

How Children Can Balance School, Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular activities figure prominently in the lives of modern children. While extracurricular activities like sports play and club participation have been linked to a number of positive outcomes, including improved academic performance, child development experts warn that too much time in structured activities can compromise kids' creativity and make it harder for youngsters to learn how to structure their own time.

Managing school and extracurricular activities can feel like a juggling act, and it's important that parents work with kids so youngsters learn to balance school work and afterschool pursuits. With the school year in full swing, parents and kids can work together and consider the following strategies to ensure there's sufficient balance between academics and extracurricular activities.

• Emphasize that academics come first. Extracur-

ricular activities are undeniably important, but studies illustrate the importance of emphasizing academics over pursuits like sports. Though many parents recognize academics should be a student's top priority, youth sports and scholastic sports now require greater commitments of time than in years past, which could make it hard to prioritize academics and may even give a false impression of future outcomes.

A 2025 survey of parents of young athletes found that 22 percent feel their child could play higher-level collegiate sports. Those expectations are not supported by statistics from the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), which reports that very small percentages of high school athletes go on to play at the collegiate level. For example, just 1.4 percent of male scholastic soccer players and 2.7 percent of female scholastic soccer players play division I soccer in college.

While kids should not be discouraged from participating in extra-



curricular activities, it's important to prioritize academics and ensure kids are afforded ample time to do their best in the classroom. Recognition of that significance can make it easier for kids and parents to avoid overscheduling and creating a situation where it's hard for students to maintain a balance that increases their likelihood of being successful.

• Identify the activities that are most important to students. Overscheduling activities is a concern, and a 2024 report from Solution-Health noted that kids who

health issues like anxiety and depression. Kids may find it easier to balance school and extracurricular activities when they pare down and identify the afterschool pursuits that are most important to them.

• Work with children on time management skills. Parents can work with children and even enlist the help of coaches, scout troop leaders and others to instill time management skills in young students. Encourage young kids to use daily planners so they can stay organized. In addition, kids can keep a

daily time journal that documents how they spend their time each day. After a week or two of tracking their time, parents and kids can identify ways to be more efficient. Parents also can examine time journals to look for periods when kids can get some free time, which is important for young people's development.

• Encourage kids to ask for help if they need it. Parents can emphasize that schedules need not be set in stone. Encourage kids to ask for help and offer input if the plan they develop with their parents to balance school and extracurricular activities is not working or proving too challenging.

Balance is important as kids navigate school and extracurricular activities. Parents and kids can try various strategies and remain flexible to help kids fulfill their commitments to school and afterschool activities.

Everyone Has A Story

By Tommy Druen

Years ago, I was channel surfing when I stumbled across an old movie called "Murder in Coweta County." Johnny Cash played a Georgia sheriff, and Andy Griffith—yes, that Andy Griffith—played the villain, a wealthy landowner named John Wallace who thought he was above the law.

I couldn't look away.

Here was Sheriff Andy Taylor, America's beloved small-town lawman. Here was Matlock, the folksy defense attorney who always got to the truth. And he was playing a cold-blooded killer who murdered a man and tried to cover it up with the arrogance of someone who'd gotten away with everything his whole life.

The most unsettling part? He was brilliant at it. And it just seemed wrong.

We do this with actors all the time—lock them into boxes based on the roles for which we know them. John Wayne playing Hamlet? Unthinkable. Meryl Streep in a Marvel movie? We'd probably assume we walked

in the wrong theater. Once we've decided who someone is, we resist seeing them any other way.

But here's the thing: we don't just do this to actors. We do it to everyone.

The teacher is always the teacher, even at the grocery store. The boss is always the boss, even at their kid's baseball game. The clerk, the coach, the pastor, the parent—we see them in their roles and forget there's a whole person underneath, someone with dimensions we've never considered.

I think about Marcel Marceau. Most people knew him as the silent performer in the striped shirt and white face paint. But during World War II, he was a Jewish teenager whose father was captured by the Gestapo and died at Auschwitz. Marcel joined the French Resistance with his cousin and brother, and together they rescued Jewish children across France, leading them to safety in Switzerland.

While he wasn't a mime yet, he used his innate gift to keep

those children calm and silent during the dangerous journey. When they were frightened, when they wanted to cry out, he made them smile without making a sound. The same talent that later made him famous on stages around the world first saved lives in the darkness of war.

We only knew him as the mime. He was so much more. His silence saved them before it ever entertained us.

I remember a moment closer to home that taught me this lesson as well. Two friends, Sarah and Amanda, saw my dad one afternoon. He was a middle school social studies teacher and principal, and Amanda only knew him in that context—dressed in jacket and tie, standing in school hallways, speaking with that particular authority teachers carry.

Walt Whitman

wrote, "I contain multitudes." So do all of us. Andy Griffith could play both the gentle sheriff and the ruthless killer because he contained multitudes, like all of us do. Marcel Marceau was both the entertainer and the hero. My dad was both the principal and the farmer.

That day, he was dressed for the farm. Amanda was genuinely surprised. Sarah was not. I heard about it the next day.

Same man. Different contexts. Both equally real.

We see people only as they appear to us in our limited interactions. We forget they go home to full lives we know nothing about. The stern principal coaches his daughter's soccer team with patience and laughter. The quiet clerk writes poetry. The intimidating boss volunteers at an animal shelter every weekend.

Walt Whitman

scene from a movie you walked into halfway through. The rest of the story might astonish you.

Maybe we need to slow down. Maybe instead of just seeing people, we need to truly know them—to remember that everyone we meet is living a story far bigger and more complex than the single chapter we happen to witness.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Union County Fiscal Court is accepting applications for two Part-Time Gatekeeper positions at Moffit Lake.

Applications can be picked up and turned in at the Union County Judge/Executive's office, located at 100 West Main Street, Morganfield, KY 42437. They may be obtained by emailing jill.hunley@unioncountyky.gov, or you can apply online at www.unioncountyky.org.

Applications will be accepted until 4:00 p.m. on Friday, February 13, 2026.

The Union County Fiscal Court is an Equal Opportunity Employer: All applicants are considered for employment without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, veteran status, or disability. 2/11c

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The Union County Judge/Executive's office is accepting applications for a road crew truck driver/general laborer. The road crew member must possess a current CDL license or obtain one within 6 months of hire.

This is a full-time position with benefits, including health insurance, retirement, and vacation.

Applications can be picked up and turned in at the Union County Judge/Executive's office, located at 100 W. Main St., Morganfield, KY 42437. They may be obtained by emailing jill.hunley@unioncountyky.gov, or you can apply online at www.unioncountyky.org. Applications will be accepted until 4:00 p.m. on February 13, 2026.

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