

# BACK TO SCHOOL



# 2019

*An Advertising Supplement to*

# The Sentinel-Progress

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# Make the transition to high school easier



The transition to high school is a significant one in the life of a teenager.

## Staff report

PICKENS COUNTY -- Over the course of an academic career, the average student switches schools three to four times. Elementary school gives way to middle school or junior high. From there, students will transition to high school. If a student chooses to keep their academic journey going after high school, college or trade school awaits.

Adolescence is a transitional period when many students may be learning how to make decisions and taking their first significant steps toward becoming

independent adults. That can make the transition from middle school to high school more complicated than previous transitional periods young people experienced.

Several changes take place in high school that can impact students' anxiety levels.

- Students go from being the oldest in middle school to the youngest in high school.
- The student body population typically increases dramatically.
- Curriculum becomes more demanding than it was in middle school.
- School hours change, often requiring students to wake up earlier.
- A new school may mean students are funneling in from different feeder schools. Long-time friends may be separated depending on where they ultimately choose to go to high school.

A 2016 survey from the Pew Research Center found that 70 percent of teens

say anxiety and depression are a "major problem" among their peers.

To help make high school a positive experience and less likely to induce anxiety, students and their parents can employ these tips.

- Establish a consistent routine. The education resource CollegeVine advises students to build good study habits, create a calm and organized homework environment and focus on studies while keeping distractions at bay.
- Encourage extracurricular activities. Activities outside of the classroom are a great way for students to make friends and involve themselves socially with their peers. Such extracurriculars can lead to strong friendships that flourish throughout high school and beyond.
- Buddy up. Just as they might have done upon entering kindergarten, students on the cusp of starting high school can find someone who will be attending the same school and go over schedules and



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potential meet-up times. They can make plans to sit together at lunch as they both get acclimated to their new environments.

- Attend open houses. Families can tour the campus to get a feel for the layout of their children's school. Ask for a map of the school grounds so students can get an idea of where their schedules will require them to be throughout the course of the day.

The transition to high school is a significant one in the life of a teenager. Families can employ various strategies to make that transition go smoothly.

# The role of free play in early education



One of the biggest benefits to free play is it can foster kids' creativity and help kids discover their interests on their own.

## Staff report

PICKENS COUNTY -- Glance at a typical family schedule and you would no doubt see that afternoons are jam-packed and many children - even the youngest among them - have full itineraries of structured after-school activities.

In an effort to raise well-rounded and intelligent children, many parents enroll their youngsters in all sorts of extracurricular activities, including sports leagues, travel teams, enrichment clubs, and musical instruction. While these activities benefit kids in myriad ways, it's also beneficial to let kids be kids and to

provide ample time for them to engage in free play.

According to the popular toy and learning company Alex Brands, structured activities can teach children how to follow rules and routines and help them build developmental skills. But free play can improve critical skills as well. One of the biggest benefits to free play is it can foster kids' creativity and help kids discover their interests on their own. Free play also helps children learn independence and how to keep themselves occupied.

The United Nations recognizes free play as a basic right of every child and underscores its importance. Despite this, unstructured play seems to be on the decline, with more structured activities taking over young children's days.

Even in school settings free play has given way to more time spent at desks and devices in preparation for standardized testing. Recess, which has been cut or reduced in many school

districts, has become a hot-button issue for many free play advocates. The development of Recess for All Florida Students, as well as proposed legislation in other states, has redirected attention to free play and the importance of it. Recess is a form of free play and provides students with a break from the rigors of learning.

In a 2011 article in the American Journal of Play, Peter Gray, Ph.D., a researcher at Boston College, indicated that "lack of play affects emotional development, leading to the rise of anxiety, depression, and problems of attention and self-control." Gray also indicated that without play, "young people fail to acquire the social and emotional skills necessary for healthy psychological development."

Free play also can benefit youngsters in the following ways:

- Enables kids to learn dexterity and improve on other strengths;
- fulfills exercise requirements for growing



Free play helps children learn independence and how to keep themselves occupied.

kids;

- helps kids conquer fears and develop confidence;
- establishes natural leadership roles and hierarchy in social groups;
- contributes to emotional well-being by giving children a respite from schedules; and
- helps teach self-responsibility, which may translate to better behavior at home and in school.

Free play is an important component of learning and exploration for children. A mix of structured and unstructured activities is key to raising well-rounded individuals



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# Be the ultimate overachiever

By Kasie Strickland

kstrickland@cmpapers.com

PICKENS COUNTY -- A new school year is a clean slate. How are you going to make your mark?

To help students gear up for a successful 2019/2020 school year, educators and parents are collaborating to help each student reach their highest potential. Likewise, kids enrolled this year can apply these tips to make a seamless transition from Summer to school.

## Set specific goals

Writing down goals and aspirations can get you started on the right note. In a recent survey conducted by Pilot Pen, more than 94 percent of people stated that writing down goals makes you more likely to achieve them, whether that means getting straight As, making your favorite sports team, or making a difference in your community.

## Get involved

Find something that you are passionate about this school year, whether that means joining an existing club or taking on a totally new project. Studies show peer motivation can be a huge factor in sticking something out through the end. What's more? Students who are involved with clubs, sports, or other team projects tend to have higher test scores, higher graduation rates and report better self-esteem and overall health.

