

# CHOICES in EDUCATION

## **PARENTING**

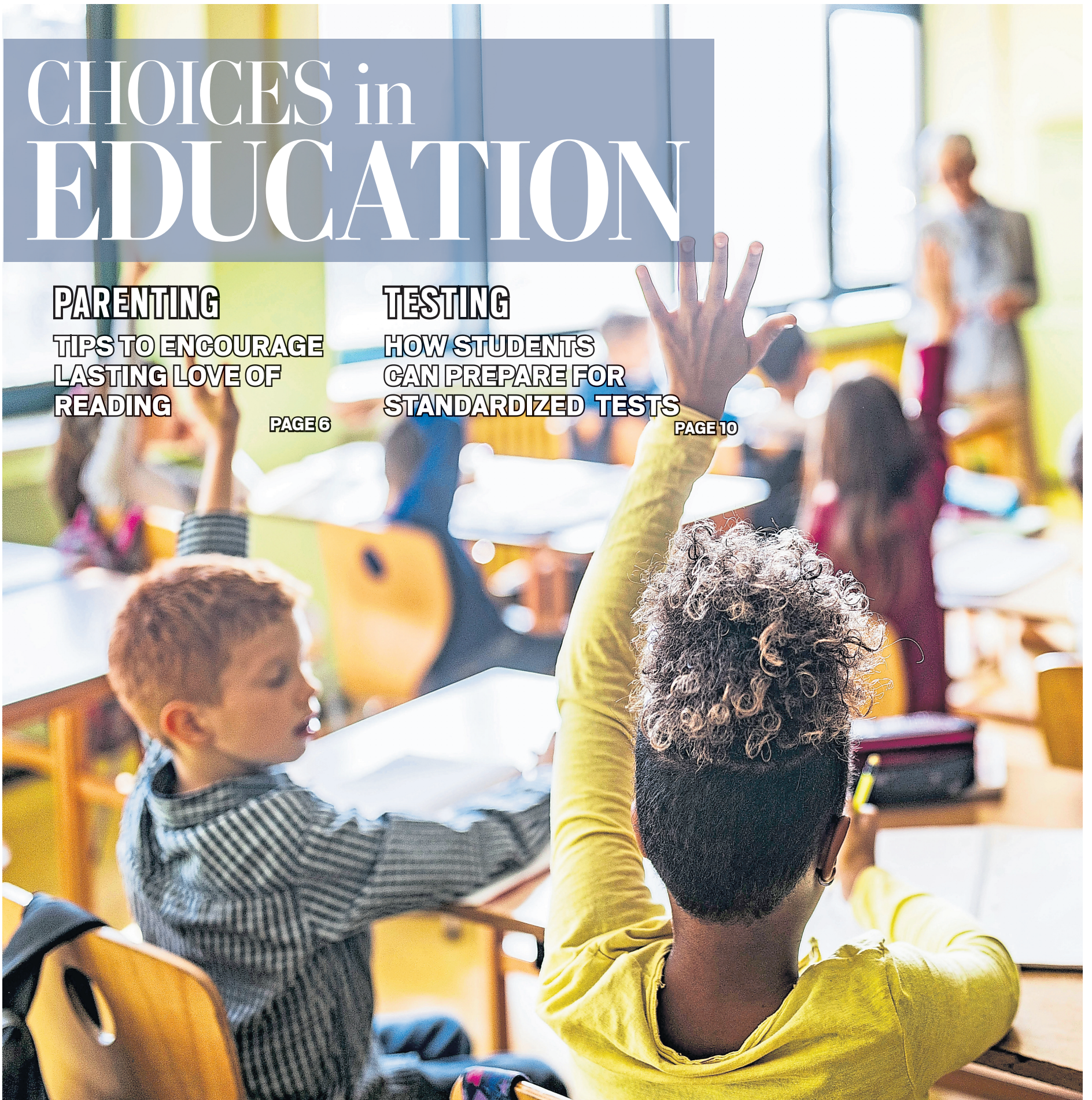
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## LIFE SKILLS

# Students can better manage their time with these tips

Many people have a lot of demands on their time. There are only so many hours in a day, which means that the sooner a person can develop strategies for managing his or her time efficiently and effectively, the more successful that person can be.

