

Choices in Education



A special supplement of the News-Herald and Press & Guide newspapers.

4 ways to keep your family fueled and healthy during busy sports season

Being involved in sports is a great way to enjoy the warm weather, bond with your kids and create long-lasting memories. It's also a great way to help keep your family healthy both physically and mentally!

Registered Dietitian and Nutritionist Dawn Jackson Blatner shares four tips that can help families on top of their game as they're shuffling back and forth from practices, games and tournaments!

1. Check your timing

When it comes to when to eat to best fuel for practices and games, this is a good rule of thumb:

- three to four hours before a game or practice, eat a "power plate" balanced meal
- one to two hours before a game or practice, have an energizing bite

This timing will help your kids have enough energizing fuel to play their best without feeling too full or weighed down.

2. Get supercharged with sleep

Sleep is the best way to recharge tired muscles and restore energy. One way to get a better night's sleep is to shut off video games, the TV, computers and phones at least one hour before bed to get your kids more relaxed and ready to fall asleep.

3. Drink up to play your best

Drinking water before, during and after practice and games can help kids' muscles stay healthy and energized and their mind stay focused. Be sure your kids always carry a water bottle so they can be sipping on the way to the field, while they are playing and on the way home.



Photo courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

4. Fuel with food

Offer nutrient-rich foods throughout the day to give kids plenty of energy to fuel increased activity. When choosing what to give your family before a game, it's important that meals are packed with nutrition and taste good so kids actually want to eat them!

These delicious Pizza-Style Egg Bites from Egglund's Best are an easy way to make sure everyone in your family is getting the nutrients they need to score big. Egglund's Best eggs contain more than double the Omega-3s compared to ordinary eggs, which can help reduce muscle soreness and aid in recovery after strenuous exercise. They also have more than double the Vitamin B-12, which provides a natural energy boost to keep the whole family going on those busy days of sports activities!

Pizza-Style Egg Bites

Prep time: 10 minutes

Cook time: 20 minutes

Yield: 12 egg bites

Ingredients

10 Egglund's Best Large Eggs

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

2 cups frozen spinach or kale

2 cloves garlic, minced

Sea salt and black pepper

1/2 cup jarred no-added-sugar marinara sauce

1/2 cup shredded mozzarella cheese

Optional: 12 pieces uncured turkey pepperoni



Photo courtesy of Brandpoint

Preparation

1. Preheat oven to 350° F and prepare muffin tin with 12 liners.

2. In a skillet over medium heat, add oil, spinach and garlic and cook until heated through, about 5 minutes. Set aside and let cool.

3. In a large bowl, whisk Egglund's Best Eggs with salt, pepper and cooled spinach.

4. Pour egg mixture evenly into the muffin liners, place in oven and cook for 15 minutes.

5. Remove from oven, top each muffin evenly with marinara, cheese and optional pepperoni.

6. Return to oven for another 5 minutes, until eggs are cooked and cheese is melted.

7. Eat immediately or store leftovers covered in fridge for up to four days or freezer up to three months.

Using these four tips, your family can enjoy your sports day to the max! To find more recipes to keep your little athletes fueled, visit EgglundsBest.com.

For families looking for a chance to win a trip to the Little League Baseball® World Series, look no further than the Egglund's Best MVP (Most Valuable Plate) Sweepstakes! Fans can enter daily from now through June 30th for a chance to win a trip, plus other eggs-ceptional prizes! Visit EBFamilySweeps.com for Official Rules and how to enter.

Story and recipe courtesy of Brandpoint

10 facts about trade school

Vocational programs attract students who do not want to attend a traditional college or university. Prospective trade school students can keep this information in mind as they consider if a career in the trades is right for them.

1. Students can often learn a trade and enter a related profession within 10 to 24 months of enrolling in trade school.

2. Schools focused on specific trades have strong job placement rates that often exceed those of schools where students pursue four-year degrees, according to the Philadelphia Technician Training School.

3. Qualified instructors and trade industry experts tend to be on staff at vocational schools. The instructors bring years of on-the-job experience to the classroom.

4. Many trade school programs offer accelerated formats that lean heavily on specialized training for specific career goals.



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

5. Trade schools tend to merge instruction in a traditional classroom setting with hands-on training in real-world situations. That means those studying electrical trades may work in laboratories that mimic both home and business settings.

