (Toutkoushian & Curtis, 2005).

### *Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of the study was to determine if after-school employment had a statistically significant affect on the academic achievement of high school students based on a comparison of the GPAs of working and non-working students. Additionally, this study was conducted to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in student achievement (GPAs) based on their socioeconomic status. The study was also conducted to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in student achievement (GPAs) based on their grade level. Finally, the study was conducted to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in student achievement (GPAs) based on their gender.

### *Significance of the Study*

The study was conducted to determine the effects of after-school employment, socioeconomic status, grade level, and gender have on student achievement based on grade point averages. Based on research findings, the study could provide administrators, teachers, parents, and students with the data and innovative methodologies to assist students further academically.



### *Research Questions*

Is there a statistically significant difference in student GPAs between students who are employed versus those students who are not employed?

Is there a statistically significant difference in student GPAs based on socioeconomic status?

Is there a statistically significant difference in student achievement based on GPAs between grade levels which ranged from ninth grade through twelfth grade?

Is there a statistically significant difference in student GPAs based on gender?

### *Hypotheses*

There is no statistically significant difference in students GPAs between students who are employed versus those students who are not employed.

There is no statistically significant difference in students GPAs based on students' socioeconomic status.

There is no statistically significant difference in students GPAs between grade levels which ranged from ninth grade through twelfth grade.

There is no statistically significant difference between students GPAs based on gender.

### *Limitations*

The study was limited to the students of one Middle Tennessee High School, thereby limiting the variable to a unique demographic region.

The study was limited to the students enrolled in the 2008-2009 school year.

### *Delimitations*

This study is delimited to high school students with similar demographics as those of the target high school

### *Assumptions*

The methods that were selected to measure student GPAs were valid and reliable.

All literature review articles that were reviewed were adequate pieces of information that were examined for use of reliable research methods.

The data collected to determine low and high socioeconomic status are valid and reliable.

### *Definition of Key Terms*

*GPA*- A measure of a student's academic achievement at a high school, college or university, calculated by dividing the total number of grade points received by the total number completed.

*High School*- Any school that houses grades 9-12.

*Employment*- A service performed for wages under a contract of hire, written or oral, expressed or implied, including service in interstate commerce.

*Not-Employed*- Not employed in manual or other labor; having no regular work.

*Socioeconomic Status (SES)*- A measure of an individual or family's relative economic and social ranking based on their level of income measured for this study, by free and reduced lunch program status.



*Low SES-* Students who were eligible to participate in the free and reduced lunch program.

*High SES-* Students who were not eligible to participate in the free and reduced lunch program.

## CHAPTER II REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Public schools are constantly faced with the widespread epidemic that continues to face the high school student population; low academic achievement caused by after-school employment. It is believed by some that after-school and weekend employment continues to contribute to students' lack of academic performance. In a study conducted by The University of Western Sydney Australia, researchers found that working during high school had negative effects on 15 out of 23 students in grade 12 and post secondary outcomes such as achievement, course work selection, educational and occupational aspirations, and college attendance (Marsh & Kleitman, 2005). High school students are not mentally mature enough to set limits for themselves when it comes to the amount of hours they are able to balance during the school term. As school districts and state legislatures try to devise plans to keep students who are employed in good standing with grade point averages, it is crucial to highlight the importance of socioeconomic status (Tourtkoushian & Curtis, 2005).

In a recent study that employed relatively large data sets, Wirtz, Rohrbeck, Charner & Fraser (1987) noted that approximately 446 high school students were planning to attend college and the majority of them were employed in fast-food franchises. Lillydahl (1990) found that "Approximately 58 percent of those who worked were employed more than twenty hours per week" (p. 306). Research indicates a negative relationship between working more than twenty hours per week and student grade point average (Marsh & Kleitman, 2005). The majority of students who were working more than twenty hours per week did not directly feel any negative factors influencing academic achievement. Instead they were constantly reminded by their teachers,



counselors, and parents of their academic performance (Lillydahl, 1990). Mortimer & Finch (1986) used cross-sectional data to determine that tenth grade students working more than fifteen hours per week and eleventh grade students who worked more than twenty hours per week had significantly lower grades than students who worked fewer hours. Many high school students lack the mental maturity to make their own decisions regarding their work load before it begins to affect their academic studies. Lillydahl (1990) questioned the benefits and costs to adolescents and society of part-time employment during the school year (p.308).

According to Lillydahl (1990), there have been several national panels that have suggested potential positive effects associated with adolescent employment. The panels hypothesized that early work experience was healthy for young adolescents simply because it would better prepare them with the skills and abilities that would help them to be more responsible and productive in the world of work (Lillydahl, 1990). There are both positive and negative aspects associated with this position. High school students are easily flattered by the fact that they can control their own free time after school, to some extent, and have the monetary funds to support their "free time." Students often feel a sense of pride and responsibility when they are employed. According to Wirtz et al. (1987), research shows a positive increase in youth morale if they are holding an after-school job. It is very hard for students to work an after-school job, maintain a successful grade point average, engage in social life at school, maintain positive relationships at home with family and friends, and have a healthy balance in their personal life. Not surprisingly, students who work in excess of fifteen to twenty hours a week are absent

more often from school, spend less time on homework, and have lower GPAs (Wirtz, Rohrbeck, Charner & Fraser, 1987).

Based on the findings by Lillydahl (1990), one could easily come to the conclusion that teachers, parents, and administrators should reconsider the amount of emphasis given to the issue of student employment during after-school hours and on weekends. Lillydahl (1990) stated, "The recent trend appears to have been toward policies that encourage intensive youth employment during the high school years" (p. 310). Lillydahl (1990) goes further by suggesting that policymakers need to reconsider the arguments supporting intensive youth employment, taking into account the recent empirical research on the subject. Administrators and teachers can suggest numerous solutions to students regarding the extensive amount of time that students sacrifice to after-school employment. However, it is the burden of the students and parents to demonstrate moderation with high school employment.