It can be especially important for students to explore ways to improve their time management skills early in their academic careers. Time management involves planning, and that includes allotting time for specific tasks. The following strategies can be useful for anyone looking to manage their time more effectively.

## Establish a daily schedule

Staying the course may require a guideline detailing how you will spend your time. A good part of the day may be taken up by classes and assignments, but focusing on the other parts of the day also is key. Set up a plan for how you will treat each day. Block off specific times for exercise, meals, school, study, and any other responsibilities you have. Time blocking is a format by which you go through the moments of the day. You can block out by the hour or any amount of time you need.

## Figure out where you're losing time

You need to know how you're currently spending your time before you can improve on time management strategies. Spend a few days jotting down a time log. This will help you determine if you're working efficiently or where you are losing time.

## Make time for breaks

Burnout can occur when you work yourself too hard. That makes breaks an important part of time management. Breaks allow for time to call loved ones, text with friends, meditate, or engage in other activities unrelated to school. According to sleep researcher Nathaniel Kleitman, people's minds naturally crave breaks after 90 minutes of intense work. You may need breaks at different intervals. Learn to



PHOTOS COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Time management involves planning, and that includes allotting time for specific tasks.

read your body's cues.

## Break projects down

Many students avoid projects they feel are huge tasks. Breaking down the larger job into smaller ones can help students stay focused and reward progress. For example, if you need to write a 50-page research paper, make the first task finding source material, the next citing quotes and studies, and then resolve to write a set number of pages per day.

## Schedule classes wisely

Some people are night owls

while others thrive in the morning. Set up schedules so you're in class when you are at your most productive; otherwise, you could lag and waste time. This may not be possible for high school students, but colleges allow for more flexibility in scheduling.

Time management is an important skill for students to develop. It will help in the classroom and later on when entering the workforce.

*Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection*



Time management is an important skill for students to develop. It will help in the classroom and later on when entering the workforce.

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## LIFE SKILLS

# New survey shows teaching practical life skills is essential in the classroom

Reading, writing, science and math are subjects that have been associated with classroom instruction since school was established. And all are relevant, important subjects to master in order to succeed in society. But according to a new survey of 2,000 parent respondents conducted by OnePoll on behalf of Kiddie Academy Educational Child Care, these subjects are not the only skills parents are looking to have their children learn in early childhood education.

An astounding 81% of parent respondents believe educators should spend time teaching things outside academics like soft skills and current events, with 60% wanting current events instruction to focus on cultural happenings like festivals and heritage celebrations.

This survey makes it clear that parents of today are focused on developing their children into well-rounded members of society beyond just traditional school subjects.

Sixty-two percent of parents in the survey responded that they prioritize their children learning soft skills like communication, critical thinking and problem solving before they're 8 years old, with 40% of parents saying that practical life skills are the most important thing for their children to learn at a young age. The majority of parent respondents said that core curriculum classes should not begin until the first grade.

"Parents who place their children in a preschool environment that focuses on



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Eighty one percent of parent respondents in a recent survey believe educators should spend time teaching things outside of academics like soft skills and current events.

character development give children a strong start," said Joy Turner, vice president of education for the Kiddie Academy brand. "Learning the ability to care about others, to communicate, and to understand how character affects the communities and world in which we live is important to early childhood education development."

The majority of parents who took the survey think that social and emotional development are absolutely necessary to learn at their child's school, with honesty ranked as the most important character trait to learn in early childhood. Therefore, parents are leaning on child care providers to bridge the gap between what parents are teaching at home and what children are learning in the class-

room.

So how can parents find child care that aligns with these priorities? By asking thorough questions when touring a facility, researching social media and websites affiliated with their early childhood education options and paying close attention to the interactions they have with a provider during a tour or interview.

"Parents have many choices to make when it comes to sending their children to an early learning program," said Turner. "Making sure you're on the same page with the facility where your children spend so much time is key to developing them into the people we hope they become."

Story courtesy of  
Brandpoint

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## PARENTING

# 5 tips for parents to encourage a lasting love of reading



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Parents can make reading a fun learning experience by reinforcing stories through related activities.

