



Parents Make A Difference!

Teen Involvement

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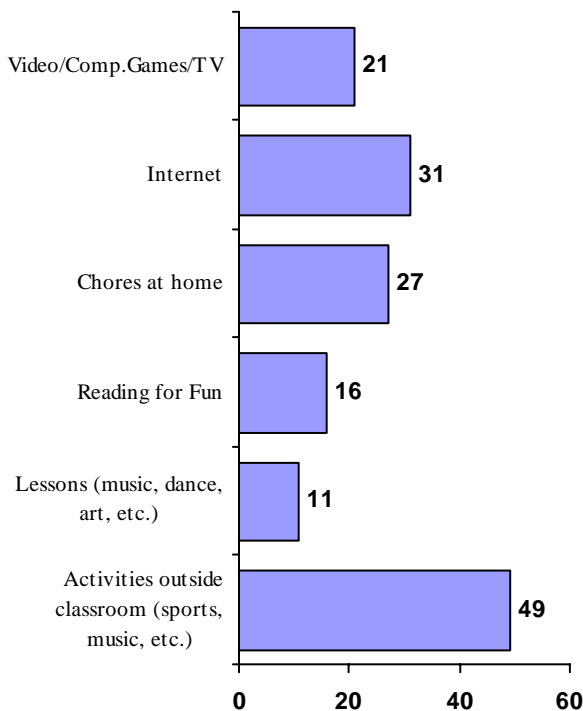
The Southwest Wisconsin Youth Survey (SWYS) was conducted in the fall of 2005 with 3,727 7th to 12th graders from 15 CESA #3 school districts participating. A close examination of the results provides clues as to how teen involvement in school and non-school activities is related to teen academic performance.

Survey results link involvement in school related co- or extra-curricular activities and involvement in structured non-school activities with academic achievement.

How are teens using their time?

Before we can address the benefits of teen involvement, it's helpful to know how teens are using their time. The majority of time in a teen's day is spent in school and in most cases on homework. In addition, teens in southwest Wisconsin have jobs, are involved in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, spend time with friends, take part in non-school activities, watch television, and spend time on the Internet. The following chart shows how teens are using their "out of school" time:

Percent of Teens Spending 3 or more hours/week



In addition to the activities listed on the chart, 26% of teens also spend more than 10 hours per week working and 65% of teens spend one or more hours per day on homework or studying.

Benefits of Teen Involvement

According to the survey, 79% of students involved in three or more hours of activities outside of school each week get As and Bs for grades. This compares to only 49% of students who did not participate in any extra-curricular activities who got grades of B or above.

In addition to enhancing academic performance, involvement in the activities described above, is tied to lower rates of risky teen behaviors. Sixty-nine percent (69%) of teens who are involved in non-school activities (one or more hours each week) do not smoke and 56% do not drink alcohol. Eighty-eight (88%) of teens who spend time in activities outside the classroom are satisfied with themselves and take a positive attitude toward themselves. Involved teens are less likely to be pressured into using drugs and less likely to ride with an intoxicated driver. Teens who are involved in out-of-school activities are also less likely to use marijuana and cocaine.

Participation in extra-curricular and out-of-school activities supports more opportunities for exploration and reflection, expression and creativity, group membership, and contributions and service. Also, opportunities for part-time employment can increase self-esteem. These "assets" are factors that help promote positive outcomes and that help protect a teen from engaging in risky behaviors. Parents that help youth get involved in their school and community and help youth see themselves as successful adults contribute to the positive development of youth.

The Downside to Teen Involvement

Although many teens are involved in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, 30% of teens report that the cost of participating in school activities keeps them from participating as much as they would like to. This feeling is much more common among 7th, 8th, and 9th graders than among juniors and seniors.

More than 20 hours of employment each week may result in lower grades for teens. The survey indicated that 55% of those teens who are not employed get As and A/Bs. Of the teens who work 1-10 hours per week, 77% get As and A/Bs. However, only 11% of those who work over 20 hours per week get As and A/Bs.

Twenty-nine percent (29%) of males and 32% of females spend over three hours each week on the Internet. Forty-eight percent (48%) of males and 39% of females spend over three hours per week playing video/computer games or watching T.V. Eighty-eight percent (88%) of teens who report spending no time playing computer games or watching T.V. get As, A/Bs or Bs. Eight-two percent (82%) of teens who get As or A/Bs spend some time on the Internet each week.

So What Can Parents Do?

As a parent, if your goal is supporting better grades now that can in turn lead to better opportunities for higher education and employment in the future, here are some suggestions:

Be Interested – Ask every day, “What did you learn today?” “Do you have any homework?” Encourage good grades, you’ll find your teen enjoys your interest in their school work.

Help Your Teen Enjoy School – Students that feel more connected to their school will enjoy going to school. Help your child get to know teachers and staff and get to know them yourselves.

Encourage Involvement in activities outside the classroom – Students that spend time outside of the classroom in activities have higher grades than those that do not participate in activities.

Encourage Involvement in Volunteer Work – Help your teen find a volunteer position for them that they find worthwhile and meaningful. Studies show that teens who spend some time volunteering do better academically.

Enforce the School Codes –The ability to participate and compete in co- and extra-curricular activities appears to help students make better choices and get better grades.

Talk to Your Teen About Their Future – Research reveals that teenagers want more, not less, guidance from their parents.

Encourage Involvement

The Southwest Wisconsin Youth Survey and the other research clearly indicate that teens who participate in school activities do better academically. Also, teens that participate in community groups typically do better in school. As a parent, remember to encourage your teen and support his or her involvement in a variety of activities. You will all benefit!

Remember, Parents Make a Difference!

“Parents Make a Difference” is a product of the Southwest Wisconsin Youth Survey (SWYS), a program of the University of Wisconsin-Extension, local school districts and UW-Platteville. This series is adapted from Parents Make a Difference, Teen Involvement and Academics, by Schriefer, et.al. This issue of “Parents Make a Difference” was written by Amy Mitchell, UW-Extension Crawford County and edited by Bev Doll, UW-Extension Grant County Jessie Potterton, UW-Extension Lafayette County, Tom Schmitz, UW-Extension Grant County, and Pam Hobson, UW-Extension Richland County. Thanks are extended to the 3,727 7th to 12th graders from southwest Wisconsin who participated in the 2005 SWYS survey. Contact UW-Extension for further information: Grant County (608) 723-2125; Lafayette County (608) 776-4820; Crawford County (608) 326-0223; and Richland County (608) 647-6148. Or visit the website at: <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/grant/tap/parentresources.html>