6. Forbes reports that students in trade school often take part in a paid apprenticeship where they earn money while learning on the job. Statistics from the United

States government state 92% of apprentices who complete their programs retain employment and go on to earn a salary.

7. Many trades are quite lucrative and in-demand. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, carpenters earn a median wage of \$54,000 while an elevator and escalator installer and repair person earns an average of \$86,000 per year.

8. Many trade schools offer industry support and career services, just like traditional colleges. These departments can assist students in funding tuition through federal aid and scholarships and help them find jobs.



Photo courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

9. Students enrolled in accredited vocational schools could be eligible for federal student aid. That's particularly true for students enrolled in programs that last longer than 15 weeks, according to The Balance, a financial resource. Individuals living in the U.S. can file the Free Application for Student Aid (FAFSA) to see if they're eligible for assistance.

10. Apart from elevator installers and repair people, dental hygienists and radiation therapists tend to earn the highest salaries in the trades.

Students interested in trade education can speak with school guidance counselors or reach out to accredited trade schools to learn more about opportunities near them.

Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

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Choices in Education



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Making sense of college costs and financial aid

That moment when your child receives an acceptance letter to a coveted college is a time to feel pride in their achievements and excited about their future. It's also a time to make sense of the school's price tag. That's where financial award letters come into play.

"You'll receive an award letter from each school your student was accepted to listing all the details of the financial aid package," says Angela Colatrisano, College Ave Student Loans. "This information helps you figure out what's covered and how much your family is expected to pay."

Unfortunately, if you're like many parents, you may not be prepared for everything you read in these award letters. In a recent College Ave Student Loans survey, only 30% of parents who received award letters said they received as much aid as they expected, and 74% said they found the expected family contribution surprisingly high. Colatrisano also notes that because the layout of these letters varies from school to school, it can be hard to compare their terms.

To help you decipher your financial aid award letters and figure out how to pay for college this fall, consider these tips and insights:

1. Sort grants and scholarships from other aid.

If your child was awarded a federal grant or scholarships from the college, they will be listed on your award letter. These do not need to be repaid and are applied directly to the school's tuition. You can also pursue outside scholarships. One easy one to apply for is the College Ave \$1,000 monthly scholarship sweepstakes. Encourage your student to apply for scholarships year-round, as every little bit helps.

2. Delve into federal aid.

The award letters will show you if your student qualified for the Federal Work-Study program. Likewise, schools will list

any federal student loans you're eligible to receive. Don't forget to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) each year to qualify.

3. Meet the gap.

If after accounting for grants, scholarships and federal aid there is still a gap between school costs and what you can afford, consider how you can reduce costs or get more funding. For example, you may reconsider your choice of school or have your student take on a part-time job. You might also want to shop around for a private student loan. If you do so, make sure you borrow only what you need. Also, look for a lender offering favorable terms, repayment options and interest rates. College Ave Student Loans offers resources to help you navigate paying for college, including a student loan calculator to show what your monthly payments could look like. To learn more, visit CollegeAve.com.



Photo courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

4. Look before you leap.

Remember that most types of financial aid come with terms and conditions. For example, a scholarship may require a student to maintain a certain GPA for it to be renewed the following semester. Federal and private loans will have interest rates and repayment terms. Before accepting or pursuing any type of financial aid, be sure you understand what's involved.

5. Get assistance.

When in doubt, don't be afraid to reach out to your school's financial aid office for assistance. They are a great resource to help you and your family navigate the financial aid process. "With so many competing financial pressures, it's more important than ever for college-bound families to understand the ins and outs of their financial aid offers and what they're responsible to cover each year," says Colatrisano.

Story courtesy of StatePoint Media



Photo by Tero Vesalainen / iStock via Getty Images Plus

The many benefits of vocational training

Earning a four-year degree is one path toward a rewarding career. However, that path is the only one available to aspiring professionals. Enrolling in a vocational program can provide students with the skills necessary to engage in high-demand and well-paying jobs.

Vocational school, often referred to as "trade school," can be an advantageous route for many people who are looking for an alternative to college. In 2020, the National Center for Education Statistics said a four-year private college cost around \$50,300 for a student living on campus, while a four-year public college was roughly \$24,300 annually. A 2018 poll from The Learning House, a skills training and coursework company, found 35 percent of students said tuition and other fees were their primary concerns when choosing college programs. Trade schools can cost three times less than other schooling, making them more palatable to young people concerned about the high costs of college.