Reading opens the door to a lifelong love of learning, imagination and adventure. When parents instill a love of reading in their children from an early age, it increases their oral language skills and vocabulary knowledge, which helps to build a solid foundation for later reading ability.

According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress' recent 2022 Nation's Report Card, reading scores for students across the country are down following years of disrupted learning during the pandemic. Research indicates early literacy skills in the critical years from birth to age five are predictive of a child's literacy skills through fifth grade and beyond.

Focusing on literacy during early childhood can help provide children with the skills needed to be a successful reader throughout their life. In addition, focusing on key early literacy skills during the preschool years can help parents and teachers identify potential indicators of learning challenges so early intervention can be provided. Beyond developing early language and literacy skills, reading may also increase a child's ability to understand the

emotions of others — a critical life skill that leads to empathy and compassion.

Dr. Maria Shaheen, senior director of early childhood education at Primrose Schools, The Leader in Early Education and Care, provides five tips to help parents encourage a lasting love of reading in their children during National Reading Month and all year long:

**1.** Introduce language as early as possible — even before birth. Oral language is the foundation of all other early literacy skills and helps build a child's vocabulary. Speaking and reading to your baby during pregnancy establishes voice recognition and promotes cognitive development. The more words parents introduce their child to, the better. Parents should talk about the meanings of words and use them in everyday conversation to ensure children understand them.

**2.** Make reading a regular part of bedtime routine. Reading books should be a favorite bedtime activity. With daily "tuck-in" stories and snuggling together

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Beyond developing early language and literacy skills, reading may also increase a child's ability to understand the emotions of others — a critical life skill that leads to empathy and compassion.

at bedtime, infants and young children begin to associate reading with comfort, warmth and security. During the first year of life, sturdy board books with bright illustrations are easiest to handle and invite participation. Books with familiar subjects, such as babies and animals, resonate since babies respond to faces and eyes before other stimuli.

**3**. Offer a wide variety of stories. This can include nursery rhymes, poetry, nonfiction and fiction from many genres, as well as books that celebrate a wide range of cultures and diverse characters. Parents can ask lots of questions, act silly and try out different character voices to make reading dramatic and engaging. Vivid illustrations, along with rhyming and repetitive text, will encourage lively dialogue.

**4**. Help children discover the magic of books for themselves. Books can help young children understand their own feelings when characters face similar life events, so parents should pick topics their children may be curious about. In the first five years of life, children form their self-identity, which makes it important that they see themselves reflected in the world around them, including the books at home and in their classrooms. One example found

in Primrose classrooms is, "I'm Like You, You're Like Me: A Book About Understanding and Appreciating Each Other" by Cindy Gainer.

**5**. Make reading a fun learning experience. Parents can reinforce stories through related activities. Preschool children can create books with their own stories about things they do with their families. Parents can encourage their children to write a card to a family member or special friend and have them read it aloud. Many children memorize their favorite texts and pretend to read, which is a wonderful sign that they are identifying their favorite books and building confidence. Parents can also play silly word games that help children play with sounds, such as rhyming games or tongue twisters.

"Reading now pays dividends later. Starting a reading routine throughout daily life models for children the importance of reading as a way to gain information and valuable life skills, complete everyday activities, explore new worlds, encourage imagination and have fun," Dr. Shaheen says.

To learn more about how parents can nurture a love of reading for their children, visit [PrimroseSchools.com](http://PrimroseSchools.com).

*Story courtesy of Brandpoint*



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## PARENTING

## Should you let your child quit music lessons?

By Meghan Leahy

*Special to The Washington Post*

**Q**: My 10-year-old started music lessons as a toddler and has been playing the piano for the past few years. She has (or, rather, was taught to have) a good ear for music. We expect 20 minutes of practice, six days per week, with one 30-minute lesson.

Every practice is a struggle; she will go out of her way to avoid doing it. We've seen tears, screams, sudden emergencies and a magical engrossment in something she believes I find more important than practice. (She's smart, so think picking up a college chemistry book.)

Although I would be fine with her quitting piano, I feel as if it's important to be developing/exploring skills outside of school. She's welcome to switch instru-

ments or move to another hobby, but she has to prove she will stick with it before quitting piano (only for a month or so).

