

# CHOICES in EDUCATION

## TESTING, TESTING

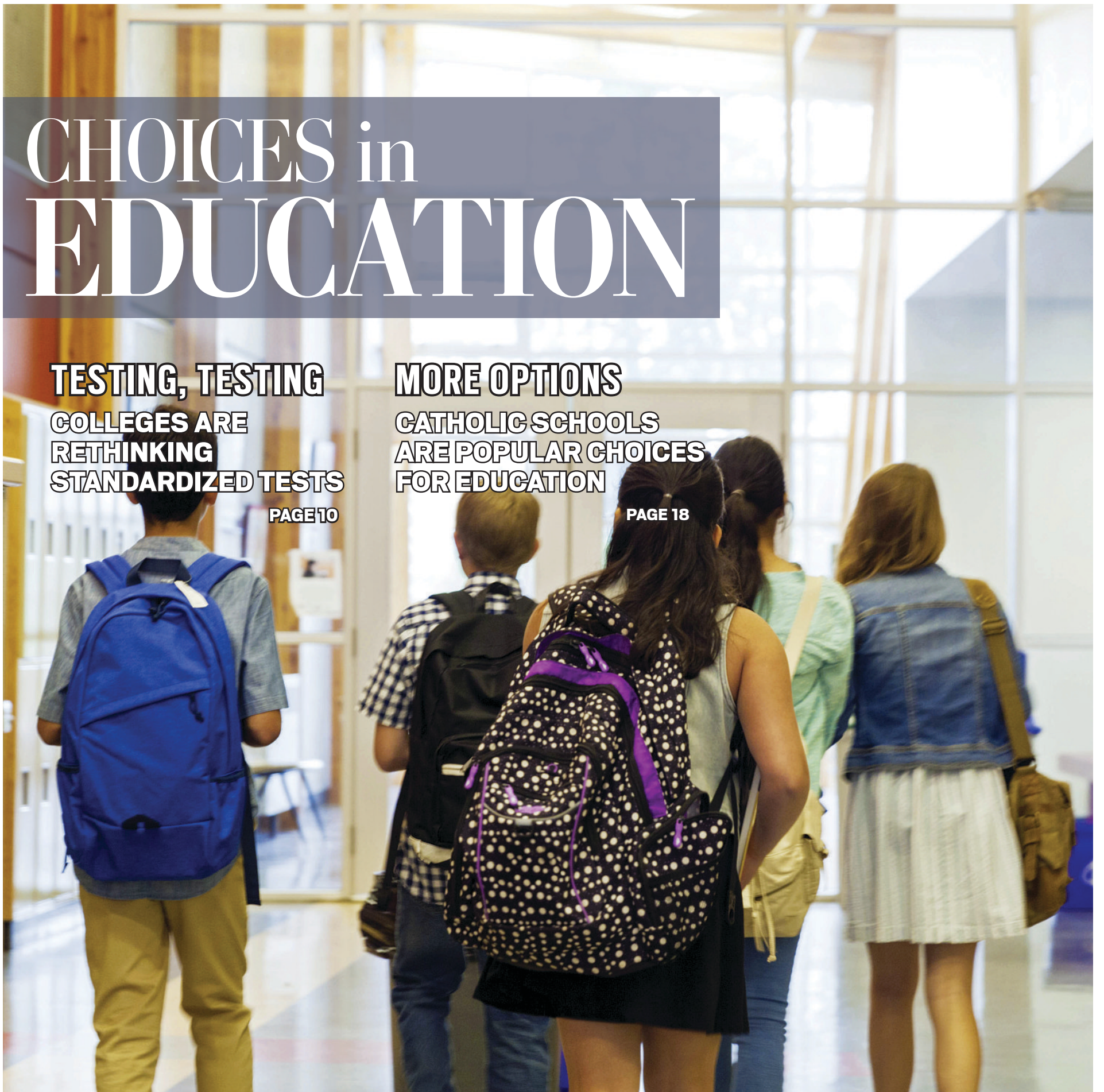
COLLEGES ARE  
RETHINKING  
STANDARDIZED TESTS

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## MORE OPTIONS

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS  
ARE POPULAR CHOICES  
FOR EDUCATION

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## CAREER PATHWAYS

# Explore career paths in the agriculture sector

As the world population grows, the role of the agricultural sector will become even more prominent. There should be significant demand for agricultural professionals capable of meeting the challenges facing the world as it confronts climate change and food shortages. That makes now a perfect time for students to explore potential career paths in the agricultural sector.

▪ **Agricultural engineer:** Agricultural engineers employ engineering principles to solve issues related to agricultural production. An agricultural engineer may design facilities or machinery or develop solutions to address problems related to irrigation and soil conservation, among other projects. Students interested in a career as an agricultural engineer can expect to study mathematics, physics, chemistry, computer engineering, and, of course, engineering analysis and design as they pursue their degrees.

▪ **Agronomist:** Agronomists work with crops and soil management and may work as analysts, environmentalists or forecasters. Agronomists may be tasked with analyzing soil structure and chemistry and study how water is moving within soil. Students will study agriculture, biology, chemistry, and physics en route to earning a degree that will help them become an agronomist. Mathematics also will be part of their studies, and statistics courses will be part of those studies.

▪ **Biochemist:** Biochemists study the chemical and physical principles of living things and biological processes. Within the agricultural sector, bio-

**Agronomists work with crops and soil management and may work as analysts, environmentalists or forecasters.**

chemists will contribute to the development of agricultural products, including those that will serve a medicinal function. Biochemistry, chemistry, biology, calculus, and physics will be part of students' coursework as they pursue degrees that prepare them for a career as a biochemist.

▪ **Climatologist:** Climatologists will figure prominently in the agricultural sector as the effects of climate change manifest themselves more readily over the next several decades. Climatologists study climate change, variability and the biosphere. Climatologists offer insight about the effects of climate change on the growth and development of agricultural products, including fruits, grains and vegetables. The natural sciences feature prominently in climatologists' educations, and students also will study meteorology as part of their coursework.

▪ **Food scientist:** Food scientists study chemistry, biochemistry, microbiology, and engineering so they can assist in the development of new food products. Food scientists may manage processing plants and some serve as researchers in an effort to solve problems related to food production.

▪ **Plant pathologist:** Plant pathologists specialize in analyzing issues re-



PHOTOS COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

The agricultural sector employs millions of people across the globe.

lated to plant diseases. Research features prominently in plant pathologists' work, and many work in university settings. Some plant pathologists work for companies attempting to develop pest-resistant plants. Advanced degrees are necessary to work as a plant pathologist, and students will study mycology, bacteriology, virology, and physiology, among other subjects, as they pursue their degrees.

The agricultural sector employs millions of people across the globe. Many of those people do interesting work as they attempt to address issues facing the agricultural sector.

*Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection*



Food scientists may manage processing plants and some serve as researchers in an effort to solve problems related to food production.



# ELIMINATING BARRIERS TO BETTER LIVES, ONE WALL AT A TIME

When it comes to responding to the needs of the community, Macomb Community College has broken down more than a few walls that prevent residents or businesses from reaching their full potential.

The recent collaboration between the college and the National Fluid Power Association (NFPA) to address a national shortage in technicians is a case in point.

Joining colleges in Wisconsin and Illinois, Macomb has been selected by the NFPA to be its third Fast Track hub school in the nation. As a result, the college's Advanced Technology faculty have been working with middle and high school faculty and industry partners to develop a fast track to employment.

Already offering several courses in fluid power technology, students will soon be able to earn certification as

well. And they'll be doing it in a newly remodeled facility.

Renovation of what will become the Skilled Trades and Technology Center will expand the facility's physical space and integrate and modernize classrooms and labs to meet Industry 4.0 (Fourth Industrial Revolution) standards.

"Macomb is committed to connecting residents to jobs with futures that can sustain families, said Jim Sawyer, college president, "and to expanding the talent pipeline to local business and industry."

The latest program unveiled by the Arts and Sciences division also owes its development to a shortage, this time in K-college teachers. To attract more students to this essential field, Macomb has introduced an associate degree program in English.