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

Career and Technical Education programs number around 1,200 in the United States alone. Many students begin vocational career tracks in high school, according to American Education Services.

Here are some benefits to pursuing an education in the trades:

- **Lower cost.** According to NCES, trade schools cost significantly less than four-year institutions. Data from the U.S. Department of Education says programs may run between \$3,600 to \$16,000 per

year. Most vocational programs last two years, meaning that students graduate with far less debt than they might accrue when pursuing a four-year college program.

- **Individualized attention.** Many trade programs offer instruction in very intimate settings, with experienced practitioners serving as mentors and trainers. While each program is different, vocational training schools tend to have lower faculty-to-student ratios than traditional colleges.



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

- **Fewer admission requirements.** Trade schools may not have the same stringent application and admissions processes as colleges. Course prerequisites and grade point average requirements also may not dictate trade school admissions policies.

- **Direct, hands-on training.** Unlike a traditional college that marries general education courses with those specific to a major, trade school programs focus only on skills and training relevant to each student's chosen career path.

- **Less time to complete schooling.** More direct lessons means that students can complete their certifications or degrees in shorter times and enter the workforce much more quickly than their counterparts at traditional colleges and universities.

Vocational training in trade schools is a viable option for students who want to spend less money and gain valuable skills they can utilize to earn a good living.

Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

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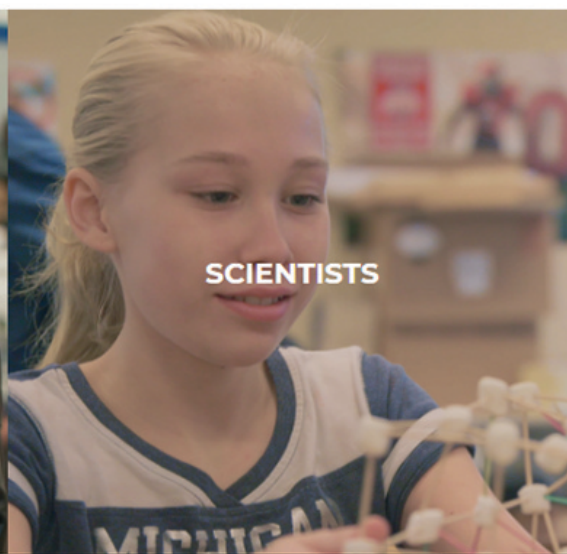
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Top tips to win a college scholarship

More than half of American families used scholarships to pay for college last year. From merit-based to artistic-focused, there are a variety of awards available.

High school senior Grace Vaughn of Trinity, Florida, knows how to successfully secure a college scholarship. After winning the \$10,000 dress grand prize in Duck brand's Stuck at Prom Scholarship Contest in 2022, Vaughn is sharing helpful tips to increase students' odds of earning funds for college:

Research, research, research

Search databases and websites to discover award options that may be new to you. Scholarships.com, FastWeb and Bold.org are resources to help narrow down opportunities that match your interests and unique talents. Vaughn also encourages students to leverage social media, where she discovered the Stuck at Prom contest, which challenges teens to create Duck Tape prom creations for a chance to win cash scholarships.



Grace Vaughn leveraged her creativity to win a \$10,000 college scholarship. (Photo courtesy of StatePoint Media)

In addition to researching national opportunities, check in with your school counselor and teachers to learn about any local or regional scholarships that are offered through the school or other nearby organizations.

Apply early and often

Federal Student Aid recommends searching for scholarships during the summer between your

junior and senior year, but some awards are open to teens as young as 14. Vaughn says entering Stuck at Prom early on in high school gave her an edge on the competition. When she wasn't selected as a finalist her sophomore year, Vaughn submitted for the contest again as a junior and went on to win the \$10,000 dress grand prize.

"When I began working on my entry in 2022, I already knew how to construct the dress from Duck Tape, so I went into the process with confidence," Vaughn explains.

If you have the time and energy, she suggests applying for multiple awards to increase your chances of securing funds for school.

