

High School Sport Involvement Among Alberta's Senior Executives

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By

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Executive Summary

- This study aimed to determine the extent to which Alberta's senior executives (both in the public and private sector) were involved in high school athletics, and the perceived benefits that these individuals derived from their participation.
- A brief survey was mailed to Alberta's 83 Members of the Legislative Assembly and the senior executives of the province's leading 146 corporations (as ranked by revenue. The data collection occurred between October 2005 and February 2006 and involved e-mail reminders and web-based response options.
- A total of 92 completed responses were returned (46 corporate executives and 46 MLAs) for a response rate of 40.2%.
- Male respondents represented 89.5% of the sample, while 10.5% were female.
- Almost four out of five (78.3%) respondents indicated that they had participated in high school athletics programs. All of these corporate and political leaders indicated that they had graduated from high school.
- The most popular sports in which Alberta's corporate and political leaders participated at high school included: track and field, basketball, and football.
- Over half of all respondents (54%) indicated that they felt that involvement in high school sport had 'significantly' or 'extensively' assisted their future career development
- The most common characteristics perceived by respondents to have been developed through involvement in high school athletics were team-work, communication, discipline, and leadership.
- Involvement in high school sport was perceived to have had a positive influence on the development of skills from which Alberta's corporate and political leaders subsequently derived benefit in their professional lives. Team-work was the skill that they learned the most from their involvement in high school sport. Other talents and traits derived from involvement in high school sport included discipline, goal setting, leadership, independence, and self-confidence.
- Almost half of the respondents (48%) indicated that there was a 'significant' or 'extensive' complementary relationship between academics and sports involvement.
- Other benefits associated with involvement in high school athletics cited by Alberta's corporate and political leaders included: physical fitness, promotion of lifelong activity, mental health, stress relief, friendship, having fun, the development of character, personal growth, travel, fair-play, and acceptance of others.

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1.0 Background

Involvement in high school athletics has been shown to provide a valuable experience for participants on a number of levels (NFSHSA, 2004). These benefits of high school sport participation include: athletics being a valuable part of the high school experience, involvement in athletics acting as a complement to academic pursuits, diminished dropout and discipline issues for participants, and involvement in athletic programs yielding post-high school career success. However, to date, there has been no formal research to support this latter claim in relation to students who participate in athletics in Alberta schools. Therefore, as part of its mandate to coordinate a program of worthwhile athletic activities for the young people of Alberta in an educational setting, the Alberta Schools' Athletics Association (ASAA) identified a need to assess the extent to which high school sport involvement has played a role in the career development of senior executives within the province.

As the 1997 Alberta Schools' Athletics Association Student Survey (Poon & Spence, 1997) highlighted, faced with cutbacks in government funding in the early 1990s, many schools viewed 'non-essential' activities including athletics with a skeptical eye. As a result, some school boards in Alberta reduced or eliminated funding to high school athletics. These cutbacks reached their peak at the same time that the benefits to individuals of involvement in active lifestyles at a young age were being highlighted in the academic literature as a means of reducing health problems in later years (Bouchard, Shephard, & Stephens, 1994). In addition to the health benefits (both physical and psychological) of involvement in physical activity during high school, Poon and Spence (1997) found that students participating in school athletics tended to be good school citizens, and possibly better school citizens than their non-sport-playing peers. They also found a positive correlation between participation in high school athletics and above average academic performance.

In addition to the health, citizenship, and academic benefits that have been shown to be associated with high school athletics in Alberta, it has been reported in other jurisdictions that involvement in high school sport has played a key role in the future career development of high level executives (USA Today, 1987). This study, based on a survey of individuals at the executive vice-president level or above in 75 Fortune 500 companies indicated that 95% of corporate executives in the United States participated in sports during high school. Furthermore, involvement in high school athletics in the United States has been shown to be positively correlated with wage differentials later in life (Postlewaite & Silverman, 2004).

However, to date there has been no study published in Canada that makes that direct link between involvement in high school athletics and future career success. To this end, the ASAA expressed interest in determining the extent to which Alberta's senior (corporate and public sector) executives were engaged in high school sport. The ASAA was also interested in identifying the benefits,

which resulted from such participation, that are perceived by senior executives in Alberta organizations.

Therefore, in the fall of 2005, ASAA contracted Caminata Consulting to design and conduct a research project that would determine the extent to which Alberta's senior executives (both in the public and private sector) were involved in high school athletics, and the perceived benefits that these individuals derived from their participation. The ASAA is grateful for the financial support by the Alberta Lottery Fund's Community Initiatives Program, which funded this research.

The remaining parts of the report outline the methodology that was used, summarize the results, provide a discussion and analysis of the findings, and highlight some conclusions. In interpreting the results, the limitations noted in the report should be borne in mind.

2.0 Methodology

This section of the report outlines the methodology used to conduct the survey of Alberta's leading public and private sector executives to determine the extent of their involvement and experiences in high school sport. The major challenge was to design a survey instrument that would balance the need for rich data with the excessive time constraints on these individuals, which might act as a disincentive for them to complete and return the survey.

In consultations with John Paton (ASAA's Executive Director), the Consultant determined that the most cost-effective and least time-consuming (for potential respondents) method of data generation was a mailed survey, which also provided an option for web-based completion. The survey instrument that was developed was limited to ten questions¹ (two pages) to encourage response.

Several pilots of both the written and web-based survey were conducted with ASAA staff, Executive Committee, and other senior executives known to the Consultant prior to the distribution of the final survey. These resulted in minor wording changes to improve clarity of questioning. The pilots indicated that the entire survey could be answered in four to six minutes. The mailed versions of the surveys are duplicated in Appendices A (MLA) and B (corporate).

In order to increase the likelihood of response, corporate executives who completed the survey were offered a summary of the findings (on completion of the analysis) and recognition by ASAA in one of its championship event programs in 2006, and on its web-site. MLAs that provided responses were offered a summary report. These incentives were only available for respondents who provided contact details (name, constituency office, or corporation), although they were assured of anonymity in the presentation of findings.

