

Choices in Education



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

3 tips for creating a summer of unplugged fun

Between school, work and entertainment, there are times when screens can seem like a pervasive part of modern life. For all the positive aspects of technology, there can also be a desire for children to have stretches of unplugged learning and participate in educational activities that do not require a screen.

Why unplugged learning matters

"Unplugged learning is important to balance the screen time children may experience with other forms of learning; to promote physical activities, social interaction and creativity; and develop the essential skills that bolster them throughout their exploration and growth as individuals," said Rurik Nackerud from KinderCare's education team.

Summer can be an ideal time to focus on unplugged learning as it often brings a break from the traditional academic year and activities.

"We want summer to be a time when children can put down technology and connect with one another face-to-face, build important creativity skills and learn how to be social with one another without the buffer of screens," said Khy Sline from KinderCare's education team. "They can play, run, be immature and laugh with their friends, giggle at the silly things and find joys in those in-person interactions with one another."



Photo courtesy of KinderCare

Tips for creating unplugged fun as a family

1. Get Outdoors. Make time as a family to get outside and explore, even if it's simply a walk around the block after dinner. Help children notice the little things like a bug on the sidewalk or the way the sun filters through tree leaves to make patterns on the ground. Ask them about the things they see and give your children the space to ask questions and work together to find



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

the answers. This helps teach children collaborative learning skills: asking questions, sharing ideas and working together to reach an answer.



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

2. Read Together. This could mean going to the library to check out new books or exploring your family's bookshelves for old favorites. Snuggle up together for family story time. If children are old enough to read on their own, invite them to read to you or their younger siblings. Talk about the story or even act out favorite parts to help your children actively participate in story time, which may help them better understand the story's concepts.



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

3. Encourage Creative Thinking. Help children expand their ability to think creatively by working together to make a craft or project. For example, the next time a delivery box arrives at your home, encourage your children to turn it into something new using craft supplies on hand. A blanket could turn a box into a table for a pretend restaurant while some tape or glue could transform it into a rocket ship or train. When everyone's done creating and playing, the box can be broken down for recycling. This activity can help children literally think outside of the box and apply their own unique ideas and creativity to create something new.

For more tips to encourage unplugged learning this summer, visit kindercare.com.

Story courtesy of KinderCare/Family Features

Unique family vacation ideas

Summer is the unofficial season of vacations, especially for families. School is not in session in summer, and kids' often busy schedules may grind to a halt in summer, when sports leagues, dance classes and other activities go on hiatus.

School closures and a largely empty obligation schedule makes summer a great time for families to go on vacation. Traditional vacation hotspots like adventure parks and resorts merit consideration, but the following are some unique family vacation ideas that can help parents and their children make lasting memories.

• **Ballpark tour.** For families that love baseball, a summer ballpark tour can be a truly unique experience. Whether families prefer Major League Baseball and its large ballparks or the more intimate settings at minor league stadiums, there's no shortage of options on a ballpark tour. Both MLB and minor league stadiums tend to be located in large or mid-size cities, which means there's plenty to do in between games as well.

• **Camper/RV trip.** A family vacation in a camper or RV is a cozy way for families to bond as they vacation at their own pace. National parks across the United States and Canada make for ideal places to visit when touring each country in a camper or RV. But there's really no limit to the experiences families can enjoy on self-driving trips when their beds are on board for the ride.



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

• **History road trip.** Historical landmarks dot the North American landscape, making a history road trip a fun way to hit the road and

learn a little something along the way. American history buffs have no shortage of historic sites to see regardless of which region of the country they plan to visit or which period of history most



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

intrigues them, from the Revolutionary War to the California Gold Rush to the American Civil War and more. Canadian history buffs can go all the way back to the days of the dinosaurs at the Dinosaur Provincial Park in Alberta or visit Nova Scotia to see the eighteenth century economic and military hub the Fortress of Louisbourg, which is the largest historical reconstruction in North America.

• **Urban tours.** One of the joys of visiting Europe is the chance to travel from city to city without spending too much time in the car or on the train between stops. Though North America might be more spread out, families can still tour various urban locales in a single vacation. Parents can pick a region of the country (such as the northeastern United States) and then plan road trips that enable them to visit different cities in that area over the course of a week to two weeks.

Make an effort to try the foods each city is known for and visit a local landmark, making sure to leave time to walk around so everyone can get a feel for what a day in each city is like.

Family vacations can be as unique as the individuals taking them.

Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

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4 ways parents can help their young drivers be road ready

Do you remember the excitement of getting your driver's permit and license? For teens, driving represents freedom and independence. However, they must understand it's a privilege with serious responsibilities.

You may be feeling some anxiety about your teen driver, but you can help prepare them for this important milestone. Before letting your teenager behind the wheel, check out these four tips that can help them get ready to hit the road.

