

Research by Varsity Brands Identifies Connection between School Spirit and Student Achievement, Involvement and Confidence

New White Paper Details Findings among Students, Principals and Parents

MEMPHIS, Tenn. – Sept. 3, 2014 – Students with higher levels of school spirit perform better academically, are more civically engaged, and are happier in general than their less-spirited peers, according to research released today by Varsity Brands. This online research was conducted by Harris Poll on behalf of Varsity Brands this past spring among 1,016 high school students, 315 parents of high school students and 150 high school principals across the United States to learn more about school pride, academics, self-esteem, community involvement and more.

The research found that students with higher levels of school spirit also have higher average Grade Point Averages and are more likely to plan to further their education than students with lower school spirit. Additionally, the large majority of principals (89%) feel that it's important to build school spirit at their school and four in five (80%) agree that school spirit is a key measure of an effective school administration. Parents who say their child has a lot of school spirit are more likely than parents who don't to report that their child performs above average in school academically compared to other students (61% vs. 31%).

"School spirit is a powerful reflection of pride, achievement and determination. It goes hand in hand with positivity and is a benchmark of a school's holistic success," said Jeff Webb, CEO of Varsity Brands. "High school students, principals and parents agree that higher levels of school spirit reflect more positively on the students' high school experience. Varsity is proud to contribute to that experience through the wide range of products and services offered by our three brands."

The survey revealed key insights on the connection between student achievement, involvement and confidence:

- From academic achievement to general happiness, there is a positive relationship to school spirit.** The majority of principals report that compared to other students, those with a great deal of school spirit are more confident (91%), are more likely to be leaders (90%), are happier (88%), are more active in their communities (87%), and are more fulfilled (73%). Further, 92% of principals agree that high school spirit is tied to high student achievement.
- Above average.** Three-quarters of students (75%) with higher levels of school spirit¹ perform above average academically, significantly more than those with low school spirit (42%). Students with high school spirit also have significantly higher GPAs than their low school spirit peers (3.5 vs. 3.2).
- Intent to continue their educations.** High-spirited students are more likely than students with low school spirit to expect that they will receive a four-year degree or more (84% vs. 51%).
- Well-rounded.** Parents who say their child has a lot of school spirit are more likely than parents who don't to say that their child is responsible (78% describes completely/very well vs. 44%), ambitious (70% vs. 29%), motivated (72% vs. 24%), and a leader (61% vs. 22%), among other positive attributes.

¹ A "school spirit index" was developed for students based on the following four attributes: 1) students' self-assessment of their level of school spirit; 2) students' self-reported pride in their school; 3) students' propensity to get other students to be active in school events; and 4) students' plans to return to their school for special events after graduation. Students were grouped into categories of high, moderate, and low school spirit based on their combined responses to these four components.

- **Feel connected.** Students with higher levels of school spirit are notably more apt to feel extremely/very connected to their school (89% vs. 4% of students with low school spirit). The majority of high spirited students (92%) also feel extremely/very connected to other students at their school – much more so than those with low school spirit (28%). And parents who report that their child has a lot of school spirit are more likely than those who don't to say their child is involved in school social events and activities (68% vs. 12%), organized sports at school (61% vs. 13%) and extracurricular activities at school (53% vs. 21%).

“Having seen firsthand the coordination between student achievement and higher levels of school spirit, I’m glad that there is now a set of research that reinforces this key relationship,” said Bob Gardner, Executive Director of the National Federation of State High Schools (NFHS). “This encourages students, parents, community leaders and all school personnel to support and promote participation in school activities. These activities build a student’s self-esteem and confidence as well as provide lifetime memories.”

This survey was developed by Varsity Brands to better understand the role school spirit plays in academic performance, principal and teacher involvement and parent engagement. The complete findings are available in the “School Spirit: the Connection between Student Achievement, Involvement and Confidence” white paper at www.varsitybrands.com.

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About the Survey

The survey was conducted online by Harris Poll on behalf of Varsity Brands. The survey was administered within the United States among 1,016 high school students, 315 parents of high school students and 150 high school principals between April 30 and May 16, 2014. Among students, data has been weighted where necessary by gender, race/ethnicity, region, parent’s education (if under 18), and school urbanicity to bring them in line with their actual proportions in the population. Among parents, data has been weighted where necessary by gender, race/ethnicity, region, education, income, and propensity to be online to bring them in line with their actual proportions in the population. Among principals, data has been weighted by necessary by gender, school enrollment, school region and school type (public/private) to bring them in line with their actual proportions in the population.

About Varsity Brands

With a mission to inspire achievement and create memorable experiences for young people, Varsity Brands elevates the student experience, promotes participation and celebrates achievement through three unique but interrelated businesses: **Herff Jones**, a Varsity Achievement Brand; **BSN SPORTS**, a Varsity Sport Brand; and **Varsity Spirit**. Together, these assets promote personal, school and community pride through their customizable products and programs to elementary and middle schools, high schools, and colleges and universities, as well as church organizations, professional and collegiate sports teams and corporations. With over 4,600 dedicated employee-owners and independent representatives, Varsity Brands reaches its individual and institutional customers each year via catalog, telesales, e-commerce sites and direct sales channels. For more information about Varsity Brands, please visit www.varsitybrands.com.

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