A study performed at Griffith University in Queensland, Australia, suggests that most students, whether working or not, report high levels of commitment to their studies and a strong desire to do well academically (McInnis & Hartley, 2002). Bradley (2006) states that "Most working students also report in the study that their paid job affects their academic performance" (p. 483). Bradley (2006) further states that "There are several hypotheses that test the relationship between work and academic success, and this study sought to test five propositions" (p. 483). The five propositions Bradley posed were:

1. Academic performance is adversely affected by any participation in the workforce.



2. Academic performance is adversely affected in proportion to the number of hours worked.
3. Academic performance is adversely affected by participation in the work force but only beyond a minimum of hours worked. In the adolescent population, work interferes with study performance only when students undertake in excess of about 15-20 hours of work per week, Payne (2003).
4. The effect of work on academic performance depends upon the quality of work undertaken.
5. Academic performance is unaffected by participation in the workforce. (p. 483-484)

Bradley (2006) further concluded that after examining the five propositions, the following results were shown:

Proposition # 1.) Working students perform more poorly than do non-working students; this received little support. The GPAs of working students were only marginally lower than that of their nonworking counterparts, and there was no difference between these two groups in academic achievement, motivation, satisfaction, or similar variable.

Proposition # 2.) Academic performance is negatively correlated with the number of hours worked, was also rejected. The number of hours worked was significantly and negatively correlated with time devoted to out-of-class study, but there was little evidence of significant relations between hours worked and the other predicted mediating variables.

Proposition # 3.) Academic performance is unaffected by small amounts of paid work, but beyond some critical threshold of hours worked, performance rapidly deteriorates as students' adaptive resources become depleted, also received little support. There was no evidence that, compared to students working longer hours, those employed for fewer than 20 hours per week performed better academically.

Proposition # 4.) The number of hours worked affects academic performance only under conditions of poor work quality, was not also confirmed. Moderated hierarchical regression analyses failed to provide any evidence that the interaction of work quantity and work quality variables predicts GPA.

Proposition # 5.) That there is no relationship between work participation and academic performance, was supported by findings of no difference in the GPAs of working and non-working students, and a correlation close to zero between number of hours worked and GPA.(p. 484)

Student participation in the workforce continues to increase. There are numerous reasons why high school students choose to work. High school students work for a variety of reasons. They want to become independent, make their own spending money, help with family bills, gain responsibility and build self confidence (Bradley, 2006). Past research has documented a range of negative outcomes such as fatigue, a lack of autonomy, social isolation, low pay, and high stress (e.g. Lucas & Lammont, 1998; McInnis & Hartley, 2002). Bradley (2006) stated in his study that "The current study



examined several likely consequences of work, with particular attention placed on the links between work participation and academic achievement" (p. 486).

Rothstein (2001), writing for the Monthly Labor Review concerning youth employment in the United States, indicates that 41 percent of males, and 34 percent of females work at some point while school is in session in the tenth grade; by twelfth grade, about 70 percent of youths work during the school year. Some students never hold a job while in high school. Different parental views vary regarding high school students being employed. All families are different; some feel after-school employment helps students gain responsibility whereas others would rather their child not work and focus on academics and extracurricular activities. As life presents itself in all different arenas, some students have no other choice but to work in order to help ends meet at home.

According to Rothstein (2001), over the past years, policymakers have been concerned about youth employment during the actual school year. Rothstein (2001) indicated that research shows a rapid increase in youth employment during the school year. Students tend to work after-school and during weekend jobs, thereby causing their grade point averages to be challenged. There are some students who are capable of juggling school work, employment, and family time. There are also students who enjoy working after school jobs but their first priority becomes their employment rather than their school work.

According to Rothstein (2001), a study completed by the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997, youths in households with low income were less likely to work. Rothstein (2001) suggests that one possible explanation for this finding is that they may have lived in areas with less economic opportunity and consequently, may have had less

access to transportation, which could have decreased their likelihood of working. According to Rothstein (2001), youths in single female-parent families may have faced relatively more obstacles to working due to issues related to their having a lower income or to having fewer adults in the household to provide them with transportation to a job. Rothstein (2001) stated that "youths in households with the annual incomes of less than \$25,000 were less likely to work at age 14 and 15 than were youths in households with higher incomes" (pg. 9).

Students usually work after-school and weekend jobs. However, there is sufficient evidence in the literature to suggest that summer and holiday employment are also very real aspects to the student employment issue. Additionally, it would seem that responsible students who choose to work would choose to do so when school is not in session as opposed to the regular school year. According to Rothstein (2001), the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth study showed that most students who worked did so during both the summer and the regular school term. One might think that more students tend to work only summer jobs and then quit before the school year actually starts. However, this is not supported by the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth study. The majority of students who choose to hold a job during the school year tend to work more hours during the summer while they have more available time to work.

According to Rothstein (2001), "Youths in households with yearly incomes of less than \$25,000 were less likely to hold employment during the school year than youths in households with higher income categories" (p. 9). Rothstein (2001) indicates that this finding is not surprising because most students who live in households that make less



than \$25,000 a year usually do not have an automobile to transport them to and from work.

