

The Benefits of Extra-curricular Activities

There are many reasons to encourage your children to take part in programs that take place outside of regular school hours. This might include sports, art, dance, and other types of programs that are offered by the community, or before or after-school “extra-curricular activities” that are sponsored by the school.

Extra-curricular activities can reinforce the lessons students are learning in their classrooms. They also offer an opportunity for students to apply their academic skills in a real-world context.

These opportunities are far more than just fun activities that keep students busy. They have been shown to:

- ▶ improve student-school connections, which is very important for student achievement;
 - ▶ improve students’ social skills and teamwork;
 - ▶ build students’ self-confidence and sense of self;
 - ▶ teach leadership, time management, and organizational skills;
 - ▶ enhance students’ self-discipline, commitment, and ability to stick with tasks and get them done;
 - ▶ help students explore their interests and expand their perspectives; and
 - ▶ encourage physical activity, engagement, and healthier habits.
- ▶ **Well-planned extra-curricular activities can reinforce the lessons students are learning in their classrooms. They also offer an opportunity for students to apply their academic skills in a real-world context.**

- ▶ Many extracurricular activities can provide meaningful opportunities to integrate First Nations' language, culture, and traditions into students learning – which is extremely valuable for many, many reasons.
- ▶ Working hard and mastering new skills in a fun, relaxed – and sometimes competitive – setting allows students to be successful without the pressure of getting a good grade. It can help students learn to take risks and be resilient – which means being able to better cope with challenges and bounce back when things don't go as planned.
- ▶ Research has shown that students who participate in extra-curricular or school-based enrichment activities have:
 - higher grades
 - better attendance
 - more positive attitudes and perceptions toward their school
 - fewer behaviour issues
 - higher learning goals

Of course, it is important to avoid picking too many activities. Schoolwork and sleep are important, too.

So strive for balance, and encourage your children to find an extra-curricular activity that matches their interests. Then enjoy watching them have fun ... knowing that they are also learning valuable skills and healthy habits at the same time.

References

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