She has no homework (her school is project-based), and I'm trying to avoid the hours of screen time every day after school. I don't know what to do. Am I being too hard on her? A few chores per week and a short daily piano practice don't seem like the end of the world, but maybe I'm not seeing the whole picture?

**A**: I can virtually guarantee that almost every parent who is reading this is nodding along. Playing piano, participating in soccer, drawing, swimming, you name it: Many children reach a point where what they started doing as toddlers no longer brings them joy. Serious avoidance, negotiations and tantrums ensue, creating total misery in the house and between the

parent and child. Not to mention the waste of money and time.

I'm going to sidestep discussing what you expect right now and whether it's reasonable (20 minutes a day, six days a week), because we have some bigger fish to fry. Let's take a look at the developmental norms of a 10-year-old girl. (I make this assumption based on your pronoun use.) A typical 10-year-old girl may be still pretty young (physically), or she may be getting ready to have her period and starting those hormones.

Although girls tend to reach puberty more quickly than boys, every girl is different, and this development brings a heightened awareness of her peers, privacy and autonomy. Your daughter is meant to have her own thoughts, opinions and wishes. We don't stop providing boundaries and rules for 10-year-olds, but we do recognize that it is their devel-

opmental work to find their own voice. To force, push and expect that our children won't change or will want to do what they've always done is not reasonable, nor is it the goal of parenting.

What are you to do? It is clear that your daughter is fairly miserable, and she is letting you know that piano is no longer her passion. I know many children who are reluctant to begin lessons, but once they start, they enjoy their time. This appears to not be the case with your daughter.

But before you quit piano altogether, I am wondering whether your daughter can choose a new practice schedule that works with her goals and her life. Have a meeting and truly listen to her needs, and see whether there is a compromise that can make both of you happy. If your daughter has become too miserable, suggest a "break" from the instrument, and choose a month to re-

visit how she feels about it. Maybe some time off will let some pressure off, and your daughter may return to it.

I understand the predicament of the hours after school being filled with screens and boredom. We could argue why our culture is so different from "when we were kids," but we largely don't live in a time when you just send the kids outside for three hours. Some neighborhoods still have children running around, heading to parks and playing, but most neighborhoods are fairly quiet. You want your daughter to choose another activity so she doesn't waste away, but she is at the age where she must have a say in some of the decisions here. Absolutely stick to your values around screens, but come to a compromise around what other activities can be considered, how often and for how long. Childhood is a time to try new things (what a privilege, really) and to discover what you like and what you don't. Childhood is not a time to perfect or narrowly adhere to one hobby unless the child chooses to do so.

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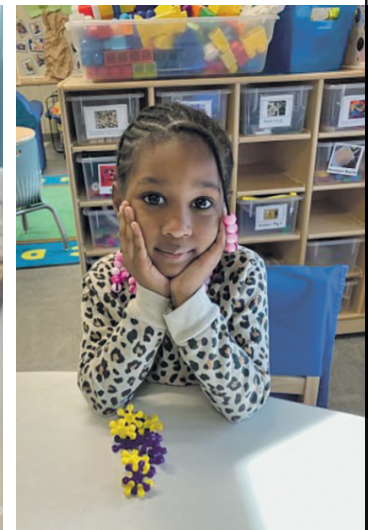
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## COLLEGE PREPAREDNESS

# How students can prepare for standardized tests

Standardized tests remain a significant part of the academic experience for millions of students at all grade levels. Though many colleges and universities no longer require the SAT or ACT for admission, experts note that many of those schools still value such tests and how applicants who choose to take them perform.

Students who want to take standardized tests can take various steps to ensure they do their best and make the decision to take the tests work to their advantage.

- Prepare as if you're taking the test early. It's never too early for high school students to begin thinking about college. Students who plan to take standardized tests like the SAT and ACT are often urged to do so in their junior year of high school. Such a timeline affords students ample time to retest if they feel they can improve their scores. Though sophomore year might seem early to start preparing for the SAT and ACT, it's the perfect time to do so for students who plan to take the test in the first half of their junior year. This gives them ample time to find a tutor or test preparation program so they can perform their best.

