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# CONSIDER THIS

# Questions to ask when looking at private schools



Courtesy photo

private schools is one parents don't take lightly. Both public and private schools have produced wonderful students, and the majority of teachers at both public and private schools are committed to their students.

Parents who are considering pri-

The choice between public or

Parents who are considering private schools for their children may benefit by asking a host of questions that can give them a greater feel for a school and how their youngsters will fit in should they enroll. While tuition costs and location will factor heavily in parents' decisions, the following are three questions parents can ask to determine if a given school is right for their kids.

### 1. WHAT IS THE SCHOOL'S MISSION?

Parochial schools are affiliated with religious institutions that often provide the foundation for the school's philosophy. Some parochial schools prefer parents be members of the church affiliated with the school, and those who are members of that particular faith may already be familiar with the school's philosophy and mission.

If you are not, ask about the philosophy and how it is applied in the classroom. You can do the same with private schools that are independent of any religious organizations. Schools that claim to specialize in the arts may not focus as heavily on the sciences as public schools or other institutions.

Understanding these philosophies and how each school applies them can help parents choose the best school for their children.

### 2. WHAT ARE THE CLASS SIZES?

Private schools have a reputation for having smaller class sizes than public schools, and class size is something parents should consider strongly before choosing a school for their children.

According to the National Council of Teachers of English, research shows that students in smaller classes perform better in all subjects on all assessments when compared to their peers in larger classes. The council notes that large class sizes may even make it difficult for schools to retain effective teachers, who may grow frustrated by especially large classes and seek positions at schools where class sizes are smaller.

Parents can ask school administrators about class sizes, while also asking parents of current students how well teachers relate to students.

Small class size may increase the chances kids perform better in school, but ineffective teachers may negate that benefit.

## 3. DOES THE SCHOOL CATER TO SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS?

Parents of special-needs students must inquire about how schools cater to kids with special needs. Public schools are required by law to meet the special needs of all of their students. Public schools typically have programs in place for special needs students, and many have teachers trained to meet the specific needs of special-needs students.

Private schools may offer services for special-needs students, but they do not have the same requirements as public schools. Inquire about special-needs services before choosing a school, ideally choosing a school that has extensive experience and training catering to students with special needs.

Parents face an important decision when choosing between public and private schools for their children. Asking the right questions can help parents make the most informed decisions.



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# Do your homework when choosing a school

Here are some helpful hints for parents and students when researching private schools:

■ Think about school size. Students who thrive regardless of class size may not have schools and get their perspective on a to worry as much about the size of a school. given school. They can then schedule

Those who like an intimate setting and more one-on-one interaction may want to gear their searches to schools that have a smaller population.

■ Factor in costs. Part of the decision-making process will involve the costs of going to school. Although some parents seek out loans and financial assistance, keeping the bigger picture in mind can help steer school choices.



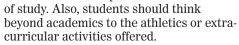
be honest when assessing their academic history and abilities. Some schools have very stringent acceptance policies and will only accept students who fit a certain academic profile. If grades fall significantly below a school's requirement, applying to

that school and paying the application fee might not be in a student's best interest.

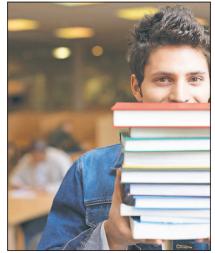
■ Seek out personal referrals. Students can reach out to alumni of certain

> tours at some of the schools that seem the best fits and judge for themselves if the schools are right for them. Scheduling tours can help students narrow down their choices so plan your visits as soon as possible. ■ Think about personal

and academic interests. Some school decisions are made simply by the programs offered. For a student who has a very specific focus in mind, there may be a limited number of schools that specialize in that course



■ Consider a school's proximity to home. Transportation to and from school is important to keep in mind.



Courtesy photo

### **AT A GLANCE**

Here are some key findings of the 2015-16 Private School Universe Survey conducted by the U.S. Bureau of the Census for the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics:

- In the fall of 2015, there were 34,576 private elementary and secondary schools with 4,903,596 students and 481,558 full-timeequivalent teachers in the U.S.
- 67 percent of private schools had a religious orientation or purpose. Collectively, they enrolled 78 percent of all private school students and employed 70 percent of private school FTE teachers in 2015-16.
- 68 percent of private schools in 2015-16 emphasized a regular elementary/secondary program, 10 
  96 percent of all private percent emphasized a Montessori schools in 2015-16 were coeducaprogram, 3 percent emphasized a tional, while 2 percent enrolled

- sized special education, 3 percent emphasized an alternative program, and 10 percent emphasized an early childhood program.
- More private school students in 2015-16 were enrolled in kindergarten (466.475) than in any other grade level (table 6).
- The average school size across all private schools in 2015-16 was 142 students. Private school size differed by instructional level. On average, elementary schools had 100 students, secondary schools had 263 students, and combined schools had 199 students.
- 46 percent of all private schools in 2015-16 enrolled less than 50 students.

- special interest, 5 percent empha- all girls and 2 percent enrolled all bovs.
  - 78 percent of private school teachers in 2015-16 were full-time teachers, while another 14 percent taught at least half-time and the remainder taught at least onequarter time.
  - The average pupil/teacher ratio in 2015-16 was 10.2 across all private schools. Private school pupil/teacher ratios differed by instructional level. On average, the pupil/teacher ratio was 11.1 in secondary schools, 10.8 in elementary schools and 9.3 in combined schools.
  - 97 percent of 12th-graders enrolled in private schools around Oct. 1, 2014, graduated in 2014-15.
  - Of the 343,252 private high school graduates in 2014-15, some 65 percent attended four-year colleges by the fall of 2015.





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# Empowering influence

#### Presentation of Mary Academy combines Catholic values with academic excellence

Simon Rodriguez, a senior at Presentation of Mary Academy in Methuen, has always dreamed of majoring in Computer Science at a top university. However, he never thought it was possible until he attended Presentation of Mary Academy.

PMA asks students to give more of themselves each day, staying true to the school's motto, "Discover You." PMA inspires a culture of learning and growth by combining a quality education centered around Catholic values and encouraging leadership and service.

Simon attributes this philosophy as the driving force behind his path to success and his personal



growth. Through his membership in PMA's National Honor Society and Interact Club, he has developed a passion for community service. He is an active partici-

pant in the school community and always volunteers at PMA-sponsored events and activities.

The greatest gift he has received while at PMA was the opportunity this past summer to participate in the Summer Scholars Program at the University of Notre Dame. Each year, the university selects just 30 percent of global applicants to participate in this academically competitive program. Students live in the dormitories, attend classes and participate fully in the culture of Notre Dame.

Each student selects a research track to study during his or her stay. Simon chose Research Computing, which is dedicated to learning how computers are applied to solve the most complex of world problems and how they fuel discovery in the science field.

While there, Simon traveled to Argonne National Laboratory in Illinois to learn about Mira, the ninth most-powerful supercomputer in



COURTESY PHOTO

Simon Rodriguez, a senior at Presentation of Mary Academy, discusses his college plans with Donna Parker, the school's director of guidance. Simon, who dreams of going on to a top university after PMA, was selected for an elite Scholars Program at the University of Notre Dame this past summer.

the world, and Argonne's future projects.

"This was a truly humbling experience to be invited to one of the most famous schools in the United States ... and through the hard work of the wonderful staff at Presentation of Mary Academy, I was presented a scholarship to attend the program absolutely free of charge," Simon said.

The connections Simon made at the University of Notre Dame have enabled him to form a

network full of ample opportunities, rare for a student his age.

Scott Hampton, PhD of the Information Technology Center at the University of Notre Dame, said, "Simon was ... very engaged and very bright, a good programmer in his own right. He has the capability to be successful and would certainly add value to the student body if he chooses to attend Notre Dame."

Simon is not the first student from PMA with ties to the University of Notre Dame.

Jinelfry Rodriguez and Sebastian Lopez, both members of the class of 2015, were the first PMA students to pave the way. Both attended the Summer Scholars Program, and were accepted to the University of Notre Dame, class of 2019. Jinelfry is currently studying Psychology and Sebastian is a Political Science major.

Before entering high school, it was difficult for Simon to see his unique talents and gifts. He did not perceive how his actions could make a difference in the world. Throughout his time at PMA, that has changed.

"My teachers, counselors, family and friends saw potential in me that I didn't see in myself," he said. "That experience allowed me to blossom in high school to a degree that I never thought I could achieve."

Presentation of Mary Academy is a Catholic, coed, college preparatory high school located on the historic Edward F. Searles Estate in Methuen, Massachusetts." To learn more about how your child could discover his/her unique potential at the Academy, visit www.pmamethuen.org or attend our Open House on Sunday, Oct. 29, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Take this opportunity to meet students like Simon while touring the campus and discuss our academic and extracurricular programs with teachers and administrators.

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# WRITING A WINNING ESSAY

# Tips for letting your story shine through

FAMILY FEATURES

For many students applying to schools, the task of writing an essay if one is required can be a dreadful experience.

Whether applying for admission or scholarships, many students find completing the essay to be the most stressful and daunting part of the application process.

Students who don't understand how to approach essay writing struggle with staring at a blank page and finding a compelling topic.

However, Howard Reichman, president of EssayDog, outcome a cloud-based platform that helps students write winning application essays, said a good essay "is really just

a story others want to hear about you."

"Every good story, from a blockbuster movie to a novel from your high school English class to your favorite show, has four critical elements that make it fascinating and reveal inner depth about its characters," Reichman said. "That's exactly what you want your essays to do: show the real you beyond the test scores and GPA."

According to Reichman, every good story has four essential elements:

- The initial plan
- The anticipated
- The setback
- The discovery

The next step is to round out the narrative by filling



Getty Images

#### An essay is a good way for students to let their personalities shine during the admission process. storytelling techniques to

in details that let the applicant's true character shine through.

The essays that resonate most with admissions departments typically convey a student's you like to be around?

intangibles or "the Four Ps," specifically:

- **Passion:** What drives you and what do you really care about?
- **Personality:** What are

ily be able to identify you by reading your essay?

■ Perseverance: How do you respond to challenges? What gives you strength, both intellectually and

emotionally?

■ Potential: What talents, interests and goals will you bring to a school? How can a school help you further develop those interests and talents as you continue to grow into adulthood?