Leverage your creative side

Not all programs are focused on academics and athletics, so flex your creative side to win scholarships that will reward artistic abilities in drawing, painting, music and more. Beginning at an early age, Vaughn excelled at visual arts and design, which is how she knew Stuck at Prom was a perfect fit for her.

"Creative awards programs are a good outlet for students to show off their talents outside of typical schoolwork," Vaughn says. "Even if you aren't crafty, scholarship applications could be a chance for you to try something new."

Make scholarships a priority

Vaughn spent 143 hours crafting her prom dress made from Duck Tape to enter Stuck at Prom.

While not all scholarship program submissions will take 143 hours or require making Duck Tape attire, Vaughn says it's important to block off areas on your calendar so you can balance busy school schedules and extracurricular activities along with applications—ensuring there's enough time to work on a polished entry, whether it's creating a piece of art or writing an essay.

While applying for scholarships is time consuming, it can make a huge impact when it comes to paying for college.

Vaughn notes, "It takes commitment and drive to apply for scholarships, but the results are worth it."

Story courtesy of StatePoint Media

How to put your passion and skills to work in the Peace Corps

Since President John F. Kennedy established the Peace Corps in 1961, more than 240,000 Americans have served in 143 countries worldwide. The agency has high needs for volunteers to deliver on its mission of world peace and friendship, particularly in the agriculture, health, education and youth-in-development sectors.

In more than 60 countries, Peace Corps volunteers are putting their purpose, passion and skills to work in partnership with welcoming host communities – growing, teaching, learning and making change.

Peace Corps volunteers live and work alongside community members on locally prioritized projects, receiving a stipend and other support as they immerse themselves in a new culture. They build relationships, exchange knowledge and help transform lives for generations.

The immersive volunteer experience

The Peace Corps volunteer program is often called life-defining by the more than 240,000 Americans who have served. Volunteers get the chance to fully integrate into a host country community, where they live and work on projects ranging from education to business development



Photo courtesy of the Peace Corps

To be considered for global service, adult U.S. citizens should apply at peacecorps.gov/apply. Applications will be accepted on an ongoing basis.

As part of its recruitment campaign, the Peace Corps is sharing a few essential things that potential volunteers need to know about service:

• **Fast facts:** Volunteers typically serve for two years, with an additional three months of training. These assignments are great for recent college graduates, retirees, career changers or

anyone looking to make a difference in the world. Additionally, there are 3-12 month service options ideal for experienced professionals and returned volunteers for specialized, high-impact, short-term assignments and part-time virtual opportunities.

• **What volunteers do:** Volunteers live and work alongside the people they serve, collaborating with local governments, schools, small businesses and entrepreneurs to create sustainable, community-based projects that address local development priorities across six sectors.



Photo courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

• **Post-service:** Serving in the Peace Corps is a viable way to launch a career. It gives volunteers the skills needed in today's global economy. In addition to rigorous technical training at the start of service and regular opportunities to gain new skills related to work, language, culture and safety, the Peace Corps offers graduate school benefits and career support specifically tailored to volunteers when they return home to help them prepare for their next step.

For more recruitment information and to learn more, visit peacecorps.gov/volunteer/connect-with-a-recruiter/.

Whether you're a recent college graduate or a retiree, you may have what it takes to make a lasting impact overseas through Peace Corps service.

Story courtesy of StatePoint Media



21st Century Virtual Learning Program



- Crestwood School District's 21st Century Virtual Learning Program for the 2023/2024 School Year is open to Residents and Non-Residents.
- Parent(s)/Guardian: complete the application at csdm.k12.mi.us if you are interested in registering future 7th - 12th grade students in the Crestwood School District's 21st Century Virtual Learning Program for the 2023/2024 School Year.
- Completion of one application per student is required.
- Acceptance to the 21st Century Virtual Learning Program is dependent on students meeting eligibility requirements and availability, acceptance is **NOT guaranteed**.
- 21st Century Virtual Learning Program applications will be accepted **March 27th through the end of May 26th, 2023**.
- Parents will be notified of acceptance by **June 16th, 2023**. The program will follow the same school calendar and daily instructional hours as face-to-face students. Student may be allowed to participate in extracurricular activities and athletics in accordance with MHSAA guidelines and school [code of conduct](#) policy.