It joins degree program in



Macomb President James Sawyer and Board Chair Katherine Lorenzo break a wall on the future Skilled Trades and Technology Center.

math and science that offer a lower cost alternative to attending a college or university for four years. Students can transfer after two years to a bachelor's degree program, putting graduation and their teacher certification in timely reach.

No less driven by the pulse of the community is the college's Health and Human Services division. It has developed a dental science curriculum that encompasses a 16-week Dental Assisting program and a two-year Associate Degree in Dental Hygiene program.

Lauded by dentists who are having difficulty staffing their practices, the Dental Assisting program was unveiled last year in a state-of-the-art facility off of South Campus. The Dental Hygiene program is pending approval of the Commission on Dental Accreditation and will be housed there as well.

To provide practical experience to students in the two programs, a Dental Clinic offering affordable dental care to low-income residents is also in the works.

"Supporting Macomb's new Dental Science programs is not only about expanding educational and career opportunities for our students," said Katherine Lorenzo, chair of the college's Board of Trustees, "it is also a tangible step forward in supporting the health and well-being of Macomb County residents."

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## PARENTING

# How young children's vocabularies benefit from being read to

A recent study from researchers at The Ohio State University found that the disparity between the number of words young children who are frequently read to have heard compared to those who have not been read to is significant. The study first appeared online in the *Journal of Development and Behavioral Pediatrics* and found that young children whose parents read them five books a day entered kindergarten having heard roughly 1.48 million words. By comparison, children whose parents never read to them had heard just over 4,600 words by the time they entered kindergarten. Even children who are read to daily hear significantly fewer words than children whose parents read them five books a day. Such children hear just under

300,000 words prior to entering kindergarten.

Exposure to a larger vocabulary is not the only benefit kids reap from being read to. Reach Out and Read, a national nonprofit that champions the positive effects of reading daily and engaging in additional language-rich activities with young children, reports that language-based interactions help children develop communication skills, patience, empathy, and literacy. Reading to young children also enhances their understanding of the world by transporting them to places and times they have never experienced.

One study also noted the effects that reading to young children can have on the relationship between parent and child. That study, authored by researchers at the Univer-

**Reading to young children also enhances their understanding of the world by transporting them to places and times they have never experienced.**

sity of Wollongong in Australia and Boston University and published in the journal *Archives of Disease in Childhood*, found that reading to young children supports a strong relationship between parent and child.

*Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection*



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Exposure to a larger vocabulary is not the only benefit kids reap from being read to.

## WHATEVER IS NEXT

For Grand Valley students, next is opportunity and innovation. Next is global, connecting and uniting us. It's local, shaping the spaces in which we work and live. It's a commitment to progress. Next is where minds are free to imagine what could be. At GVSU, next is now. And whatever's next for you, we will help you get there.

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Photo taken pre-COVID

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## 3 Options for Kindergarten-Age Children

### FULL- DAY KINDERGARTEN

- Children must be 5 years old by Sept. 1 of the school year in which they plan on attending Kindergarten.

### HALF- DAY KINDERGARTEN

- Students continue on to Kindergarten or 1<sup>st</sup> Grade the following year based on progress.

*Full-day and half-day curriculum is based on the Michigan Standards for Kindergarten.*

### YOUNG FIVES

- Young Fives is a full day program.
- Designed for children turning 5 years old between June 1<sup>st</sup> and December 1<sup>st</sup>.
- The Young Fives curriculum is based on the Michigan Standards for Kindergarten modified to meet the foundational academic, social/emotional, and developmental needs for younger children.
- Students will enter Kindergarten the following school year.

~ **Schools of Choice available for all Kindergarten options!**~

## New Online Process!

New Student Registration & School of Choice Applications for the 2022-23 School Year are available online by clicking the

"Enrollment Information" Banner at

**[www.anchorbay.misd.net](http://www.anchorbay.misd.net)**

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Anchor Bay School District  
5201 County Line Rd., Casco, MI 48064

# Experience the Anchor Bay Way!



## Kindergarten Registration & K-12 Schools of Choice is Open for the 2022-2023 School Year

### Anchor Bay Elementary Schools offer:

- Three Options for Kindergarten-Aged Students
- K-5 Art, Music, Literacy, Physical Education, and Technology Classes
- K-5 Project Lead the Way STEM Classes

### Anchor Bay Middle Schools offer:

- Junior Honors Academy with Classes in Math, English, Science, & Social Studies
- STEM/PLTW classes include: App Creators, Engineering in Action, Medical Detectives, Green Architecture, and Energy & the Environment
- Earn High School Credit in Full-Year Spanish & Algebra
- Full Sports Program (No Pay-to-Play Fees)
- Award Winning Band & Vocal Music Program

### Anchor Bay High School offers:

- Honors Academy including 9 Advanced Placement Courses
- Over 50 Competitive Team Sports with No Pay-to-Play Fees
- Award Winning Theatre, Art, Band, and Choir
- JROTC Programs for 9-12 Graders
- Foreign language: French, Spanish, & German
- 16 Career Technical Education Programs

### Strong Student Achievement:

- Anchor Bay students scored higher than county & state averages in every area tested on Spring 2019 assessments.
- Over a Decade of Excellence: we have led the county in test scores since 2009.



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**Mt. Clemens Middle School,** 6-8  
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**Mt. Clemens High School,** 9-12  
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FOR 2022/2023  
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***Our students, staff, and families come first.***

***Read what our parents and students have to say and join us in educating our future.***

- *I am a second grade student at Seminole Academy. I have learned so much. My teacher has helped me write, read, and learn new things in math. I am getting ready for third grade and I am so thankful from my head to my heart.*
- *I appreciate Mount Clemens schools more than ever. With the pandemic, things were hard for me and my family. The school put the kids in front of themselves and I will be forever grateful.*
- *My daughter's teacher genuinely loves her students and wants to see each of them reach their full potential. As a special needs parent, having my voice heard and being a valued member of my daughter's team is as important to me as her education. I need to know that my daughter's IEP will be followed, that she will be safe, and that I will be kept in the loop. In my experience, it is the kind and caring people at Seminole that make it a great school.*



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[www.mtcps.org](http://www.mtcps.org) or call (586) 469-6100



## MUSIC EDUCATION

# Important ways music education benefits students

Researchers increasingly are finding that “do-re-mi” may be just as essential to children’s development as “A-B-C.” Music education, which was once required in the classroom, is increasingly absent from school curriculums. However, proponents feel there should be a greater push for musical education as part of school curricula because of the many benefits students reap from music education.

## Taps into multiple skill sets

Music participation goes beyond playing an instrument or singing notes from a page. Experts at Music Together, an early childhood music development program, say that participating in music education involves many different skills, including listening, vision, fine motor skills, problem solving, and utilizing large and small muscle groups.

## Transformative effects

A growing body of research points to music for its transformative effects on youngsters. Participation in music education may help improve communication skills, foster better memory and help children focus their attention more effectively, according to the instrument retailer Zing Instruments. Music may provide the common ground to unite children in pursuit of a common goal.

## Improves language skills

Neurobiologist Dr. Nina Kraus participated in “The Harmony Project,” which involved a series of experiments among second and third graders. Dr. Kraus discovered conclusively that music enhanced sound processing and cog-



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Music education plays an important role in childhood development and acquisition of skills in and out of the classroom.

nitive skills (memory and attention). Music helps students develop the left side of the brain, which is known for processing language. A 2014 study by Arete Music Academy found children who study music tend to have larger vocabularies and more advanced reading skills than those who do not participate in music education.

## More consistent attendance rates

The National Association for Music Education deter-

mined that schools that offer music education have better attendance rates (93.3%) than those that don’t (84.9%).

## Higher grades

A study in The Journal for Research in Music Education found that students who participated in excellent music programs scored higher on tests in mathematics and English/language than students enrolled in lower-quality music programs or none at all. Researchers concluded there is a correla-

tion between music education and better retention of material.

## Support from parents and teachers

Both educators and parents strongly believe that music education has a positive impact on overall academic performance, indicates NAMM Foundation and Grunwald Associates LLC. They also feel that budget cuts in music education or deficits in supplies and insufficient allocation

## GREAT MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS FOR BEGINNERS

Playing a musical instrument benefits people of all ages, including children. Young children may take to music education more readily than adults, acquiring skills in record time. While many instruments are beneficial to kids, certain choices are best for children just starting out.