More than anything, procrastination and stress are often students' worst enemies when they sit down to begin the essay-writing process.

"If you feel you are wasting time, switching topics or disagreeing with your parents, teachers or counselors about the direction your essays are taking, try going back to these simple ensure you are showcas-Would your friends and fam- ing what sets you apart from other applicants with similar grades and scores," Reichman said.

Visit essaydog.com to find more tips for confidently writing standout essays.

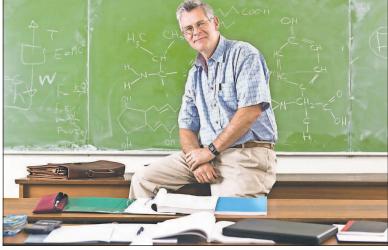
### How to ask for a letter of recommendation

Knowledge, skills and personality can get students far, but having the right people in their corners can open doors for new opportunities that students might otherwise never have considered. Perhaps this is why recommendations are so coveted when applying to schools.

Asking for a letter of recommendation is something that should be done with forethought. The correct approach and proper timing can mean the difference between receiving a recommendation or not.

#### Who to ask

The first step for students is to decide who they want to ask for a recommendation. Select those teachers who know you well or can validate how you performed or improved in class. Opt for a teacher whose class you recently took so the recommendation reflects the student you are today and not the student you



Courtesy photo

Choose wisely when selecting teachers to write letters of recommendation. the recommendation by making

might have been when you were younger.

It can also help to ask for a recommendation from teachers or staff who have sufficient experience. Their input may carry more

weight than someone whose career is less accomplished. A well-established teacher who leads a class that pertains to your academic goals is a good fit.

Remember to consider the

requirements of the schools you are applying to as well. Schools frequently ask for recommendations from specific people, such as a teacher in a certain subject.

#### Don't delay

Teachers may be inundated with requests for letters of recommendation around application deadlines and at the end of semesters. It's better to leave plenty of time than to put teachers under pressure. The same rule applies to anyone else you're asking to write you a recommendation.

#### Request in person

Underscore the importance of it a personal request. Schedule an appointment with the individual and discuss why you believe he or she would be the right person to provide the recommendation. Remind the person of your attributes and point

out something that exemplifies your skills. Speaking face-to-face shows respect and gives you the advantage to make your points personally, rather than through email.

#### Make the process easier

Provide all of the necessary items to help the person along. This can include a brief résumé, academic progress report, required forms, and so on. Also offer any school-directed requests. As the deadline looms, offer concise reminders that you will need the recommendation. Offer to pick it up personally. Make copies or scan and save the original just in case a mix-up in the admissions office occurs.

Recommendations are a key part of being offered acceptance into some schools. Asking the right people early will translate into recommendations that paint an accurate picture of you as a student.

Thursday, September 28, 2017

# Stress check: Help your teen navigate freshman year

By Chris Palmer AMERICAN UNIVERSITY SCHOOL what I've learned. OF COMMUNICATION

Entering high school can be an exciting experience, but can cause anxiety for high for some teenagers it can also be scary, intimidating and confusing.

According to one study, approximately half of all high school students feel a great deal of stress on a daily basis. As author and film producer Vicki Abeles writes, there's a "nationwide epidemic of school-related stress." The cause? Abeles says that "expectations surrounding education have spun out of control," with excessive loads of activities, homework and

Stress can be excessive and even toxic if kids are ill-prepared. Like many parents, I've wondered what I could have done to help my teenagers adjust well to the first year of high school. As

a parent and teacher, here's

#### Why all the anxiety?

A few of the factors that school freshmen include going to school for the first time with older, bigger, physically mature students who are essentially adults. Your teen is now one of the youngest in the school, having come from a school where she was among the oldest and most senior. The change can be jarring.

Your teen also has to get

used to a new school building intently and give them as well as new teachers and classrooms for every subject. I know from experience that teens might worry, perhaps even obsess, about their new teachers: Will I like them? Will they be too strict? Too hard to understand? They'll also likely worry about the work being too difficult, how they can achieve satisfactory

grades and if they'll be able to judgements and without make new friends.

In some unfortunate cases, teens may also have to deal with bullying, cyberbullying, intimidation or sexual harassment. Studies have shown that between 20 and 30 percent of students in grades six to 12 have been bullied.

#### What can parents do?

How can parents help their teen manage their anxieties in a healthy way? Here are six ideas:

- Be caring, empathetic and affectionate. Listen to teens emotional security. Be as supportive as possible. Try not to give advice too quickly. Let them solve their own problems if they can. In fact, some research suggests that extreme levels of parental protection can be counterproductive.
- Listen. More importantly, listen without making

rushing to offer your own solutions. Remember their roiling anxiety and that they need you now more than ever — even if they try to be "cool" and push you away. Expect your teen to be occasionally grumpy, moody and cantankerous. Try not to take it personally.

- Be supportive. Emphasize that you love your teen unconditionally, and that you admire and respect him or her for the effort being made to tackle the challenges of starting high school. Research shows us that diligence, effort and hard work can increase intelligence. Grit is something to be encouraged.
- Attend to the basics. When teenagers are stressed, the essentials can be neglected. Do whatever you can to help them get enough sleep, eat healthy and exercise regularly. All of these things will

help them to manage their

- Help them get involved. Find out or have your teen find out about extracurricular activities at the high school. Joining a club, sport or activity can be a great way to build a community of friends quickly and adjust to new surroundings.
- Get help. If you think it is advisable, reach out to the school counselor before school begins and set up a meeting for your teen to meet the counselor to talk about the transition to high school. This may not be the right move for all teens, but consider whether it would help with your child.

Stress can be good. And bad.

Your teen cannot and should not avoid all stress. Stress arising from challenging situations that they can successfully handle is healthy nally published on The and even desirable.

Even biologically, stress prompts the body to produce adrenaline and the stress hormone cortisol. In short bursts, these hormones raise our performance, keep us focused and increase our capabilities, which is good. However, over the long term, prolonged and excessive stress can be damaging.

In short, some anxiety is natural and to be expected. It will help your teen prepare for the start of school. But if you sense your teen has a damaging level of anxiety, reach out to the school counselor, or another appropriate professional, for help.

Helping your teen face stress head-on at the start of high school will help him or her prepare for potentially higher levels of stress associated with getting into college or finding a job.

This article was origi-Conversation.



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### Ready for KINDERGARTEN: Knowing when the time is right

Kindergarten can be a pivotal time in a young child's life. Although many kids attend preschool or receive guided learning at home, kindergarten marks students' first official foray into the classroom. This is an exciting time for kids and parents, and also one that may be fraught with nerves. That is especially true for parents who are not quite sure if their children are ready to begin their academic careers.

While many school districts mandate that students must be at least 5 years old to begin kindergarten, age is not the only factor to consider when gauging kids' readiness for school. Childeducation experts note that there is no single factor that determines kids' readiness for school, but rather there is a host of factors that, when taken together, can help parents determine if their youngster is ready for the rigors of the classroom.

The following are some factors parents can consider as they try to determine if their children are ready to enroll in kindergarten.

■ Separation anxiety: Does your child handle separation well, or is he or she prone to meltdowns each



time you leave for even a short period of time? School requires kids to spend several hours away from home and away from their parents, and parents might need to take steps to increase kids' comfort levels away from home before school begins.

**■ Follows instructions:** Experts at BabyCenter.com advise that children who are able to listen to simple instructions and follow them will be more apt to thrive in classroom settings. They also will be more capable of keeping up with bers: While children on the verge teachers and peers.

■ Self-sufficiency: Has your child exhibited signs that he or she can be self-reliant? This includes putting on his or her coat, dressing himself or herself, and being able to use the bathroom on his or her own. If not, then you might need to work on the child's self-sufficiency before school begins.

■ Cursory knowledge of letters/numof entering kindergarten need not be experts in language and mathematics, kindergarten curricula has become more rigorous, thanks to the implementation of new standards. As a result, children should be able to recognize some letters and numbers before starting school. They do not necessarily have to enter school knowing them all or being able to read fluently, but the more familiar they are with language and mathematics, the more likely they are to have a successful year in kindergarten.

**■ Coping strategies:** Parenting experts affiliated with Care.com say that children on the verge of entering kindergarten should be able to control their emotions to a certain extent. While children may occasionally cry in the kindergarten classroom, it's important that your child be able to cope with some of the ups and downs of classroom life without shedding tears.

■ Interest in learning: Another indicator of school readiness is a general interest in learning. Children who like hearing stories, enjoy participating in discussions and activities and are stimulated by information and interactions with others are probably ready to begin their academic careers.

Kindergarten readiness can be determined by many factors. Age alone does not dictate a child's readiness, as there are many additional potential indicators that can help parents determine if their youngsters are ready to begin

# Mastering the ABCs of preschool

Although kindergarten traditionally marks a child's first foray into formal education, preschool is now taking up that mantle for many students.

Some parents may recall their own preschool experiences, mostly remembering extended moments of play and more monitored fun inside the school. But as the world of education has become more competitive, and students are required to meet certain standards at even earlier grade levels than before, preschool has undergone its own transformation.

Academic preschools have become a popular choice for parents hoping their children can gain that extra edge. Rather than the play-based philosophy preschools adhered to in the past, academic preschools introduce students to the rigors of the classroom. These academic preschools often teach math and reading.

Proponents of this type of



learning say that children are sponges at early ages, and the more information they can be presented with, the more they are likely to retain it. Children who are able to sit and focus for 20 to 30 minutes at a time and who are very curious and ask a lot of questions may

make for the best candidates at academic-based preschools. Other children may be more comfortable attending play-based schools.

While parents who hope to enroll their students in preschool may have to choose between a play- or academic-based curriculum, there

are other factors to consider as

- Is proximity to your home important? Some parents prefer that their children's preschools be close to home, while others want a school closer to their office. If your commute to work is long, then keep in mind that children will spend more time at a preschool close to home, which can cost more and reduce the amount of time parents and their children spend together.
- Should the school be faith-based? Religious organizations frequently offer their own faith-based preschool programs. Parents will have to decide if they want a faithbased curriculum for their young children.
- Are pre- and post-care services available? A school that has flexible hours may be appealing to some. This enables parents to drop off and pick up children according to their own work schedules or in coordination with school hours for other

children in the family.