- برنامج التعلم عن بعد عبر الإنترنت في منطقة مدارس كريستود التعليمية للقرن الحادي والعشرين للعام الدراسي 2023/2024 مفتوح للمقيمين ضمن حدود منطقة كريستود وخارج حدودها أيضاً.
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Helping teachers and students prepare as school supply costs surge

Every summer, parents nationwide get ready for the upcoming school year by purchasing necessary school supplies. However, a whopping 92% of classrooms have students with families who can't afford many of the basics, according to AdoptAClassroom.org. Families are feeling stretched by inflation, forcing some to choose between buying new clothing, putting food on the table, or paying rent and utilities. Many teachers are also being pinched, with 96% already spending money out of their own pockets (an average of \$860 each year) to help their students by purchasing necessary classroom supplies.

Preparing for this coming school year may be even more challenging, due to the rising costs of goods that are required for any classroom. For example, the cost of pencils is up 40%, and the price of a ream of paper is up 60%. These expenses - for families and teachers - are likely to reach an all-time high this summer. With the financial burden on teachers growing, even more students may enter classrooms without the items they need.

Mission-driven partnerships working to help

Nonprofit organizations and corporations are recognizing these challenges and working together to help make a difference for teachers and students. Over the last two years, for example, Subaru of America, Inc. has focused their Subaru Loves Learning® initiative on a partnership with AdoptAClassroom.org, which will support more than 470,000 students nationwide with school supply donations by this summer. This ongoing collaboration has been able to provide teachers across the country with flexible funding to purchase more of the supplies they need to help their students thrive. Students and educators are requiring even more support in face of today's unprecedented challenges, and the Subaru Loves Learning initiative helps pave the way toward childhood success and academic innovation.

"As families begin preparing for each new school year, not every student has the same opportunities to make the most of their education," said Alan Bethke, Senior Vice President of Marketing, Subaru of America, Inc. "Together with AdoptAClassroom.org, our retailers are helping to relieve some of the financial burden from teachers



Photos courtesy of Brandpoint

while helping all students secure the resources they need to learn and succeed in the classroom."

Recognizing the impact of social good across the country

The success of this initiative and many more are being recognized by Engage for Good's annual Halo Awards, North America's highest honors for corporate social impact initiatives engaging consumers or employees. The prestigious awards celebrate programs that blend brand purpose and social impact to build a better world and bottom line.



Photos courtesy of Brandpoint

The Subaru Loves Learning initiative in partnership with AdoptAClassroom.org was recently recognized with the Gold Halo Award in the "Best Education Initiative" category. Their efforts have so far equipped 167,943 students with necessary school supplies, funding 5,699 classrooms across the U.S., with 100% of the funding going to high-needs schools. High need is defined as a school that has a Title I Schoolwide Program and/or a school where 40% of the student population qualifies for the free or reduced-price lunch program.

The initiative not only provides tangible items, but it also helps to make teachers feel appreciated and supported as professionals, boosting their morale - which can help make the difference between a teacher continuing to teach or leaving the profession. It also gives students equitable opportunities to succeed in school, regardless of their family's financial means.

"When you give under-resourced children new supplies, you make them feel valued, build their confidence and ease the mind of their parents," added Bethke. "Education is foundational for strong, healthy communities and gives children a pathway out of generational poverty."

Story courtesy of Brandpoint

5 activities to keep children active over the summer

Everybody, no matter their age, can benefit from daily physical activity. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), young children should be physically active throughout the day for growth and development. Despite the common misconception that children are in perpetual motion, the CDC reminds caregivers to encourage children to be active when they play.

"Physical activity is important because it is critical in assisting with gross motor development and helps support development in other areas," said Khy Sline from KinderCare Learning Center's education team. "Children thrive when we give them the tools to use their bodies and muscles in new ways and make mind-body connections."

Consider these five activities to encourage children to get moving.

• **Blow bubbles.** Appealing to children from infancy on up, seeing bubbles floating around can encourage babies to reach out and try to grab them, building arm strength and coordination. Toddlers and older children can run around the patio or lawn chasing bubbles and watching them pop.



Photo courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

• **Build a tunnel.** Whether indoors or out, made from furniture covered with sheets or cardboard boxes, tunnels encourage children to move over,

under, around and through, which helps them explore new ways of moving while also building coordination and balance.