As was explained to recipients of the survey instrument in a covering letter (see below), the prime goal of the survey was to assess the role and relative importance of students' involvement in athletics during high school in shaping their future career path as perceived by Alberta's public and corporate leaders.

In order to generate a suitable sample from which to draw respondents for the study, two population sources were used:

- Political – All 83 Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs)
- Corporate – The designated 'senior executive' of Alberta Venture's "The Venture 100" and "The Next 50" corporations as identified in Alberta Venture Magazine's September 2005 edition (Volume 9, Issue 7). These rankings combine to provide details of Alberta's leading 150 private corporations (ranked by revenue).

¹ As a result of formatting, the web-based survey, although it asked the same questions in the same order, was 14 questions.

Survey Design and Coverage

The surveys were conducted in several steps:

- A mail-out / mail-back questionnaire was sent to the senior executives of the "The Venture 100" and all eighty-three Alberta MLAs, addressed to them at their corporate and Legislature offices respectively, in late October, 2005. The covering letter included a request that they complete and return the survey (either in an enclosed return-paid envelope, or by fax, or via the web-based survey instrument) by November 18, 2005. By this date only about 10% of the surveys had been returned.
- In order to improve the response rate, follow-up e-mails were sent to those individuals (both MLAs and corporate executives) who had not responded (or whose responses could not be tracked because they had responded in anonymity). These initial reminders, which included copies of the original letter and the survey instrument as well as a hyper-link to the web-based version of the survey, were sent during the first week in December. An extended deadline of December 12th, 2005 was indicated for response.
- A second e-mail reminder and request was sent on December 16th, 2005 to MLAs and corporate executives who had not responded by that date, with a further extended deadline for receipt of responses set at December 23rd, 2005
- A further letter was sent to MLAs (at their constituency offices) who had not responded by January 25th, 2006, with a request that they submit responses by a final deadline of February 10th, 2006
- At the same time (January 25th, 2006) a letter was sent to senior executives of the "Next 50" corporations with a request that they complete and return the survey (either in an enclosed return-paid envelope, or by fax, or via the web-based survey instrument) by February 10th, 2006.
- A reminder e-mail was sent to the senior executives of the "Next 50" corporations on February 20th, 2006, which included a hyper-link to the web-based version of the survey. The final deadline for receipt of these responses was set at February 26th, 2006.
- On February 28th, 2006, no further surveys had been returned and the web-based survey instrument was disabled.

Of the 150 corporations listed in "The Venture 100" and "The Next 50", some had ceased operations as separate entities by the time the surveys were mailed, and two companies listed the same individual as its senior executive. As a result, only 146 corporate executives were reached with the survey.

Despite the numerous follow-up requests made to non-respondents, the overall rate of response remained relatively low (approximately 40.2%). Nevertheless, the results obtained do provide some insight into how involvement in high school athletics is perceived later in life by participants who have gone on to achieve success in either corporate or political life in Alberta. As a whole, the responses can be considered reasonably representative of the population of Alberta's corporate and political elite, with a margin of error of +or- 7.2% nineteen times

out of twenty. For sub-samples of the data (i.e., MLAs or corporate executives alone), the margin of error is greater.

The number of responses received is summarized in Table 2.1 (below):

Table 2.1 Survey Response Rate

	Target Population	Responses Received	Refusals	Did Not Respond
MLAs	83	46 (55.4%)	6	31
Executive	146	46 (31.5%)	9	91
Overall	229	92 (40.2%)	15	122

As can be seen from Table 2.1, the response rate among MLAs was higher than it was among corporate executives (55.4% as compared with 31.5%). However, given the level of executive that was targeted for inclusion in the survey target population (only the most senior executive in the corporations selected), this was not particularly surprising. Of some note is the fact that fifteen of Alberta's political and corporate leaders (six MLAs and 9 corporate executives) took the time to write to inform the researchers that they would not be able to participate in the study. The majority of these individuals cited a policy that prevented them from responding to surveys. Nevertheless, the overall response rate provides a reasonable cross-section of Alberta's corporate and political leaders.

As with any survey of this nature, there is the possibility of non-response bias whereby those who were not involved (and therefore generated no perceived benefit from high school athletics) chose not to complete and return the survey. However, all respondents (whether they participated or not) were offered the same benefits for returning the survey. The fact that seven MLAs and nine corporate executives who had not been high school sport participants made the effort to return the surveys indicates that this perhaps proved sufficient incentive.

3.0 Results

This section of the report outlines the findings of the survey. The initial questions sought to determine some basic information about the respondent related to company or constituency identification, name, and gender. In order to encourage an increased response-rate, respondents were instructed that their answers to these questions were optional. However, they were informed that it would not be possible to acknowledge their responses in the manner outlined in the previous section of this report (summary results and/or ASAA championships program mention), unless they provided some form of identification.

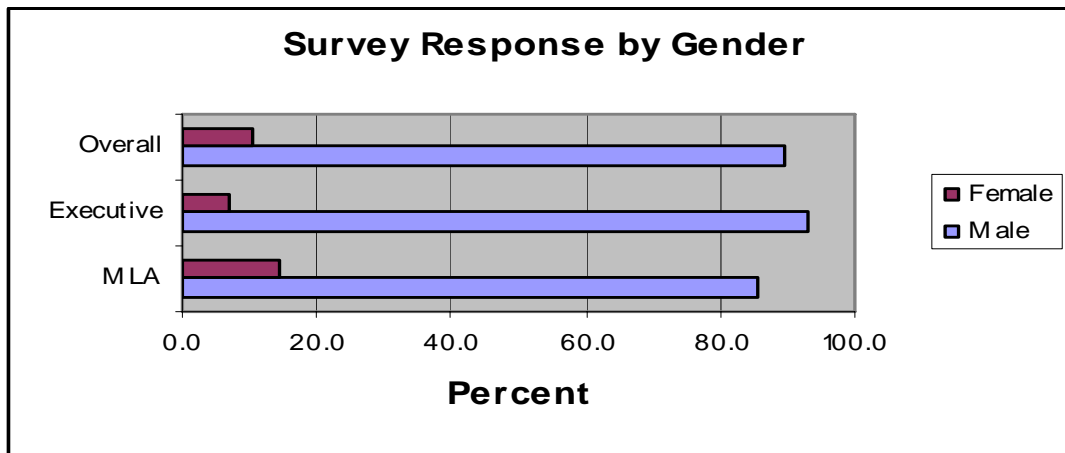
3.1 Gender

The gender of respondents to the survey is outlined in Table 3.1 and Chart 3.1. A total of 92 responses to this question were received, although six of the respondents declined to identify their gender. Although the overwhelming majority of respondents was male, it should be recalled that the survey sample only targeted the most senior executive in Alberta's largest 150 companies, and its MLAs. Some thirteen of the eighty-three MLAs are female (15.7%), while four of one hundred and forty six of Alberta's corporate leaders are female (2.7%). Thus, the gender of respondents is reasonably representative of the sample population as a whole, although female corporate executives are slightly over-represented.