### Piano

The piano is a great instrument to learn because it enhances fine motor skills and often serves as a foundation for music education. The good news is one doesn’t have to purchase a piano to get started. Digital keyboards and even online piano keyboards can replicate piano sounds quite well and provide an inexpensive way to learn piano.

### Ukulele

Ukuleles are affordable and their small size makes them ideal for kids. It’s easy to learn a few chords and play familiar songs. Plus, parents may appreciate that the ukulele is a relatively quiet instrument.

### Recorder

A recorder often is one of the first instruments introduced to children in music classrooms. A recorder is an ideal introductory wind instrument because it is easier to play than a flute or clarinet. Nonetheless, it still requires students to learn coordination and breathing techniques.

### Drums

Drums teach children rhythm, which is an essential component of all music. Drums are attractive to kids because they can be great fun to play and help reduce stress by getting out all that nervous energy. Electronic drum kits are available as quieter alternatives and are great options when space for a regular drum set is unavailable.

As children acquire skills on these instruments, they can continue or move on to more complicated alternatives.

*Courtesy of Metro Creative Connection*

of resources is detrimental to students.

## Increased IQ scores

An experiment published in a 2004 issue of Psychological Science conducted by E. Glenn Schellenberg at The University of Toronto at Mississauga found that, over the course of nine months, six-year-old participants who were given piano and voice lessons

tested on average three IQ points higher than those who had drama lessons only or no lessons at all.

Music education plays an important role in the lives of students, paying dividends that might surprise even those devoted to ensuring school curriculums include it.

*Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection*





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## COLLEGE PREP

# U.S. colleges are rethinking standardized tests

By Janet Lorin  
Bloomberg

The pandemic forced a pause on colleges requiring standardized testing, long the gold standard for admissions in the U.S. As COVID-19 restrictions ease, widespread mandatory reliance on the ACT and SAT entrance exams isn't springing back as quickly. One reason is that schools anticipate more COVID disruptions and want to provide predictability to applicants. Another is concern over large race-related gaps in SAT scores, which have been blamed for unequal educational opportunity for people of color.

## 1. What are the SAT and ACT?

The SAT, administered by the New York-based College Board, and the Iowa City-based ACT are decades-old screening tools for U.S. college admission. Both are multiple-choice, written exams heavy on math and reading, taken by high school students typically in their junior year, sometimes senior. The SAT was invented in the 1920s. Harvard University, in the early 1930s, was the first school to use the SAT as an instrument in admissions decisions, initially to determine recipients of one small scholarship program, according to Nicholas Lemann, author of "The Big Test: The Secret History of the American Meritocracy." The College Board, an association of educational institutions, adopted the SAT to replace a battery of essay tests during World War II, a change billed as temporary that instead proved lasting, Lemann said. College Board membership expanded greatly after the war, and the SAT became a

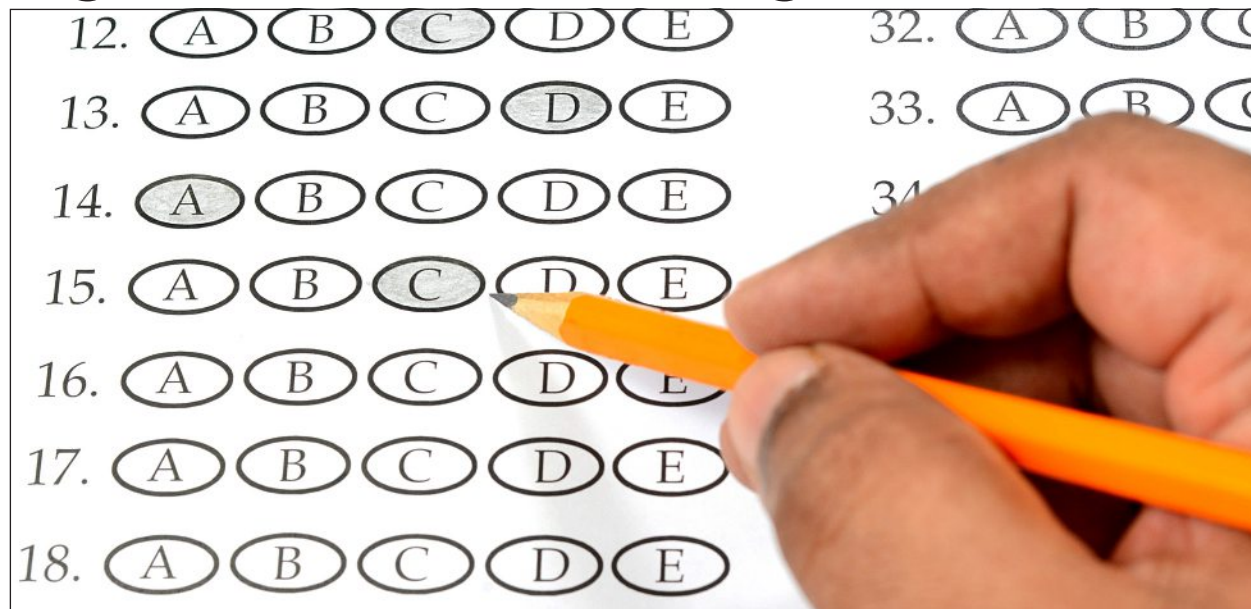


PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

The SAT and ACT are multiple-choice, written exams heavy on math and reading, taken by high school students typically in their junior year, sometimes senior.

mass-administered exam. The ACT emerged in the late 1950s as a competitor.

## 2. How important are they?

In a 2018 survey by the National Association for College Admission Counseling, nearly half of colleges said they gave "considerable importance" to ACT and SAT test scores in deciding which applicants to accept, down from 60% in 2004. The scores are also considered for scholarships, an important means of tuition support for many students. Some large public systems such as the University of Georgia and the University of Florida still require them. "A high score on the SAT or ACT will not compensate for a non-competitive" grade point average in high school, the University of Georgia says on its website. "Your record of three to three-and-a-half years' worth of rigorous academic work in the classroom will be the primary focus of any

admission decision."

## 3. Who has moved away from the tests?

The Common Application, the nonprofit behind the standardized application form, said only 5% of about 850 member schools are requesting scores in 2021-2022, compared to 55% in 2019. The University of Chicago and Brandeis University were among schools that had stopped requiring testing before Covid-19. The pandemic, by forcing the cancellation of most in-person testing, accelerated the reconsideration of standardized tests. All eight Ivy League schools have made them optional for current high school juniors. Harvard has suspended it for students as young as current 8th graders, and Cornell, for some of its undergraduate schools, won't even accept scores. The University of California system abolished testing requirements. "Test-optional admission is

the new normal," said Bob Schaeffer, interim executive director of FairTest, a nonprofit that has led the "test-optional" movement for 30 years. "These schools aren't going to go back even if they want to in most cases." The College Board in 2021 also eliminated the essay section from the SAT.

## 4. Who's still taking the tests and sending scores?

Even though many colleges aren't mandating scores, at least one group of students are still sending them: wealthier ones. In the current application cycle for current high school seniors, 52% of students in the wealthiest households submitted scores this school year, according to data from the Common Application through February. Only 39% of the poorest did so. Applications among first-generation students — those whose parents didn't receive bachelor's degrees

— grew by 21% from two years prior. Only 37% of underrepresented minorities sent scores in 2021-22, compared to 52% of non-unrepresented minorities. It's not clear how schools are evaluating students without testing.

## 5. What's the concern about racial disparities in testing?

"The use of standardized tests to measure aptitude and intelligence is one of the most effective racist policies ever devised to degrade Black minds and legally exclude Black bodies," Ibram Kendi wrote in his bestselling book, "How to Be an Antiracist." In the most recent report for the class of 2021, the mean score was 1,112 for White students and 934 for Black students. (The overall mean score was 1,060. A perfect score is 1,600.)

