

Extra Curricula Activities

At the beginning of each new school year students and parents alike are bombarded with a plethora of invitations to join in extra-curricular activities. Whilst some are offered during the school day, most are an out- of- school-time commitment and may include sports teams, swimming, chess, music lessons, dancing, band, drama, rowing, debating, athletics or more. They are all marketed at school; all great activities and very enticing, especially to students in Grade 7 who are open and excited about the new opportunities which are part of being in high school. Some students, relaxed and invigorated from the summer break, can't resist the urge to sign up to, well, more than they can manage. Or, importantly, more than the family can manage.

It is very well documented that a standout characteristic of resilient kids is that they have found out what they are good at. That is, they have discovered their "island of competence"...the thing that they know they can do well. It is our job as parents and educators to help our children to do this.

Organised extra-curricular activities can help students in many ways. They provide the opportunity for children to learn and master skills, to work with others and to challenge themselves (take risks even) in a safe environment. They learn the value of practice and the challenge of competition. On top of that, playing sports provides natural and fun opportunities for exercise.

Not only will participating in chosen extra-curricular activities bring our children into contact with other like-minded students, it will put them on a collision course with coaches, mentors and role models, who, like you, want them to be the best they can be.

Busy, engaged children do not have a lot of time left to get bored, but the secret is in finding the balance that is right for your family. A manageable program is one which allows for family time and plain, old fashioned relaxation. Talk to your daughters about the time commitment involved in the activities they want to choose. Help them make considered choices and then give them your full support. Signing up for a team is a commitment that should be kept. Skipping a match, a training session or rehearsal for work, homework or a party is not only poor form which lets down a whole group of people, it fails to teach the student the very things such activities aim to engender: commitment, work ethic, perseverance, decision and choice making, cooperation and the setting of priorities. Most importantly it teaches them responsibility and it is never too young to start.

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