



## Research Article

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# Examining the Role of School Authorities to Promote High Academic Performances of Students in Music at Nkonya Senior High School in the Volta Region of Ghana

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**Abstract:** *The study's objective was to ascertain the courses of action, their impacts, recommended treatments, and actions implemented to improve academic performance. Between October 2016 and February 2017, data were collected and analyzed using a mixed method analysis (triangulation) technique. The study revealed that a lack of parental support, poverty, absenteeism, individual mental capacity, and school authorities' engagement all have a role in academic performance changes. Boys were found to be absent from external examinations at a higher rate than girls, according to the data. Boys, on the other hand, exceed girls in terms of total academic achievement during a six-year period. According to the study, music students, music teachers, and school management all contribute significantly to boosting the academic level of the school. To ensure academic equity in subsequent years, the music teacher should devise techniques to boost female students' love for the subject. Additionally, parents should provide academic materials and monitor their children's attendance to reduce truancy and absenteeism. This will improve the academic performance of students at Nkonya Senior High School.*

**Keywords:** Students, Role, School authorities, academic Performance, Music.

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## INTRODUCTION

Music has been an examinable course since 2002/2003 at Nkonya Senior High School. Since its start, all music teachers have earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Education, Winneba. From 2002 through 2009, the first music teacher taught the course. The second teacher, who started in September 2009, has remained till the 2016 -2017 academic year and took part in the study. The majority of music students were from Nkonya and its environs. Some of them had prior music experience as members of the town's "Brass Band" before entering Senior High.

Nkonya Senior High School had no designated music classrooms. The teacher and students had to teach and study in the dining hall, under a tree, in the open or in any other accessible classroom block. There was no teaching or learning material for this subject. The music department at Nkonya Senior High lacked music studio and a laboratory which should help facilitate teaching and learning of the subject. This has impacted class delivery. Nkonya Senior High School is located between Nkonya-Ahenkro and Nkonya-Ntumda on the Kpando – Abotoase high way.

Over the previous six years, the musical output at Nkonya Senior High School has been inconsistent (2011-2016). This incident had a negative impact on

several students who wanted to pursue music at a higher level. They were denied the opportunity because colleges and universities had set cut-off grades (A1-C6) for students who wanted to improve their knowledge and abilities in music subjects, including Music Education. (University of Ghana, copyright 2016.)

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### The Concept of Academic Performance

Academic performance is a phrase that describes how well a student does in school. Poor academic performance is defined as receiving poor grades. It also relates to how students' approach their education and how they handle, or complete various assignments assigned by their teachers or lecturers. Academic performance refers to how students complete their tasks and studies in general, although there are a variety of elements that influence the degree and quality of students' academic performance. Academic performance, or how well a student satisfies the institution's criteria, is used to assess achievement in educational institutions. As the workplace becomes more competitive, the necessity of students doing well in school has piqued the interest of parents and government education agencies alike. Although schooling is not the sole path to professional achievement, significant effort is put into identifying, evaluating, and encouraging students' development in

schools. Parents are concerned about their children's academic performance because they feel that excellent grades will lead to greater professional opportunities and employment stability for their children.

Academic achievement is assessed in a variety of ways at school. Students show their knowledge by taking written and oral examinations, giving presentations, turning in assignments, and engaging in class activities and discussions to receive regular grades. As a result, teachers use letter or number grades as well as side remarks to explain how well a student has performed.

Grading systems first appeared in America during the late Victorian era. Academic performance, according to the researcher, is a fundamental process of adopting and enhancing the quality and development of students' performance; what is learnt may be assessed either by things that can be observed in an individual's behavior or by things that can be inferred. Learning is continuous, and it builds on previous experiences in the setting in which it occurs, i.e. the school, which is the subject of this research.

### **Learning Environment**

Learning Environment as a Factor in Learner Differences in Academic Performance The term "learning environment" encompasses a wide range of concepts, and its impact on learning cannot be overstated. The physical environment, according to Akinboye *et al.* (1981), is complex, and its effects on learning are equally complex. Temperature, pressure, and humidity are all factors in the physical environment that impact the individual and, as a result, his learning. He went on to say that leaning is the result of an individual's interaction with his surroundings.