## 6. What explains the disparity in scores?

A variety of factors, ac-

ording to experts. For one thing, wealthier families can afford to send their high schoolers to test-prep courses that teach strategies for excelling on written exams. Wealth also influences the quality of schooling a given child receives. William Spriggs, an economist at Howard University in Washington, D.C., says Black students "are less likely to be in schools where there are advanced math courses," such as calculus. Priscilla Rodriguez, a vice president at the College Board, said the SAT is not a racist instrument. "Every question is rigorously reviewed for evidence of bias and any question that could favor one group over another is discarded," she said. "Further, changes made to the test over its 100-year history have removed all vestiges of an aptitude or 'IQ' test."

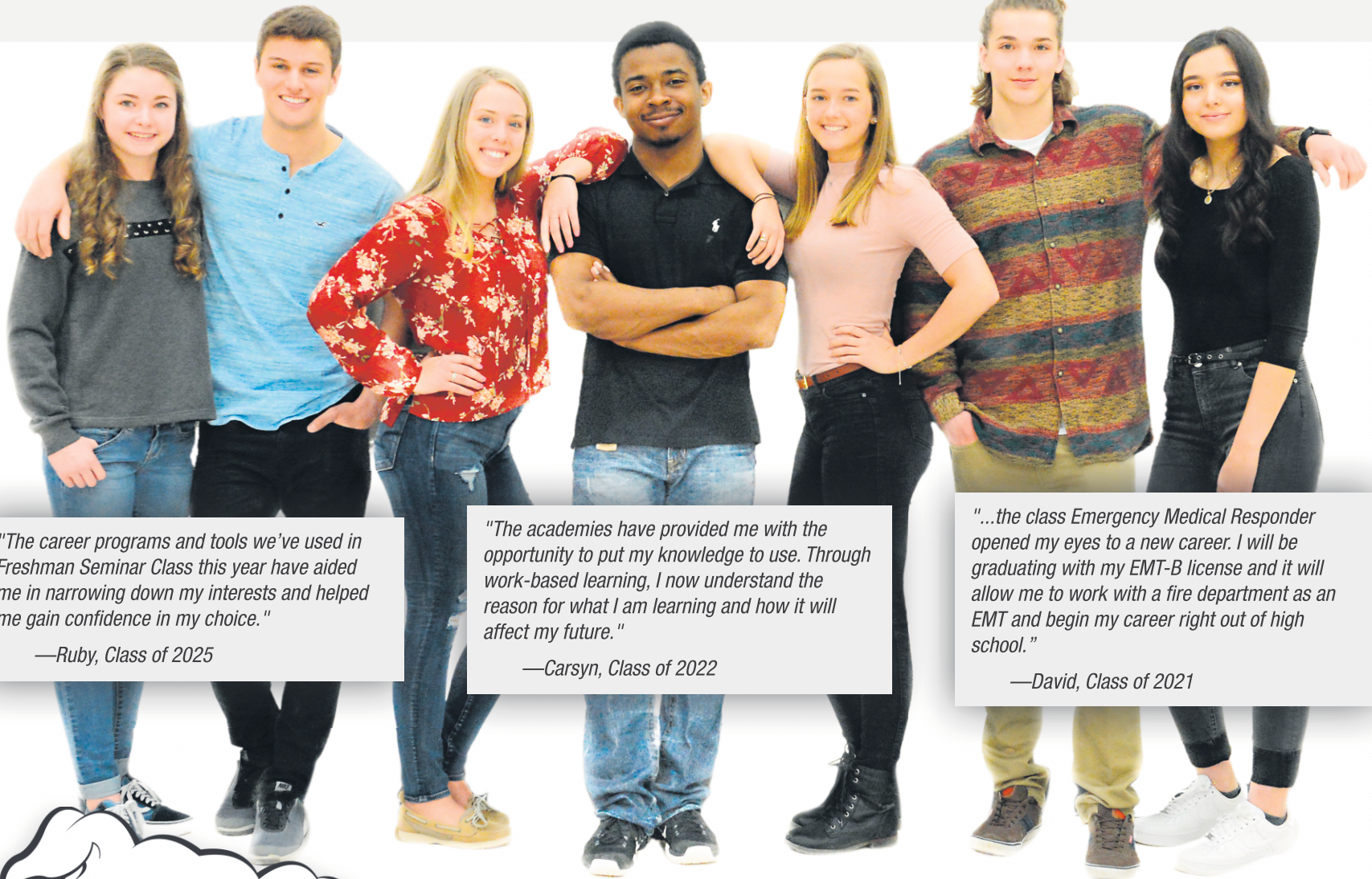
## 7. What alternatives are there?

Bowdoin College, which led the way by making admission tests optional starting in 1969, considers what courses were available at an applicant's high school, whether the student chose the most or least challenging and how the person performed relative to peers. James Nondorf, vice president for enrollment at the University of Chicago, said students can show their strengths in competitions such as chess, debate or math. (About 68% of applicants to Chicago chose to apply with test scores this year, down from 75% in 2021.) "I love entrepreneurship competitions, hack-a-thons, coding competitions," Nondorf said. "In some ways it's better than testing. It showcases a particular skill as opposed to testing, where you're seeing a whole set of things measured."





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SCHOOLS**



*"The career programs and tools we've used in Freshman Seminar Class this year have aided me in narrowing down my interests and helped me gain confidence in my choice."*

*—Ruby, Class of 2025*

*"The academies have provided me with the opportunity to put my knowledge to use. Through work-based learning, I now understand the reason for what I am learning and how it will affect my future."*

*—Carsyn, Class of 2022*

*"...the class Emergency Medical Responder opened my eyes to a new career. I will be graduating with my EMT-B license and it will allow me to work with a fire department as an EMT and begin my career right out of high school."*

*—David, Class of 2021*



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## PARENTING

# Parents can help kids struggling with social media

Social media is a big part of young people's lives. Psychology Today reports that social media use is now the most common activity children and teenagers engage in, with the majority of users accessing social media platforms several times each day through their personal cell phones.

Social media has its benefits, and being able to keep in touch with friends and family remotely was one of the saving graces in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic when people were isolating in their homes. But there's a dark side to social media as well. Recently leaked documents from Meta, the company that oversees social media giants Facebook and Instagram, suggest the company has known for

several years that its Instagram app is contributing to body image issues and other mental health problems for teens, particularly females. Social media platforms use algorithms to enhance users' engagement. Feeds may be driven toward polarizing topics or those that have the most shock value, further leading teens down a negative path.

The current tween and teen generation is faced with constant information being delivered right to their handheld devices. Children may not be developmentally ready for the immediate gratification that social media provides nor the constant onslaught of content. As a result, teens increasingly are becoming more irrita-



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

There are steps parents can take to help tweens and teens who may be struggling and need assistance managing social media.

ble, having trouble sleeping and are spending more time alone as a result of phone usage.

The Harvard Graduate School of Education says recent studies have

noted a significant uptick in depression and suicidal thoughts over the past several years for teens, especially those who spend multiple hours a day using screens.

There are steps parents can take to help tweens and teens who may be struggling and need assistance managing social media.

- **Set real limits.** The Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health suggests that until meaningful government oversight is in place to police social media platforms, parents will have to set their own parameters for use. Putting phones down at meal times, turning off alerts close to bedtime, and making certain days "a rest from technology" can help.

- **Block upsetting content.** It's a parent's job to be a parent, not a best friend. Giving in to requests to engage with certain social platforms, even when they do not align with

one's beliefs or values, can be harmful. Set limits on which platforms children are allowed to use.

- **Regularly monitor kids' usage.** Parents should look through their kids' phones and accounts on a regular basis to see which sites are being visited and how kids are engaging with others. If social media is affecting a child's mental health, have him or her take a break or delete the account.

Social media is ever-present in kids' lives. Parents and other caregivers have to find a way to assist struggling tweens and teens with social media so it does not become a detriment to their overall health.

*Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection*

## STUDY STRATEGIES

## How to help kids with math

Many parents recall struggling with math at one point or another in their academic careers. According to PBS, little is known about the neurobiological or environmental causes of math disabilities. Many experts attribute them to various deficits in a handful of skill types, including difficulties connecting the relationship between numbers and the quantities they represent and an incomplete understanding of the language of math.

Determining what's behind a student's struggles with math may require a collective effort on the part of parents and educators. Parents also may need to make a concerted effort to help their children with math at home, and they can approach that in various

ways.