1. Drill the basics

Before you hit the road, train your teen on the basics. Show them how to adjust the seat, steering wheel and the side and rear view mirrors to suit their needs. Make sure they can locate the car registration, insurance card and car manual and discuss situations they'll need to pull them out.

Also, take a few minutes to review the vehicle controls and demonstrate how each works. For example, point out and explain the dashboard controls, turn signals, headlights, safety features like airbags and seat belts, wipers, emergency lights, parking brake and release, engine on/off and warning indicator lights.

2. Review rules and responsibilities

Talk with your teens about the rules and responsibilities of driving so they can get themselves and their passengers safely from Point A to Point B. It's especially important to emphasize that driving requires their full attention and that removing or reducing distractions, such as their phone, is essential.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), a teen's chances of crashing increase six times when dialing a phone and 23 times when texting. Meanwhile, State Farm's 2023 Distracted Driving survey found that drivers who had their license for five years or less were significantly more likely to use smart phone apps and record and watch videos while driving than drivers who had been licensed for more than 10 years.

Let your teens benefit from your driving knowledge and experience. Share stories about distracted driving and the outcomes for drivers, passengers and pedestrians. These stories can help them understand that even a momentary distraction can lead to serious consequences.

3. Practice driving at night

Experienced drivers know driving at night is more difficult than during the day. Practice is essential to staying safe while driving in the dark.

More than half of the State Farm survey respondents did not have night time driving practice while learning to drive. Nearly half did not feel they had sufficient driving practice overall before getting a license. Make sure your young driver gets some night-driving experience so you're both more comfortable with evening outings.



Photo courtesy of Brandpoint

4. Be a good role model

Your teen's driving education starts at home. You can't rely solely on driver's education class to teach your teen the rules of the road and safe driving practices. Model safe driving practices by remembering to buckle up and always keep your hands on the wheel and your eyes on the road.

Also, when you're in the driver's seat - whether it's to the grocery store, school or sports practice - use the trip to explain the choices you're making behind the wheel. You can also share tips you learned from your driving experiences that may not be covered in class.

Be proactive and get your teen road ready this summer. Using these four tips and other Teen Driving 101 tips from State Farm, you can ensure your teen is prepared to get behind the wheel.

Story courtesy of Brandpoint

What is Juneteenth?

In 2021, President Joseph Biden signed the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act, which established an official holiday to commemorate the end of slavery in the United States. The act became law and the holiday was celebrated two days later.

As the United States prepares to celebrate its third official Juneteenth holiday, here is an in-depth look at what the day is all about.



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

Origins of Juneteenth National Independence Day

The origins of Juneteenth date back to June 19, 1865. Months after Confederate forces surrendered in the American Civil War, enslaved African Americans in Galveston, Texas were finally told they were free. Union soldiers arrived in Galveston and explained that slavery had been abolished and the war was over. This liberation actually took place more than two and a half years after President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Act, which freed enslaved people throughout the country.

Juneteenth began as a regional celebration that was observed locally each year before becoming a state holiday in Texas in 1980. Juneteenth was subsequently recognized as a holiday in a number of other states before President Biden officially made the day a federal holiday in 2021.

Juneteenth traditions

Due to federal law, federal businesses are closed for Juneteenth. Private businesses may opt to close or remain open. Some may issue a floating holiday to those who would like to observe Juneteenth.

Celebrations vary across the country. Some states host parades, and families and friends may gather to play games and enjoy food and other fun. Public readings or church services relevant to the holiday also may be part of Juneteenth celebrations.

Juneteenth food traditions

Juneteenth has its own traditions, including some involving food. For example, many people enjoy a dish known as the Marcus Garvey salad. Marcus Garvey was a Black activist who sought to unify and connect people of African descent worldwide. The dish is made with red, green and black beans to symbolize the Pan-African flag. Additional Juneteenth foods are red, which is no accident. Before slavery was abolished, many slaves ate foods that were white, green or brown. Eating brightly colored red foods was a rarity and a cause for excitement. The color red also was associated with the cultures of people who used to be enslaved. Red beverages, sauce-covered barbecue, red velvet cake, and many other red foods and beverages are now served on Juneteenth.



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

Juneteenth is now celebrated across the United States and can serve as a catalyst for discussions about American history.

Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

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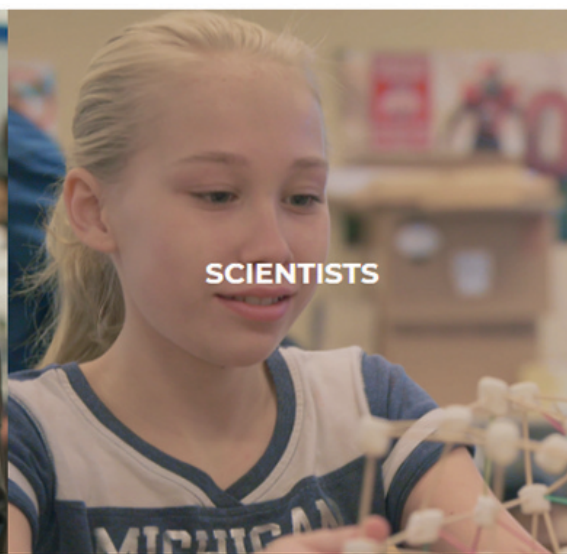
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Why the graduation lei is a popular, meaningful tradition

By Christina Merino
For MediaNews Group

At commencement time, new graduates don their decorated caps and gowns, waving diplomas as they smile for photos. But many graduates also wear lei — made from flowers, candies, or ribbons around their necks — as congratulations from family and friends.

Gifting and wearing a lei is a now ubiquitous tradition during graduations and other special occasions, including birthdays, weddings and even funerals. But where did the colorful, eye-catching garland come from, and what does receiving and wearing it actually mean?

With its roots in Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander culture, a lei refers to a series of strung-together objects — most commonly fresh flowers, but can also be made of leaves, braided ribbons, nuts, candy, shells, or even folded money — that are meant to be worn around the neck.

Since the Hawaiian language doesn't distinguish between singular and plural, the word "lei" also refers to more than one

of these garlands. A lei can also be worn around the head — commonly called a haku lei, or lei po'o (flower crown) — or wrist.

Samara Suafo'a, a professor and assistant director of the Department of Teacher Education at Claremont Graduate University, said that in Hawaii, lei were historically regarded as a symbol of rank, wealth and royalty.

"Because traditional lei are made from elements of the land (i.e. flowers, leaves, vines, shells, etc.) they were also a way for Native Hawaiians to honor and pay homage to their gods," Suafo'a, who grew up in Honolulu, said.

She distinguished the lei garland itself from the act of gifting or receiving a lei, especially one that's been handmade. The tradition is rooted in acts of service; recognizing that one's personal achievements are "never just about you, but rather about those who paved the way for you and those who will follow."

"What a beautiful extension of love and support. Seriously, when is the last time someone made something for you, with their own hands, that came straight from the land?" Suafo'a said. "To me, lei are the ultimate way of saying to the receiver, 'I may not have much to offer in the form of monetary gifts or material things. But I'm here and I took the time to make this for you.' Lei are the truest form of aloha."

Though customs differ, lei should also be adorned a certain way. Typically, the



Graduate Yostena Getachew is draped in lei as she takes a photo with her dad and aunt following the Savanna High School graduation in Anaheim, Calif. on Thursday, May 25, 2023. (Photo by Paul Bersebach, Orange County Register/MediaNews Group)

gifter — who either makes or purchases the lei — places it over the receiver's head, so that person must bow their head slightly, and the lei is worn draped half in front of the chest and half down the back. Refusing to wear a lei is a show of disrespect.

Graduates celebrate, honor the tradition

Cal State Dominguez Hills graduate Christian Alvarado wore his colorful *maile* lei made of leaves — a gift from his girlfriend, mom and grandmother — as he walked across the stage at his school's May 20 commencement.

"We had to continue the tradition," said Alvarado, who graduated with his bachelor's in business administration. "My grandfather is from Hawai'i too, so it's really meaningful."

Ontario resident and Cal Poly Pomona graduate Adrienne Manapat wore her orchid lei, a money lei, and a fresh lei po'o crown during her graduation ceremony on May 22. The lei were meaningful gifts from family and close friends, and Manapat plans to preserve them — next to her new Bachelor's degree in organizational communication — for as long as she can.

"My best friend, who is originally from Hawaii, had the crown specially made and brought it all the way here from Las Vegas," Manapat said. "I felt special; like she went through all the trouble and picked those flowers and colors just for me."

Marketing graduate Teresa Lopez shared her excitement after walking across the stage at her graduation from Cal State Northridge on May 22. Her sister-in-law adorned her with a lei bearing Lopez's name, graduation year, and two origami butterflies made out of dollar bills that took her two hours to make.

Receiving the lei was more than a congratulatory gift, but "a symbol," Lopez said, "meaning that people are proud of you."

CSUN graduate Ancely Juarez was surprised with a handmade lei at her graduation. "It feels so meaningful to have something handmade worn around you at such a beautiful time."

Andrea Neri received a lei from an aunt who she had been staying with during her time at CSUN studying emerging media production.

"It symbolizes all of the hard work I went through the past five years," said Neri. "Finally, I'm doing this, and walking and showing off everything I've accomplished."



