



THE VALUE OF EXTRACURRICULARS

As the school year nears, you might be struggling with how much to load on your child's plate when it comes to sports, scholarly activities and community engagement.

Encouraging your child to participate in extracurricular activities is a wise choice. They can develop meaningful relationships, people skills, responsibility and commitment.

Here is a closer look at these benefits:

1. Helps develop diversified interests. Kids should explore new things. This is how they discover what they like and what they don't. And who knows, they might stumble on something that will parlay into a career path later on.
2. Teaches time management and responsibility. As adults, we are

used to juggling commitments and prioritizing our time, but we didn't get here overnight. Kids need practice at this if they are going to be successful at managing their time later in life. Being active also helps them understand they've made a commitment and must see it through.

3. Raises self-esteem. Being part of a group can be very motivating and uplifting. There are people counting on you, and it always feels good to be needed. Trying out different activities encourages children to find what they excel at, allowing them to really shine.
4. Cultivates people skills. Joining any group or activity encourages kids and teens to work on their communication skills. These situations teach kids how to behave



in social settings — not to mention it's a great way to make new friends.

5. Jump-starts a "personal resume." Extracurricular activities also look great on college applications. Even if your child isn't in high-school yet, it's never too early to build a solid foundation. Colleges want to see

students who not only excel in school but can enjoy other aspects of life. They want to see clear hobbies and interests. And don't forget, they also know extracurricular activities indicate strong people skills, responsibility and work ethic.



NUTRITION AND ACADEMICS

What we eat — and when we eat — has a big impact on a person's ability to learn and retain information. That's why eating healthy is critical for students of every age.

However, healthy eating habits can be difficult to maintain. Utilize the following outlined strategies to help you and your children develop a more balanced approach to nutrition.

KEEP A REGULAR MEAL SCHEDULE

Stick to a schedule as best you can. Maintaining a consistent eating schedule can help prevent kids from getting too hungry, which could lead to cravings for foods high in fat and sugar. This approach also helps kids sleep better at night.

DON'T SKIP BREAKFAST

Low energy, decreased motivation and impaired problem-solving abilities are all associated with skipping breakfast. It actually is the most important meal of the day.

PLAN AHEAD

Have snacks ready for your kids when you pick them up from school, so they can eat on the ride home. If they ride the bus or car pool, pack an extra snack in their lunch box to be eaten later in the afternoon. While small and frequent meals are an eating style recommended for everyone, kids especially need the constant fuel provided by eating on a regular basis.



AIM FOR VARIETY

Plan different fruits and vegetables for different days. This ensures a balance of nutrients and brightens up any plate.

LIMIT THE JUNK FOOD

Most junk foods and fast foods are high in fats and sugars. These are filler calories that can have a negative impact on your child's mood.

DRINKS MATTER, TOO

Water is the body's best friend. Your children should drink water often, as well as milk and natural juices.

Limit the amount of soda children drink, as well as coffee for teens. Stimulants can produce a temporary "high" followed by a drop in energy, and can cause heart problems.