The research conducted by Rothstein (2001) also indicates that older high school students typically tend to work more hours during the week than 14 and 15 year old students. Rothstein (2001) also indicates that freshmen, on average, generally tend to work fewer hours than sophomores and once students reach the sophomore level, they will usually begin to gain more responsibility and start to work longer hours during the school week. Rothstein (2001) also mentioned that once students are juniors and seniors, their after school jobs become more of a priority, thereby causing a negative impact in student grade point averages. According to Rothstein (2001), research indicates that upper-classmen typically work as many hours during the school year as they do during the summer months. From age 14-15, youths appear to shift more toward working in employee jobs and less in freelance jobs, such as babysitting, and yard work jobs (Rothstein, 2001). Rothstein (2001) states: "Even in these young ages of 14-15 gender and racial differences in employment are significant" (p. 16). According to Rothstein (2001), research suggests that Caucasian students are more likely to participate in the work force than are African Americans and Hispanics.

Several studies suggest that student employment tends to have a negative effect on student grade point averages. According to Warren, Le Pore & Mare (2000), The Center for Statistics and Social Sciences Center for Studies in Demography and Ecology from the University of Washington presented data that supports both short and long term effects of adolescent employment on grades in academic courses and to what extent grades may influence employment behaviors. However, Warren et al. (2000) stated,

"Research supports no evidence that high school employment has either short or long term effects on grades in academic courses or that grades in these courses influence employment activities" (p. 943). There are several factors that could possibly support this premise. One is that, students come from diverse backgrounds; some households hold their children who work more accountable than those children who do not work. However, there are always those students who find ways to balance school work, employment, friends, family time, and church and be successful. Warren et al. (2000) indicate the demands of state standards and curriculum leave only a small margin for error when it comes to classroom work and student achievement. According to Warren et al. (2000), "Pre-existing differences between more and less intensively employed students fully account for the association between employment intensity and grades in academic courses" (p. 949).

DeSimone (2006), writing about the effects of part-time employment on the academic performance of students, states that: "The 1991-2004 Monitoring the Future Survey using high school seniors indicated that GPA increases with additional work hours up to 15 hours per week and then begins to decline" (p.10). According to the student surveys, working has a small negative impact on educational time, but a much larger impact, which is negative up to 15-20 hours per week, on time spent watching television and in social activities (DeSimone, 2006). Based on the information presented in the Monitoring the Future Survey, DeSimone (2006), suggests that student's GPAs tend to suffer more from after-school activities and leisure activities than actual after-school employment. Another important factor regarding time spent after school is that of socioeconomic status. Family background and expectations are also important when



determining how many after-school and weekend hours students actually work. More affluent families generally have more ground rules at home when defining work hours than do those students from lower SES backgrounds. Lower income families prove to be more lenient with student employment due to the need for extra monetary funds to help run the household (DeSimone, 2006). According to Toutkoushian & Curtis (2005), research suggests that:

The relationship between a students SES and academic performance at school is generally typified in the statement that "poverty is not an excuse; it is a condition. Like gravity it affects everything." In school systems today, a major problem that continues to surface is that with the relatively low SES, states tie funding to those measures, therefore making it almost impossible to help low-SES students achieve due to such poor funding.

(pg. 260)

Administrators and teachers are under tremendous pressure from No Child Left Behind and state and federal mandated testing programs in efforts to raise the achievement level of the low SES child. The research conducted by Toutkoushian & Curtis (2005) indicates that there are no clear answers as to what steps schools can take to improve student achievement outcomes. Toutkoushian and Curtis (2005) examined whether teachers hold the same expectations for all children, even those who are considered low socioeconomic status (SES). According to Warren (2002), 25 percent of teachers interviewed held high expectations for all children and had a high sense of teaching efficacy (p. 109). According to Warren (2002):

"Throughout the past several decades, educators have all contributed to the effort of trying to improve student achievement in low-performing schools. Educators generally appear to have a sense of responsibility when it comes to making sure that all students excel in the classroom. Diversity is a characteristic that all educators must work hard to accept and often times teachers strive to help their students understand the importance of diversity and acceptance of all students. (pg. 109)

Warren (2002) states that: "All educators bring to their classrooms their own social identities, ideologies and ways of viewing students who are often very different from themselves" (p. 113). According to Warren (2002), there are several factors that coincide with the complexity of educators trying to balance, not only their personal views towards diversity, but also with monitoring those of the students in the classroom. The study revealed the deep effects of school culture that must be considered in order to envision true school reform and, therefore improve student achievement, particularly in poor urban schools (Warren, 2002). Diversity is a crucial yet difficult concept for all educators, administrators, students, and parents to accept.

In a research study conducted by Gerald Oettinger (1999), it was determined that school-year employment affects academic performance by causing students to devote less time to studies. High school students are very social. Therefore, they strive to maintain a social life outside the classroom. When students are trying to balance after-school employment, family time, academic studies and time with their friends, they quickly lose sight of the main task at hand, which should be excelling academically. Oettinger (1999) suggests that after-school employment should not necessarily be discouraged even if it



alters student academic performance, because students certainly receive benefits from current earning and their personal human capital.

Part-time employment is very common in the daily life of today's teenage society. According to Singh, Chang, & Dika (2007), part-time employment is thought to be a major part of teenage identity. In teenage society, students are constantly striving to arrive at their perfect identity that they have perceived or visualized in their minds. Having an after-school or weekend job seems to help add to students' perfect identity. Singh et al. (2007) concluded that about 80 percent of high school students work at some point during their high school years. According to Singh et al. (2007), some students generally tend to maintain a job during the actual school year whereas some students choose to work only during the summer months. Based on research data from the Current Population Survey (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005), 37 percent of students between the ages of 16 and 19 work during the actual school months. Students develop a strong sense of ownership when it comes to their jobs. According to Singh et al. (2007), "Most students spend anywhere from a few hours to over 40 hours per week in part-time jobs" (p. 12).