Photo courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

• **Play hide and seek.** As they dash around trying to find the perfect hiding spot, children build spatial awareness, their understanding of where their bodies are in relation to other people and objects.

• **Play red light, green light.** This classic game helps children build coordination - connecting the verbal instruction with the physical movement - while also teaching them impulse control, an essential executive function skill. Be sure to get creative with instructions and add variations like tip-toeing, crawling, hopping and more.

• **Walk the line.** Draw a line on the ground using chalk outdoors or painter's tape indoors and encourage your children to walk along the line. This activity helps children improve balance and coordination. Get creative and add in a challenge by drawing a wavy or zig-zag line. Once your children get the hang of following the line, ask them to think of other ways to travel along that space, such as hopping on one foot or skipping.

For more ideas to encourage physical activity among children, visit kindercares.com.

Story courtesy of Family Features/KinderCare

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5 tips to ace college entry exams

Because most colleges and universities require applicants to submit ACT or SAT results as part of admissions consideration, prepping for the test itself can be a critical component of that process.

While it can oftentimes be hard to deal with the anxiety that comes with a rigorous test meant to show your mastery of certain subjects and concepts, such as reading and mathematics, consider these test prep tips to help boost your score while simultaneously lowering stress.

Register early

To allow yourself as much flexibility as possible, taking college entrance exams during your junior year of high school is encouraged. If you don't get an ideal score, you can refine your approach and retake the exam with a better idea of what to expect.

Take a practice test

Any test prep plan should start with a practice SAT or ACT exam. Taking practice tests under realistic conditions can help you gain a better understanding of the content of the test, improve your time management and help combat test anxiety. You can use your practice test as a baseline to set goals and focus the rest of your prep on areas you would like to improve before the real thing.

Sign up for a prep course

If you find studying on your own difficult or not as successful as you'd hoped, a prep course can put you through the paces and hold you accountable.

Complete with homework and in-class practice, prep classes can range from small groups to larger classes taught by test experts. Some school districts even offer after-school programs dedicated to ACT or SAT prep.

Gather supplies

To help reduce test day stress, gather everything you'll need the night before. Check the list of banned items - cellphones aren't permitted - to make sure you don't accidentally bring something you're not allowed to have. Ensure your bag is packed with your admission ticket, valid photo identification, several sharpened pencils with erasers, an approved calculator (with fresh batteries) and a watch, if allowed.

Get a good night's sleep and eat breakfast

While it can be tempting to stay up late the night before the test to cram, you're likely to perform better with a full night's sleep. Sleep is important for retention, and eating a balanced breakfast before heading out the door can aid in your ability to focus. To make your morning easier, prep breakfast before bed to keep an early morning from starting even earlier.

Remember, the college admissions process involves more than just test scores. Visit eLivingtoday.com for more education tips and information.

Story courtesy of Family Features/eLivingtoday.com



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

Family game night can provide many benefits for children's mental health

Modern children have somewhat different ideas of what constitutes entertainment, especially when compared to youngsters from a generation or two ago. While it was once commonplace for kids to be out and about with their friends riding bikes and spending time in each other's backyards — only returning home when the streetlights came on — modern youths spend lots of time at home and indoors on their devices.



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, kids between the ages of eight and 18 now spend an average of 7.5 hours in front of a screen each day. That figure only accounts for recreational time, and doesn't include the hours kids spend on computers or tablets for educational purposes. In addition, social media is a large part of kids' days. The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry indicates 90 percent of teens between the ages of 13 and 17 have used social media, and 51 percent report visiting a social media site at least daily. Younger children also use social media, with a recent poll from C.S. Mott Children's Hospital saying 32 percent of parents of kids between the ages of seven and nine reported their children use social media apps.

A classic children's game night might be just what the doctor ordered to draw kids away from screens and provide a healthy respite from the barrage of information coming their way through the internet. With these tips, a game night can be a successful way to help children engage socially in person.

Pick a theme

Unite all elements of the game night by selecting a theme. For example, if you will be pulling out the classic game Operation™, pre-purchase inexpensive lab coats or doctors' scrubs for participants to wear. Serve foods shaped like

various body parts (borrow from some Halloween ideas) and invite guests with an invitation that serves as a "Prescription for Fun."