Graduate Isaiah Pantoja wears several lei following the Savanna High School graduation in Anaheim, Calif. on Thursday, May 25, 2023. (Photo by Paul Bersebach, Orange County Register/MediaNews Group)



Graduate Courtney Yada, left, gets assistance with her lei from sister Christine and mother Joyce Yada, center, after the Beckman High School graduation ceremonies at Northrup Stadium on the Tustin High School campus in Tustin, Calif. on Wednesday, May 31, 2023. (Photo by Leonard Ortiz, Orange County Register/MediaNews Group)



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**.
- 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.

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How do college refunds work? Learn how to protect your investment

It's graduation season! If you have a high school senior, you're probably busy planning a party or vacation to celebrate the end of their high school years. Last year, more than 20 million students enrolled in undergraduate and graduate programs across the U.S. If your child is one of the millions of students attending college this year, you also have a lot to do before the fall. However, it's important to set aside time, even now, to plan for your college student's freshman year and have tough conversations about what you'll do in case they need to withdraw.

After all the effort going into choosing the ideal college experience, families don't often consider what might happen if their child may need to leave school during their educational journey. But it's a common enough occurrence that it's best to be prepared. The National Student Clearinghouse found that one in four first-year college students don't return for the second year. Often, leaving school is a tough decision for students and parents. It's even more stressful when families can't recoup the loss of tuition, housing and fees if their school doesn't offer a refund.

Families are smart to not be surprised. Read on to see how you can protect your financial investment in your child's education and receive a refund if they are forced to withdraw midterm due to legitimate reasons including accidents, injuries, or physical or mental health conditions.

1. Learn why students withdraw

Many students have to withdraw for medical reasons, including anxiety, depression, stress, mono, flu and



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

concussions, just to name a few. Even for those who don't withdraw, nearly half (41%) of students have considered withdrawing in the past year, with 55% citing emotional stress, according to the 2023 Lumina Foundation Gallup State of Higher Education Report.

Even if they feel that they need to withdraw, many students push themselves to the breaking point for fear of placing undue financial burden on themselves and their families. That's why it's important to talk with your child about how they're feeling leading up to their fall semester and to check in with them as the term progresses.

2. Understand your school's refund policy

Not knowing why and when your student can withdraw from classes can leave you scrambling should your student need a leave of absence. According to the 2022 College Confidence Index, 74% of students and 66% of parents are unfamiliar with their school's tuition refund policy. Before taking your student to freshman orientation, make sure to review their

school's refund policy.

Most colleges don't offer tuition refunds after the first few weeks of school and virtually no schools provide refunds for the cost of housing or academic fees, so it's vital to know important withdrawal dates. Otherwise, you risk losing tens of thousands of dollars if your child is forced to withdraw midterm.

3. Determine if you could afford the cost of an extra semester

If your child's school doesn't offer a tuition refund or you want to be prepared in case your student needs to withdraw after the refund period, you'll need to see if you can afford an extra semester. If you can't, you're not alone. More than half of parents (52%) reported it would be difficult for them to pay for the cost of an extra semester, according to the College Confidence Index. As college costs continue to rise, families have difficulty paying for a regular four-year degree, let alone tens of thousands of dollars for an extra semester.

4. Find out if your school offers tuition insurance

Many colleges and universities offer tuition insurance that provides a tuition refund if your student is forced to withdraw midterm. Your school may partner with an insurance provider like GradGuard, the only company in the country that provides up to 100% refunds for students who withdraw for a covered reason during the insured term.

While hundreds of schools from Auburn, Duke, Harvard, NYU, Purdue, Tennessee, and Vanderbilt provide their students with tuition insurance, some schools may not and it is useful for families to ask them for protection. The only alternative to an official school program is GradGuard, which offers plans to any student attending a four-year private or public nonprofit institution in the U.S. To learn more, visit GradGuard.com.



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

5. Know what tuition insurance covers

Not all tuition insurance plans offer the same coverage. Make sure you sign up for a plan that covers a variety of situations that could cause your student to withdraw from classes. Tuition insurance can reimburse the cost of a covered term, including tuition, housing and fees, in case of a covered medical withdrawal.

GradGuard's Tuition Insurance plans can cover ordinary but serious medical conditions like mono and concussions. It also covers mental health conditions that can lead to unexpected withdrawals, including anxiety and depression.

Students who are struggling should not be burdened with feeling the need to stay in school for financial reasons alone. By being proactive, knowing your school's refund policy and purchasing tuition insurance prior to the start of school, your family can have confidence that if your student needs to leave school for a legitimate reason, they can do so. Students can focus on their health and return to school when they are well again.

Story courtesy of Brandpoint

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A brighter future: 6 tips for funding your child's college education

The college years are an important milestone in a young person's life - during this time they explore options for future careers and gain experiences that shape the person they will become. These years can also bring stress, especially when it comes to figuring out how to pay for their education. A recent survey found that while 81% of students felt a college degree was crucial for their future, 7 in 10 also agreed paying for college is stressful - and 67% found the cost surprising.