Table 3.1 Gender of Survey Respondents (%)

	Male	Female
MLA	85.7	14.3
Executive	93.2	6.8
Overall	89.5	10.5

Chart 3.1 Gender of Survey Respondents



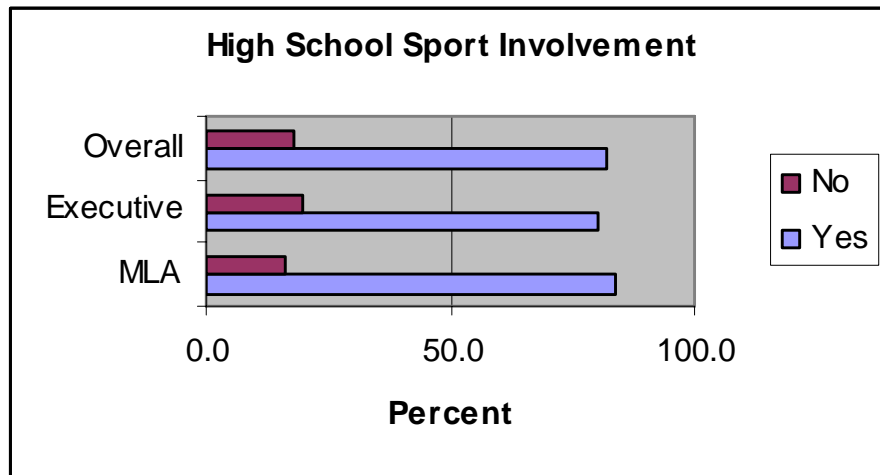
3.2 Involvement in High School Athletics

The extent of high school involvement in athletics among the survey respondents is outlined in Table 3.2 and Chart 3.2. A total of eighty-eight responses to this question were received. The vast majority of respondents indicated that they had been involved in high school sports at some level. However, these rates of participation were somewhat lower than those that were found in the previously cited study of American corporate executives (1987). The current study did not seek to identify reasons why high school sport involvement among Alberta executives of today might have been different from that experienced by their American counterparts in the late 1980s. However, it is possible that variations in the demographic and school profiles of members of these two groups may have contributed. For example, the 1987 study investigated corporate executives at the vice-president level or higher, whereas the current investigation considers the responses only of CEOs and MLAs.

Table 3.2 Competitive High School Sport Involvement of Alberta's Senior Corporate Executives and MLAs (%)

	Yes	No	Not Stated
MLA	80.0	15.6	4.4
Executive	76.6	19.1	4.3
Overall	78.3	17.4	4.3

Chart 3.2 Competitive High School Sport Involvement of Alberta's Senior Corporate Executives and MLAs (%)



The subsequent results presented in this section refer only to those senior executives and MLAs who indicated that they had been involved in high school sport. This is because those who indicated no involvement were instructed not to answer further questions as the remaining questions related specifically to experiences from high school sport.

3.3 High School Graduation Rates

Table 3.3 indicates the graduation rate among the MLAs and corporate executives who indicated involvement in high school athletics was 100%.

Table 3.3 High School Graduation Rates of Alberta's Senior Corporate Executives and MLAs Involved in Athletics (%)

	Graduated	Did Not Graduate
MLAs	100.0	0
Executive	100.0	0
Overall	100.0	0

3.4 Year of High School Graduation

The year of high school graduation of survey respondents who indicated involvement in sport at high school is outlined in Table 3.4. While respondents were not specifically asked for their age, this table provides some indication of the average age of respondents. Based on a high school graduation age of 18, respondents were, on average, in their mid-50s.

Table 3.4 Year of High School Graduation of Alberta's Senior Corporate Executives and MLAs Involved in Athletics (%)

	1960s (or earlier)	1970s	1980s	1990s (or later)
MLA	57.1	31.4	8.6	2.9
Executive	23.1	56.4	20.5	0.0
Overall	39.2	44.6	14.9	1.4

3.5 Location of High School

The province in which the respondents' high school was located is summarized in Table 3.5. The proportion of MLAs who attended high school in Alberta is significantly higher than is the case for Alberta's senior corporate executives.

Table 3.5 Province of High School Graduation of Alberta's Senior Corporate Executives and MLAs Involved in Athletics (%)

	Alberta	Other Canadian Province	Other (outside Canada)
MLA	67.6	29.7	2.7
Executive	35.7	59.5	4.8
Overall	50.6	45.6	3.8

The remaining questions on the survey related specifically to the nature of sport involvement and its perceived impact on future career success.

3.6 Sports Involvement

The sports in which senior corporate executives and MLAs participated during their high school years varied greatly. As is highlighted in Table 3.6, the most prevalent sport among MLAs at the high school level was track and field (73.7% of respondents participated in this sport, with 71.1% participating in high school, and 36.8% at the Varsity level). For corporate executives, the most prevalent sport was football (59.5% participation, 56.8% in high school, and 45.9% at Varsity level). However, when the two sub-samples are combined, the most popular sport was track and field (54.7% involvement at high school), closely followed by basketball (52.0%) and football (42.7%). One third of respondents (33.3%) indicated that they participated at the Varsity level in each of high school football, basketball, and track and field. The most popular community-based sport was hockey (42.7% overall participation outside of high school programming).