However, when the environment appears to be harsh not conducive for teaching and learning then learning is adversely affected. Learning environment therefore refers to the total surrounding where learning takes place. The classroom is the pupils temporary home and his immediate learning environment and it must appear very comfortable, colourful, clean and educationally attractive. A good learning environment is characterized by some of the following depending on the immediate community, subjects demand etc. There is the need of well-spaced classrooms for effective teaching and learning to take place.

### **The Role of Infrastructure and Instructional Aids**

In teaching and learning, instructional venues such as classrooms, libraries, labs, and technical workshops are critical. The extent to which these spaces can help teachers and students learn more effectively is determined by their position within the school, as well as its structure and amenities. It is doubtful that well-designed instructional environments in terms of location, size, structure, and facilities will make

teaching and learning easier, as well as improve students' academic achievement. It is important to note at this point that having a well-spaced and adequate classroom will facilitate and make the teaching and learning process more effective; however, if the classrooms do not have adequate lighting and ventilation, the students will not be able to perform as well, and there are instances where classrooms are located very close to technical workshops.

As a result, well-equipped laboratories are required for efficient teaching and learning to take place. Laboratories, according to Bajah (1979), are critical in the teaching and learning of science topics. In certain secondary schools, laboratories have been reported to be poorly designed. Apart from the lack of essential facilities in the laboratories, and the fact that some of the laboratories are cramped, poorly situated, and lack cross ventilation and inappropriate lighting, such laboratories may hinder efficient teaching and learning, lowering students' academic performance.

Thus, a well-equipped library is needed for effective teaching and learning. There can be no overemphasis on the role of school library in teaching and learning. Fuller (1986); & Popoola (1989) revealed that the academic performance of school library impacts much. There seems to be an insufficient library facility in some Senior High School. In certain situations, school bookstores are not big enough and are not conveniently placed in the school. The situation of infrastructure deficit is one of the greatest challenges in the teaching and learning of music students at Nkonya Senior High School. Though the demand is capital intensive, it is the only resort to the effective delivery of music as much as the benefits are enormous for the students and the school community.

### **Factors Affecting Some College Students' Performance**

Much practical research is conducted to explore elements that influence college students' musical performance. The performance of students (academic success) is critical in creating high-quality graduates. Such students will grow into excellent leaders and manpower for the country, contributing to its economic and social growth (Ali *et al.*, 2009).

### **Student Performance**

Galiher (2006); & Darling (2005) utilized GPA to assess student achievement since the major focus is on the student performance for the specific term. These results are computed over a three-year period, with the average mark achieved (Internal Assessment) being 30% while the student prepares to write the external examinations for 70%. The WAEC evaluates students based on the Cumulative Grade Point which is formative and the summative assessment occurs in the exams room. Because they are analyzing performance for a certain subject or year, some other researchers

utilized test results or prior year outcomes (Hijazi & Naqvi, 2006; & Hake, 1998).

### Communication

A number of academics have explored several aspects that influence students' academic success. Students' academic success is influenced by two sorts of variables. These are both internal and external classroom variables that have a significant impact on students' performance. Students' English proficiency, class schedules, class size, English text books, class test results, learning facilities, homework, classroom atmosphere, difficulty of course material, instructors' involvement in the class, technology utilized in the class, and exam systems are all internal classroom variables. Extracurricular activities, family difficulties, job, and financial, social, and other problems are all examples of external classroom influences. According to research, student performance is influenced by a variety of elements such as learning facilities, gender and age disparities, and so on Hansen (2000). The most significant element that has a favorable influence on students' performance, according to Harb & El-Shaarawi (2006), is their English proficiency. Students' performance improves when they have good communication abilities and a firm command of the English language. Communication abilities have an impact on a student's performance; communication may be viewed as a variable that is positively connected to a student's success in open learning. This research differs from prior research in that it focuses on open learning (Abdullah, 2011). There is a connection between communication and student achievement.