- Visit the school and assess the environment. A school may look excellent on paper, but you will not get a feel for it until visiting the school during a school day. Take your child along and get his or her opinion. Parents may love a particular school, but if kids are uncomfortable, the school may prove ineffective.
- Confirm the curriculum before enrolling. Schools may have different educational philosophies. These can run the gamut from the Montessori Method to the Waldorf Approach to the High/Scope Approach. Familiarize yourself with a school's educational philosophy so you can be sure you are making the most informed decision possible.
- Go with your gut. Sometimes choosing a preschool boils down to a facility that just feels right. At this stage in a child's education, schooling is about learning social skills and growing acclimated to the routines of the classroom.

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#### Lynn Lyons—Anxiety Expert, Author

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November 27th, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

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# Getting involved: A role for parents in school

Family Features

For parents of private school students, getting involved with your child's education can be a little tricky, especially if they're enrolled in a school that's out of town.

But taking an active role at your child's school is a simple way to provide support and stay engaged.

Whether your schedule is relatively open or you're juggling multiple demands, there are ways for virtually all families to participate in their children's classrooms.

- Volunteer in the classroom. Today's teachers are busier than ever, developing classroom lessons, teaching to rigorous curriculum standards, coaching and chairing extracurricular activities and tackling their own professional development goals. This can leave little downtime to coordinate special activities or classroom celebrations, but that's where parent volunteers can play an essential role.
- Join a formal organization. School organizations like the Parent Teacher Association and other parent groups are designed specifically to engage parents in the education system. Members have a direct connection to news about what's happening in the school, an avenue to



Getty Images

Sharing resources and ideas for your child's classroom is one way for parents to stay connected with their education.

for inspiring change and bringing about school improvements.

■ Take part in field trips. Many rich learning

share concerns and means opportunities exist outside require certain student-tothe classroom, but those activities are often limited by chaperone availability. Both schools and most field trip destinations

chaperone ratios for safety and optimal learning. Joining a classroom field trip not only allows you to share the experience

side-by-side with your own child, but makes the outing possible for other children as well.

■ Share your talents.

There are ways parents can get involved without straying too far from what they know best. Volunteering to speak at a career day in your child's class is a simple way to share real-world experiences and help prepare the next generation

of leaders. Of course, if vou're looking for something a little more handson, many schools welcome community support to help build props or sew costumes for the school play, host a lesson on a favorite artist, share cultural traditions or help run activities like science fairs or field days.

■ Offer up ideas. Creating a connection with vour child's teacher can be based on more than checking in on performance and behavior. Sharing resources and ideas with teachers makes you an ally and an asset to the

classroom. One example is the Tom's of Maine "Green Your School Fund," which will give \$1 million to classrooms nationwide this year so students can roll up their sleeves and tackle hands-on environmental projects to understand the impact they can have on the planet today and tomorrow. Learn more about the program at GreenSchoolFund.com.

If you're unsure how to get started, contact your student's teacher or the school's main office and ask for guidance on where you can make the biggest impact.

Jen Hamilton 508 • 954 • 7941

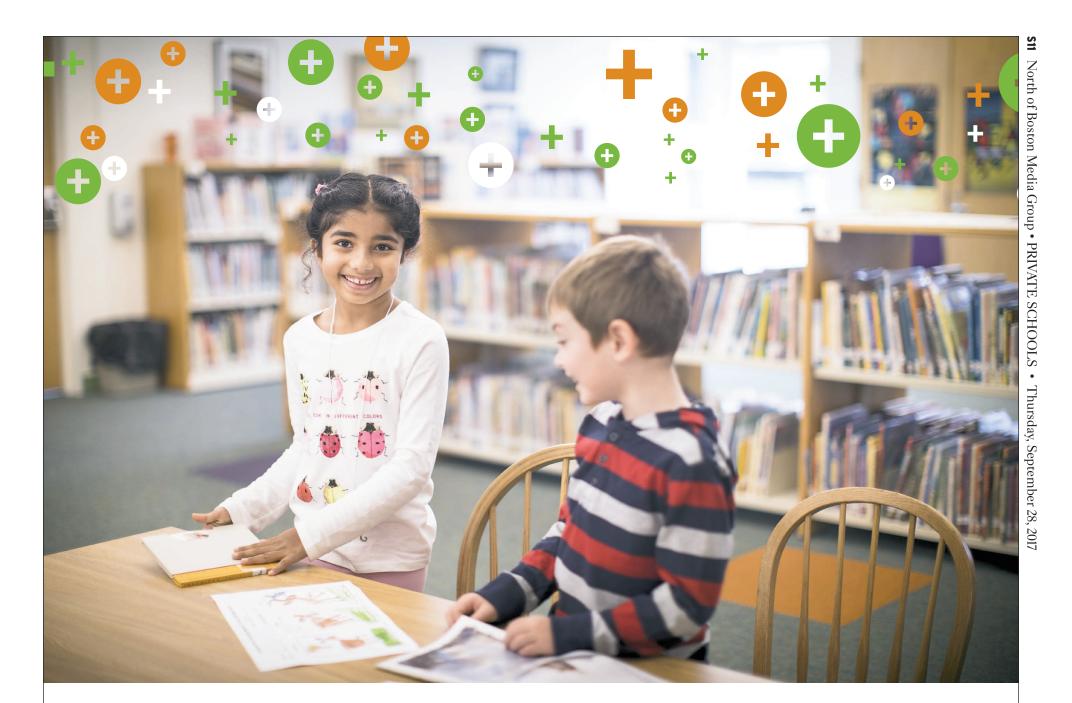


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# Dressed for success: The plus side of uniforms

School uniforms can simplify dressing for school and may even bolster school pride among the student body.

The U.S. Department of Education says that wearing a uniform may help decrease the risk of violence and theft and instill discipline while helping school officials more easily recognize potential intruders.

The National Center for Education Statistics indicates roughly 20 percent of public and private schools across the U.S. required students to wear uniforms in the 2011-12 school year — the most recent year for which data is available. In Quebec, school uniforms are far more common than in other provinces, potentially influenced by the classical Quebec private colleges and Montreal's English independent schools.

School uniforms may help families save money on clothing. Although the initial cost of the uniform may be higher than some other clothes parents may purchase for school, uniforms can be worn again and again, saving parents the expense of buying many outfits for their kids to wear to school. Uniforms may even be available for purchase from multiple places, allowing families to shop around for the best prices. Some uniforms may be simple, such as a white shirt and khaki pants, so that parents have more options.

School uniforms require an investment, and it is important to take care of the uniforms so they can handle the wear and tear of daily use, as well as all of the potential hazards kids might experience in a typical day.

These tips can help families keep school uniforms in the best condition possible:

- Launder gently. Wash clothes in cold water to prolong their life. When possible, line dry items or tumble dry on low.
- Have a few backups. Purchase a few pairs of pants, skirts and shirts that can be interchanged each day. This will cut down on how frequently uniforms need to be washed.
- Spot-treat stains immediately. Kids seem drawn to stains from ink, grass, grease and more, and these stains can permanently ruin clothing if they are not addressed promptly.



- Rely on some of these stainremoval techniques to keep uniforms looking newer longer:
- Soak clothes in cola for 30 minutes prior to laundering to remove greasy marks or food stains.
- A paste of white vinegar and baking soda can remove grass stains when worked into the stains and then washed.
- Spray pen marks with hair spray, then blot to lift off the ink. Repeat as needed before laundering.
- **Skip some washes.** If the uniform isn't especially soiled or smelly, it may be possible to wear it again without washing. Clothes can often be "refreshed" by using athome dry cleaning kits.
- Reinforce buttons. Use a thin coating of clear nail polish to serve as a protective barrier on button finishes. This will help the buttons look newer longer. The polish also can strengthen the thread that holds buttons on.
- Label all clothing. Uniforms all look the same. Be sure to use ironon or sewn-in labels to identify kids' clothing and avoid having to replace lost items.

#### AT A GLANCE

- Catholic schools in the U.S. numbered 6,429 for the 2016-17 academic year - 5,224 elementary and 1,205 secondary.
- Total U.S. Catholic school student enrollment for 2016-17 reached 1,878,824, with 1,309,429 students in elementary/middle schools and 569,395 students in secondary schools.
- Of the total enrollment, 18.4 percent, or 345,327, represented non-Catholic students.
- 1,739 schools reported waiting lists for admission.
- 98.6 percent of Catholic elementary schools and 70 percent of Catholic high schools were coeducational institutions. At the secondary level, 12.7 percent of the schools were all-male and 17.3 percent were all-female.
- The student-teacher ratio at Catholic schools for 2016-17 averaged 12:1.
- The full-time-equivalent professional staff totaled 152,883 for 2016-17: 97.4 percent laity (75.3 percent lay Of the staff, 2.6 percent were religious women, 22.1 percent lay men).



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individuals or clergy members, with

Source: National Catholic Educational Association

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# STEM taking schools by storm

An increased focus on STEM education is one of the most influential initiatives to reach schools in recent years. STEM is an acronym for Science, Technology, Engineering and Math. The world has become increasingly complex and competitive, and today's youth need to be equipped with the knowledge and skills to evaluate ideas and turn them into productive applications. These are two of the key hallmarks of STEM.

According to the National Science Foundation, STEM subjects include chemistry, computer and information technology science, engineering, geosciences, life sciences, mathematical sciences, physics and astronomy, social sciences (anthropology, economics, psychology and sociology), and STEM education and learning research.

Recognizing that more and more students are gravitating toward STEM-focused fields and that projected STEM job rates are rising steadily, schools have

begun to beef up their offerings with regard to STEM subjects. Jobs in mathematics, computer system analysis, systems software, and biomedical engineering are just some of the careers in which anywhere from a 15 to 62 percent increase between 2010 and 2020 is predicted, according to the U.S. Department of Education.

Individuals may believe that STEM study begins in high school, but the success of older students in STEM subjects is often shaped much earlier on. That's why parents and educators can do much to cultivate an interest in natural and social sciences as well as in math as early as possible. Here are a few ideas to do just that.

■ Encourage participation in the community. Various national clubs and science-based organizations have begun to pay more attention to STEM and offer activities that foster a greater love of science, engineering and math. By joining such clubs and organizations, students can learn more about

these subjects and reinforce their enjoyment.