Research conducted by Singh et al. (2007) indicates that students work a substantial number of hours during the week, therefore, freeing up their weekends in order to maintain a social life with their family and friends. Throughout past decades there has been extensive research conducted in an effort to examine student employment and its effects on student academic success. Singh et al. (2007) stated, "Although the body of knowledge on part-time workers has grown substantially in the last decade, findings about the multiple effects of work on the school lives of students, including how

work affects achievement, are inconsistent and debatable" (p. 15). Numerous studies indicate that the effects of part-time employment on academic achievement as measured by grade point averages, grades, or standardized test scores are generally too small to have an influence on student achievement outcomes, controlling for prior achievement (Singh et al. (2007). According to Singh (2007), researchers have not found a significant effect of work on after-school employment on academic success in school. However, according to Marsh & Kleitman (2005), "researchers have determined that there are small to moderate negative effects of employment on achievement measures such as grades and test scores among high school students" (pg. 16). Singh (2007) stated that: "Because school engagement factors such as motivation, effort, and interest in learning are precursors to school achievement, it is important to control for their effects to understand the true relationship of part-time work on school achievement" (pg. 16). In the research conducted by Singh et al. (2007), the effect of part-time work on academic achievement, effort, and student motivation were compared to background factors, such as family socioeconomic status and family history. Typically, if students' parents were college graduates' then their children will most likely aspire to have the same or similar goals and expectations as their parents. There are always those exceptional children who desperately want to aspire and go far beyond their past family history and, who are able to adjust and persevere until they reach their aspirations.

The research conducted by Singh et al. (2007) was directed at answering the question: "What is the effect of part-time work as measured by the number of work hours per week during the school year on grades" (pg. 17)? Singh et al. (2007) state:



"In order to get a true idea of what factors lead to school success, family background as well as educational aspirations, personal and school related motivation and engagement in academic work were studied. The background factors include family socioeconomic status and the parental support system in the home" (pg. 17).

In recent studies, researchers have examined the relationship of part-time work to school achievement and other school-related outcomes (Singh, 2007). "Using data from the National Education Longitudinal Study: 1988 (NELS: 88), Singh et al. (2007) found a small negative effect of work hours on standardized achievement test scores and larger negative effect on student grades" (pg. 18). Singh et al. (2007), found a negative effect between the intensity of part-time work and mathematics and science achievement. Singh et al. (2007) references the study conducted as a follow up to the National Education Longitudinal Study by Quirk & Keith & Quirk, (2002), who found no overall negative effect of employment on high school students' grade point averages (GPA's), controlling for the effects of family background, previous achievement, gender, and ethnicity. Singh et al. (2007), state that, "researchers determined there is a significant decline in achievement scores when students worked more than 10 hours a week" (pg. 18). Marsh & Kleitman (2005) found that "working during high school had negative effects on 15 out of 23 in grade 12 and postsecondary outcomes, such as achievement, course work selection, educational and occupational aspirations, and college attendance, controlling for background and prior variables" (pg.19).

According to Steinberg & Dornbusch (1991), & Steinberg, Greenberger, Garduque, & McAuliffe (1982), "in several cross-sectional studies, researchers found that

work intensity was negatively correlated to attention in class, effort in school, and attendance, whereas studies in which part-time work was related to time spent on homework and GPA have somewhat mixed results" (pg. 19). Singh et al. (2007) stated: "Some researchers have reported no effects of work on school performance, whereas others have found little evidence of intensity of work behavior on educational achievement" (p. 18).

There have been numerous studies where researchers have found negative effects of students holding jobs during the school term and those researchers reported zero effects of working on academic performance (Singh et al., 2007). According to Singh et al. (2007), "some later researchers found that generally the effect of work on GPAs was negligible and that the effect of work intensity seemed to vary according to grade level through the student's senior year" (pg. 19).

According to Singh et al. (2007), "in a small sample of high school students, researchers reported that part-time work was not a significant predictor of student GPA, although the general trend of the data indicated a negative correlation between hours worked and grades. A major explanation with the relationship of GPAs and part-time work is that working students generally take fewer and less challenging classes in order to maintain a high GPA". (pg. 19)

Teachers are aware of their students' performance in the classroom and are also capable of determining whether students are willing to push themselves to succeed at their highest potential. Educators lowering the standards in order to accommodate working high school students will only result in negative results in the future in regards to student academic success. According to View (2006), high schools today are witnessing a



widespread epidemic of students who feel as if they are true honors students, but they try to weasel their way past the harder honors and AP classes in order to maintain the desired overall grade point average. View (2006) stated: "Far too many high school students approach their senior year and choose the path of least resistance" (§ 2). According to View (2006), high school seniors try to go about obtaining their grade point averages with the least amount of work. High school students are engaged in far too many extracurricular activities and after-school employment; so much so, that they are no longer able to maintain high grade point averages because of scarce time.

According to Holloway (2001), referencing the work of the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (1998), the effects of after-school jobs on adolescents were studied. Researchers examined the value of the various kinds of after-school jobs that most students held. According to Holloway (2001), "Most jobs, were disconnected from what students learned in school, did not systematically teach the job skills necessary for advancement, and provided little meaningful interaction with adult supervisors" (§ 1). The top five occupations of youths working in after-school and weekend positions are: cooks, cashiers, waitresses/waiters, food counters, and sales workers (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1997). Holloway (2001) stated: "if students begin working during their sophomore year of high school, they are less likely to engage in extracurricular school-related activities because of their after-school job" (§ 4). If students begin to work while they are upper-classmen, they are more likely to continue to find ways to maintain an after-school job as well as participate in extracurricular activities at their school. Social life is vital to high school students' lives. However, student academic performance can be

easily affected by the amount of extracurricular activities, including work, and a corresponding lack of attention or hours of academic engagement.