In the College Ave Student Loans survey, it is clear that most families manage paying for college from a combination of several different sources, rather than relying on any one source of funding.

According to the survey, the top 5 sources used to pay for college are:

- Merit aid (scholarships/grants) - 51%
- Federal student loans - 46%
- Parent savings/income - 40%
- Student savings/income - 36%
- Private student loans - 20%

Here are 6 tips to help you get started with putting together your financial plan for college.

1. Everything starts with the FAFSA

If your child will attend school next fall, you probably filled out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) months ago. This form must be filled out each year your child attends college, and becomes available on October 1. It is not just the federal government that uses FAFSA information to provide grants or loans - schools also use this information to offer financial aid, such as scholarships. Because some funding is limited, it's important fill the FAFSA out as early as possible.

2. Grants

The most well-known government grant, the Pell Grant, is based on student need. However, other grants may be available through your state or school, so be sure to check your state's department of education website.

3. Scholarships are not just about grades

It's not just students with a 4.0 GPA who qualify for scholarships. Some are based on a wide variety of criteria such as where you live, interests/majors, family background - or even by chance. Many employers offer educational scholarships, so ask your HR department (and your child's employer, if they have one). Check with community groups or civic organizations you belong to, or that are active in your area. Your child's high school guidance counselor can also help with finding scholarships.

Don't forget online scholarship searches at websites like Fastweb, Scholly, Cappex and Unigo. One easy scholarship to apply for is a \$1,000 monthly scholarship sweepstakes at CollegeAve.com.

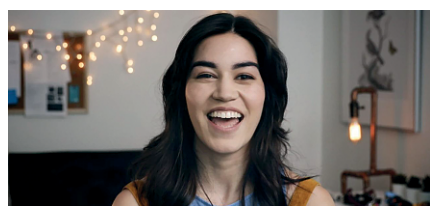


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4. Federal student loans

If you need to borrow, the best place to start is with any federal loans in the student's name that they qualified for as part of their financial aid package. These loans have low fixed rates and offer unique benefits, such as income-driven repayment plans.

5. Private loans

Because federal student loans have annual limits, you may need to consider a private student loan to help bridge the gap between the financial aid your family receives and the amount you need to cover remaining expenses. Use the student loan calculator at CollegeAve.com to look at possible monthly payments, private loan interest rates and repayment terms.

You may also consider private parent loans, if you have strong credit and are able to take on the debt. Private parent loans such as those at College Ave offer a choice of fixed and variable rates and no origination fees, unlike federal parent PLUS loan options.

6. Part-time employment

Students can also help pay for expenses by working part-time. The survey found 6 out of 10 students plan to have a job while in college. Students who qualify for work-study will have options for jobs right on campus. If not, they can look for other part-time work in the area. Some students may also opt to work over the summer and use that income to help pay for expenses over the school year. Looking for summer jobs in the student's field of interest is also a great resume builder.

Cutting costs up front can also help make college more affordable. Strategies like using public transportation, buying used textbooks and living at home can help students save money. Another option is spending the first year or two at a community college. Just make sure all course credits will transfer to the student's preferred school.

These tips should help you begin putting together your best combination of funding options.

Story courtesy of Brandpoint

Summertime projects for kids

Summer slide is a concept that has been on educators' minds since 1996, when the first comprehensive study on the topic was published. Students lose significant knowledge in core subjects over the summer break, and those losses increase each year. There's much parents can do to help their children continue learning over the summer. Educational projects may be a good start.

Here's a brief list of educational projects children can work on this summer:



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

- Stock up on summer reading books that everyone in the family can enjoy while sitting poolside or at the beach



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

- Conduct informal science experiments, such as growing the biggest vegetable or studying butterflies or insects that visit the backyard.
- Maintain a journal about adventures during summer vacation through personal narratives or even through creative fictional accounts based on the child's experiences.
- Search for patterns in nature, such as those in shells or flowers.
- Learn about money by keeping tallies on souvenir purchases or the cost of items in stores.
- Calculate distances from home by using maps and mileage.
- Become amateur meteorologists, keeping track of changing weather patterns and which signs indicate precipitation.



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

- Visit a museum or a local point of interest and learn about something historical.

Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

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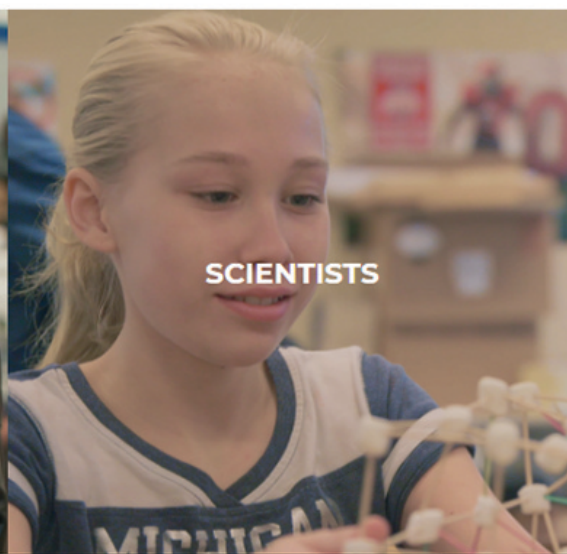
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Choices in Education



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

Enriching non-sports extracurricular activities

A school experience goes beyond lessons learned in the classroom. Part of what helps shape well-rounded students are the skills they sharpen and memories they make while engaging in extracurricular activities. Extracurricular involvement shows that students can stick with activities for extended periods of time, indicates they have passions and interests, and illustrates that they can take initiative outside of their schoolwork.

Athletics is a popular extracurricular activity. A love of sports often develops in elementary school, with children participating in recreational or school-based leagues each year. That enjoyment of the game only builds in middle school and high school. However, there are plenty of students who are not sports enthusiasts but still fill their after-school hours with activities that can help cultivate leadership, teamwork, time management skills, confidence, and much more. The following are some extracurriculars that go beyond the scholastic playing fields.



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

- **Arts activities.** These can include painting, sketching, ceramics, jewelry-making, and yarn work.
- **Band or chorus.** Music instruction is ideal for those who want to explore a passion for singing or playing an instrument.
- **Theater.** Students can participate in theater productions after school. It's possible to get involved both in front of the curtain and behind with positions in the cast, crew and even promotional team.
- **Newspaper.** Many schools still produce student-led newspapers in print or digital versions. Students handle all of the roles, from reporting, editing, photography, and managing the publication.
- **Foreign language clubs.** Students may want to expand on their foreign language studies by participating in language clubs. Often these clubs

include learning more about the cultures where specific languages are spoken, including exploring culinary delights and possible travel.

- **Philanthropy.** Like-minded students may want to participate in school-organized volunteer activities. These keep students busy, but also benefit recipients in many ways. Activities can include beach sweeps or volunteering at animal shelters.



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

- **Coding and programming.** Students can learn the basics of writing code and building computer applications or websites.



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

- **Culinary arts.** Certain schools may be equipped with kitchen facilities and still offer elective courses in culinary arts, while others may reserve cooking classes to extracurricular activities. If a school does not have a culinary club, chances are students can find a cooking class offered through a private group.

There are plenty of extracurricular activities to engage students who are not interested in athletics. Students also can start new clubs if there are deficits in offerings at their schools.

Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

How to help STEM students fulfill their potential

Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) classes are now integral components of students' educations. Increasingly students are drawn to STEM education, including pursuing STEM pathways in high school, because of the doors such an education can open in the future. According to the United States Department of Labor, there were nearly 10 million workers in STEM occupations in 2021, and this total is projected to grow by almost 11% by 2031 — roughly two times faster than the total for all occupations.

STEM subjects may not come so easily for some students, who at times may feel disengaged from the coursework. That doesn't mean students should give up. Even if STEM classes do not come easily, one still could have what it takes to be involved in science or engineering, and eventually land STEM jobs. Here are ways to mold great STEM students.



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

Recognize that STEM is more exacting

Unlike other classes in liberal arts education that are highly subjective, STEM involves answers that are exact. There is no wiggle room for subjectivity, so students must get in the habit of checking their work and ensuring their answers are correct. Students may need some assistance from tutors or parents to recognize common mistakes and learn how to proof their work. This fosters a greater attention to detail.

Show the work

Teachers often require students to show the computation involved in reaching a mathematical conclusion, or the reasoning behind how an answer is derived. While the answer may be correct, points may be deducted for not showing the work. Students should make it a habit to be transparent with their calculations so educators can point out where they were right and where they went wrong.

Recognize your own scientific tendencies

Those who are science-minded tend to make good observations, base claims on evidence, express curiosity, and make connections between complex ideas. Some students may not think they are intellectual enough to be involved with STEM, but after recognizing these traits in themselves, they may find they have more in common with great scientists than they first imagined.

Maintain good notes

Get the most out of courses by taking excellent notes, as the best instruction often comes from lectures and class time. Review notes regularly and practice work frequently.



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

Have a study buddy

Studying with someone else can be helpful with STEM coursework. A study buddy can be a fellow classmate, a parent, a friend, or anyone else to bounce ideas off of. Others view problems differently and may see something a student is missing, or be able to explain it more readily.