Choose a good time

Even though "game night" implies the gathering takes place in the evening, choose a time that works best for most. Perhaps meeting directly after school for snacks and play before dinner aligns better with everyone's schedule. Parents can take turns hosting to give children something to look forward to once a week.

Shop together

Bring the kids along to the store to select board games and other activities that appeal to them. Explain that the majority of game nights will be dedicated to non-electronic games. Parents can organize game night how they see fit, but working one video game night into the rotation each month can up the fun factor for kids.

Take it outside

"Games" encompass a wide array of activities. Organize a pick-up wiffle ball game in the cul-de-sac or an after-dark manhunt game with flashlights (age-permitting). Families with pools can rotate having kids over for pool games, which can include volleyball, diving games or Marco Polo.



Photo courtesy of Getty Images

Plan in advance

Know what kids will be playing before guests arrive to cut down on arguments over which games to play, which only wastes time. An older child or an adult can chaperone.

Game nights can be fun ways for kids to interact away from screens.

Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

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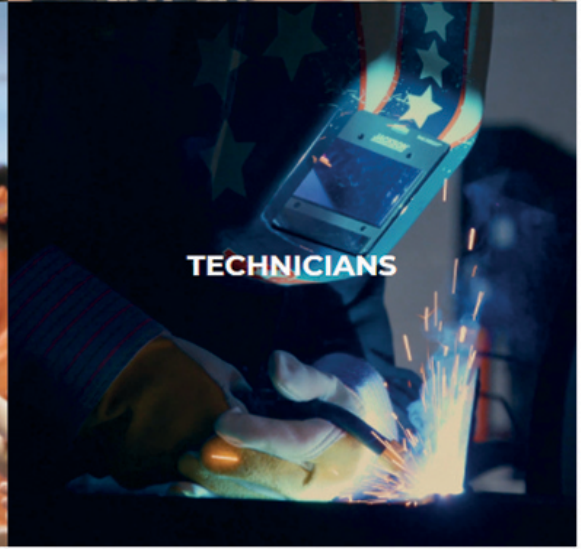
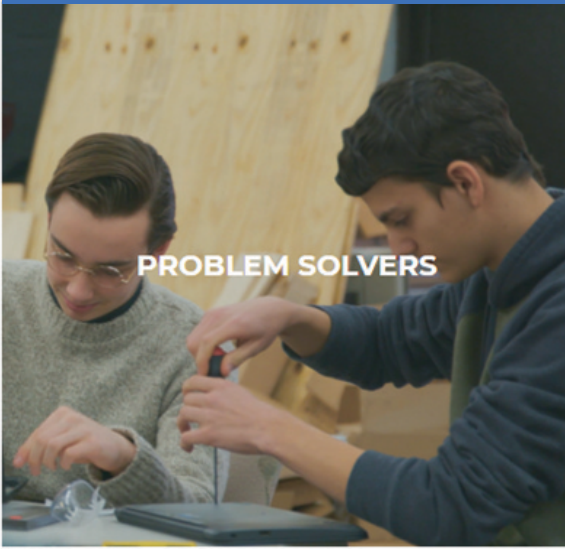
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A special supplement of the News-Herald and Press & Guide newspapers.

Protecting children in a digital age

Keeping a watchful eye on your kids requires an increasing level of tech savvy many parents find intimidating. Not only are your kids vulnerable to bad actors online, but your family's personal information could be at risk, as well.

Learn how to protect your children and family in this digital age with these tips:

Elementary-age children

- Encourage open communication. Have conversations about what your kids see and do online and talk with them about potential dangers. Avoid lecturing in favor of an open exchange of information.

- Make their inherent interest in privacy work in your favor. Kids in this age group, particularly toward the middle school years, understand the concept of privacy and value it immensely. Use that context to help them understand what goes online is there to stay. Talk about what kinds of information should always be kept private, including identifying details like addresses and social security numbers.

- Stay on alert. Not all apps are completely safe (even the ones you can access from trusted stores) and not all filters are foolproof. Keep close tabs on what your kids are downloading by reading comments and reviews, and regularly monitoring what kind of content they see.

Middle school and high school kids

- Continue talking about privacy. You can never have too many conversations about privacy. What seems like harmless sharing on social media can be quite revealing. For example, frequent posts about visits to a favorite store or restaurant can allow a predator to begin tracking behavior patterns that make your child a target. It's also important for kids to understand how their privacy settings work. For example, settings that allow exposure to friends of friends make their visibility to strangers much broader than they may realize.