- Utilize preparation services. Standardized tests carry a lot of weight, even at schools that no longer require them, so professional test preparation services can be a good investment. Parents can work with their children to find a tutor or preparation program in advance of their scheduled testing date. Some programs are lengthier and more intensive than others, but families can identify which type of program can most benefit the student. Some students may just need a post-summer refresher, while others may benefit from a more intensive program.

- Look for free programs and resources. A student's school may offer a free test preparation program as testing season draws closer. In addition, books on preparing for tests may be available for free at your local library. In



PHOTOS COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Students who want to take standardized tests can take various steps to ensure they do their best.

the latter example, parents and students should confirm that any preparation guidebooks are up-to-date. Testing has changed significantly over the years, so students won't want to be looking over prep materials that no longer reflect modern tests.

- Take practice tests. Practice tests can be invaluable. Such tests can indicate where students are strong and any areas they should seek to improve. Students who have a tutor or are enrolled in a test prep program can go over their practice test results with their tutor or instructor to identify areas for improvement and strategies to perform better

when the tests count.

- Time your practice tests. Standardized tests like the SAT and ACT are timed. Students can prepare for that by taking timed practice tests. The more acclimated students become to testing situations, the better they're likely to perform.

Standardized tests can put pressure on students. One of the ways students can alleviate that pressure is to prepare for tests in advance so they're as comfortable as possible on the day of the test.



Books on preparing for tests may be available for free at your local library. However, parents and students should confirm that any preparation guidebooks are up-to-date.

*Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection*

## OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

# Extracurricular activities for non-athletes

High school sports garner significant attention in communities that want to support their student-athletes. But what about students who aren't inclined to compete on the field or in the gym? There are many more non-athletes than athletes, and the following are some extracurricular activities that might appeal to students who aren't interested in sports.

## Theater

School theater programs faced significant challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, when indoor gatherings were limited if not outright restricted and students were forced to adapt to remote learning. But since COVID-related restrictions were lifted, many theater

programs are back in full swing. In fact, the Educational Theatre Association™ notes that its programs were present in roughly 5,000 schools during the 2021-22 school year. Theater programs can expose kids to the performing arts but also teach youngsters who aren't interested in performing about backstage components, including set design and even script writing.

## Volunteering

Volunteering is another potential extracurricular activity high school students might want to consider. Volunteering can expose children to potential career paths and introduce them to people from all walks of life. The vast majority of nonprofit organiza-

tions welcome and need volunteers, so students should be able to find an organization with a mission that aligns with their values. Schools also may sponsor volunteer programs, and that can be a great way for students to engage with their school community.

## Clubs

High schools are home to clubs that cater to all sorts of interests. Foreign language clubs, gaming clubs, book clubs, and debate clubs are just some of the many non-sports-related clubs students can join to participate more fully in campus life.

## Physical activities

Just because kids aren't interested in traditional scholastic sports doesn't



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Foreign language clubs, gaming clubs, book clubs, and debate clubs are just some of the many non-sports-related clubs students can join to participate more fully in school life.

and other physical activities that are not affiliated with a school. Such options are great opportunities for kids to engage in physical activity and meet fellow fitness enthusiasts. One option kids may want to consider is a local recreational pickleball league. Pickleball has exploded in popularity in recent years and many communities now host competitive leagues for people of all ages.

Students who don't want to compete in scholastic sports can still find a wealth of extracurricular activities that align with their interests and even others that may stoke newfound passions.

mean they don't enjoy breaking a sweat or being part of a team. Local community programs may offer club skiing teams, rowing clubs, hiking clubs,

*Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection*



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## COLLEGE PREPAREDNESS

# How students can narrow their college lists

College requires a significant commitment of time and money. High school seniors are expected to have an idea of what they want to do with the rest of their lives and then find schools that can help them achieve their career goals.

By the time many high school students reach their junior year, colleges have undoubtedly already sent them brochures highlighting their programs. Applying to college is much simpler than it once was, thanks in part to various softwares that centralize and streamline applications. But the application process can still be complex and even expensive. To simplify the process and reduce costs, students will eventually need to decide which schools to apply to. The following strategies can help students narrow down their lists.