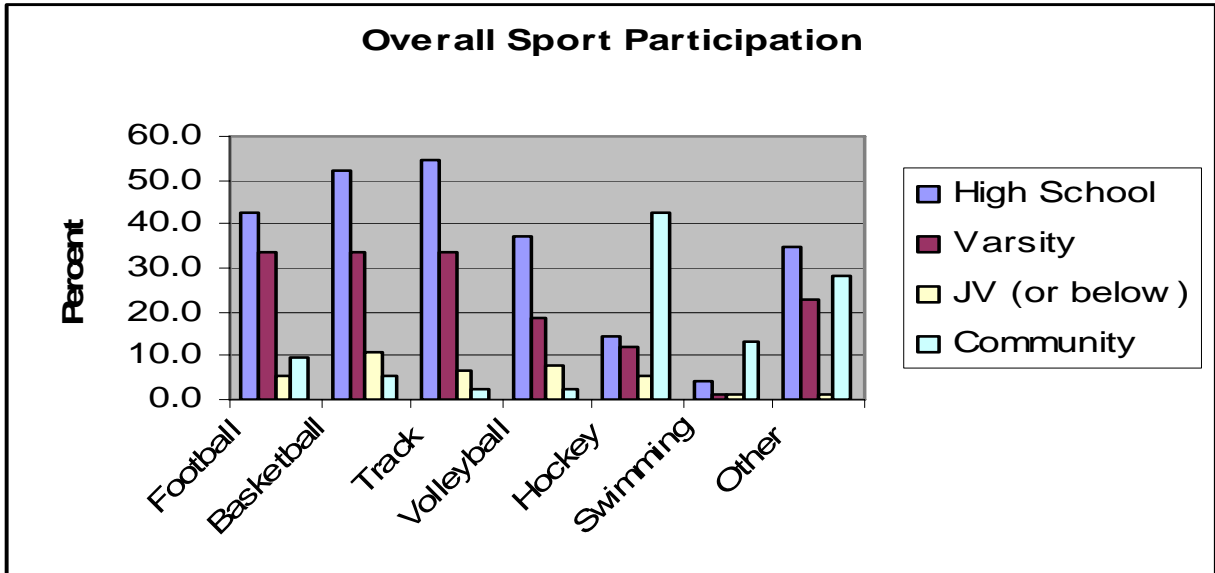
Table 3.6 High School Sports in Which Alberta's Senior Corporate Executives and MLAs Participated (%)

	Football	Basketball	Track	Volleyball	Hockey	Swimming	Other
MLA	39.5	63.2	73.7	57.9	57.9	21.1	44.7
High School	28.9	63.2	71.1	52.6	15.8	7.9	31.6
Varsity	21.1	34.2	36.8	28.9	7.9	2.6	15.8
JV (or below)	5.3	10.5	2.6	5.3	5.3	2.6	2.6
Community	15.8	5.3	5.3	5.3	50.0	15.8	23.7
Executive	59.5	45.9	37.8	21.6	45.9	10.8	56.8
High School	56.8	40.5	37.8	21.6	13.5	0.0	37.8
Varsity	45.9	32.4	29.7	8.1	16.2	0.0	29.7
JV (or below)	5.4	10.8	10.8	10.8	5.4	0.0	0.0
Community	2.7	5.4	0.0	0.0	35.1	10.8	32.4
Overall	49.3	54.7	56.0	40.0	52.0	16.0	50.7
High School	42.7	52.0	54.7	37.3	14.7	4.0	34.7
Varsity	33.3	33.3	33.3	18.7	12.0	1.3	22.7
JV (or below)	5.3	10.7	6.7	8.0	5.3	1.3	1.3
Community	9.3	5.3	2.7	2.7	42.7	13.3	28.0

Highest participation rates highlighted
 Percentages may not add up to totals because of non-responses or duplicate responses

This information is summarized graphically in Chart 3.6.

Chart 3.6 High School Sports in Which Alberta's Senior Corporate Executives and MLAs Participated (%)



3.7 Competitive High School Sport Involvement and Career Assistance

The extent to which high school sport is perceived to have assisted the future careers of Alberta's senior corporate executives and MLAs is indicated in Table 3.7.1. Over half of all respondents (54%) indicated that they felt that involvement in high school sport had 'significantly' or 'extensively' assisted their future career development. The median response was 3.3, 3.6, and 3.5 out of 5 (i.e., between 'Moderately' and 'Significantly') for MLAs, corporate executives, and overall respondents respectively. Thus, both MLAs and corporate executives, on average, indicated that they felt that their involvement in high school sport had played a relatively important role in helping them achieve success in their future careers.

Table 3.7.1. Extent to which Competitive High School Sport is Perceived to Have Assisted Future Career Development among Alberta's Senior Corporate Executives and MLAs (%)

	Not At All	Marginally	Moderately	Significantly	Extensively
MLA	8.1	10.8	29.7	45.9	5.4
Executive	0.0	10.8	32.4	40.5	16.2
Overall	4.1	10.8	31.1	43.2	10.8

Survey participants were asked to elaborate on their responses and indicate how involvement in high school sport assisted with preparing them for their future profession. Their reasoning is outlined in Table 3.7.2. This table consists of quoted responses to the open-ended question. The responses have been categorized under broad headings.

The most common traits perceived by both MLAs and corporate executives to have been developed through involvement in high school athletics were team-work, communication, discipline, and leadership. Other benefits cited include: understanding of others, developing a competitive nature, self confidence, a commitment to health and lifelong physical activity, preparation for future challenges, and social networking.

Two corporate executives noted negative sentiments towards high school athletics. However their comments suggested that the reason for their negative experience had been that sport at their high school was poorly organized. This perhaps stresses the importance of adequately structured programming for high school sport to reap future benefits for participants.