- Set up an internship or meet-andgreet. Take students to STEMcentered places of employment so they can get a firsthand experience from within the STEM trenches. Provide opportunities for students to chat with people in the field and ask questions about the type of schooling necessary to pursue a particular degree, and if any hobbies and other activities promote STEM learning.
- Investigate school-based opportunities. Schools are broadening course offerings and also establishing STEM-based clubs. Students have the opportunity to get involved with other like-minded classmates. If a club isn't already available, a teacher or a parent can consider volunteering to serve as the head of the club.

STEM is a hot topic of discussion in the world of education. Students can expect to get plenty of exposure to science- and mathrelated topics both inside and out of the classroom.



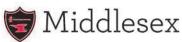
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### Inside the connected classroom

Schools have recognized how influential mobile technologies are on students and how they can shape teaching and thinking. As a result, technology is now a major component in the classroom, where educators are implementing technology to help students succeed not only in school but also after they graduate.

The following are some of the growing tech trends inside of the classroom.

■ Internet connectivity: Students most often connect to the internet using their mobile devices. Many schools have replaced their older computer labs with tablets and other mobile devices. Students can simply sit at their individual desks and connect directly



**Electronic devices and** smartboards have replaced paper and chalkboards in the classrooms of today.

to the internet. Once online, even dry-erase boards in students can access shared drives where assignments can be found or homework can be posted.

■ Tech homework: Rather than homework in the traditional sense, students are being asked to research information online cators have grown more and then submit assignments directly through

an application like Google Classroom. Homework also may involve spending time on educational apps that help reinforce lessons learned in school that day.

■ Personal mobile device access: In addition to tablets, students also have access to internet-connected smartphones, which may even be their own phones when personal phones are allowed in the classroom.

■ Classroom smartboards: Described as large tablets, smartboards have all but replaced chalkboards and many schools. Teachers can present lessons through the display, and students interact with the board to answer questions.

Technology use in the classroom continues to grow as students and eduaccustomed to using technology in all aspects of life.

# COMMON DENOMINATOR

### Connections, collaboration hallmarks of single-sex schools

By Jan Healy THE ACADEMY AT PENGUIN HALL

Imagine a working environment where you are exposed to an open and supportive exchange of ideas while being challenged to achieve your greatest potential. A place where you practice leaning into giving and receiving constructive feedback in order to build and strengthen your own problem-solving and collaboration skills as well as those of your peers. A place where you consistently receive the message that the possibilities for your future are limitless.

This working environment can and does exist in single-sex educational settings where young women and men are empowered to think for themselves, thoughtfully articulate their ideas and make connections across academic disciplines.

In the 2013 High School Survey of Student Engagement (HSSSE) conducted by the National Association for Independent Schools (NAIS), young women attending all-girls schools reported they felt challenged to achieve more than single-sex schools arrive at their female counterparts at other schools.

They also said that they felt more actively engaged in their own learning process and possessed greater motivation and higher aspirations as they experienced higher levels of support from faculty, administrators and peers. They also felt greater success in the core academic skills of writing, speaking, critical thinking and independent learning.

An earlier study in 2010 by Linda Sax of the UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Studies determined several key findings:

■ Women graduates of single-sex schools exhibit



Courtesy photos

higher academic engagement as measured by survey questions about time spent studying, working on homework, collaborating with other students, and meeting with teachers outside of class.

■ Female graduates of college with greater confidence in their mathematical and computer abilities.

■ 71 percent of women who attend single-sex schools report that they are planning to pursue graduate school after college.

Closer to home on the North Shore, members of the senior class at The Academy at Penguin Hall in Wenham report that an allgirls education is making a difference for them as well. They took a risk in changing schools midway through high school, but it is paying off in their feeling of greater ownership over their day-today learning experience and in their self-confidence in the classroom.

Erin Murray actively sought an all-girls learning environment for her secondary school years. After Nazareth Academy in Wakefield closed, she transferred to The Academy at Penguin Hall, an independent, allgirls, college preparatory high school that opened in 2016.

"I love the all-girls environment and the closeness

between everyone in it," Erin said. "I truly believe I have greatly benefited from an all-girls school because of the support I get from my peers and teachers, and I don't have to worry about the pressure of boys in the classroom. I feel confident when raising my hand in class to answer a question, and not afraid of saying the wrong thing and being

laughed at for it."

Her classmate, Olivia Wolcott, said she, too, appreciates learning in the company of other young women.

"I think the main difference with this school compared to a coed school is how much more comfortable I feel here than my old school," Olivia said. "Having boys in class was definitely fun sometimes, but it also felt like there was almost more pressure to prove your worth. This school is definitely a lot more supportive of different people."

Aside from the affinity these seniors feel with their peers, they also agree with Sax's premise that they are more academically engaged in a setting that encourages them to partner with their teachers and classmates to find deeper meaning in their studies.

Kathryn Ward said, "At my previous school, I would show up to class, take notes on the lecture, go home,

memorize the facts, come in the next day, and regurgitate the answers I mindlessly accepted the previous day in class. This culture shamed any questioning and rewarded standardized thinking. I found myself shying away from my thoughts, ideas and opportunities.

"Project-based learning (at The Academy at Penguin Hall) introduced the 'why' and 'how' into my education. Learning within an interdisciplinary context facilitates a deeper understanding of the world. Creativity is celebrated, which allows me to find my voice, an important skill to have as a woman. Participation in class discussion is now exciting and no longer intimidating."

Certainly, support for and against the merits of single-sex education for today's female students will continue to be debated because successful outcomes depend on more than simply separating the sexes. Innovative teaching methodologies focused on how girls learn best and ongoing professional development for faculty are critical to the success and college readiness of young women.

As we prepare girls to function with confidence and ease in an increasingly complex world, it is imperative that we continue to pay attention to what they are saying about how their academic engagement is affected by both their learning environment and the curriculum made available to them.

Jan Healy is the Dean of Academics and Director of College Counseling at The Academy at Penguin Hall in Wenham, the only all-girls independent college preparatory high school North of Boston. She has more than 25 years of experience guiding curriculum and college counseling at some of the best independent high schools in the country.



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## Extracurricular activities: Striking the right balance

Many schools emphasize their goals of producing well-rounded students. Extracurricular activities teach students important life lessons, provide them opportunities to socialize and often stimulate their minds and bodies in ways that differ from the stimulation provided in the classroom.

Data from the U.S. Census Bureau states that, in 2014, 57 percent of children between the ages of 6 and 17 participated in at least one after-school extracurricular activity. Children are more likely to participate in sports than clubs or lessons, such as music, dance and language, but each of these activities can be beneficial to students' development.

Students who participate in extracurricular activities may want to limit their participation to 20 hours per

Even though extracurricular activities are largely positive — even when schedules are packed — parents need to be aware of the diminishing returns of too many activities.

week. This is according to a group of professors from Stanford University in California and Villanova University in Pennsylvania who have been collecting data on also suggests that hectic the issue since 2007.

In their report — "Extracurricular Activity in High-Performing School Contexts: Stress Buster, Booster or Buffer?" — Jerusha Conner and Sarah Miles found that 87 percent of kids who would be considered to have packed schedules were perfectly happy unless they were doing more than four hours a day.

The "over-scheduling hypothesis" may be

overhyped. This is the concern that too much participation in organized activity leads to poor developmental outcomes. This hypothesis schedules undermine family functioning, detract from schoolwork and possibly increase the risk of copycat behaviors and excessive competitiveness.

However, in the study "The Over-Scheduling Hypothesis Revisited: Intensity of Organized Activity Participation During Adolescence and Young Adult Outcomes," researchers J.L. Mahoney and Andrea Vest determined that



Striking the right balance with extracurricular activities is important for keeping students from becoming over-scheduled.

extracurricular intensity was a significant predictor of positive outcomes and unrelated to indicators of problematic adjustment (for example, psychological distress, substance use, antisocial behavior) at

Even though extracurricular activities are largely positive — even

young adulthood.

when schedules are packed — parents need to be aware of the diminishing returns of too many activities. This is something called the "threshold effect." Benefits from extracurricular activities can level off when too many activities are being juggled. If a child is experiencing anxiety, sleeplessness or depression, or

seems overly stressed, it could be time to reduce that student's time spent doing structured activities.

It's essential that families use the cues given by kids to assess what students can handle. And children should be encouraged to be honest with their parents about their extracurricular activities as well.



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# Combining life lessons with fun

Extracurricular activities can benefit students in various ways. Academic clubs, sports and volunteer organizations provide students with opportunities to grow as people and make new friends while also teaching kids skills they will use for the rest of their lives.

Many parents are aware that extracurricular activities can help students improve their chances of gaining admission to college. But students who choose the right extracurricular activities will benefit in greater ways than simply strengthening their college applications. Here are some ways parents can help their sons and daughters key in on extracurricular activities they'll enjoy:

■ Ask kids to jot down their interests. Students are more likely to enjoy and excel at extracurricular activities that align with their existing



Parents can employ various strategies to help kids find activities they can be passionate about for years to come.

interests. Ask kids to jot down a list of their interests or anything they might want to try. Youngsters

might want to learn a musical instrument even if they have never before taken a course on music. Once kids

have listed their interests, look for activities that allow them to further explore those interests. Chances are there is a school-sponsored or community-based club or organization that will align with at least one thing on vour child's list.

**■** Encourage kids to have fun. Kids are more likely to enjoy and fully commit to an activity if they find it fun. While extracurricular activities can help kids grow as people and improve their image in the eyes of college admissions officers, kids will get even more out of an activity if they enjoy doing it.

■ Look for something that won't interfere with schoolwork. Extracurricular activities can look great on a college application, but that benefit is lost if the activity interferes with a student's academic performance. Some activities, including sports, demand more of students' time than others, but make sure kids know that school always comes first.

■ Ask around. Ask neighbors or school officials for recommendations to help kids who have tried but failed to find the right fit regarding extracurricular activities. Sometimes it takes a little trial and error before a child finds an activity he or she is comfortable with. Fellow parents can be great resources, and school officials likely know of a host of clubs and organizations that kids may be interested in.

■ Sign up with your kids. If kids are hesitant to sign up for an activity because they are shy, sign up with them. Volunteer organizations are typically family-friendly, and kids might be more likely to come out of their shells if they sign up with their parents or siblings. As kids grow more comfortable with an activity, they will want to get more involved even if mom and dad don't have the time.







