



More than sports for fall fun

Rare is the child today who returns home immediately after school. Many school-aged children now have busier schedules than their parents. Involvement in an extracurricular activity can help kids make friends while they learn about responsibility. Some extracurricular activities even allow kids to apply lessons learned in the classroom in real-world situations.

High schoolers frequently turn to sports, and School Sport Canada reports that more than 750,000 school-aged students participate in sports. Such heavy participation can make it easy for parents to encourage their youngsters to go out for a school team. But not all youngsters want to play sports, and even those who do might not be able to make a team.

Lacking the desire or talent to compete in high school sports does not mean students cannot participate in extracurricular activities. The following are a handful of extracurricular activities that can benefit students even if they don't require them to lace up their cleats.

VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering is a great way for school-aged kids to spend some of their free time. Student volunteers can often pick when they want to perform service, and that can make it easier on kids who want to focus on their performance in the classroom. For example, students can focus on their studies on weekdays and volunteer on the weekends. Many organizations, from animal shelters to hospitals, accept student volunteers, who can learn about the benefits of helping others and the importance of making a positive impact in their communities.

Volunteer organizations do not typically require a long-term commitment, so students will not have to

continue to volunteer if an organization is not what they hoped it would be. But parents should discuss kids' interests with them before choosing a volunteering opportunity. For instance, youngsters who love the beach might be best suited to an organization devoted to cleaning up the beach, while animal lovers would likely love to volunteer at a local animal shelter. Finding the right organization will benefit both parties, and parents will be happy to have fostered a sense of responsibility to the community in their youngsters.

MUSIC

Some youngsters might not know the difference between a first down or the first inning. But many kids who are not inclined to play sports may be inclined to play a musical instrument. And some kids are inclined to play both a sport and try their hand at music. Many school music programs have fallen victim to governmental budget cuts, leaving students who want to play an instrument without a proper introduction to music or an opportunity to play. Parents must therefore make that introduction on their own, discussing kids' attitudes toward music

with them. That discussion should include asking kids if they would like to play a specific instrument or be part of a choir.

In addition to giving kids a creative outlet, music may even benefit them in the classroom. Researchers found that musical training improves how the brain processes the spoken word. In addition, in an analysis of data on more than 25,000 secondary school students, researchers found that students who report consistent involvement in instrumental music during middle school and high school perform significantly better in mathematics by grade 12 than those who do not participate in music programs.

WORKING

Many students live in communities that allow them to work once they reach high school age. While working might not be as fun as playing an instrument, getting a job can teach high school students valuable lessons they will carry with them throughout their lives. Even though high school students only work part-time, such a work schedule can still teach them the importance of money management and the valuable lesson of

reaping what you sow. High school students can save their money to finance their college educations or purchase their first cars, each of which can teach them the value of saving money. Working in high school also can prepare students for college, where many will need to work in order to support themselves.



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DANCE DIVAS: Members of a TDI dance troop, including Amelia Torraville (left), Brie Lirette, Katherine Zawadzki, Madison Hurrell and Kylie Mitchell enjoyed the recent Leathertown Festival, where they entertained the crowds with their smooth moves. — Ted Tyler photo

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