- **Learn the ways modern teachers teach math.** It may not take long before parents recognize that math is now taught differently than it likely was when they were still students. Beginning in 2010, the Common Core State Standards Initiative attempted to teach math in a new way. Parents of students who are struggling with math can contact their children's teachers to learn the methods they're using in the classroom. Ask for pointers on presenting the material at home and do your best to grasp the new approach.

- **Utilize kids' interests** to relay mathematical concepts. Kids may find material more relatable and easier to understand if parents incorporate their interests

into lessons. For example, parents can use sports to reinforce concepts kids are being taught in the classroom. If a child's favorite football team is winning by 21 points, parents can ask children to determine how many touchdowns the opponent will need to score to tie the game. Young readers can be given books that help children build fundamental math skills like counting, addition and subtraction. Incorporating kids' hobbies into home math lessons is a great way to build their enthusiasm for math.

- **Speak with teachers.** Ask teachers for their advice on relating concepts at home. Teachers may be limited in regard to how they can teach math in the classroom, but they might



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Parents can try various strategies to help their kids grasp mathematical concepts more fully.

be able to offer some tips to make materials more relatable at home.

- **Work with a tutor.** Parents who are struggling to grasp the new ways math is taught can easily become frustrated, and that frustration could rub off on kids. Before things reach

that point, parents can reach out to tutors. Some schools provide tutoring programs, while others may recommend local tutors. Fellow parents also can be great resources and may be able to recommend tutors who have produced successful results for their

children in the past.

Struggles with math are not uncommon. Parents can try various strategies to help their kids grasp mathematical concepts more fully.

*Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection*





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## COLLEGE PREP

# Guide to preparing for college admissions

Junior year is a pivotal time in the lives of high school students. Junior year marks a transition to upper classmen, and students begin to ponder their post-high school academic careers around this time as well. The college preparatory process can seem daunting, particularly if a student does not have a sibling who recently went through the steps and can offer advice. Well-meaning parents may want to share their own experiences, but much has changed since parents were looking ahead to their own college experiences. That doesn't mean parents can't offer important assistance, particularly when they learn the ropes of today's college preparatory process.

## Speak with a guidance counselor to plan courses

Parents and students can meet collectively with a guidance counselor to talk about goals and coursework. Many high schools offer Advanced Placement classes or dual enrollment courses that enable students to earn college credit.

## Discuss extracurricular activities

Colleges and universities do not just look at grade and test scores; they consider the entire applicant. Therefore, high schoolers should dabble in various clubs, organizations and sports to make them more appealing to admissions departments.

## Enroll in a test preparation course

Though a growing number of American colleges

and universities have abandoned ACT and SAT scores as part of their admissions process, many schools still require those scores. Students can benefit from taking test prep classes either in school or through outside tutoring businesses. Learning strategies for the tests as well as seeing sample questions can remove some of the anxiety associated with the tests.

## Visit schools and attend college fairs

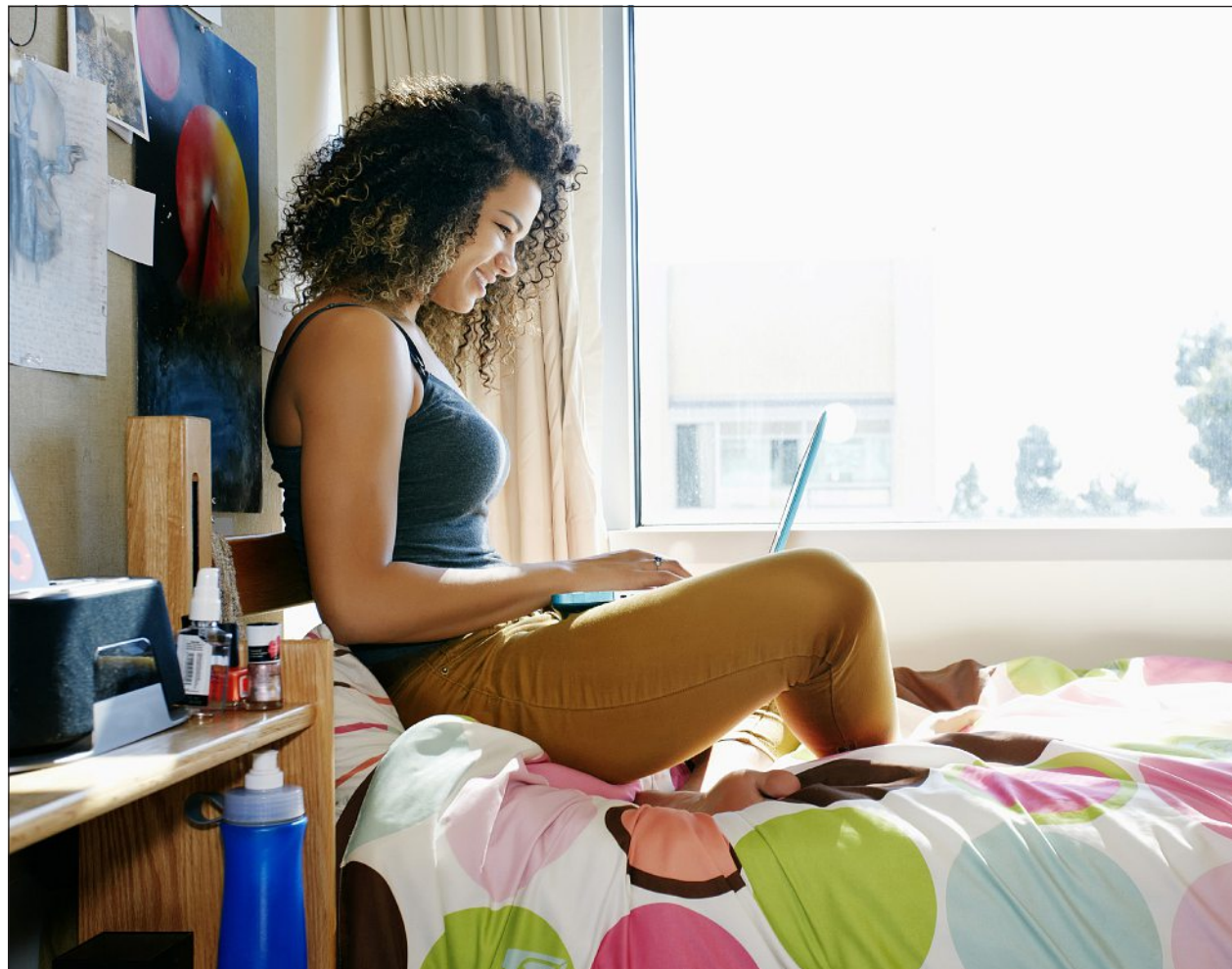
Parents and students should make appointments to visit several college campuses that offer courses students are interested in. Getting one's name in admissions departments' databases also opens up students to emails about upcoming events and application deadlines.

## Learn about The Common Application

The Princeton Review says most schools will use The Common Application as part of the admissions process. This enables students to enter all of their information and apply to multiple schools using the same account. However, schools will typically have different supplemental essay topics or test score requirements. Essays typically are required to be around 650 words.

## Get financial paperwork in order

Applying to college and applying for financial aid (which every student should do regardless of income) are two separate processes. In the United States, students will start with the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. The FAFSA will



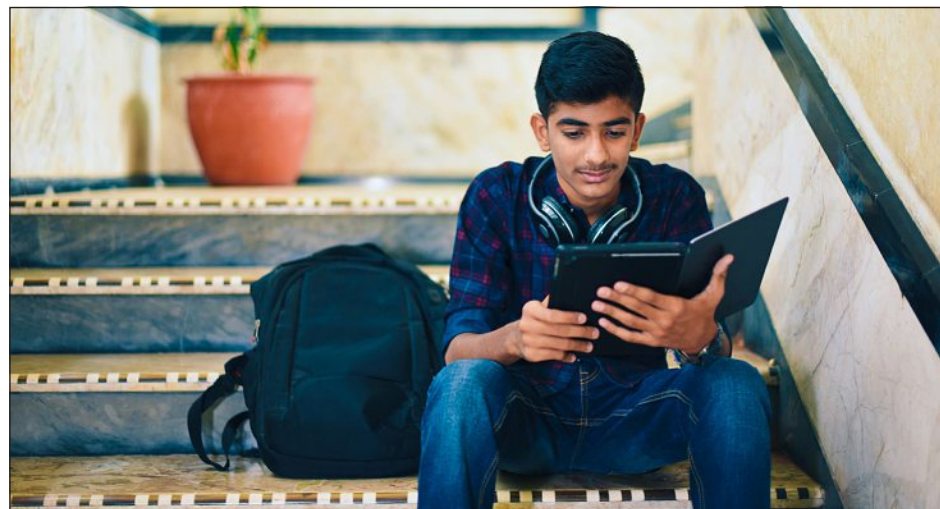
PHOTOS COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

The road to college may seem confusing, but a few simple strategies can make it easier to navigate.

help determine eligibility for grants, scholarships, federal work-study, and student loans. The FAFSA requires information taken from federal income tax statements. Parents can help guide their students further by following up on school transcripts, teacher recommendations and providing application cost fees, which vary from \$50 to \$100 per school.