According to Holloway (2001), "a study showed that the number of hours that tenth graders worked increased the number of absences from school, especially among those students who worked more than 30 hours a week" (§ 3). Holloway (2001) stated: "working more than 30 hours a week during high school was associated with lower levels of future education attainment" (§ 3). Some high school students are employed in jobs that are enjoyable and realize that they might want to pursue a career in this area at some point in the future.

According to Holloway (2001), the report also found some benefits from after-school employment. Holloway (2001) stated that:

Students who were able to balance school and work by limiting their work hours gained valuable time-management skills that permitted them to work when they went off to college. Most studies show that the amount of time that students work or do not work does not really affect homework grades. High school students who are employed and participate in extracurricular activities tend to spend little time working on after school homework assignments. (Holloway § 3)

Over the past several years, there has been an increase in teachers assigning homework to high school students for failing to complete assignments because of the time spent in after-school activities at the expense of their academic responsibilities. According to Holloway (2001), because the U.S. average for homework time is low (fewer than four hours a week), employment was unlikely to diminish students' already modest investment in homework. However, research does suggest a relationship between



after-school employment and student academic achievement as measured by standardized tests. According to Holloway (2001), "part-time work affected both standardized test scores and grades" (§ 5). According to the research conducted by Holloway (2001), "the actual number of hours students worked had a significant negative effect on their standardized achievement levels. Students were more likely to have lower achievement scores than their peers if they worked longer hours during the school year" (§ 4). The main point of this study appeared to be to demonstrate that there is a positive correlation between the number of hours worked and the greater the negative effects on standardized measures of achievement (Holloway, 2001). According to Singh (1998), the more hours' students worked the more likely they were to get lower grades. According to Singh (1998), "Students' previous grades also affected their later working behaviors. Students who had higher grades in elementary and middle school were less likely to work longer hours when they reached their sophomore year" (§ 4). Students who tend to be more academically focused are not usually driven in the after-school employment arena. According to Gerald Oettinger (1999), "students of high ability were likely to hold regular jobs that required fewer hours each week. However, school-year employment tended to compromise academic performance overall" (§ 5). Most students who are striving for a successful academic career during their high school years typically choose to maintain a job in order to make some extra spending money without the job becoming their first priority. According to Holloway (2001), "The largest adverse effect in the whole study was on minority students, especially those who went from not working to working more than twenty hours a week in most or all weeks of the school year" (§ 5). Holloway (2001) found that students who went from not working to working more than

twenty hours a week suffered a decrease in their grade point averages of about 0.20 grade points in one year. Minority students have tendencies to struggle academically. However, this is not the case all of the time. Minority students tend to struggle the most with language barrier issues.

According to Singh & Ozturk (2000), research indicated that students who worked part-time tended to modify their course selections. Holloway (2001) stated, "Part-time work had a significant negative effect on the number of mathematics courses that these students took. The more hours that students worked, the fewer mathematics courses they completed and, in turn, this led to lower achievement in mathematics" (§ 7).

In conclusion, student grade point averages are affected by after-school employment and socioeconomic status. There seems to be a small correlation between student grade point averages and time worked outside of the classroom. However, research indicates that there are other factors such as after-school and extracurricular activities that can affect student progress in the classroom, as well as student background and family history. According to the research mentioned in this chapter, there are several indicators that suggest that student employment has negative effects on student academic achievement as reflected in student grade point averages (GPA's). However, some research supports a positive effect of student employment on the academic achievement of high school students as reflected in their grade point averages (GPA's). Student employment does not appear to have as strong of an effect on increasing or decreasing student grade point averages as does the student's socioeconomic status. Students are a product of their environment. Therefore, students generally appear to perform based on their parents' social status in the community. "Families and students need to be aware



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at the only apparent "good" reason for holding a job during the school year is to save money for future education" (Marsh & Kleitman, 2005, p. 363). Students often have the strong perception for the primary reasons they should work at an after-school job. The main concern for high school students should be to obtain a high school diploma, to achieve at their highest potential in preparing themselves for future academic success, and to secure the skills and knowledge necessary to enable them to transition into the next phase of their adult life without any hindrances caused by poor choices made during their high school years. However, due to the stressors of today's society, teenagers are burdened with other factors that do not allow them to put academic performance ahead of their perceived need to maintain an active after-school employment regimen.

*Overview*

The purpose of the study was to determine if after-school employment had a statistically significant affect on the academic achievement of high school students based on a comparison of the GPAs of working and non-working students. Additionally, this study was conducted to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in student achievement (GPAs) based on their socioeconomic status. The study was also conducted to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in student achievement (GPAs) based on their grade level. Finally, the study was conducted to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in student achievement (GPAs) based on their gender.

*Research Design*

This study was a descriptive study of the effects of employment, socioeconomic status, grade level and gender on the student's academic achievement as measured by student GPAs. Data from a researcher developed survey and archival data provided by the school system were used in the analysis to determine the level of significance of the effects of after-school employment, socioeconomic status, grade level and gender on student academic success as measured by their overall GPAs.



The participants of this study included students from a Middle Tennessee High School. Participants included both male and female students in grades 9-12. Approximately 300 students participated in the study.

*Instrument*

The instrument used was a researcher designed survey to collect data on student's employment status. Socioeconomic status, grade level, gender and GPAs were gathered from archival data from the 2008-2009 school year.

*Procedure*

Approval and permission to conduct the study was given by Austin Peay State University Institutional Review Board and the Sumner County Board of Education to study the Effects of After-School Employment and Socioeconomic Status on Student Grade Point Averages in one Middle Tennessee High School. Approval and permission was sought from the local board of education to access the student grade point averages of students enrolled during the 2008-2009 school year. Students completed a survey in their English classes in order to determine their degree of after-school employment. The socioeconomic status factor and grade point averages were accessed by school system approved personnel who coded the data prior to providing the data to the researcher. The study used coded archival data to collect student grade point averages and to ensure anonymity for all participants.