Table 3.7.2 How Competitive High School Sport Involvement Assisted Career Development of Alberta's Senior Corporate Executives and MLAs (responses to open-ended question)

MLAs

Team-Work, Communication, Discipline, Leadership
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taught me to learn about others and team work • Teaches communication, perseverance and team work • Leadership, Teamwork, Problem solving • It taught me teamwork, practice makes perfect, (Persistence), organization and commitment • Working with a team • Sports definitely helped in understanding the concept of team and leadership • Team sports help promote the idea of working together toward a common goal. • Added a very meaningful dimension to the academic. Social growth through team sports. • Taught me leadership skills, working towards a specific goal and discipline. • Most importantly, it me about leadership, teamwork, and being the best person I could be! • It got me involved with people of all different backgrounds. Had to learn how to step up. • Team interaction allowed me to meet • Self-confidence, Discipline, Teamwork • Involvement in athletics helps develop your personality. Participation develops leadership, giving one a more mature, self-confident and independent feeling. • Being a team player teaches one how to work together to succeed and these habits become part and parcel of your life. • Team sports are great as you learn the importance of team effort and deal with the frustration of someone not doing their job or putting in their best effort and on the other side though you might not be the star player you realize you can still very much make a difference in a small yet significant way. • Team spirit Taking winning & losing with stride Never giving up • Taught about playing as a team • Sport teaches teamwork, spirit, the fruits of hard work and practice and determination in tough situations. • Learn to function in team atmosphere. Learn how to lose • Fair-play, leadership, team sport - all developed learning.

- Involvement allows one to slowly learn the 'value of time' and helps one set goals accordingly

Distraction, Understanding

- Too busy to cause trouble
- As a teacher I was able to relate to students as I worked with them as a coach and had some good understanding of their behaviours, activities, etc.

Competition, Confidence

- Many other activities were available outside of the school - a rural area
- Track and field is beneficial as outright competition.
- Team activities. Interaction with others at competitive level.
- Individual sports on the other hand help you to develop confidence and personal commitment to yourself in doing your best.

Health, Lifelong Activity

- Healthy living
- You can't have a healthy mind without a healthy body.
- Provided me with the opportunity for life long friends and an appreciation for sport - which I hope I have passed on to my 4 children
- There are many benefits to sports and I will only respond briefly... One could right a lengthy essay if time permitted... You have the opportunity to meet other people with a common interest and an excellent form of enjoyable exercise usually.
- Perhaps a finishing note would be one of personal satisfaction in participating and enjoying an active lifestyle I still today prefer to play sports as to only being able to watch.
- To be well rounded, you must develop all skills somewhat.

Preparation for Future Endeavor

- It prepared me for climbing Mt. Everest - Twice - which opened all sorts of doors
- I had a PE major at University and taught Physical Education & coached at the Jr. High-High school level. It was a great prelude to politics.
- I feel that I benefited by participating in sports during my school years as the qualities I learned then, I still practice in my day to day and professional life.

Criticisms

- Sports were not a high priority for me.
- While I did not participate to a great extent in extra curricular team sports as a student because of part time jobs, I was very involved as a teacher of 34 years in coaching both in school and extra curricular sports. I coached a variety of sports including cross country, soccer, wrestling and gymnastics. I coached wrestling for over twenty years and soccer both at the community and school level. I played rugby for 17 years and soccer for about 15. Cross country running has always been both a physical and mental fitness exercise for me.

Corporate

Team-Work, Communication, Discipline, Leadership

- 'High school sports helps to build character, a sense of teamwork, establish goals, commitment and a number of strong values that are still with me today in my career'
- A fit body is a fit mind. Still into physical fitness today
- Goal setting Focus Time Allocation Dedication
- Developed sense of team, of playing a role. Learned to deal with defeat
- The physical activities were strenuous enough, testing endurance to the point of reaching limits, which, when accomplished added greatly to sense of self worth.
- Taught teamwork, fairness, defeat and success and how to handle them all.
- Knowledge of teamwork

- Participation in sports provides the essential corporate skills of teamwork, competitiveness and the ability to operate under pressure.
- The concept of team. Being able to depend on others and understanding they depend on you, you need to get along.
- Learn effectiveness of teamwork
- Learn to get along with others. Learn to motivate and be motivated. Learn losing/failure is no big deal personally.
- Taught Leadership, Teamwork
- Leadership skills, fitness, commitment to a team, time management,
- I became exposed to a new group of more focussed friends. I learned to balance life skills between school and athletics. I learned the value of being part of a team.
- It helped me understand the need to prioritize and to be prepared as to not let down the team.
- Teamwork, Commitment, Perseverance
- High school sports taught me the perseverance, commitment and most importantly team work that are critical in today's business world.
- Opportunity to develop team values and importance of competition
- Team work, Hard work, Goal orientation, Winning AND losing
- It taught me about the value of teamwork, motivation, perseverance and how to get to the next level.
- Team skills, Fitness, Discipline, Time management
- It taught elements of teamwork, compromise, dealing with winning and losing, the benefits of hard work, goal setting
- The skills, discipline, teamwork, leadership and work ethic experienced during high school football have contributed to, and provided the base for my character and values today.
- My experience in high school football provided me with mental and physical discipline.
- Importance of training, motivation, attitude, focus. Importance of team work

Health, Lifelong Activity

- Importance of health balance aiming for success
- Importance of dealing with loss
- Many aspects of competing on teams analogous to competing in business
- Developed interpersonal skills in dealing with people, physically fit keeps the mind alert and makes you feel good about your personal being, competitive spirit.
- Great outlet for energy etc.
- Learned how to compete, overcome adversity.

Social Connections

- Excellent social connections. Great rapport with teachers.
- The folks I participated in athletics with are all very successful in their career pursuits.

Criticisms

- Although I didn't get involved at school, made many friends in golf & tennis; learned to compete - how to win and lose gracefully.
- Most sports activity was outside school.
- Community sports better organized/higher level which diminished participation/interest in high school sports. [The] coaching at High School [was] generally poor
- High School sports were not intensive or highly competitive. Participation did not have any social implications.
- Very poor programs and instruction

3.8 Transferable Skills

Alberta's senior corporate executives and MLAs indicated that their involvement in high school sport had varying degrees of influence on the development of skills from which they subsequently derived benefit in their professional lives. These skills included: time management, discipline, goal setting, team-work, leadership, independence, and self-confidence. The extent to which MLAs and senior corporate executives perceived to have benefited from their involvement in high school sport is indicated in Table 3.8.1. For all skills, with the exception of 'time management', over half of the respondents indicated that they had been advantaged either 'significantly' or 'extensively'.