The road to college may seem confusing, but a few simple strategies can make it easier to navigate.

*Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection*



Applying to college and applying for financial aid (which every student should do regardless of income) are two separate processes.





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Parents/Caregivers –

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years old by September 1, 2022,\*  
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to complete Kindergarten Registration forms.  
This is an IMPORTANT time for your child's learning.

\*According to Michigan law, if a child residing in a district is not five years of age on or before September 1, 2022, but will turn five years of age not later than December 1, 2022, the parent may contact the school district to obtain a possible Waiver for their child to enter Kindergarten this year.



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## PRIVATE EDUCATION

# Catholic schools are popular options for education

Education is a personal decision for every family. Families have many education options to choose from, and that includes private institutions.

When considering private education, families may consider Catholic schools. The family and parenting resource Verywell Family indicates that Catholic schools have the highest enrollments and the greatest number of schools in operation of all private schools in America.

The first Catholic parochial school opened in Philadelphia in 1783 and was called St. Mary's School. Interest in Catholic education soon started to grow, especially during the mid-19th century, when the United States welcomed an influx of Catholic immigrants. By 1920, there were around 1,500 Catholic schools in the United States, reaching peak enrollment and total number of schools in the 1960s.

Catholic schools still present a viable education option for students in the 21st century. Consider these points of interest about Catholic education.

- The NCEA says academic excellence is a hallmark of Catholic education, but it is directed in a way to foster the growth of the whole person — mind, body and spirit.

- Service is fundamental to Catholic education and is a core teaching of the Catholic faith. Students enrolled in a Catholic school can expect to participate in service projects.

- Many people are drawn to Catholic schools because of the smaller, more intimate campuses and class sizes. NCEA indicates the average student/teacher ratio in Catholic schools is 13:1.

- Statistics for the 2018-



PHOTOS COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Catholic schools have the highest enrollments and the greatest number of schools in operation of all private schools in America, according to VeryWell Family.

2019 school year indicated there were 6,289 Catholic schools operating across the country.

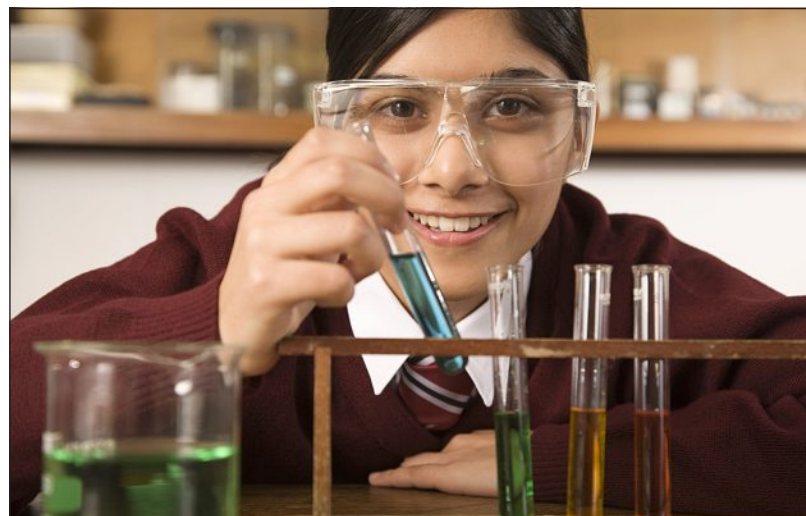
- Catholic schools enjoy diverse populations and have a history of welcoming and supporting lower-income students. The NCEA says the Hispanic/Latino population accounted for 20.7% of Catholic school populations in 2017.

- While many of the students enrolled in Catholic parochial schools are practicing Catholics, it is not necessary to be Catholic, or even Christian, to

attend.

Catholic schools require a significant financial commitment. Niche, the school comparison and rating company, and the NCEA indicate the average cost of Catholic elementary schools in the U.S. is \$4,400 per year, while Catholic high schools cost around \$9,840 annually. However, many families feel the cost is well worth it because of the education students receive at Catholic schools.

*Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection*



While many of the students enrolled in Catholic parochial schools are practicing Catholics, it is not necessary to be Catholic, or even Christian, to attend.





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## COMMUNITY

# How to help kids find suitable volunteering opportunities

Volunteering is a great way for people to give back to their communities. Many people give back out of a desire to help others, but those same individuals may acknowledge that volunteering benefits volunteers most of all.

Various studies examining the benefits of volunteering on volunteers have been conducted in recent years. Seniors and retirees who volunteer often cite the sense of purpose that giving back provides. But it's not just adults who benefit from volunteering. In fact, a report from the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension noted that volunteerism promotes positive citizenship among youth, contributes to youths' identity development and increases their self-esteem. The authors of the report also note that volunteering helps youth develop empathy for others.

Parents who want their children to reap the rewards of volunteering can try various strategies to help youngsters find an opportunity to lend a hand.

- Utilize the internet. The internet is a great resource for aspiring volunteers. VolunteerMatch.org partners with more than 130,000 nonprofit organizations to help them find the volunteers they rely on to meet their missions. Volunteering opportunities listed on VolunteerMatch are broken into categories such as Animals, Arts & Culture and even Children & Youth, making this an ideal place for aspiring do-gooders to start their volunteering journey.

- Speak with school officials. A child's school is another great place to discover volunteering organi-



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Volunteering benefits young people in myriad ways, especially when kids find an opportunity they can be passionate about.

zations. Extracurricular activities like school-sponsored clubs may organize volunteering excursions throughout the school year. Educators, including school principals, teachers and guidance counselors, also can help parents find the right volunteering op-

portunities for their children.

- Speak with local church officials. Like schools, local churches often sponsor youth-based volunteering activities. Many churches encourage all youths to join in their efforts, including those

who are not members of their congregations.

- Speak with children. Parents can encourage youngsters to offer their input in regard to volunteering. Some youngsters may already have strong ideas on the types of volunteering activities that

interest them. For example, avid surfers and nature enthusiasts may want to volunteer with their local parks system to help keep beaches and parks clean. The more enthusiastic children are about a volunteering opportunity, the more likely they are to

stick with it for the long haul.

Volunteering benefits young people in myriad ways, especially when kids find an opportunity they can be passionate about.

*Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection*





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## OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

# How being bilingual benefits kids

Bilingualism has long been advantageous to adults who like to travel. An ability to speak a foreign language fluently can ease travelers' concerns when visiting a new country, and it also can help professionals advance their careers and expand their networks. But the benefits of bilingualism aren't exclusive to adults.

According to Waterford.org, a 501(c)(3) organization that seeks to blend aspects of learning science, mentoring relationships and innovative technology to help learners, bilingualism benefits students in myriad ways.

▪ Bilingualism is advantageous to emergent readers. Waterford.org reports that bilingualism has long suffered from a misconception that knowing two languages makes learning to read difficult. However, a 2012 article in *Cerebrum Magazine* noted that bilingual students develop metalinguistic skills at an earlier age than most other children. Metalinguistics is the understanding of the structure of a language on both a verbal and written level. Waterford.org notes that linguists believe bilingual kids' exposure to multiple languages at a young age sharpens their ability to pick up on word structure, thus helping them develop the tools necessary to learn to read faster than their monolingual peers.