## Data Analysis Plan

The information gathered from the student surveys and the archival data from the school system were compiled and analyzed. An Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) one-way and three-way analysis of variances were used to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in GPAs for students who work versus those who do not work. The study will also utilize an unpaired t-test when comparing data from the students GPAs based on their socioeconomic status and the number of hours worked as an employee. The statistical software program Statistica was used to enter and run data collected during the study. Analyses were conducted to test the four hypotheses at the .05 level of confidence.

1. **Classification:** The students were from either ninth, tenth, eleventh, or twelfth grade. The students were classified by a coding system established by the guidance department at one Middle Tennessee High School. The students' names were not revealed to the researcher.
2. **Socioeconomic Status:** Students qualified in this category based on whether



The study examined the effects of four independent variables; employment status, socioeconomic status, grade level and gender on students achievement as measured by student grade point averages (GPAs). The data for employment and socioeconomic status were gathered using a researcher developed survey. The data for student grade levels and grade point averages were gathered using school system archival data. The study was conducted in one Middle Tennessee High School. The study included 155 females and 142 males for a total of 297 students which consisted of 74 freshmen, 80 sophomores, 74 juniors, and 69 seniors. Socioeconomic status was determined by whether or not the student qualified for free or reduced lunches during the 2008-2009 school year.

The computer program, Statistica was used to analyze and measure the level of statistical significance of employment status, socioeconomic status, grade level and gender on student academic success based on their overall grade point average (GPAs). The surveys also indicated whether or not the students were employed and how many hours they worked after-school and on weekends. The independent variables used in this study included:

1. **Classification:** The students were from either ninth, tenth, eleventh, or twelfth grade. The students were classified by a coding system established by the guidance department at one Middle Tennessee High School. The students' names were not revealed to the researcher.
2. **Socioeconomic Status:** Students qualified in this category based on whether or not they received free or reduced lunch during the 2008-2009 school year.



3. **Employment:** The surveys were used to determine whether or not the students were employed. If the students were employed, they were asked to indicate whether or not they worked 1-15 hours, 16-30 hours, or 31+ hours per week.
4. **Gender:** The students indicated on the survey whether or not they were male or female.

The dependent variable used in this study was:

1. **Grade Point Averages:** Student GPAs were obtained by the guidance department at one Middle Tennessee High School.

### *Hypothesis One:*

1. **Null:** No statistically significant difference was predicted for student GPAs between students who are employed versus those students who are unemployed.

A one-way ANOVA was used to determine whether or not after-school employment played a significant role on the student's grade point average. The comparison of after-school employment did not show a significant difference for GPAs with those who were employed as compared to those who did not work regardless of the number of hours worked, ( $t(302) = .1147, p = .13$ ) likewise no significant differences were found when comparing non-workers to different work load schedules,  $F(3, 300) = 0.9388, p = 0.42219$  (see Table 4.1). It was concluded that after-school employment did not have a significant impact on student GPAs when compared with students who were not employed.



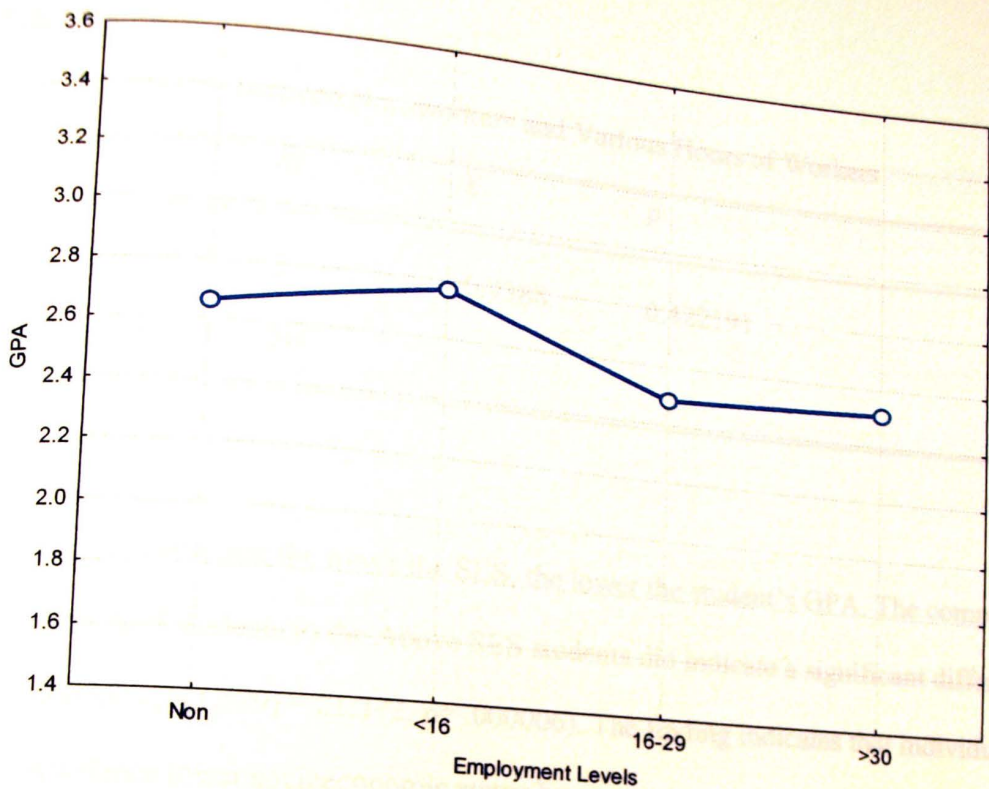


Figure 4:1. Effects of Employment Level on GPA.