See failure as a motivating force

Only by failing can STEM students dissect missteps and improve work to get to more concrete conclusions. While it initially may not seem enjoyable to fail, it does present opportunity to do things differently the next time. Failure usually lights a fire to get students to work harder and fulfill their potential.

STEM classes can be quite challenging and not every student takes to them immediately. But with a little work and support, students can improve their performance in STEM subjects.

Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

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Choices in Education



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

What parents can do to be more involved at school

Parents can make every effort to encourage children to make the most of the school experience, including academics and extracurricular activities. Though students' level of engagement is ultimately up to them, parental involvement at school can be crucial for students' success.

According to the National Education Council, when parents get involved in their children's education, those children are more likely to do better in school and be more positive about the school experience. They also may be well-behaved. Parents wondering what they can do to assist at the school level can consider these possibilities.



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

Attend school board meetings

Many community school boards are comprised entirely of volunteers who work with superintendents and other personnel to advocate for policies and procedures for students. Decisions typically are up for vote, and parents can run for school board positions or simply attend meetings each month and let their voices be heard about various issues.

Attend open houses and conferences

Parents can make every effort to get to know teachers and other staff. Putting faces to names can help parents develop a connection to teachers and vice versa. Most schools have back to school nights, meet the coaches opportunities, open houses, and parent-teacher conferences. Parents can take part in these events.

Open lines of communication

Parents can ask teachers and other staff how they prefer to communicate. Some teachers want students to take the lead and reach out first, with parents providing support if need be. Adults can be responsive when teachers reach out.



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

Attend school events

Families can make it a point to support students in all endeavors. Whenever the opportunity to visit the school comes up — whether for a concert, sports game, trivia night, or fundraiser — parents can make an effort to attend.

Volunteer

When parents want to be involved even further, they can head committees at school or volunteer with the PTA or PTO. They also can help out in the cafeteria, library or in the main office. Parents who have particular skills may volunteer to provide tutoring or mentoring as needed. Furthermore, parents can volunteer in school-sanctioned extracurriculars, such as Scouts BSA or as sports coaches.

Involvement in school is part of being an informed and supportive parent.

Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

Essay-writing tips for students

Students face a number of challenges during their academic careers. Those challenges are unique to each student, as some excel in certain subjects that their classmates find difficult, and vice versa.

At some point in their academic careers, students will be asked to write an essay. University applications typically feature student essay portions, but essays are even incorporated into elementary school curricula. Indeed, students of all ages are periodically asked to write essays, which underscores how useful some basic essay-writing tips can be.



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

Longer essays typically require ample research, and it's unlikely that all of that research will make it into the final essay. Writing an outline provides a chance to narrow the scope of the essay and cut it down, which should prove useful when sitting down to begin writing the composition.



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

• **Identify the assignment.** Essays run the gamut from personal essays to papers on historical figures to precis on particular texts. Before students can write an effective, engrossing essay, they must first identify what's being asked of them. Does the instructor want students to argue a point? Is the idea to examine a meaningful personal experience? Is the essay similar to a book report? Once the ball gets rolling and writing begins, it's easy to lose track of the assignment. But an effective essay must follow the guidelines set forth in the assignment. Students can routinely read the assignment provided by the instructor so they stay the course.

• **Identify the point of the essay.** Once students gain a firm grasp of what the instructor is looking for, they can then identify what their point of view or argument will be. This can require some research and should conclude with a thesis statement that will determine the rest of the essay.

• **Write an outline.** Outlines can help frame the essay and keep writers on track. An outline also serves as a time for writers to determine what to keep and what to omit from an essay.

• **Engage readers early.** An engaging question or assertion at the beginning of an essay will entice readers to want to continue reading. The question should be one writers can answer while an assertion should be supported throughout the rest of the essay. But some engaging prose in the opening paragraphs can draw readers in and set the stage for a well-written essay.

• **Begin each paragraph with a topic sentence.** Topic sentences are similar to outlines because they establish the structure of a paragraph. Each new paragraph should include its own topic sentence. If a new topic needs to be addressed, then do so in a new paragraph. Paragraphs should flow into each other, but writers should avoid introducing more than one topic in a single paragraph.

• **Write a strong conclusion.** The thesis statement will help to define the introductory paragraph, and it also can be utilized to establish the conclusion. Revisit the thesis in the conclusion and show how the points made throughout the body of the essay support that thesis.

Conclude the essay with a statement that highlights the significance of the point the essay attempted to make.

Students of all ages write essays. Some basic writing tips can help students master those assignments.

Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection



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**.
- 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.

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Choices in Education



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

How to help student-athletes balance academics and athletics

The rigors of academia demand every student's utmost devotion. For some, the challenges in the classroom are accompanied by the thrill of competition on the playing fields. Multi-tasking may be most associated with modern professionals, but many might have learned how to balance multiple responsibilities at once during their days as student-athletes.