▪ Bilingualism improves children's vocabulary. A 2014 study published in the *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology* found that bilingual children have a higher vocabulary range

than monolingual children. Because of that heightened familiarity with words, spelling and learning the alphabet comes more naturally to bilingual youngsters.

▪ Bilingualism may improve attention spans and working memories. A 2010 review published in the journal *Review of Educational Research* found that bilingual students usually have stronger working memories and attention spans than monolingual students. Working memory is an executive function of the brain that holds new information in place so the brain can work with it and ultimately connect it with other information. A strong working memory is a significant advantage for students, as is a longer attention span.

▪ Bilingualism affects students' self-discipline and perseverance. Self-discipline and an ability to persevere can benefit students as they learn to study and work to understand potentially complex subjects. A 2011 study published in the *Canadian Journal of Experimental Psychology* found that bilingual students outperformed their monolingual counterparts on tasks that required self-discipline, perseverance and other skills.

Long thought to adversely affect young students learning to read, bilingualism has since been shown to do just the opposite. That's just one of the many ways in which fluency in two or more languages benefits students.

*Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection*



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Long thought to adversely affect young students learning to read, bilingualism has since been shown to do just the opposite.



The benefits of bilingualism aren't exclusive to adults.





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## COLLEGE PREP

# Explore these savings strategies

Enrolling in a trade school or college is widely considered the next step after a student graduates from high school. College is especially popular, as the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that 62.7% of high school graduates went on to colleges and universities in 2020.

Finding ways to pay for higher education has long been a goal for students and their families. PrepScholar, a college testing preparation resource, calculates that, by 2033, students can expect to pay around \$237,000 at in-state public universities and \$464,000 at private colleges or universities for four-year degrees. That high cost is why so many families take proactive steps to set aside funds for college soon after their children are born. No matter the situation, taking the steps to plan and save helps to make schooling more affordable.

## 529 college savings plan

A 529 is a specialized savings account for college and university costs. Most plans can be opened by a U.S. citizen or resident alien age 18 and older. The individual opening the account can be a parent, grandparent, cousin, or even a friend. The student is the beneficiary of the account. Four-year schools, community colleges and vocational/trade schools accept 529 accounts as payment sources. The only requirement is that the school must participate in the U.S. Department of Education student financial aid programs.

## Education savings account, or Education IRA

The financial experts at Ramsey Solutions say an

ESA works like a Roth IRA but it is designed specifically for education expenses. Individuals can invest up to \$2,000 (after tax) per year, per child. The account grows tax-free. The rate of growth varies based on investments in the account. Ramsey estimates that at an average return rate of 12% on a \$36,000 investment (\$2,000 per year for 18 years) would grow to around \$126,000 by the time the child starts college. An ESA also can be used to pay for K-12 private school tuition, school supplies, tutoring, or textbooks. It also can be transferred to a sibling if the money is not needed for a particular student.

## UTMA/UGMA plan

This plan is different from ESAs and 529s because it is not specifically designed for college savings. The Uniform Transfer/Gift to Minors Act is in the child's name but is controlled by a guardian until the child reaches age 18 or 21. This mutual fund account can be used to save for college with reduced taxes, or funds can be used for other expenses, such as a car or housing. Advanced placement classes AP classes allow high school students to take college-level courses that can be converted into college credits. Each AP class reduces the need to pay for a class in college. This can add up to some significant savings. In addition, performing well in AP classes may make students more attractive to colleges and universities, helping students to earn academic scholarships.

Saving for college can start early and there are various vehicles for families to explore.

*Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection*

## OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Check out these five spring break ideas that will keep young minds active and engaged, for a smooth transition back to the classroom.

## Tips to keep young minds active over spring break

No matter the length of a vacation, students often have some catching up to do upon their return to school. However, it doesn't have to be this way. Check out these five spring break ideas that will keep young minds active and engaged, for a smooth transition back to the classroom.

1. Host a read-a-thon. Get inspired by the reading challenges hosted by schools and libraries during the long summer break and host a mini event this spring. Invite your child and their friends to participate. You might even want to add a philanthropic element — have participants get sponsored by friends and family to earn money based on the amount of reading they do. (Because

of the short duration of the event, you may choose to have pledges be based on the number of pages or chapters a student reads, instead of entire books.) Donate the money raised to a local charity.

2. Pick up a new instrument. Spring break can be a great time to immerse oneself in a new instrument. To build a solid musical foundation fast, consider a keyboard designed with beginners in mind. For example, the compact and portable, 61-key Casio-tone CT-S200 allows students to make music from anywhere during their break, and has an array of useful features: a metronome to help with lessons, app connectivity to make learning fun, and built-in

speakers for cranking up the tunes.

3. Get outdoors. What do physical activity and time spent outdoors have in common? They're both beneficial for cognition and brain health. Take advantage of the warm spring weather to hit up a local park, trail or nature center and get moving as a family.

4. Make math a game. Use the time away from school to show kids that math is not just for the classroom. From puzzles to patterns to logic challenges, recreational mathematics can reintroduce an often dry subject to students in a way that is fun. Equip your child with a calculator, which can be used to play a variety of

games. The basic, scientific and graphing calculators from Casio are easy to use and can be part of the fun.

5. Get creative. Whether it's writing poems, painting a portrait or putting on a play, making art can boost self-esteem while offering kids an outlet for self-expression. It's also a fun way to keep the mind active during the break.

Not only is a week off from school the perfect time to explore interests, take up new hobbies and to be creative, engaging in these activities can help make the transition back to school after spring break easier.

*Story courtesy of StatePoint Media*



## OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

# Fun ways to introduce physics to kids

When many of us think of physics, we think of high-level science courses taught in high school and college. The truth is that not only can you teach your child the basic principles of this branch of science at a young age, but doing so can help them understand the world around them, while laying the groundwork for a continued interest in STEAM learning.

## At home

There are many ways to demonstrate basic principles of physics using household objects. However, toys designed for this purpose can be good launching pad for your quest for knowledge.

The new line of marble playsets from VTech, Marble Rush, allows kids to build thrilling marble courses, send marbles into motion and compete in exciting challenges with lights and sounds. Added bonus? You'll be introducing engineering principles at the same time! Each Marble Rush set contains color-coded blocks and easy-to-follow building instructions for kids to create a variety of beginner to advanced courses, or create their own course with endless possibilities. The Marble Rush Ultimate Set and Marble Rush Launchpad Set can also be combined to create an extreme playset. Plus, the Marble Rush playsets have received the Toy Association's STEAM Toy Accreditation seal of approval, meeting experts' criteria for a good STEAM toy.

Families can find course design instructions, along with super cool challenges that demonstrate specific physics concepts like force and friction, on the VTech website. For more information, visit [vtechkids.com/marblerrush](http://vtechkids.com/marblerrush).

## On the go

Physics truly is all around us, which means there are always opportunities to introduce concepts while on-the-go. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- At a sporting event. Talk about how the ball flies through the air because of the force the athlete applied to it. Discuss how gravity is at the same time, pulling the ball down toward Earth, and how friction from the air around the ball applies a force that slows it down.

- In the car. The car is the perfect place to demonstrate the Doppler Effect and learn about sound. The next time you drive past music, a car alarm or other source of noise, ask your child to observe the way that it sounds as you get closer to it and then how it sounds as you move away from it again. Explain that the noise itself hasn't changed, but your perception of it has because sound waves are moving differently from the point of view of the observer — you.

- On a walk. Brr...it's cold outside! The next time you're on a walk, talk about how even the seasons can be explained by physics. The part of Earth where you live is tilted away from the sun right now, which means that sunlight is more indirect. This is also why the days are shorter this time of year!

It's never too early to bring science to life for kids. There are not only real-world examples of physics at play to discover, but new toys can make learning about these concepts a fun, exciting adventure.

*Story courtesy of StatePoint Media*



PHOTOS COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

It's never too early to bring science to life for kids.



The car is the perfect place to demonstrate the Doppler Effect and learn about sound.



## OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

# Tools and strategies to help your student learn from anywhere

With school districts in flux as the pandemic continues to evolve, students, parents and teachers have had to roll with the punches in order to adapt. Here are three ways to ensure your student thrives during this unusual school year.