Table 3.8.1 Extent to Which Involvement in Competitive High School Sport Taught Skills Used in the Professional Life of Alberta's Senior Corporate Executives and MLAs (%)

	Not at all	Marginally	Moderately	Significantly	Extensively
MLA					
Time Management	10.8	16.2	40.5	27.0	5.4
Discipline	5.7	5.7	25.7	48.6	14.3
Goal Setting	6.1	6.1	33.3	45.5	9.1
Team-work	5.7	2.9	8.6	57.1	25.7
Leadership	5.9	5.9	26.5	50.0	11.8
Independence	6.1	6.1	21.2	54.5	12.1
Self Confidence	5.7	2.9	22.9	48.6	20.0
Corporate					
Time Management	5.7	22.9	28.6	40.0	2.9
Discipline	2.8	5.6	22.2	52.8	16.7
Goal Setting	5.6	2.8	27.8	44.4	19.4
Team-work	2.8	5.6	2.8	30.6	58.3
Leadership	5.6	5.6	16.7	33.3	38.9
Independence	5.6	11.1	41.7	22.2	19.4
Self Confidence	2.9	5.7	20.0	48.6	22.9
Overall					
Time Management	8.3	19.4	34.7	33.3	4.2
Discipline	4.2	5.6	23.9	50.7	15.5
Goal Setting	5.8	4.3	30.4	44.9	14.5
Team-work	4.2	4.2	5.6	43.7	42.3
Leadership	5.7	5.7	21.4	41.4	25.7
Independence	5.8	8.7	31.9	37.7	15.9
Self Confidence	4.3	4.3	21.4	48.6	21.4

As is illustrated in Table 3.8.2, both MLAs and corporate executives felt that team-work was the skill that they learned the most from their involvement in high school sport. The median response for all respondents (on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1=Not at all; 2=Marginally; 3=Moderately; 4=Significantly; and

5=Extensively) was 4.2 for team-work. . For corporate leaders, the average response was 4.4, while for MLAs it was 3.9. Time management was only cited a being 'moderately' learned from involvement in high school athletics (overall median score of 3.1: for MLAs 3.0; for corporate leaders 3.1). The median response for all other skills derived from involvement in high school sport (including discipline, goal setting, leadership, independence, and self-confidence) was between 3.4 and 3.8 for both MLAs and corporate leaders.

Table 3.8.2 Median Extent to Which Involvement in Competitive High School Sport Taught Skills Used in the Professional Life

	Median (on a scale of 1-5)*
MLA	
Time Management	3.0
Discipline	3.6
Goal Setting	3.5
Team-work	3.9
Leadership	3.6
Independence	3.6
Self Confidence	3.7
Corporate	
Time Management	3.1
Discipline	3.8
Goal Setting	3.7
Team-work	4.4
Leadership	3.9
Independence	3.4
Self Confidence	3.8
Overall	
Time Management	3.1
Discipline	3.7
Goal Setting	3.6
Team-work	4.2
Leadership	3.8
Independence	3.5
Self Confidence	3.8

*(1=Not At All, 2=Marginally, 3=Moderately, 4=Significantly, 5=Extensively)

3.9 Athletics as a Complement to Academics

As has been noted in studies of the relationship between academic success and involvement in high school athletics among the student body at large (McNeal, 1995; Poon & Spence, 1997; Smith, 1994; Spreitzer, 1994), almost half of the respondents to this survey (48%) indicated that there was a significant or extensive complementary relationship between their education and sports involvement. This is illustrated in Table 3.9.1. Therefore, there appears to be further support for the notion that involvement in high school athletics does not act as a detriment to academic success. In fact, the two pursuits seem to have been complementary for the majority of Alberta's corporate and political leaders who were involved in sports.

3.9.1 Extent to Which Involvement in Competitive High School Athletics Complemented Academic Pursuits of Alberta's Senior Corporate Executives and MLAs (%)

	Not at all	Marginally	Moderately	Significantly	Extensively
MLA	5.6	16.7	30.6	33.3	13.9
Executive	2.7	18.9	29.7	40.5	8.1
Overall	4.1	17.8	30.1	37.0	11.0

(% responding with each level of agreement)

The median response to the question: "Did you find that your involvement in high school athletics acted as a complement to your academic pursuits?" for all respondents (on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1=Not at all; 2=Marginally; 3=Moderately; 4=Significantly; and 5=Extensively) was 3.3. This is shown in Table 3.9.2.

Table 3.9.2 Median Extent to Which Involvement in Competitive High School Athletics Complemented Academic Pursuits

	Median (on a scale of 1-5)*
MLA	3.2
Executive	3.3
Overall	3.3

*(1=Not At All, 2=Marginally, 3=Moderately, 4=Significantly, 5=Extensively)

3.10 Other Benefits Derived from Involvement in Competitive High School Sport

The final question on the surveys asked respondents to indicate whether they had derived any other benefits from their involvement in high school sports. This was an open-ended question (i.e. no prompts were provided). Many of the respondents chose to reinforce what they had already indicated in their responses to other questions on the survey. However, others highlighted other benefits that had not previously been mentioned. The responses are provided in Table 3.10. This table consists of quoted responses to the open-ended question. The responses have been categorized under broad headings.

The categorization of benefits mentioned included physical fitness, promotion of lifelong activity, mental health/stress relief, friendship/camaraderie, fun, synergies with academics, the development of character, personal growth, team-work, travel, fair-play, and acceptance of others. The most common of these among MLAs was friendship and fun; while among corporate leaders team-work and acceptance of others was the most commonly cited other benefit. Taken as an overall group, the most common responses related to exposure to physical activity at an early age providing an opportunity for fitness and lifelong activity.

As with Table 3.7.2, a small number of respondents offered criticism of high school athletics. The experiences of these MLAs and corporate leaders did not appear to have been enjoyable ones. However, it is interesting to note, once again, these respondents noted a lack of organization of sports programming in their particular high schools. For ASAA and its constituent high school members, it is encouraging to note that these situations appear to have been isolated exceptions to an overall positive experience associated with involvement in high school athletics.