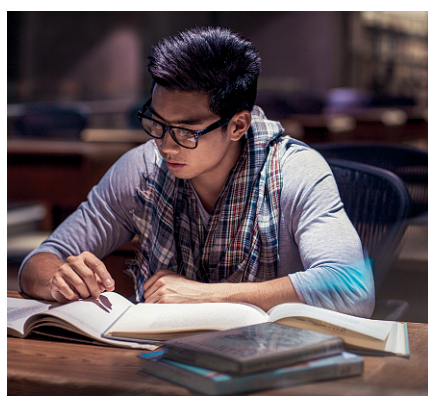
Student-athletes typically have a lot on their plates. Managing multiple priorities at once can overwhelm anyone, especially young student-athletes without much experience handling such a juggling act. As a new school year begins, student-athletes can consider these strategies as they try to do their best in the classroom and on the competitive playing fields.

overcome mental and physical fatigue. According to guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, teenagers between the ages of 13 and 18 should sleep eight to 10 hours each night.

• **Avoid distractions.** Student-athletes who are finding it hard to get at least eight hours of sleep each night might be too distracted during the day to get everything done so they can go to bed at a reasonable hour. Smartphones ensure distractions are never too far away, but student-athletes can take a proactive approach and turn off app notifications once a new school year and season begins. In addition, pick a quiet homework/study room in the house without distractions like a television or the hum of outside noise.



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

• **Practice time management over the summer.** Summer vacation provides a much-needed respite for all students, but it also can serve as a time management trial run for student-athletes. Over the course of summer break, create a schedule of activities and allot a certain amount of time to devote to each. In the spirit of summer vacation, these activities need not be rigorous, but the schedule can lay the foundation for the hopefully successful management of time that will be necessary when the school year begins.

• **Take steps to avoid burnout.** Burnout can affect student-athletes in the classroom and on the field. Work with parents, coaches and school staff, including a nutritionist if one works for the school's athletic department, to devise a meal plan that will help to energize the body and reduce injury risk. In addition, follow a consistent sleep schedule that helps to

• **Set academic and athletic goals.** Coaches typically establish goals for players before the season and then again during end-of-season exit interviews. Such goals can help athletes maintain their motivation, and a similar strategy can be employed in the classroom. Parents and student-athletes can meet with teachers to establish study goals to keep them striving toward academic achievement. Clearly defined goals can improve student-athletes' focus, and that can make it easier to balance their responsibilities.

Student-athletes face a balancing act once a new school year or season begins. Various strategies can help young people successfully juggle their academic and athletic obligations.

Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

How students can benefit from study abroad programs

Study abroad program participation understandably dipped in recent years as the world confronted a global pandemic, during which many countries closed their borders to non-residents for a period of time. In fact, according to NAFSATM: Association of International Educators, the number of students from the United States studying abroad in the 2020-21 academic year declined by 91% from the year prior. Since then, the world has largely returned to normal, and that means tens of thousands of students are once again considering study abroad programs.

Participation in a study abroad program can be a life-changing experience for young students. As students and their families consider study abroad programs, they can consider these notable benefits of signing up to study overseas.



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

• **Experience a foreign culture.** The chance to experience foreign cultures firsthand compels many students to study abroad each year. Data from NAFSATM indicates that 44% of American study abroad students study in just five countries: Spain, Italy, the United Kingdom, France, and Ireland. But study abroad programs are active in just about every corner of the globe. That means study abroad participants can experience foreign cultures similar to their own or go to school in countries with cultures vastly different from their own homeland.

• **Enhance your career prospects.** Study abroad programs can help students enhance their career prospects after graduation. NAFSATM notes that a 2014 survey found that nearly 40% of companies indicated they missed out on overseas business opportunities due to a lack of personnel capable of working abroad. Students who study abroad can stand out in crowded applicant pools, particularly among employers looking to expand their international operations.



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

• **Build networks.** Networking is perhaps more valuable to professionals than ever before. Students who enroll in study abroad programs may ultimately graduate with both domestic networks and international networks through their universities at home and abroad. Career placement offices at both schools can help students connect with alumni and professionals. In addition, students can build relationships with professors and fellow students they meet while studying abroad, further expanding their professional and personal networks.



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

• **Improve your earning potential.** The Institute for the International Education of Students, also known as IES Abroad®, reports that its alumni earn an average of \$6,000 more in starting salaries compared to recent college graduates in the United States. That's a significant benefit for students on the cusp of graduating who will have to confront a rising cost of living that has made it as challenging as ever for young adults to establish their financial independence.

Study abroad programs have much to offer. Students who enroll in such programs may find the benefits of studying overseas pay dividends for the rest of their lives.

Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

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