### Learning Facilities

According to Karemera *et al.* (2003), students' performance is highly associated with their happiness with the academic environment and the institution's library, computer lab, and other amenities. In terms of background factors, he discovered a favorable relationship between high school performance and school accomplishment, but no statistical evidence of a significant relationship between family income level and student academic performance. According to Robert & Sampson (2011), members of the educational board will be educated, and their influence on the school will be good; professional growth is necessary for student learning. Students that participate actively in the learning process have a favorable association with their CGPA. The student's study effort and correct use of the facilities given by the institution, as well as a good fit between the students' learning styles, have all had a beneficial impact on the student's success (Norhidayah Ali, *et al.*, 2009). Young (1998) believed that student achievement is connected to the use of the library and the amount of parental education. The utilization of the library has a favorable impact on student achievement. For students, the academic environment is the most important variable, and it has a favorable link with their parent's education and grade

level (Kirmani & Siddiquah 2008). Learning facilities and student performance have a favorable link.

### Proper Guidance

Through academic achievement in high school, Noble *et al.* (2006) found that students' academic accomplishments and activities, perceptions of their coping strategies and positive attributions, and background characteristics (i.e., family income, parents' level of education, parental guidance, and the number of negative situations in the home) were all indirectly related to their composite scores.

Guidance is a factor that may help a student improve his study attitudes and habits, and it is closely related to academic success. Students who are well-guided by their parents have done well on their tests. The teacher's advice has an impact on the student's performance. The pupils' performance is indirectly influenced by parental and teacher supervision (Hussain, 2006). There is a link between good mentoring and improved student achievement.

Attendance in class, family income, and mother's and father's education, teacher student ratio, presence of qualified teachers in school, sex of student, and distance of the school are all factors that influence student performance (Raychaudhuri *et al.*, 2010).

According to Kernan *et al.* (2011), graduate student academic achievement will be increased if health-related obstacles are minimized.

College credit has a negative connection with stress, although GPA (Grade Point Average) has a weak link with stress. Amitava *et al.* (July, 2010) discovered that various research has been conducted to determine the elements that are impacting women's reproductive health.

The students' academic performance depends on a number of socio-economic factors like students' attendance in the class, family income, mother's and father's education, teacher-student ratio, presence Galiher (2006) of trained teacher in school, sex of the student, and distance of schools (Hijaz & Naqvi, 2006).

We assess students' academic achievement in a variety of methods, including CGPA, GPA, and test scores. The GPA was utilized by the majority of researchers throughout the world to assess student achievement (Darling, 2005; Ross, & Broh, 2000; & Stephen & Schaban, 2002). They utilized GPA to assess student achievement in a given semester. Another researcher assesses student achievement based on the outcome of a certain topic in the previous year's results (Hijazi & Naqvi, 2006; Hake, 1988; & Tho, 1994). Music as an academic discipline also have some factors that influence performance notable among them are the

student - related factors, teacher - related factors, school - related factors and family - related factors.

Mushtaq & Khan (2012) identified that Internal and external factors affect the student academic performance. These entire hosts of reasons are at work when societies refuse to take responsibility and when children themselves behave inappropriately or fail to meet a passing standard. However, by grouping factors according to sources, you can begin to identify where specific performance factors come from and how they intertwine with each other. Children's behaviour and attitude towards school is influenced by our society today.

### **Student-Related Factors**

The education system in Ghana is largely examination oriented. The quality of education tends to be evaluated in terms of the number of students passing WAEC examinations (Eshiwani, 1993).

There are some reasons for poor performance that are specific or related to the students and not related to external factors. Self-motivation and learning disability are student-centred and may create an obstacle to reaching certain academic standards. (OECD, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation Development, 2012).

Students' reaction to education determines the extent to which he or she will go in education. The impact of motivation on education of a child cannot be undermined. That is why Hall (1989) believes that there is a need to motivate students so as to arouse and sustain their interest in learning. In Nigeria, a study carried out by Ajayi *et al.* (1998) on achievement motivation using 276 students revealed that there is an agreement between academic performance and motivation. In this case, a combination of incentive and composition effects will increase student performance (Lazear, 2003). Issues of motivation can be placed upon Parent Teacher Association or even the School authorities, (Loe & Feldman, 2007; & Niepel *et al.*, 2014), and it is about time award schemes are instituted to students who excel in the field of music.