1. Supplement coursework. It has always been important to supplement classroom learning at home, and that's particularly true right now. With large percentages of teachers out sick, and schools having to combine classes in order to keep students supervised, classroom learning has suffered. Digital resources however, such as Scholastic Learning at Home, offer activities, book clubs, homework help and more to help ensure younger students don't miss out on the fundamental literacy skills they will need to build on their future success. To keep older students engaged, check out TEDEd, which offers thought-provoking content on a range of topics, as well as resources for parents and teachers.

2. Provide top-tier educational resources. Be sure your student has the proper tools needed to grasp the material in their most challenging classes, whether or not their teacher is in the



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Here are three ways to ensure your student thrives during this unusual school year.

room with them. For higher level math and science classes, that means having a user-friendly graphing calculator that brings the subject to life. For example, Casio's fx-9750GIII

leverages a new natural display feature, which allows for fractions, roots and other functions to appear on the screen as they are written in the textbook. This makes for a seamless

learning experience. Students can also turn to online resources, such as ClassPad.net. This all-in-one, web-based mathematics creation and discovery resource is geared for K-12

and beyond and is an engaging tool for all students, including those learning remotely, those being homeschooled, or those who may need a little extra practice outside the classroom. Of-

fering innovative features like unlimited customizable workspaces and the ability to create authentic mathematical text and easily adjust geometric objects, measurements and angles, ClassPad.net is free to all students and teachers.

3. Go the extra mile. Some school districts are choosing to cancel extra-curricular activities that involve high-risk activities such as band, choir and certain team sports. From soccer drills to scales, you can encourage your child to continue to excel in these activities. Help them set up a space where they can effectively practice their skills at home, in the backyard or in a local park. When these programs return, your student won't miss a beat. Even if your child is not enrolled in a team sport, try to fill in gaps for missed P.E. classes by encouraging regular physical activity.

During a school year unlike any other, smart strategies and educational tools can help students meet the challenges associated with missed activities, disrupted lesson plans and other setbacks associated with the ongoing pandemic.

*Story courtesy of StatePoint Media*

## TECHNOLOGY

## How to ensure your child's screen time is educational and meaningful

Did you know that your child's screen time can be educational, thought-provoking and meaningful? Here's how to ensure that happens:

- Make educational screen time fun. The best learning apps for kids these days don't just cover traditional school subjects, they also add creativity, problem-solving and social-emo-

tional skills into the mix. Such tools will help lay the groundwork for a lifelong love of learning. Seek out educational games and content presented in fun and engaging ways.

- Pay attention. For greater peace of mind, consider leveraging tools and features that offer insights into the activities your child is engaging in online. For

example, educational apps might feature a parent dashboard, which can allow you to check-in and track your child's progress with the program's curriculum.

- Stick with the program. The most versatile educational tech tools are ones that grow with your child's skills and interests and offer an expansive library of content so kids never get

bored. For example, LeapFrog Academy, an interactive learning program designed by educators for children 3-6 years old, features over 2,000 engaging games, eBooks, activities and more. Kids can earn certificates and rewards for their achievements. Plus, the app can be used on a variety of devices, including computers, tablets and

smartphones, and kids can even save their favorite activities to play without Wi-Fi. To start a free trial and learn more about subscription plans, visit [www.leapfrogacademy.com](http://www.leapfrogacademy.com).

- Set a good example. Your kids are paying attention to your screen time use. If you want your child's screen time to be meaningful, yours should be too. Talk

to your child about healthy digital habits and then set a good example.

One thing is certain, kids absolutely love their tech tools. The good news is that by seeking out the best tools, games and apps, screen time can actually add value to their life.

*Story courtesy of StatePoint Media*





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## MENTAL HEALTH

# Beat burnout with these playful tips

For many, the additional isolation and never-ending uncertainty of the past couple years has led to mental fatigue and burnout. Experts say that no matter your age, turning to play instead of social media can help you feel more like yourself again.

“While it’s tempting to constantly reach for our devices to check social media during times of stress and loneliness, or even just when there’s down time, it’s a habit that a number of studies unfortunately link to anxiety and depression,” says Anna Yudina, senior director of marketing initiatives at The Toy Association, which spearheads The Genius of Play. “Research shows that play, on the other hand, reduces stress, boosts life satisfaction and empowers adults and kids alike to be creative thinkers.”

To combat burnout and mental fatigue, The Genius of Play is offering the following tips for reducing screen time and embracing playful hobbies instead:

- **Make time for play.** The habit-forming properties of social media are well-documented. However, you can commit to less screen time and more play time. In the case of families, parents can lead the way by example. Consider instituting policies that help strike a healthy balance. For example, make the dinner table a device-free zone, schedule device-free game nights and set time limits. Still struggling to set healthy limits for yourself or your children? Apps, such as Moment and Social Fever, are designed to help.

- **Get outside.** Fresh air is good for the mind, body and soul. From nature hikes, riding bikes and



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Through play, you can not only beat the blahs and develop important skills, you can also help your family form healthy habits.

- other outdoor adventures to backyard activities and obstacle courses, there are many ways for people of all ages to be playful outside. For kids, you can also try classic games like Kick the Can, and Capture the Flag. Social distancing? Try Shadow Tag. Played the same way as a traditional game of tag, players tag each other with their shadows instead of their hands.

- **Play indoors.** Feel-

ing cooped up? Promote screen-free playtime at home with classic board games and card games, STEAM projects, and with toys that build real-world skills and challenge participants to solve problems imaginatively. For example, construction toys offer something for everyone, whether they prefer following directions or building freely. There’s no right or wrong way to do it.

- **Make art.** From painting a still life to completing a project that’s a bit sillier, making art builds fine motor skills and problem-solving skills, enhances communication and self-expression, and promotes self-esteem and the motivation to succeed. Need some inspiration? Marshmallow Sculptures is a perfect project for kids ages 5 and up. Let your little Michelangelo connect tooth-

picks and marshmallows, revealing a one-of-a-kind work of art. Best of all, you can keep each sculpture, disassemble and start again, or even eat it!

- **Take time to relax.** Quiet time is vital for recharging one’s batteries. Build in time for your family to read, color, assemble puzzles, practice yoga or participate in other stress-relieving activities.

For more tips, advice

and the latest research from leaders in child development, education and play, visit [thegeniusofplay.org](http://thegeniusofplay.org).

Through play, you can not only beat the blahs and develop important skills, you can also help your family form healthy digital habits — a win-win for everyone.

*Story courtesy of StatePoint Media*





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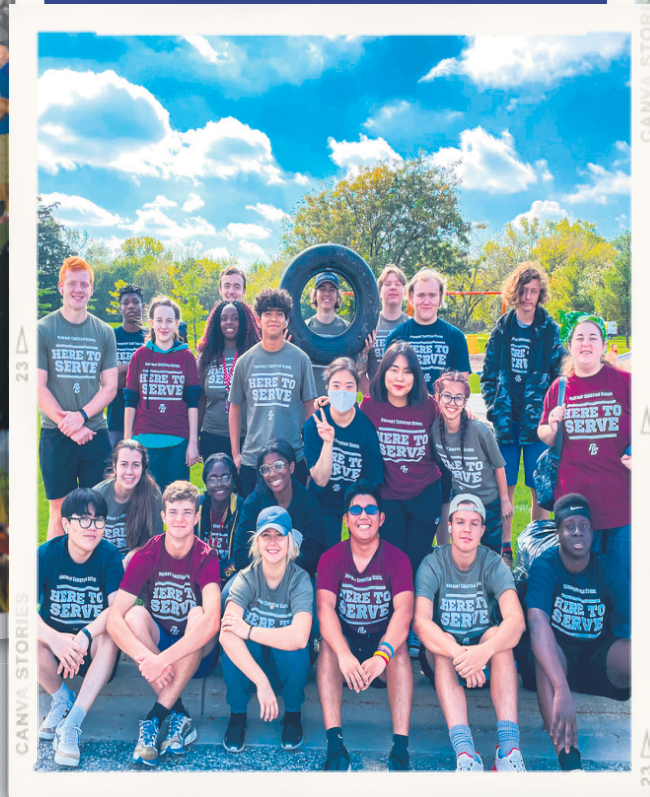
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