

Educational survey findings

Keeping children active can improve academic performance

(NC) A recent survey conducted by Ipsos-Reid on behalf of Kumon Math and Reading Centres has found that children that are engaged in extra-curricular activities experience academic benefits beyond their less-active counterparts.

According to responses from more than 1,200 Canadian parents, the number of nights a student participates in extracurricular activities does not negatively impact academic performance. Of those parents surveyed whose child participates in extra-curricular activities on two or more school nights, 84 percent were identified by their parents as academically at or above average grade level.

“Extra curricular activities are important. They challenge children to explore their talents and interests, develop responsibility, and encourage time management skills as students learn to balance schoolwork, extracurricular activities, social life, health, and for many older students, a job,” explains Dr. Donna McGhie-Richmond, education specialist with Kumon Math and Reading Centres. “The survey findings point out that the majority of students who perform well in school have achieved a balance between homework demands and extra curricular activities. This is key to their achievement.”

The amount and type of extra curricular activities will depend on a number of factors including the age of your child.

- **Kindergarten to Grade 2:** The early school years are a time for your child to adjust to school routines and explore individual interests. Non-competitive sports and other physical activities such as dance or gymnastics are good bets, as well as enhancing your child’s creative side with art or music classes.
- **Grades 3 – 6:** Team sports are now a good bet at these grade levels. Your child is old enough to remember and follow rules and typically has the maturity to handle a bit of competition.
- **Grades 7 – 12:** Pre-teens and teenaged children can be steered toward activities such as clubs of interest, volunteering, and leadership activities at school (e.g., school newspaper) or in the community (e.g., Scouts or Guides). Part time jobs are popular with this age group. While your child will enjoy the extra money and independence that accrues from having a job, now more than ever striving for and

maintaining a balance among school work, extra-curricular activities and a job is critical.

Parents can help by encouraging their child to become involved in extra curricular activities whether offered at school or in the community. Here are some tips:

- Explore the options that are available at your child's school and in the community. Talk to your child's teacher and other parents. You will be surprised to learn how many activities are free or have a nominal charge.
- Talk to your child about his or her interests and once you have researched possibilities, discuss those options with your child.
- Ensure that your child is not over scheduled and has enough 'down' time during weekdays. This varies from child to child, but some signs of possible over scheduling include irritability, tantrums, regular complaining about the activity itself, a recurring illness such as stomachaches, and a sudden drop in grades.

Remember, children who have developed good study habits from a young age, are doing well in school and are not spending time struggling with their homework will have more free time available to pursue after-school activities. Educational programs such as Kumon help children develop good study habits so they can free up time to explore other interests.

For more tips and hints to help your child make the most of the learning experience, download Kumon Math and Reading Centres' podcasting series, The Learning Curve, from iTunes. You can learn more about the Kumon program online at www.kumon.com.

This article originally appeared in the February 2010 issue of Capital Parent Newspaper