### **Teacher-Related Factors**

Teachers have a huge impact on student achievement and can also be held accountable for bad student performance. For example, if a teacher lacks expertise or is uninterested in teaching, the students may be unable to gain thorough understandings of the subject matter. Furthermore, if the instructor has a problem with classroom management, such as excessive authoritarianism, the classroom climate may stifle constructive class debates and collaborative learning. It can also discourage pupils from performing to the best of their ability.

Ghana's school system is heavily focused on examinations. The number of pupils completing WAEC tests is commonly used to assess educational quality (Eshiwani, 1993). Educators and the public have often expressed concern about variables that impact student exam performance.

In Ghana, there is rising concern over secondary school performance.

Students' low performance is a source of worry for all stakeholders. Poor performance in most secondary schools has been ascribed to a variety of causes, including school characteristics, student-related factors, and government-related problems, as well as the state of the teaching force, availability, and a lack of resources.

In a similar development, the research focuses into the elements that impact performance in Kibwezi sub-public County's secondary schools. Dissatisfied teachers who want to transfer to other schools may be poor performers due to general motivational factors (Rockoff, 2004; & Hanushek *et al.*, 2005), as well as because they are simply waiting to move on to a different location, putting little effort into their current work duties and ignoring any longer-term plans for their students.

According to Baron (1986), job satisfaction may impact numerous elements of work such as efficiency, productivity, absenteeism, turnover rates, and desire to quit, as well as employee well-being. Poor working conditions, low wages, excessive workloads, unreasonable managerial expectations, low professional standing, organizational conflict, and limited autonomy are all factors that lead to teacher unhappiness, according to Fenech (2006). The topic of teacher motivation in education and its impact on academic achievement is seen as a crucial component of successful learning.

Individual or group teacher incentives that succeed in connecting public or societal goals with the teacher's aims may increase student success. Motivation presents the topic of why individuals act in certain ways. Furthermore, (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2006; & Ruppert, 2002) discovered that academic achievement and motivation had a strong link. In a variety of ways, a teacher's self-efficacy beliefs might impact a student's accomplishment. Instructors with a strong feeling of self-efficacy are more likely than teachers with a low sense of self-efficacy to employ classroom management strategies and suitable teaching methods, as well as to adopt didactic innovations in the classroom. Many studies have found that new instructors (those with less than two years of experience) are less effective than more experienced teachers. However, after roughly five years, the advantages of expertise tend to level out (Darling-Hammond, 1999). In Hanushek (1999)



assessment of 140 research, only 30% of the studies established a link between teacher experience and student success. Experienced instructors have a variety of effects on student success. Teachers with more expertise employ more effective classroom management techniques as well as appropriate teaching strategies that motivate pupils. Take responsibility for students' learning requirements, manage classroom difficulties, and keep pupils on target by giving them autonomy and reducing custodial supervision (Chacon, 2005).

### School-Related Factors

Most study evaluations back up the idea that student performance is influenced by a variety of socioeconomic, psychological, and environmental variables. The findings of research studies focused on how different factors such as learning abilities affect student performance because the new paradigm about learning assumes that all students can and should learn at higher levels, but this should not be viewed as a constraint because other factors such as race, gender, and sex can also affect student performance. Some researchers even attempted to explain the positive relationship between students' achievements, economic circumstances, and the risk of dropping out (Goldman *et al.*, 1988; Pallas *et al.*, 1989; & Levin, 1987). Chansarkar & Mishaeloudis (2001) explained the effects of age, qualification distance from learning place. According to their statement, "High school students' level of performance is statistically significant differences, linked to their gender, grade level, school location, school type, student type, and socio-economic background (SEB)." Beaumont Walters & Soyibo (2001) further elaborated that student performance is highly dependent on SEB (socio-economic background). Kirby, Winston, and colleagues (2002) studied how a student's impatience (time-discounting behavior) affects his academic performance. Goethe discovered that when poor pupils are paired with other weak students, they perform better. Pupils' performance increases when they are around students of their own type, as Zajonc's research of older siblings (1976) suggests. Hoxby's K-12 results (2000) show that grades are higher when students have unusually academically strong roommates; Sacerdote (2001) finds that grades are higher when students have unusually academically strong roommates. Zimmerman's (1999, 2001) findings were somewhat contradictory to Goethe's, but they demonstrated that students' performance is dependent on a variety of circumstances. It claims that weak classmates may lower the grades of medium or outstanding students. (Alexander *et al.*, 1974; & Fraser *et al.*, 1977) explained that several of the college's practices also help to increase performance.