- Help manage their online reputation. Behaviors that once resulted in a day or two of hallway



Photo courtesy of Getty Images



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection
chatter can now live forever. Documenting mischief online is only fun until it spills over into real life and everyone sees those mistakes in full color - including prospective future employers.

- Be clear about your position on bullying. From the safe distance of a screen, it's easier for kids (and adults) to say things they'd never say in person. Teach your kids to handle problems constructively offline and avoid engaging in attacks on others through social media, email and other platforms.



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

College students

- Reinforce the risks. Once they're on their own, kids may feel more liberated to make their own choices online. However, college students are easy prey for identity theft and worse. Remind them what's at stake if they fail to protect their identity and private information, like where they live and what they do on a regular basis.

- Teach smart practices. With all the independence that comes with college life, this is an ideal time for your student to take personal responsibility for his or her online security, including learning about virus protection, updating software, avoiding scams and backing up data.

Story courtesy of Family Features

Preparing your children for kindergarten

Being ready for kindergarten is about far more than writing names and reciting the ABCs. It is also about building a foundation for deeper conceptual thinking, curiosity, creativity and social and emotional skills that can help children during their early school days and also in life.

For parents, this transition can be nerve-wracking and raise questions about how to best prepare their children for the next step in their educational journeys.

Dr. Lauren Starnes, senior vice president and chief academic officer at The Goddard School, and Lee Scott, chairperson of The Goddard School's Educational Advisory Board, recommend helping children prepare for kindergarten through:

Building Strong Routines and Foundations for Learning:

1. Language and literacy: Practice writing by making place cards for the dinner table. For younger children, it can be the first letter of each person's name or fun scribbles on the card. Early scribbles are part of developing writing skills.

2. Mathematics: Count while you work. Ask your children to put away toys. As they work, you can count the toys together.

3. Science: Make yard cleanup fun. As you clean the yard, talk about the leaves and why they turn colors and fall to the ground. Pile them up and jump in.

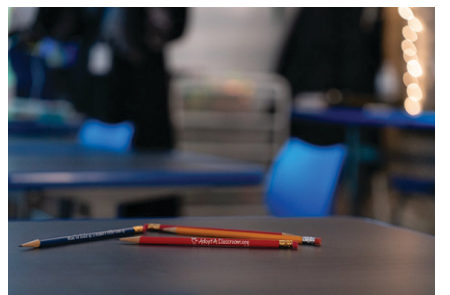
4. Executive function: Incorporate your children in planning for the family. Help your children stay organized with a daily or weekly chart. Have your children make the chart with you. For younger children, you can use drawings or pictures instead of words.



Photos courtesy of Getty Images

5. Creative expression: Sing and dance while you work. Make up songs or repeat favorites as your children go through a few basic chores such as putting clothes away.

6. Social-emotional development: Build a sense of responsibility and caring for others with real or pretend pets. Take the dog for a walk, feed the cat or water the pet rock. Taking care of a pet can help children develop a sense of responsibility and empathy for others.



Photos courtesy of Getty Images

7. Healthy development and well-being: Daily routines help your children practice fine motor skills while doing a few chores, such as setting a table, helping you cook by mixing or stirring, putting their clothes on or brushing their teeth.

Incorporating Playful Experiences:

1. Puzzles: Solving puzzles supports the development of skills such as concentration, self-regulation, critical thinking and spatial recognition.

2. Board games: Playing games provides a number of benefits for children, including supporting memory and critical thinking, helping them learn to take turns and count, and developing early language skills.

3. Blocks: Block building supports creativity, cognitive flexibility, planning and organization. Take some time to build with blocks using different shapes and colors.

4. Clay: Children need to develop fine motor skills beyond using devices. Few things are better for developing fine motor skills than modeling clay. Learning to sculpt with clay also builds creativity, artistic expression and strategic thinking.

5. Recycled materials: Inspire creativity by finding things around the house to build with, such as cardboard, paper, paper towel rolls and plastic bottles.

For more actionable parenting insights, guidance and resources - including a webinar with Scott focused on kindergarten readiness - visit GoddardSchool.com.

Story courtesy of Family Features/The Goddard School

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