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# Sleepy teenage brains need later start to school day



Well-rested students who are alert when they hit campus do better in a variety of ways.

By Kyla Wahlstrom UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Millions of high schoolers are fighting with their alarm clocks as they start another academic year. As students struggle to get up early, parents battle to get them out of bed and off to school — a stressful way for everyone involved to start the day.

Are teenagers just being lazy when they have to be dragged out of bed in the morning?

According to the National Sleep Foundation, the sleep requirement for teenagers is eight to 10 hours per night. Yet, the average teen in America obtains less than seven hours of sleep on a school night. A big part of the reason why is that nearly half of all high schools in the U.S. start before 8 a.m., and more than 85 percent are starting before 8:30 a.m.

Sleep deprivation in teenagers as a result of early school hours has been a topic of concern and debate for over two decades. Districts across the country have wrestled with the question of whether their local high school should start later.

I've been studying the effects of later high school start times for 20 years. My research shows that teens' inability to get out of bed before 8 a.m. has serious consequences for learning and health outcomes. Essentially, the adolescent inability to be fully awake before then is a matter of human biology — not a matter of attitude.

#### Need to get to class

In the earliest days of American education, students of all ages attended a single school with a single starting time. In fact, as late as 1910, half of all children attended one-room schools. As schools and districts grew in size in the early 1930s, staggered



Antonio Guillem/Shutterstock

Teens' inability to get out of bed before 8 a.m. has serious consequences.



The Conversation

Teens' hormones are out of sync with school start times, making it difficult for them to feel rested in class.

starting times became increasingly common. The oldest students in cities and large towns were given the earliest starting time, with the thought that high school and safety outcomes. was preparation for the adult world of work. Many rural schools continue to have only a single starting time, as buses pick up students of all ages on a single

Since 2014, however, major national health organizations have taken a policy stand to support the implementation of later starting times for high school. The American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Medical Association, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. and, most recently, the American Academy of Sleep Medicine have all come out with statements that recommend high schools start at 8:30 a.m. or later.

A national conference

held in April 2017 showcased the research linking teen sleep, later high school start times and significantly positive academic, health

Since the experts have started to weigh in, hundreds of schools in 45 states across the country have been able to make the shift. In fact, the state of California is currently considering a bill that would require all middle and high schools in the state to start school no earlier than 8:30 a.m. by the year 2020. Legislators are starting to consider teens' sleep deficit as an issue of public health.

#### Why does it matter if teens are tired?

Studies on sleep in general and sleep in teens in particular have revealed the serious negative consequences of lack of adequate sleep. Teens who are sleepdeprived — defined as

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obtaining less than eight hours per night — are significantly more likely to use cigarettes, drugs and alcohol.

The incidence of depression among teens significantly rises with less than nine hours of sleep. Around half of teens who sleep four hours or less per night feel sad and hopeless, compared to just 19 percent of their well-rested peers. Teen car crashes, the primary cause of death for teenagers, significantly decline when teens obtain more than eight hours of sleep per night.

A newly released report by the RAND Corporation quantified the "costs" to our society of early high school start times in terms of lost income due to impaired academic and professional performance and car crashes for teens who are sleepdeprived. The report projected annual gains to the U.S. economy of nearly \$9.4 billion over 15 years if high school starts nationwide at 8:30 a.m.

#### Biology of the teenage brain

So what exactly is going on with teenagers and their sleep patterns? Can't they just go to bed earlier?

Research informing expert recommendations began in the 1980s, with studies that cast new light on what goes on in the teen- world corroborated these age brain.

Our brains release the sleep hormone melatonin as a signal that allows us to fall and stay asleep. In preteens and adults, the secretion of melatonin is flexible and variable, and sleep timing preferences are genetically based. But the timing is different in teens, as it is related to puberty.

For virtually all adolescents, the secretion of melatonin doesn't begin until about 10:45 p.m. and continues until about 8 a.m. This means that most teenagers are unable to fall asleep until melatonin secretion begins, and it's hard to wake up until the melatonin secretion stops. This fixed pattern of melatonin secretion in teens changes back



The Conversation

School start times can have more to do with district bussing schedules than what's best for high school students.

to an individual's genetically preferred sleep/wake

The unique sleep/wake pattern of teens is beyond their control. Just expecting the morning. Not only does teens to minimize distractions and go to bed earlier is not a solution.

I have interviewed hundreds of teens who all said that if they went to bed early, they were unable to fall asleep — they just stared at the ceiling until sleep set in around 11 p.m.

Researchers around the findings. At the onset of puberty, nearly all humans (and most mammals) experience a delay of sleep timing in the brain.

Medical researchers have also found that sleep patterns of younger children enable them to rise early and be ready for learning much earlier than adolescents.

In other words, the biology of the teenage brain is in direct conflict with school schedules, which typically require adolescents to begin school earlier the effects on after-school and younger children to start later.

#### What happens with a later start?

Results from schools that switched to a late start

time are encouraging. The students do in fact get more timing once puberty is over. sleep, tending to go to bed at the same time, but getting to rise a bit later in the teens' use of drugs, cigarettes and alcohol decline, their academic performance improves significantly with later start

Most recently, car crash rates for teen drivers have declined with the implementation of a later high school start time. In fact, the crash rate for teens in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, in 2013 dropped by 70 percent in the first year the district adopted a later high school start.

Plenty of schools and districts across the U.S. are resisting delaying the starting time of their high schools for many reasons.

Issues such as changing transportation routes and altering the timing for other grade levels often lead the list of factors making the later start difficult. Schools also must consider sports and activities.

Such concerns are valid. However, schools that have delayed start times found creative solutions. For example, schools adopted mixed-age busing,

coordinated with public transport systems, and expanded after-school child care.

There's clearly more that needs to be addressed in making the change. But, in

the end, schools and commuadult lives tomorrow nities that value maximum development for all of its children should also be willing to grapple with solutions.

After all, our children's ability to move into healthy depends on what we as adults are deciding for them today.

This article was originally published on The Conversation.



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# Strike up the band for young musicians

By Alexandra Olson ASSOCIATED PRESS

Before plunging into music lessons, it helps to explore the landscape.

#### Have realistic expectations

It's extremely unlikely your child is the next Yo-Yo Ma, but that's no reason not to put him in lessons. Your child's first piano class could music stores that offer be the first step to a music scholarship or the start of a lifelong hobby. Ask yourself if you're OK with either possibility because chances are the going will get tough after the novelty wears off.

Go in for the long haul. Anthony Mazzocchi, associate director of the John J. Cali School of Music at Montclair State University, suggests giving it a go for two years or so before contemplating quitting. He suggests prioritizing daily practice like math homework. With the big picture in mind, a few struggles over practice won't seem like signs your investment is going down the drain.

#### Involve your child in the decision

It helps if you don't just

drop an unsuspecting 6-year-old in piano lessons. Let your child explore different instruments first. Try the library or local park for free concerts and sing-a-longs. Mazzocchi, who runs the website musicparentsguide.com, suggests watching YouTube videos of master performances. He advises searching for "petting sessions" for children to hold and try out instruments.

#### Take the time to find a good teacher

A good place to start is the Music Teacher National Association, which has a "Find-A-Teacher" search function and tips on what to look for, said Sue Wege, director of coordinators for MusicLink. Try to get a trial lesson and interview. The MTNA site offers a list of questions to ask, including whether the teacher offers performance opportunities that can be important for motivating children.

Look for teachers who are plugged into the music scene and provide fun

opportunities for children. practices every day. In addition to recitals at her studio, Wege takes her Research, reach out, speak up students to play pianos that the group "Sing for Hope" places outdoors throughout New York City in June.

#### Rent or buy, used or new?

There are pitfalls when it comes to buying used or cheap instruments. A good rule of thumb is to consult with your child's music teacher before turning to Craig's List.

George Shelby, a Los Angeles musician who tours with Phil Collins and created the Yamaha-sponsored website musicalinstrumentchoices.com, recommends sticking with reputable music stores for rentals and used instruments. While that might be pricier than going online, the instrument will come with a quality guarantee.

It is possible to find quality instruments on sites like eBay, but Shelby urges buyers to bring a technician to check it out.

Many dealers also offer rent-to-buy options. Let your child know he gets to keep the instrument if he

On the fence about private lessons? There's no rush. Find out how good your school's program is. Ask how often classes meet. Check out The National Association of Music Merchant's website for a list of schools with the best music programs. It might be enough to supplement that program with lessons every other week. Group lessons are also a more affordable option, or seeking a graduate student who teaches at a discount.

#### Plan for the costs of a school music program

Because of fees, music is one of the three areas along with sports and field trips – where low-income students get left out, according to Dale Erquiaga, president and CEO of Communities in Schools. He urges families to ask school officials about fee waivers or seek out a community coordinator for help. Reach out to parents of older children about hand-me-down instruments, unexpected costs and money-saving tips.

### Music education: The right note

The benefits of music education extend far beyond getting kids to tap their toes. The National Association for Music Education lists the following reasons to support music education in schools.

- Music training helps develop language skills. Studies have shown that music training contributes to the physical development of the part of the left side of the brain associated with processing language. A 2005 study from researchers at Stanford University found that mastering a musical instrument may also improve reading skills, which can benefit students both inside and outside the classroom.
- Music training can improve hand-eye coordination. Studies have linked long-term music training to improved hand-eye coordination. That is likely connected to the motor skills children develop when playing musical instruments. Without those instruments, those motor skills may not develop as strongly.
- Music improves concentration. Even students who cannot play a musical instrument can still benefit academically from simply listening to music. In 2007, a research team from the Stanford University School of Medicine in California found that music engages the areas of the brain involved with paying attention. Today's students deal with numerous distractions, from smartphones to tablets to social media, but those who routinely listen to certain types of music might find it easier to block out those distractions and focus on their work.



Music education can help with concentration, emotional development, and hand-eye coordination.

- Music can help students' emotional development. A 2003 study commissioned by Chorus America found musicians are more likely than the average person to be involved in charity work as volunteers and donors. The national association also notes that music students may be more likely to exhibit empathy toward other cultures.
- Music can improve self-esteem. In a study examining 117 fourthgrade students attending public school in Montreal, a researcher at the University of Texas at Austin found that children who received piano lessons weekly for three years had higher self-esteem than children who were not given piano lessons during the same period. Neither group had participated in formal music instruction before the study, and students in both groups reported similar levels of self-esteem prior to participating in the study.