Taking into account all of the variables stated by other experts, the researcher agrees with Zimmerman because outstanding students occasionally educate their less bright peers. However, if a class has a large number of kids who are not performing well academically, the

total academic achievements of a year group might be impacted.

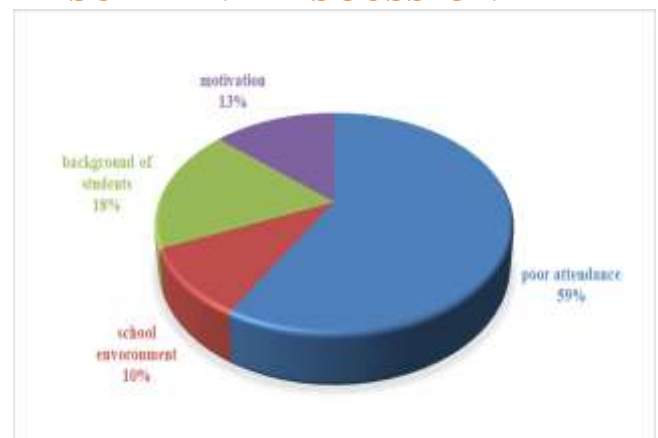
## METHODOLOGY

The study used triangulation to collect and analyse data (quantitative and qualitative). These methods were approved for the study because they covered both quantitative factors (like statistics) and non-numerical information about how things work and move.

The study included a total of 125 candidates who took music as an elective during a six-year period. It also contained interviews with the Headmistress, Assistant Head Academic, and Music Master. Quantitative research relies on large representative samples to provide a broad and generalizable account of most circumstances, whereas qualitative research relies on smaller groups to analyse a specific setting in depth (Borrego *et al.*, 2009; & Kumekpor, 2002).

Both stratified and random sampling were used to choose the respondents. Because the population was not homogeneous, stratification had to be done before simple random selection could take place.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION



**Figure 1:** Factors that Affect Academic Performance of Students

**Source:** Field survey

From the above diagram, more than half of respondents (59%) largely attributed poor academic performance in the WASSCE to the teacher's poor attendance in class. In a focus group discussion one of the students said "our teacher is more than a travelling secretary. We often see him occasionally. We are not happy about the situation but what can we do?" (Kwame, a candidate in 2014-year group).

However, the music teacher justified why it was so. He enumerated reasons such as marking of BECE and WASSCE papers. Other engagements he stated include the preparation of students towards Inter-Schools, Zonal and National Festival of Arts and

Culture programmes conducted in both first cycle and second cycle Institutions. Other National assignments such as Engagement with the Electoral commission and National Census programmes he added take him out of the classroom.

All other factors assigned to students' failure such as motivation of students to learn the subject, background of students and school environment contributed less than half of reasons respondents gave in relation to the abysmal performance in the WASSCE. We have our selves to blame. When we entered the exams room (WASSCE), most of the topics that were treated came in the exams. It is obvious that if we read our notes, some among us here, even me, I could get an A1 in the subject but I did not learn hard. I thought we did not cover much topics so I was not confident in the notes I had." (Owusu, a candidate in 2015 -year group).

Students would not be able to learn if they always keep absenting themselves from class. However, this situation was identified among some candidates of music (2011 – 2016) year groups. This situation was worrisome and frustrating to the teacher as well as the academic work. When school re-opened, some students stayed at home for about three weeks with the excuse that the term was young and teaching and learning would not be effective at the time. In another development, some students would deceive their parents that they were going to the school but would hide with friends in town for weeks. In a face to face interaction with the Assistant Headmaster of the school he confirmed this to the researcher. It is a legitimate concern of some stakeholders that students absent themselves with impunity. It is against this backdrop that the school authorities must hold students and parents responsible for consistent unwarranted absences. The School should have a solid attendance policy in place which would specifically addresses absenteeism because teachers cannot do their jobs if students do not come to school regularly.