Table 3.10 Other Benefits Derived by Alberta's Senior Corporate Executives and MLAs
(Responses to Open-Ended Question)

MLAs

Physical Fitness, Lifelong Activity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise, physical fitness • Life long interest to maintain fitness • Sports kept one in better physical shape and provided for a healthier lifestyle • Physical involvement established life style that was much healthier than would otherwise have been the case. • Helped clarify importance of wellness. • Lifelong interest in several sports
Mental Health
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health - athletics continue to be a central part of my well-being!

- To me it was important and put balance in my life between the purely mental and the mental and body combination of sports. I am a huge believer in being and doing all you can do I also really enjoyed industrial arts and the hands on experience it provided me and the other students and have always felt that we would truly benefit the education of our young if we would just incorporate more of these activities for students even on an intra-mural level and had more people involved. We really do our students a favour by allowing more involvement across the board in sports and industrial arts especially when we start doing them after school for extra curricular activities.
- Living the concept of 'well-rounded' person, with healthy mind and health body! My slogan of personal living and development priorities: 'Brain, Body and Fun'.
- Kept me awake

Link with Academics

- High school sports are critical to building one's capacity to learn. Opportunities to problem solve, the ability to work together in a team atmosphere provides opportunities for leadership skills development
- At that age I never connected the two (athletics and academics). Sports gave me the opportunity to spend time outside of school in a fun, constructive and useful way.
- I loved it, it gave me something to look forward to & participate in.
- The most important benefit I had during these days was leadership skills. I learned that to earn respect from your fellow man you must give them that respect as well. If you treat your teammates well it is easy to develop other good qualities.

Friendship, Fun

- Friendship, belonging and achievement
- Provided opportunity to meet many new friends and to grow as a person.
- I coached community sports. Encouraged and committed our children in physical and sport activities
- Fun
- Exposure to wide variety, gymnastics, track & field, volleyball, basketball in Phys. Ed classes.
- Relationship building. Channeled energy to a positive endeavour
- Involvement is important to provide enjoyment and a reason for living
- Comradeship and common purpose in working towards a specific goal (i.e. City Championship in football)
- A way to get to know other students in large populations
- The benefits I derived were the direct result of a very positive interaction with students who were highly motivated. The sports I chose to coach did not require cuts. Anyone who showed up for practice was automatically eligible to compete. While former students very rarely refer to a single academic moment that affected their lifestyle or career choice they frequently refer to the fun and sense of camaraderie they experienced while engaged in sporting activities.

Criticisms

- Dealing with the ASAA was very frustrating. As a coach I found the ASAA a hindrance - internal issues - kids were not the first priority.

Corporate

Character, Personal Growth

- Shaped my character development through a combination of athletics and academics and a desire to set high achievement standards in both
- Having a challenging physical program in conjunction with a challenging academic program provided opportunity to grow with success and failure both as an individual and a team.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formed my competitive character and leadership qualities.
<p>Travel</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broadened horizons by traveling, competing, learning and experiencing cultures • I was a more rounded person. I got to travel, met a new circle of friends, dealt with adults in a different environment
<p>Team-Work, Fair-Play, Acceptance</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lessons learned from this have to [be] experienced. They cannot be taught. • Fair play, accepting members of the team for the positives they bring, • High school sports helped me understand the power of the team versus a group of talented individuals • Dealing with victory and defeat and the realization that there are greater personal and team victories through shared positive experiences • Properly structured and coached you obtain maturity of self you would take years in the workforce to achieve. Poorly structured/coached, any form of athletics can destroy confidence • Involvement in any sport will complement academic pursuits. Life is full of winners and losers. There is no sense of losing in team sports, as participation in any game makes you a winner. • High school sports were as important as the academic portions of high school. These programs developed the full potential of students.
<p>Physical Fitness, Lifelong Activity</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical Fitness • Physical fitness • Physical activity • Better life fitness expectations - interest and confidence to pursue other activities, outdoor activities, and the interest to do so.
<p>Distraction, Stress Relief</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gave me something to focus on besides drinking and getting into mischief • Relieved the stress of day to day study • Greatly enhanced the overall high school experience and school atmosphere. It made high school much more acceptable which helped attendance, better marks etc. • School spirit / camaraderie Pride in our team together
<p>Criticisms</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I believe that high school sports are very important, albeit my high school was very poor. • I think it made a good addition to the academic program although in my case it was student government, school band and chess club activities that really made the difference for me personally. Not to minimize the value of athletics but in my case enthusiasm was much stronger than skill and so I didn't get to participate as much in the team based sports. • Most sports activity was outside of High School. The better athletes competed in community competitive sports not high school • Basically none, it was all derived from community sports

4.0 Conclusions

The results of this study indicate that almost four out of five (78.3%) of Alberta's MLAs and senior corporate executives were involved in high school sport in their formative years. The majority of these Alberta leaders who indicated involvement in high school athletics recalled a positive learning experience that provided skills that were used later in their professional life.

The benefits that these leaders associated with their participation in high school sports included the following:

- Leadership skill development
- Team-work
- Discipline
- Focus
- Self-confidence
- Goal-setting
- Competitive nature
- Character building
- Social growth
- Responsibility (to self and others)
- Friendship
- Relationship building
- Fun
- Life balance
- Fair play
- Health and wellness
- Lifelong physical activity
- Diversion from other stresses and negative influences in high school

The most common paybacks perceived by both MLAs and corporate executives to have been developed through involvement in high school athletics were team-work, communication, discipline, and leadership. These are the same qualities that are found in abundance among the most successful public and corporate leaders. Although it cannot be shown conclusively from the data presented here that there is a direct causal relationship between involvement in high school athletics and the ability to develop such skills at an early age, it does appear that such involvement provides an opportunity for such traits to be acquired and cultivated.

Perhaps of even greater substance is the contention made by over half of all respondents (54%) that their participation in high school sport had 'significantly' or 'extensively' assisted their future career development. This result, when combined with the evidence that supports a positive relationship between involvement in athletics and academic success, suggests that there are

considerable potential benefits associated with expanding opportunities for student involvement in high school athletics programs.