Music education can enrich the lives of young students in a myriad of ways, potentially contributing to happier, more fulfilling lives.

A love of travel can be fos- exchange programs vary tered early in life by parents in length and the ages of who encourage their children to immerse themselves in various cultures. One way for students to do that is to participate in student exchange programs.

Many schools are affiliated with exchange programs, and families can look into programs on their own as well. For example, the nonprofit AFS-USA (formerly the American Field Service) is a leader in intercultural learning and offers international exchange programs in more than 40 countries around the world through independent AFS organizations.

Study abroad and

students. Some may be a full-year program consisting ing on the program, but of 10 months of education, while others may last just a semester or trimester. Exchange students usually are placed with private host from the country a student families who have been carefully vetted and are eager to participate in the program and share their rich culture with students. Exchange students will enroll in a public or private school, depending on the cost and parameters of the exchange.

Parents and students considering exchange programs expenses. Students also should take the following into consideration as they

look to learn more about their options.

- Age limits vary dependmany work with high school students between the ages of 15 and 18.
- Apply for a student visa plans to visit. This process may take some time, so build it into your schedule.
- All fees are the responsibility of the student visiting the host family. These fees may include, but not be limited to, insurance, tuition and application fees. Students and their parents will be responsible for their travel should take a decent amount of spending money with

them so they can fully experience the country and city where they will be living.

- Foreign language experience may be required if you are traveling to a non-English speaking country. Make sure you know the requirements or restrictions.
- Host families typically undergo stringent background checks by representatives of the placement agency or organization. Therefore, students and parents can rest assured that these are secure places. The placement group also will work to address any issues that may arise during the exchange to ensure all parties are happy and safe.



Foreign exchange programs enable students to immerse themselves in different cultures and understand the international education process.

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## Strategies to help sharpen kids' focus on schoolwork

Some youngsters experience difficulty when the time comes to focus on their schoolwork. Such difficulties may be linked to a variety of factors, and parents can be overwhelmed as they attempt to identify the root cause of their children's struggles in the classroom.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, roughly 6.4 million American children between the ages of 4 and 17 have been diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, or ADHD. ADHD most often occurs in children, and these children may have difficulty concentrating, paying attention, staying organized and remembering details.

But not all children struggling to focus on their studies have ADHD. Parents who want to help their kids overcome their issues with regard to focusing



Courtesy photo

Kids' sense of focus is sharper when distractions are kept at bay.

can consider a host of approaches and strategies.

■ Speak with a qualified healthcare professional.

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Because ADHD is so common, parents should seek the opinion of a licensed healthcare professional to determine if their child has the disorder. According to the National Resource Center on ADHD (www.help4adhd.org), psychiatrists, pediatricians, neurologists, psychologists and certain licensed counselors or therapists are qualified to diagnose ADHD. Determining if a child has ADHD is a great first step toward helping that child overcome his or her struggles in the classroom. A qualified healthcare professional can help develop a strategy to improve focus, and that may include prescribing medication to improve the child's ability to concentrate.

■ Talk with your child's teacher. Students who don't have ADHD can still have trouble focusing on their schoolwork, and parents of such students may want to speak to their children's teachers to solve the problem. Educators have significant experience dealing with students who have trouble focusing, and they

### Standardized tests may be losing their weight

College and university admissions teams use unique formulas to determine if student candidates are the right fit for their schools. For many years, admissions officers paid considerable attention to applicants' performance on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and/or ACT. But things have begun to change, and standardized test scores may no longer

carry as much weight as they once did.

Many students struggle with the pressure of college entrance exams like the SAT and ACT. Students who may be high achievers in school may not perform well on stan-

dardized tests, or they may will now capture a more perform poorly because of the weight that such tests bear on their academic futures. College applicants may miss out on the opportunity to attend their preferred schools simply because of this one measure of academic prowess.

However, many individuals and educators contend that these exams measure test-taking skills rather than academic ability and are therefore not necessarily strong indicators of academic performance.

Many schools have changed their approach to standardized tests and the role such tests play in the college admissions process. According to the admissions department of

may be able to make certain suggestions to help kids focus on their work.

Harvard College, the SAT does not factor heavily into a student's application. And while other schools say a lot of their admitted students have high test scores, these scores are not the primary factor for consideration in the application process.

In 2015, George Washington University announced it would no longer require applicants to take the SAT

> or ACT. As many as 800 four-year colleges and universities in the U.S. already do not require potential prospective students to take the tests, according to NPR. Schools hope testfree admissions criteria



diverse pool of students.

Many attest that the most reliable predictors of college success are a high school student's gradepoint average and the rigor of the courses he or she takes. Still, the nonprofit College Board defends the importance of its SAT, offering that "overwhelming evidence shows that SAT scores and high school GPA in combination are the best predictors of college success."

Students thinking ahead to college may rest easier knowing that SAT and ACT scores may no longer bear the same level of importance as they once did in the college admissions process.

■ Minimize distractions at home. Some kids may do well in class, but find

# 5 ways to promote tween confidence

FAMILY FEATURES

Experts say a significant drop in self-esteem happens between ages 9 to 12. Instilling confidence in kids during these pivotal years can start with actionoriented activities that promote family time and conversation.

"Simple tasks like doing a good deed for others, learning something new or accomplishing a goal go a long way in boosting selfesteem for tweens," said Dr. Michele Borba, a globally recognized educational psychologist, parenting expert and author of "UnSelfie: Why Empathetic Kids Succeed in Our All-About-Me World."

"It's important for parents to support and encourage their tween by creating experiences they can complete together as a way to build confidence."

Set out to tackle this bucket list, created by Tom's of Maine Wicked Cool! Deodorant in partnership with Borba, to help build confidence:

1. Spread kindness. Encourage your tween to team up with a pal to complete five acts of kindness in one week the person behind you in for people outside of your immediate circle. It could be helping a coach clean



Encouraging tweens to learn something new is one way to boost their self-esteem.

up after practice, holding the door, pitching in with a neighbor's yard work, paying for the ice cream of line or any number of small gestures that help spread kindness.

2. Test out a new activity. Brainstorm activities with your tween that he or she has always wanted to learn, but never tried, like drawing, kickboxing or yoga. Engage your child in exploring how to make

it hard to focus once they arrive home. That's because home often has far distraction. Let kids do more distractions than the classroom. Once the time comes for your child to do his or her homework, minimize distractions that can compromise the ability to focus. Designate a homework zone in a distractionfree area of your home. Turn off the television and take kids' phones away. During homework time, only allow them to use their computers for their lessons and not to connect with friends via social

media. Parents also should accomplishment, which make sure they aren't the their work in peace and quiet, offering to help if need be, but steering clear of kids' work areas so they are encouraged to focus and not strike up conversa- don't take up another tions with mom or dad.

■ Make lists. Some kids focus better when they know exactly what they have to do. Encourage such that standing up every so youngsters to make lists of their assignments and check items off as they are completed. Checking items off can give kids a sense of haul.

can motivate them to stay focused on their schoolwork going forward.

**■** Encourage breaks. A breather every so often can help kids avoid growing tired. Make sure kids task, such as playing video games or watching television, during their breaks. But keep in mind often to walk around or get a glass of water can help them stay sharp and energized over the long

it happen. Ask around. Many places offer free trial classes, the library may have a how-to video, or you can work together to find someone who can help teach the new skills.

3. Be an agent for good. Inspire your tween to look for someone who has had a hard day, needs a friend or just a positive boost, and encourage him or her do something to make their day a little brighter. Think of simple acts like leaving a note of encouragement for a friend, baking extra treats to thank a neighbor or cleaning up trash for the school janitor. Let your tween decide whether to make the actions known or keep it a surprise.

4. Interview a grown-up. Promote positive role models by asking your tween to interview someone he or she admires. It could be a

favorite uncle, grandparent, teacher or anyone they find interesting. Challenge them to discover at least three new things, take notes or record the conversation, and then write up a story to share the discoveries. Be sure to send the interviewee

5. Learn a new family task. Initiate a chore swap with family members and encourage your tween to take on a task someone else normally does around the house to foster learning new skills that can come in handy later in life. Options could include doing the laundry, mowing the lawn, washing dishes or cooking a meal. Invite your tween to watch how, ask for pointers and then practice until he or she masters another life skill.

Explore more ideas to encourage and inspire your tween at TomsofMaine.com.



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# IT'S NOT JUST CHILD'S PLAY

### At more US colleges, video gamers get the varsity treatment

By Collin Binkley ASSOCIATED PRESS

Next time you go to admonish your child for incessant video gaming, think twice.

Competitive gaming is taking colleges by storm — with financial incentives potentially at stake.

In some ways, the "players" are like typical college athletes. They're on varsity teams. They train for hours between classes. Some get hefty scholarships. But instead of playing sports, they're playing video games.

Varsity gaming teams with all the trappings of sports teams are becoming increasingly common as colleges tap into the rising popularity of competitive gaming. After initially keeping its distance, even the NCAA is now considering whether it should play a role.

Fifty U.S. colleges have established varsity gaming teams over the past three years, often offering at least partial scholarships and backed by coaches and game analysts, much like any other college team.

"We're talking to at least



University of California, Irvine students Connor Nguyen, right, and Griffin Williams, second from right, compete in a "Super Smash Bros. Melee" tournament at the Shine eSports festival at the Seaport World Trade Center in Boston over the summer. A growing number of U.S. schools have started to offer scholarships to students who compete in esports, competitive videogame playing.

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three or four new schools every single day. We did not expect this type of reaction," said Michael Brooks, executive director of the National Association of Collegiate eSports, a group that represents more than 40 schools with varsity gaming teams. "It caught us a little off guard."

Competitive gaming, often called esports, has become a booming entertainment industry over the past decade, with flashy professional events that fill sports arenas and draw millions of online viewers.

The biggest tournaments offer prize pools upward of \$20 million, attracting elite gamers who wage battle in popular video games such as "League of Legends" and "Overwatch."

Until recently, most colleges were slow to meet demand for a collegiate version, experts say, but interest has come in a flurry over the past year as more schools see a chance to benefit from the industry's growth.

Smaller private schools in particular have been quick to create varsity programs as a way to boost enrollment numbers, although so far it has brought mixed results. Among several starting new teams this year is the College of St. Joseph, a school of about 260 students in Vermont.