### **Steps Taken by the School Authorities to Promote High Academic Performances**

With respect to steps taken by the school authorities to promote academic performance, and to also avert poor performance in subsequent years, the Headmistress of the school organized stakeholders meeting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 2015 to deliberate on the dwindled performance in the subject. In the meeting, a few challenges were enumerated. Notable among them was the lack of teaching and learning materials. Insufficient use of the contact periods and lack of classrooms were high on the agenda. Ever since the meeting was held, the implementation of the possible solution has become a challenge, for example the provision of permanent infrastructure as a music classroom is yet to be implemented. Secondly, no teaching Aids has been provided to support the teaching and learning of the subject. However, the greatest

attention is allocated to the monitoring of the Music Master. When the academic results were not positive, the blame was mostly apportioned to the Music Master for failing to deliver on his mandate. This attitude was executed to the later. In 2016 year, the Headmistress solicited help from the Music Master of Bishop Herman College to help prepare her students towards the WASSCE. This was an immediate step she took. In the end, it yielded an excellent result where all students passed the subject and 75% of them produced Quality Grades (A1-C6). But the question is that, is it an end to the problem of poor academic performance? Can the school authorities sustain this measure? Will the Music Master from Bishop Herman be there forever? Is the utilization of the contact period in itself the only way to solve the academic challenges? Although the attention is focused on the academic performance of the subject, public perception about the subject is that people should be able to demonstrate their musicianship by singing, playing of a few instruments and composition of songs. Will the current approach to the teaching and learning of the subject meet the needs of the society? Why should the school authorities lose sight on the provision of adequate teaching and learning materials? Why should they fail in their responsibility to allocate classroom blocks for the teaching and learning of the subject but demand an Excellent Academic Results from the Music Master of the school?

The rising and falling academic results as said earlier have been a source of worry to school authorities especially the Management, Staff and Students of Nkonya Senior High School. The academic results improved in the 2011 and 2012 years. However, the results began to depreciate continuously from 2013 to 2015 years. Although general academic results of the school did not always appreciate each year, the situation in relation to music was constantly and consistently becoming a woeful performance. This situation set the aforementioned stakeholders thinking through ways of salvaging the situation from possible wreck because they (stakeholders) were alarmed that further delay in attacking the problem head-on will lead to a total collapse of the Music Department as well as the subject offered in the school.

### **The Role of School Authorities in the Promotion of Good and Stable Academic Results in Music**

The rising and falling academic result as said earlier has been a source of worry to school authorities especially the Management, Staff and Students of Nkonya Senior High School. The academic results improved in the 2011 and 2012 years. However, the results began to depreciate continuously from 2013 to 2015 years. Although general academic results of the school did not always appreciate each year, the situation in relation to music was constantly and consistently becoming a woeful performance. This situation set the stakeholders thinking through ways of salvaging the situation from possible wreck because they

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## CONCLUSION

The study made efforts to reveal in details various issues connected with producing the rise and fall in academic standards within the six-year period

(2011-2016). The research revealed lots of factors that culminated progress in achieving good academic results, even if the results produced in a year or two seems promising, the sustenance of such outstanding performance and possible improvement on such results has been difficult task over the six –year period. Lack of permanent classroom blocks, lack of Music Studio or Research laboratory, No Library and Musical Instruments were provided for the Teaching and Learning of the subject. This has impacted negatively on the teaching and learning processes of the subject. The demotivation also set in on the part of the learner and the teacher. However, the most challenging situation was the ineffective use of the instructional period. Although the Music Teacher's reasons for being absent were justifiable, it has impacted negatively on the academic results of students.

## Recommendation

It is anticipated that academic performance of students will significantly increase if school officials apply their own policies of providing permanent classroom blocks, Research Laboratories, and a Library for students. Additionally, sponsors should equip students with musical instruments so that they can learn and perform on them. The issue of putting the blame on the Music Master as the root cause of low academic achievement would not help to remedy the situation in any way. Over the years, the Music Master has gained valuable experience in dealing with the subject, and his knowledge and expertise will be required to ensure the continued success of the Department and the subject. Instead, the school officials should hunt for an additional permanent Music Master to assist in the instruction of students, as they did for the 2016-year group. Anyone interested in continuing the research should consider a well-endowed school that has the necessary facilities and compare their academic outcomes with those of schools that are under-resourced, as well as analyze patterns in academic results over time.

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