- Employ the “match,” “reach” and “safety” formula. A match school is one you’re likely to get into. A reach school is one that is more selective and could be a bit of stretch for acceptance. A safety school is one that’s likely a guaranteed acceptance. A well-rounded college list includes a mix of these types of schools. College application fees range from \$20 to \$90, so set a reasonable limit for applications. Choosing around three to four matches, two safeties and at least one reach is a good cut-off.

- Decide where you “don’t” want to go. Turn the criteria around and narrow down prospects by what doesn’t appeal to you. Maybe you don’t like the hot weather, so certain southern schools may be out. If you do not like large lecture halls, maybe schools with a huge student population and large classes can be eliminated. Weed out what you don’t like to help narrow your options.

- Consider cost. Before applying to schools, thoroughly research all costs. According to CreditKarma, in 2022 the average tuition at public colleges in the United States was \$10,577 per year, while private college tuition cost \$33,230. Additional costs



PHOTOS COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

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include room and board, meal plans, books, and any technology or additional fees. Discuss these costs with your family. Compare them to what the expected family contribution will be, and approximately how much aid money can be expected from each school (this information is typically included on the school’s website or through college comparison tools). Cost alone could weed out many options.

- Course of study is a major consideration. Eliminate any school that doesn’t offer your intended major. Eliminate schools that do not offer the courses you desire.

- Rate the campus. Visit as many schools as you can in person. A school that looks one way on the internet may not come across the same when you schedule a tour and see the facilities up close. First-hand impressions are important considering this is where you’ll be spending time for the next four years.

When narrowing down colleges, some additional considerations are distance from home, campus life, potential internship opportunities, and other criteria that is important to you.



According to CreditKarma, in 2022 the average tuition at public colleges in the United States was \$10,577 per year, while private college tuition cost \$33,230.

*Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection*



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## GRADUATION

# Gift ideas for high school graduates

The class of 2023 soon will be donning their caps and gowns and receiving their diplomas. After commencement ceremonies, graduation parties will soon follow. For party guests, that means finding the right gifts for grads.

Some high school graduates will continue their studies at colleges and universities. Others may pursue careers in various trades. Still, some graduates may be ready to enter the workforce right away. No matter the direction, these gifts can treat graduates to something special.

## Travel accessories

Graduates may want to go on a trip before they take the next step in their lives. Quality travel gear is a worthy investment. Select luggage that won't exceed airport carry-on limits so grads can cut the baggage check lines when they dart away to locales near or far. Carry-on bags also fit easily in bus cargo areas or in the trunks of cars. Pair the gifts with standard or digital luggage tags.

## Streaming TV device

While it's certainly possible to watch favorite shows or films on mobile devices, viewing is that much clearer on televisions. Rather than graduates having to invest in cable television wherever they go, streaming devices like AppleTV or Roku are portable, which means they can be used at home, in a dorm room or on vacation.

## Secured credit card

Individuals typically are eligible to apply for credit cards once they reach age 18, which is the age most students are when they graduate high school. Credit cards are one method of establishing solid credit, so it can be

beneficial for a teen to have one. But it can be challenging for individuals with no credit histories to get approval. A secured card, according to CapitalOne, is a credit card that requires money deposited with the credit card issuer in order to open the account. This security deposit is held by the issuer as long as the account is open. Often the security deposit is the same as the credit limit. Gift-givers can help establish secured cards for grads by providing the funds for the security deposits.

## Wireless earbuds or headphones

Upgrade grads' audio with the newest wireless earbuds, AirPods, or headphones. This way they can take them to the gym or use them to listen to shows or music while sharing spaces with others, including college roommates.

## Smartphone wallet case

Teenagers are seldom without their phones. A smartphone wallet case enables graduates to stash IDs, credit or debit cards and some cash into specially designed pockets built into the phone cases. This keeps all essentials in one spot.

## Framed memorabilia

Whether a graduate was a star athlete or a premier member of the marching band, gift-givers can provide special memories of time spent in school. Frame ticket stubs, sports jerseys, show programs, or other memorabilia that commemorates a graduate's glory days at their alma mater.

*Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection.*



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If you have an upcoming high school graduate in your life, you might be wondering what gift would be appropriate for



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Upgrade grads' audio with the newest wireless earbuds, AirPods, or headphones.



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