"Strategically, we knew that it would give us more cache with students," said Jeff Brown, the school's senior vice president and athletic director. "We're all looking for a way to bring

more kids in."

Many colleges hope to replicate the success they've seen at Robert Morris University in Illinois, a small school that launched the country's first varsity team in 2014 and has since become can bring national exposure a national powerhouse.

But it's also catching on at some bigger schools, including the University of Utah, which says its new varsity teams are the first at any school in the five major athletics conferences.

Although most collegiate tournaments are now organized by third-party gaming leagues or videogame companies, the rapid expansion has caught the attention of the NCAA. The league's board of governors announced in August that it will discuss its "potential

role" in esports at an October meeting, noting the "prevalence of organized gaming competitions" on college campuses.

Supporters of collegiate gaming say varsity teams to colleges at a relatively low cost, with the potential to land sponsorships that bring costs even lower.

The University of California, Irvine, opened a new \$250,000 "eSports arena" last year with financial backing from sponsors including a computer company and Riot Games, a video-game maker that organizes collegiate tournaments.

Other sponsors of the 3,500-square-foot arena provided 80 high-end computers, specialized gaming chairs and other equipment,

### Dollars and cents: Saving for higher education

saving for higher education, the better off ing for college, parents can save more you'll be.

But just how early should you start? According to a recent MassMutual College Planning and Savings Study, parents each week spent on child care and saves who started saving at birth or before their child's first birthday have saved an average of about 25 percent more than those who started saving when their child was between ages 1 and 10 and about 40 percent more than those who started after age 10.

The real boost seems to come if parents start saving right away, but saving for college is no easy task, especially for new parents who are juggling new financial priorities like child care costs.

MassMutual's college savings calculator estimates that a family with a 5-yearold child entering kindergarten today can expect to pay a hefty amount when their child enters college in 2030, with averages for these youngsters looking like:

- Private four-year college: \$368,739
- Public four-year, out-of-state college: ing gift-giving events. \$287,466
- Public four-year, in-state college:
- Public two-year college: \$44,763 For those who haven't started saving, age 5 is an interesting tipping point. That's when many parents can stop paying for full-time child care expenses. By putting a percentage of the money freed

It's no secret that the earlier you start up from child care expenses toward savwithout having to change their current spending habits.

> For example, a family who takes \$200 it from the time when their child starts kindergarten through high school graduation can save more than \$135,000 for college (assuming a conservative average 1.5-percent interest rate over the time period).

Here are five tips to help families plan and save for college:

- 1. Start early. Start saving what you can at birth, and for those with child care expenses, increase the contribution amount at age 5 by putting the money you freed up toward saving for college.
- 2. Make it automatic. Consider automating checking account or payroll deductions to interest-earning savings accounts specifically designed for higher education, such as a 529 savings plan.
- 3. Encourage monetary gifts (including 529 plan gift cards) from family members and friends for college savings plans dur-
- 4. Know how much you need to save. Determine how much you need to save using free online tools such as MassMutual's college savings calculator.

To learn more about establishing financial goals for your child's education, visit massmutual.com and also view more information in the MassMutual College Planning and Saving study.

university officials said.

"Compared to traditional sports programs, it's more affordable," said Brooks, of the collegiate esports association. "At the end of the a souped-up computer lab."

Students who represent their schools say it teaches them lessons in strategy, teamwork and time management, and it offers camaraderie with other gamers on campus.

"It really builds a sense of community," said Griffin Williams, a senior at UC Irvine who captains a team for the game "Super Smash Bros. Melee." "I actually feel more school pride than I would have had otherwise."

Other schools have brought esports into the classroom as students pursue careers in the business side of gaming. Boston's Emerson College is offering day all we're talking about is a new course on esports this year and eventually hopes to offer a minor degree.

"It's becoming a vast piece of everybody's world," said Gregory Payne, the head of communication studies at Emerson. "We have to be open to what new generations are dealing with."

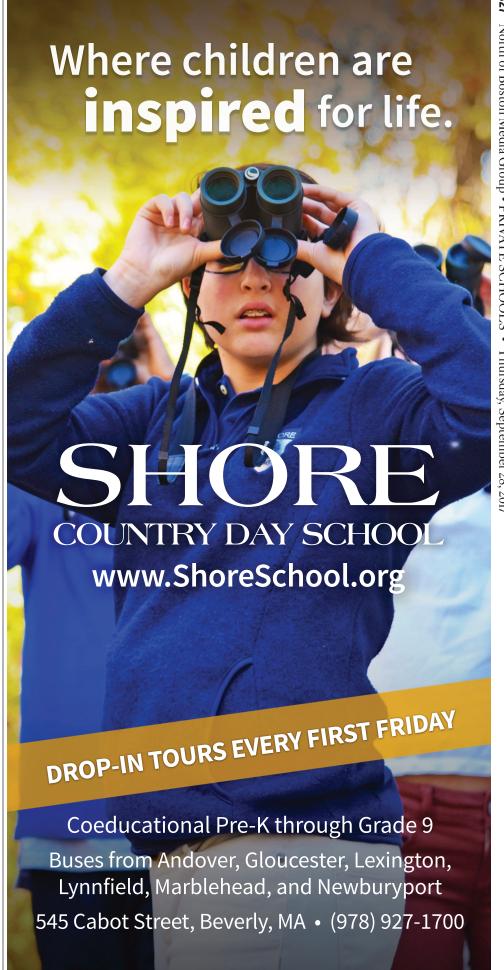
Still, some have been reluctant to embrace what is sometimes seen as a slacker's pastime. Administrators on many campuses leave gamers to compete through unofficial clubs rather than

varsity teams.

But that hasn't stopped others who expect collegiate gaming to keep growing. After announcing its first varsity team in April, Utah has already added teams for three more games and eventually hopes to offer full scholarships to gamers.

At the College of St. Joseph, Brown said demand for the school's two new teams is already overflowing. By next year, he expects the school to add several more.

"We're getting a tremendous amount of interest," he said. "Nearly every kid on campus wants to be a part of this.'



### A PRINCIPAL'S 'EXTREME' EXPERIMENT:

# Paying kids \$100 to unplug

BY GAIL ROSENBLUM TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

Diana Smith is growing so concerned about the potential perils of technology on kids' psyches and behavior that she devised a refreshing solution this past summer.

Call it pay-per-not-view. Smith, principal at the Washington Latin Public Charter School in Washington, D.C., challenged her eighth- and ninth-grade students to put down their phones, laptops, tablets and video game consoles for the 11 Tuesdays of summer.

Whoever gave them up successfully, confirmed in writing by two adult testimonies, would get \$100.

Smith funded the deal personally, by canceling her own cable TV service. Of 160 students, 78 attempted the challenge and 38 succeeded.

Smith is \$3,400 poorer (four students declined the cash), but richer in hope.

"I've had kids say that they realize that they can always rely on their own thoughts," Smith said. "They can think more. They know what it feels like now to not have to reach for the phone."

It's no surprise to me that Smith's story was shared by media around the country. It's a rare parent of a tween or teen who doesn't worry about kids' uber-usage of social media, particularly its intoxicating, but capricious ego fulfillment via likes and shares.

It's also a rare kid who doesn't know on some level that he or she is too reliant, bordering on addicted.

It's just so hard to shut it off.

And parents are hardly the best role models for abstinence. In fact, Smith heard from many parents who said they could not do the challenge, "or didn't even want



Dreamstime/TNS

It's a rare parent of a teen who doesn't worry about kids' uber-usage of social media.

to try."

She said, "They use work as an excuse."

While Washington Latin serves students in grades five through 12, Smith cooked up the plan in June specifically for middle-schoolers. First, she hoped to lessen "the drama that the girls engage in over the phones. Now it's with gasoline."

Her other big concern is sleep, something these students are not getting.

"The boys and girls text each other at 3 or 4 in the morning," she said, "and they walk in here and they can't function."

Smith explained that each student needed to assume responsibility for figuring out the challenges posed by not having access to screens for 24 hours every Tuesday from June 13 to Aug. 22.

"For example," she explained, "if you have Latin summer school and a video is assigned in class Tuesday for the next day, a student could wake up early to watch that video. If your friends invite

you to the movies on Tuesday, you need to take a rain check."

She did allow for a few exceptions, such as receiving calls from parents or guardians. But call a friend to chat?

"Nope, that knocks you out."

The idea, she explained, "is for you to discipline yourself. It is like fasting ... to feel and understand what happens to your life when you go without. Live without the screens for a day a week and see what happens."

Guess what? A lot happened.

They baked and read and hung out with friends.

"One family had a huge water fight," Smith said. "Back to the 1950s."

Smith knew that offering cash for good behavior would raise some eyebrows.

"My faculty's mouths were open," she said. "I'm always lecturing them about not bribing the students. But I don't know what else would work. I'm not sure anything else would work. I had to go

extreme."

Even Melinda Gates understands that. Gates, a former developer at Microsoft and co-founder of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, recently checked in with her own struggles around raising 21st-century teens.

In a thoughtful essay, she wrote that "phone apps aren't good or bad in themselves, but they can exacerbate the difficulties of growing up."

Parents also might want to take a look at "Screenagers," a 2016 film by Delaney Ruston. Ruston, a Stanford University-trained physician and documentary filmmaker, grew interested in this issue when buying a smartphone for her daughter.

She soon learned that the average kid spends 6 1/2 hours a day looking at screens — boys often many hours more. And while kids boast, correctly, of being skilled at multi-tasking, they might not understand that they're rarely doing any of those tasks well.

One teen in "Screenagers"

frets about her inability to concentrate when her teacher is instructing. Another said she turns off her data when she studies, so she "can't go on the internet and I can't get text messages."

Maybe it's wisest to explain to our kids (calmly) that we all benefit from technology, but a "yes/and" strategy is best, for the whole family.

Yes, technology. And fresh air.

Yes, Snapchat. And face-toface conversations.

However you feel about paying kids to do something that's good for them, I do like Smith's philosophy of baby steps.

Power off one day a week. Or one hour a day. Or during dinner.

In "Screenagers," a group of teens agrees to place their cellphones on the table at a restaurant. Whoever grabs his or her phone first to check messages has to pick up the tab.

Just think about all the burgers and fries a \$100

#### HOW TO GET KIDS OFF THEIR DEVICES

Bribing?? Begging? Grounding? Artful persuasion?