*Hypothesis Two:*

2. Null: No statistically significant difference was predicted for student GPAs based on students' socioeconomic status.

A factorial design using a two-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to determine whether or not a main effect for socioeconomic status played a major affect on student grade point averages (GPA's). Individuals that had a lower socioeconomic status (SES) tended to have a significant effect on the outcome of one's GPA (see Table 4.2).

Figure 4:2 Mean Comparisons for Socioeconomic Status by Classification Levels.

Table 4:2

Mean Comparison between Non-workers and Various Hours of Workers

Source	df	F	p
Employment (A)	3	0.9388	0.422191
Within group error	300		

Research indicated that the lower the SES, the lower the student's GPA. The comparison of the Low SES students to the Above SES students did indicate a significant difference regarding SES ( $F(1,279) = 21.372, p = .000006$ ). The finding indicates that individuals who experience lower socioeconomic status have a tendency to achieve significantly lower academically as determined by their grade point averages (GPAs) (see Figure 4.2).

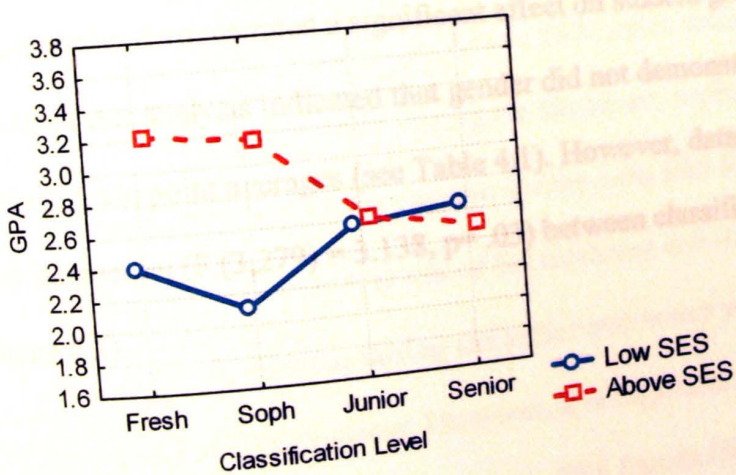


Figure 4:2 Mean Comparisons for Socioeconomic Status by Classification Levels.



### *Hypothesis Three:*

3. Null: No statistically significant difference was predicted for student GPAs among the various classification levels which ranged from ninth grade through twelfth grade.

A factorial design using a three way ANOVA was used to determine whether or not classification levels had a significant effect on student grade point averages. The comparison of classification levels did not show a significant difference among grade levels ( $F(3,279) = 1.292, p = .28$ ). It was concluded that classification levels did not have a significant difference on student grade point averages (GPAs) (see Figure 4.2).

### *Hypothesis Four:*

4. Null: No statistically significant difference was predicted for student GPAs based on gender.

A factorial design using a three way ANOVA was also used to determine whether or not gender demonstrated a significant effect on student grade point average. The results of this analysis indicated that gender did not demonstrate a significant effect on student grade point averages (see Table 4:1). However, data indicated that there was a 3 way interaction ( $F(3,279) = 3.138, p = .03$ ) between classification, gender, and SES (see Figure 4.3).

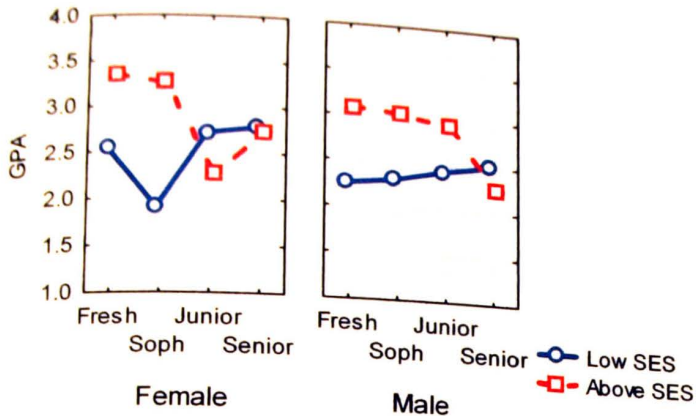


Figure 4:3. Mean Comparisons for Socioeconomic Status by Classification Levels by Gender.

These findings indicated that differences are present with the Above SES female students achieving significantly higher GPAs during their freshman and sophomores years in high school. Similarly, the Above SES males achieved significantly higher GPA levels than the Low SES males during the freshmen, sophomore, and junior years in high school. An examination of the patterns for the Low SES female students indicated that the significantly lower GPA levels of the freshmen and sophomore students changed to non-significant differences during the junior and senior years with the senior year indicating minimal differences. However, it is important to note that, during this same period of classification in which the Low SES female GPAs indicated an increase, the Above SES female experienced significant declines in their GPA achievement levels. This same pattern of decline was present for the Above SES senior males. The Low SES



males appear to be more at-risk for maintaining higher GPA levels throughout the entire high school experience with only a gradual non-significant increase over the four year period.

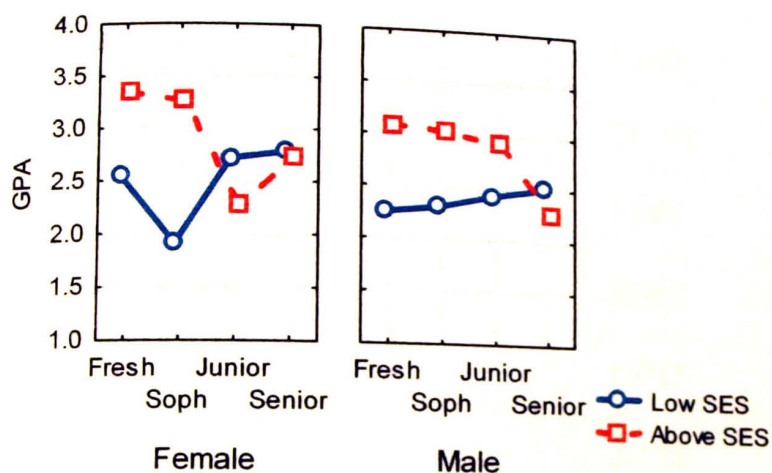


Figure 4:3. Mean Comparisons for Socioeconomic Status by Classification Levels by Gender.