However, as was noted by the few respondents who had negative experiences with high school athletics, in order for them to be proving grounds for future career success, it is important that these programs be well-organized. It is not too great a step in logic to suggest that organization relies, at least to some extent, on adequate resources (both financial and human) being allocated to high school athletic programming.

Finally, it would be remiss to overlook the gender bias of the respondents in this study. Almost 90% of those who returned the survey were male. While in no way condoning this gender bias, it acts to highlight the under-representation of women in executive positions. This is because although approximately 16% of MLAs are women (13 out of 83), fewer than 3% of senior executives in Alberta's largest corporations (4 out of 146 companies in this sample) are female. Nevertheless, the number of female executives in North America has been rising in recent years. In fact, women hold 50.3% of management and professional positions in Fortune 500 companies. However, fewer than 2% of the Fortune 500 and Fortune 1000 CEOs in 2005 were women (Catalyst, 2005). Similar proportions were reflected in the population of the Alberta corporations sampled in this study. This is not to suggest that female participants in high school athletics do not reap future career benefits from their involvement. In fact, it is quite likely that the contrary is the case. However, this is a question that was beyond the scope of this study and clearly deserves further research.

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Appendix A – MLA Survey

Alberta Schools' Athletic Association – MLA Survey

Please complete and return by **November 18, 2005** to
 Alberta Schools' Athletic Association – Executive Survey
 Mail: 11759 Groat Road
 Edmonton AB T5M 3K6

Fax: 780-415-1833 E-mail: info@asaa.ca

Alternatively, a web-version of the survey can be completed at:
<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=715631462290>

Responding to Question 1 is optional, but, in order to allow us to send summary results to you, we do require you to identify your constituency.

1. **Constituency (optional):** _____
Name (optional): _____
Gender (optional): *Male* *Female* (please circle)

2. **Were you involved in sports during high school?**

Yes	No
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If you answered “No” to question 2, the remaining questions do not apply, please return the survey.

If you answered “Yes” to question 2, please continue with question 3.

3. **Which sports did you participate in, and at what level?**

Sport	Level (<i>Jr. Varsity</i> <i>Varsity, etc.</i>)	Was this a High School Sport? (<i>Yes or No</i>)	Was this a Community-based (non school) Sport? (<i>Yes or No</i>)
Football			
Basketball			
Track and Field			
Volleyball			
Hockey			
Swimming			
Other			

4. **Where did you attend high school?**

Town/City
Province

5. **When did you graduate from high school?**

Year of Graduation
Did Not Graduate

Please answer the following questions as they relate to your **high school sports** experiences **only**

6. *To what extent do you believe your involvement in high school athletics assisted your career development?*

Not at all Marginally Moderately Significantly Extensively

7. *Why do you believe this to be the case?*

May we quote your response to Question 7? Yes No (please circle)

8. *To what extent did your involvement in High School sports teach you skills that you continue to use in your professional life?*

	Not at all	Marginally	Moderately	Significantly	Extensively
Time management					
Discipline					
Goal setting					
Team-work					
Leadership					
Independence					
Self Confidence					

9. *Did you find that your involvement in high school athletics acted as a complement to your academic pursuits?*

Not at all Marginally Moderately Significantly Extensively

10. *Please indicate any other benefits that you derived from your involvement in High School sports.*

May we quote your response to Question 10? Yes No (please circle)

Thank You

We appreciate your feedback.
 Any questions regarding the survey may be directed to:
 John Paton, Executive Director, ASAA,
 11759 Groat Road, Edmonton AB T5M 3K6
 Telephone: 780-427-8182 E-mail: john@asaa.ca

Appendix B – Executive Survey
Alberta Schools' Athletic Association – Executive Survey

Please complete and return by **November 18, 2005** to
 Alberta Schools' Athletic Association – Executive Survey
 Mail: 11759 Groat Road
 Edmonton AB T5M 3K6
 Fax: 780-415-1833 E-mail: info@asaa.ca
 Alternatively, a web-version of the survey can be completed at:
<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=72181426068>

Responding to Question 1 is optional, but, in order to allow us to send summary results to you and identify your company in the appendix, we do require you to identify your company.

1. *Company (optional):* _____
Name (optional): _____
Gender (optional): *Male* *Female* (please circle)

2. Were you involved in sports during high school?

Yes	No
-----	----

If you answered “No” to question 2, the remaining questions do not apply, please return the survey.

If you answered “Yes” to question 2, please continue with question 3.

3. In which sports, and at what level, were you involved?

Sport	Level (Jr. Varsity Varsity, etc.)	Was this a High School Sport? (Yes or No)	Was this a Community-based (non school) Sport? (Yes or No)
Football			
Basketball			
Track and Field			
Volleyball			
Hockey			
Swimming			
Other			

4. Where did you attend high school?

Province
Town/City

5. When did you graduate from high school?

Year of Graduation
Did Not Graduate

Please answer the following questions as they relate to your **high school sports** experiences **only**

6. To what extent do you believe your involvement in high school athletics assisted your career development?

Not at all	Marginally	Moderately	Significantly	Extensively
------------	------------	------------	---------------	-------------

7. Why do you believe this to be the case?

May we quote your response to Question 7? **Yes** **No** (please circle)

8. To what extent did your involvement in High School sports teach you skills that you continue to use in your professional life?

	Not at all	Marginally	Moderately	Significantly	Extensively
Time management					
Discipline					
Goal setting					
Team-work					
Leadership					
Independence					
Self Confidence					

9. Did you find that your involvement in high school athletics acted as a complement to your academic pursuits?

Not at all	Marginally	Moderately	Significantly	Extensively
------------	------------	------------	---------------	-------------

10. Please indicate any other benefits that you derived from your involvement in High School sports.

May we quote your response to Question 10? **Yes** **No** (please circle)

Thank You

We appreciate your feedback.
 Any questions regarding the survey may be directed to:
 John Paton, Executive Director, ASAA,
 11759 Groat Road, Edmonton AB T5M 3K6
 Telephone: 780-427-8182 E-mail: john@asaa.ca