What's the best way to motivate kids to give up their technology, even temporarily? Lisa Vaupel, a therapist at Washburn Center for Children, offers a few ideas:

- **Distract**. Get kids interested in something else. "As a family, say, 'We're going to the park' or on a bike ride. They're getting off their technology and getting great interactions with their family."
- Enrich. Find something else your kids are interested in, from swimming to a book club.
- Delay gratification. "Technology can be the reward in a limited dose, but have them complete tasks first. For younger children, say, 'If you get dressed, brush your teeth and eat breakfast, you can have 15 minutes of screen time.' With older kids, first they do chores, then they get the wireless password," which means you might have to change that password tomorrow.
- **Read**. Put down the phones and read a book together, "or have them read to you."
- Teach time management. Allot 30 minutes to screen time, which teaches them how fast time flies.
- Role model. "At the park, do we pull out our cellphone after we've just told them to go play?" Instead, go talk to another parent.

#### ■ Use technology wisely.

"Kids need to use their technology, and we want them to use it and understand it. For example, technology is great for organizing. Have them use alarms to remind them to do their laundry. Or text your kid and say, 'Hey, I'm thinking about you. I'm really curious about your day."

Gail Rosenblum

infusion from Smith could buy them.

# Time to reboot kids' bedrooms

### Keep it timeless and simple, with a bit of flair

The first term of school can be the perfect time to reboot a child's bedroom.

Ideally, the room should be easy to keep organized and great for concentrating on homework. It also needs to be decorated in a way that's cheerfully kid-friendly but not too age-specific, so you won't have to redecorate too soon.

Three designers offer help with some organizing and decorating strategies for children's rooms.

#### Simple choices

In choosing a color palette, keep it as simple as possible, said Brett Beldock of Brett Design Inc. She suggests limiting the number of colors to create a stylish space that feels orderly. Use white paint on walls, she said, and then bring in just one bold accent color, like red, navy or magenta, perhaps through a patterned rug and colorful bedding.

Another trendy but timeless option: Use charcoal paint on the walls with crisp white trim, then add a white-and-charcoal patterned rug, and bring in bolder colors through books said. Even if your child is and keepsakes displayed on shelves. Colorful lamps are also a great way to add personality.

"We used to do baby colors, but I think the important thing is to do strong. handsome colors they can live with and grow into," Beldock said.

#### **Durable fabrics**

For those who worry about using a lot of white in a child's room, where it could easily get dirty, interior designer Andrew Howard notes that outdoor fabrics and rugs have become just as pleasant to the touch as indoor items, and they're far more durable. So light colors can be much more easily cleaned



Lucas Allen/Andrew Howard via AP

Andrew Howard suggests parents choose timeless, classic wall colors and furniture for a child's bedroom, like the one pictured that he designed, so that the room doesn't require redecorating as the child grows and is easily convertible into a guest room in the future.

than they would have been a are likely to want a big decade ago.

Use outdoor fabrics in places where kids "might be putting their hands, and where they might sit," he neat, "his friend might wipe Cheetos all over everything and not think about it."

Patterns, too, can help hide wear and tear. Catherine Davin said, using a patterned carpet that's "forgiving with stains" to add color and style to a child's room. "By the time they grow out of it, it might be time to change the carpet anyway," she said.

She added that organic cottons and other fabrics made without harsh dyes can be durable, and are becoming more popular with health-conscious parents.

#### Open and organized spaces

"Don't over-furnish," said Davin, because kids open space to spread out on. Include only furniture that's necessary.

And while some open shelving is great for displaying favorite items, all three designers recommend plenty of closed storage for kids' rooms. Deep drawers, bins with lids and cabinets with doors will all help kids stash their items.

Davin suggested hunting for flea market finds, like old armoires or Queen Anne dressers offering plenty of space. "You could paint it bright pink or shiny black or whatever color you need," she said. "We never do that 'matched set of furniture for a child's room' anymore."

Bunk beds with drawers are also useful, and even young kids can learn to put away their toys and clothes in these low drawers.

Remember, Howard said, that you will always need a bit more storage than you think. So rather than filling all storage to capacity, keep one drawer or one big bin on a shelf empty for quick cleanup of clutter.

#### Small room strategies

Large furniture pieces can make a small room feel smaller, and yet some of them may be needed. Beldock said one creative strategy to keep desks and storage units from dominating a room is to use transparent, durable Lucite for these large pieces. For one design project, Beldock created an entire wall of Lucite bookcases, and she has designed a clear Lucite desk for CB2.

Another small-space strategy: Howard suggests adding built-in storage

beneath window seats or anywhere else there might be unused space.

For lighting in small rooms, wall sconces are great because you don't have to worry about kids knocking lamps over.

But even in small rooms, Beldock suggests investing in a full-size desk. When a child is young, it's nice to be able to pull up a second chair at the desk for a tutor or family member helping with homework. Once kids get older, they'll be ready to use that full-size desk all by themselves.

#### Touch of personality

Although the goal is a timeless space that won't need too much redecorating as a child grows, be sure to incorporate a few special

items that express a child's interests. Davin often includes framed prints like movie posters or depictions of favorite animals, or one big item like a surfboard. "For one little girl, we did a swing chair and fairy lights in her room," Davin says. The items don't have to be expensive, she said, but they should be chosen to highlight what the child loves.

Howard agreed, but cautions parents to remember how easily kids' tastes can change.

"If they like blue now, they're going to like red tomorrow," he said. So strike a balance between giving the child a voice in choosing some items, and letting the grown-ups make the bigger design decisions.



#### **FALL OPEN HOUSES**

BEVERLY - Thursday, October 19th - 9 - 11 a.m. LYNN - Thursday, October 19th - 6 - 8 p.m. LYNN - Saturday, October 21st - 9 - 11 a.m.

# **CONCUSSIONS AND KIDS:** KNOW THE SIGNS



By Gerald Zavorsky GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY

health concern in the U.S., with indirect and direct health-care costs approaching nearly \$1 billion annually. Worse, head trauma also can cause shortand long-term health problems and, in children, problems with academics, headaches and behavioral health issues.

One challenge has been determining just how widespread concussions are among children. reported by emergency depart-A study published in May 2016 found that only 80 percent of concussions were treated by a pediatrician or other primary care provider. This limits accurate surveillance and data

Head trauma is a major public collection, but it also means that tens of thousands of children, and maybe more, are not getting treatment.

Another study published last June gives an even more distressing number. That study estimated that between 1.1 million and 1.9 million concussions occur in children each year. That is far greater than the number of children with concussions ments; their records indicate the number ranges between 115,000 to 167,000.

More than half — about 53 percent — do not occur during school sports settings, yet a





LEFT: Some high school football teams have adopted helmet shells to help prevent concussions during practices. ABOVE: According to a study published in June, between 1.1 million and 1.9 million concussions occur in children each year.

significant number do. With concussions and how they 44 million children playing tant that we collect better data – and make sure all children are receiving the care they need. While some can stay with a child for high-profile athletes have tried and touted oxygen chambers to treat concussions, there is questionable evidence that these work. The treatment for most concussions is usually rest. Sometimes, doctors may prescribe a shortened school day.

#### Treatment for a first. protection from a second

In the past few years, awareness has grown about the long-term effects of trauma to the head, particularly repeated hits such as those that occur when playing professional contact sports. As more study has revealed the danger of head trauma, it is important that children, parents and coaches know the signs of

can occur. Most important, sports each year, it is impor- however, is to know when to result from a strong hit to seek treatment.

While rare, the effects of an untreated concussion cause brain malfunction, risk for longer-term problems increases if a child has a second concussion. It is also important to determine assault, such as when kids whether a child has suffered a concussion so that a second concussion can be prevented. Recovery is longer for a second concussion. about half are assault-Thus, it is imperative to avoid sending a child back into a game or activity if head trauma has occurred.

#### Just what is head trauma, and what causes it?

Head trauma is a type of traumatic brain injury (TBI) that is caused by a hit to the head causing the brain and head to be jostled rapidly,

disrupting its normal function. A concussion also can the body that inadvertently jostles the head and brain.

While TBI among professional football players many years. The effects can brought the issue of concussions to the forefront, it is including a lack of focus and important to know that head difficulty learning. Also, the trauma doesn't just happen when children play football. Concussions can happen from a fall or from an get into a fight or are even attacked. Of all the head traumas reported in children younger than 18 years, related head traumas.

About 0.7 percent of the U.S. population visits the **Emergency Department** each year from head trauma (which encompasses, concussions, TBI, as well as minor head injuries) and about 15 percent of these visits result in hospitalizations.

quarter of them are for children 11 and younger, and 35 percent of the visits are for newborns to 17. Nearly a third of reported head traumas are sports-related, with football-related injuries accounting for nearly twothirds of all sports-related head traumas in children.

Regardless of the cause, head trauma is a major public health concern in children. Untreated concussions can lead to cognitive impairment, headaches, dizziness and sense of "not being oneself."

#### There's help for the heads

There is good news among the disturbing news. About 90 percent of concussions are transient, with symptoms resolving within seven days. However, a minority of patients remain symptomatic several months postinjury, a condition known as post-concussion syndrome.

The Centers for Disease Of all these visits, nearly a Control has developed a

helpful program for kids, parents and coaches called "Heads-Up." This provides a list of signs for parents to look for in case a child has been hit. The agency also provides a list of symptoms reported by the child. Because diagnosis depends in large part upon self-reported symptoms, it is important that children be informed of signs and symptoms.

While some serious concussions may result in a collection of blood that forms on the brain after a hit, there is no reliable test for a concussion. According to the Centers for Disease Control, a parent should call 911 or take the child to the emergency department if a child has one or more of these signs:

- One pupil larger than the other.
- Drowsiness or inability to wake up.
- A headache that gets worse and does not go away.

- Slurred speech, weakness, numbness or decreased coordination.
- Repeated vomiting or nausea, convulsions or seizures (shaking or twitching).
- Unusual behavior. increased confusion, restlessness or agitation.
- Loss of consciousness (passed out/knocked out).

According to the Centers for Disease Control, children and teens who return to school after a concussion may need to take rest breaks as needed, spend fewer hours at school, be given more time to take tests or complete assignments, receive help with schoolwork, and reduce the time spent reading, writing or on the computer.

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