Source Table for Mean Comparisons of Socioeconomic Status Classification and Gender

Source	df	F	p
Classification (A)	3	1.292	0.277440
Gender (B)	1	1.143	0.285977
SES (S)	1	21.372	0.000006
A X B	3	1.987	0.116071
A X S	3	9.590	0.000005
B X S	1	0.047	0.828296
A X B X S	3	3.138	0.025848
With-in group error	279		



## CHAPTER V CONCLUSIONS

This study analyzed students in grade levels ninth grade through twelfth grade in one Middle Tennessee High School. There were a total of 297 students that participated in the study. The study looked at gender, socioeconomic status, employment, grade level and student grade point average. The study was used to show whether or not grade point averages are more affected due to socioeconomic status or after-school employment. This chapter is a discussion of the research findings.

The participants involved in this study were enrolled in a large Middle Tennessee High School during the 2008-2009 school year. The statistical software used to access the data was Statistica. The data was analyzed by using an ANOVA in order to analyze the statistical differences among the various groups. The independent variables used in this study were: gender, after-school employment, classification levels, and socioeconomic status. The dependent variable used was student grade point averages. Based on the analyses of the independent variables, only gender and socioeconomic status proved to be significant predictors when trying to determine the affects of student GPAs and after-school employment.

Based on the research findings, there was a statistically significant difference between students' socioeconomic status and their individual GPAs. A factorial design using an ANOVA (three-way analysis of variance) was used to determine whether or not socioeconomic status played a major affect on student grade point average. The comparison of the Low SES students to the Above SES students did show a significant difference regarding SES ( $F(1,279) = 21.372, p = 000006$ ). It was concluded that SES did have a significant difference on student GPAs.

The research findings also presented a statistically significant interaction between classification and gender. However, data showed a 3 way interaction ( $F(3,279) = 3.138$ ,  $p = .03$ ). The research also indicated that the number of students on free and reduced lunch decreased with grade level. There were more students at the freshmen and sophomore level that classified as low SES.

The purpose of this field study was to determine whether or not socioeconomic status or after-school employment affected students GPAs more significantly. The following conclusions can be made based on the results of the study:

1. Socioeconomic status played a major factor when analyzing students GPAs. The research showed a significant difference in low and high SES when looking at student GPAs.
2. Gender was not a major factor when trying to determine whether or not socioeconomic status or after-school employment affected student GPAs.
3. There was a significant interaction between classification of students and gender.
4. Employment did not have a significant difference when analyzing student GPAs. Students participated in a survey where they were asked to indicate how many hours a week they work. Based on the research findings, hours worked after-school did not play a significant role in affecting student GPAs.



### *Recommendations for further study:*

1. This study could be elaborated in order to determine other beneficial factors when trying to determine influential factors that affect students overall GPA.
2. It may also be beneficial to conduct this study in a more diverse, urban school district.
3. A further study may help to determine if after-school tutoring and special programs could help aide in grade level progression towards individual student GPAs.

The literature review in Chapter II supported the premise that SES had a stronger impact on student grade point averages than after-school employment. Based on the data from this field study, SES proved to be the most significant factor in influencing the level of student academic achievement rather than the postulated factor of after-school employment.

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## Appendixes

## Appendix A

### Sumner County School Board Approval

I am a graduate of the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, where I received my Bachelor's Degree in Education. I have also received my Master's Degree in Education from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville. I have also received my Doctorate in Education from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville.

I am currently a teacher at Hendersonville High School as a part of the school's English classes. I will send a copy of the results to the school principal, who will be kept confidential and will be kept on file while conducting research. If I have your permission, I will sign and date this letter and return it to me as soon as possible.



# HENDERSONVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

123 CHEROKEE ROAD  
HENDERSONVILLE, TENNESSEE 37075  
TELEPHONE: (615) 824-6162 FAX: (615) 264-6027

Mike Shelton  
Principal

**TO:** Mrs. Judy Wheeler  
Assistant Director of Schools for Instruction  
Sumner County School System

**FROM:** Kristin Averitte

**DATE:** April 7, 2008

**SUBJECT:** Approval to Use Student Data

My name is Kristin Averitte, and I am currently pursuing my Education Specialist Degree in Educational Leadership at Austin Peay State University. The major requirement for this degree is to conduct a research project. I have chosen the topic of: *"A Comparison of the Effects of After-School Employment on Student GPA's and Discipline in one Middle Tennessee High School."*

I am requesting permission to use student data from Hendersonville High School as a part of my project. I will need student overall grade point averages in order to complete my study. I will also be surveying students through their English classes if approved, to determine the amount of hours worked during the school term on a weekly and monthly basis. Upon completing this research project, I will send a copy of the results to the board of education. The student data will be kept confidential and will be kept on file here at Hendersonville High School while conducting research. If I have your permission to use the requested student data, please sign and date this letter and return it to me as soon as possible.

Thank you sincerely for your time and cooperation with this matter.

Kristin Averitte  
117 Raindrop Lane  
Hendersonville, TN 37075  
615-264-9137

B.S. History, 2004, APSU; M.Ed. Administration & Supervision, 2006, APSU

4-11-08

OK

Judy Wheeler

## Appendix B

### Researcher Developed Survey