## Be prepared

Overachievers of all ages know that you have to have the right tools at your disposal to get the job done. But "tools" doesn't necessarily mean the latest technological gadget -- it can mean anything (or anyone) who can help you get the job done. Easily distracted? Set aside a quiet study time. Struggling in a certain class? Ask a teacher for help or talk to your parents about a tutor. Shady internet at home? Make a list of available free wifi hotspots you can use if needed and keep a portable power strip on you. In short, having the skillset doesn't hurt, but it's great to have help lines set up if you need it.

## Try something new

Make this the year you step outside your comfort zone and try something totally new to you. Audition for the school play. Join or start a

new club. You never know where a hidden talent lies and there's only one way to find out.

Whether you or your children are in public school, private school, homeschooled or attend an online school -- starting with the basics is a good place to begin. So when taking on new challenges this school year, no matter your goals, remember that with smart planning, perseverance and the best tools, you too can be an overachiever.



Find something that you are passionate about this school year.



To help students gear up for a successful 2019/2020 school year, educators and parents are collaborating to help each student reach their highest potential.



Overachievers of all ages know that you have to have the right tools at your disposal to get the job done.

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# Extracurricular activities for non-athletes

## Staff report

PICKENS COUNTY -- Sports are a popular activity for adults and children alike. While adults may not have the time to hit the hardwoods or toss the ball around as much as they used to, sports continue to be as popular as ever among young people. According to the State of Play: 2018 report from The Aspen Institute, 69 percent of children between the ages of six and 12 participated in a team or individual sport at least once in 2017.

As popular as sports are, some students are not inclined to lace up a pair of cleats or compete with their peers on the athletic playing fields. In fact, the State of Play: 2018 report found that just 37 percent of kids between the ages of six and 12 participated in a team sport on a regular basis in 2017. Lack of interest in sports is nothing for parents to worry about, though it is important that parents encourage their kids to participate in extracurricular activities, which can pay a host of dividends.

## Why participate in extracurricular activities?

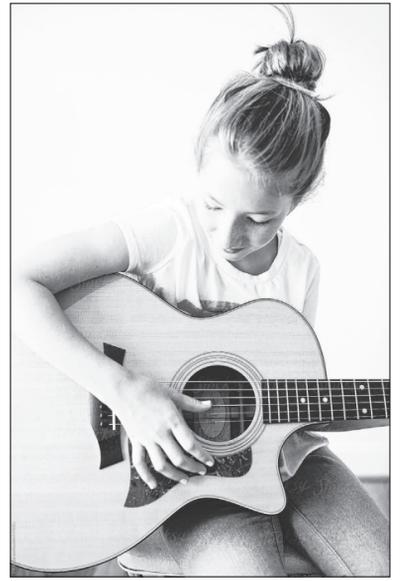
Extracurricular activities do more than just provide something for kids to do once they're dismissed from school. Certain activities may help kids perform better academically. In analyzing data on more than 25,000 second school students, the United States Department of Education found that those who reported consistent involvement in instrumental music during middle school and high school performed significantly better in mathematics by grade 12 than kids who did not participate in music programs.

Participation in extracurricular activities as a youngster also may pay dividends well into the future. A 2017 study from researchers at Rutgers University found that people who were involved in extracurricular activities in high school were likely to stay involved in their communities throughout their lives.

## Extracurricular activities for non-athletes

Sports might be a popular extracurricular activity, but there are still plenty of additional activities for kids who have no interest in sports.

- **Music:** School bands or community music programs provide opportunities for kids to learn an instrument and connect with fellow music lovers.
- **Volunteering:** Many organizations welcome teenager volunteers, recognizing that kids who volunteer as teens are more likely to continue doing so as adults, which can help charities and other organizations meet their missions. Volunteering even allows kids to further indulge an existing passion. For example, kids who love the beach can volunteer with a local environmental organization that works to clean up local beaches and waterways.
- **Writing:** Youngsters with an interest in writing can participate in local creative writing groups. Such groups can be great places to brainstorm story ideas and learn about the creative writing process.



**Lack of interest in sports is nothing for parents to worry about, though it is important that parents encourage their kids to participate in extracurricular activities.**

activities can enrich young peoples' lives and lay the foundation for a rich, fulfilling life.

## How parents can get involved with kids' extracurricular activities



**Kids who participate in sports can learn about discipline, how to handle winning and losing with grace, and the importance of setting and achieving goals.**

## Staff report

PICKENS COUNTY -- Educators often note the importance of family engagement in regard to academic achievement. A strong and engaged support system at home can propel students to reach their full academic potential, laying the foundation for success into adulthood.

According to the National Education Association, research continues to show that family engagement benefits students in a variety of ways. Such engagement has

been linked to reduced absenteeism and improved performance in the classroom. In fact, the NEA notes that students with involved parents or other caregivers earn higher grades and test scores and also have better social skills than those students whose parents aren't as involved.

Family engagement also can be beneficial in regard to extracurricular activities. Kids may be more excited about extracurricular activities if their parents are involved. In addition, such activities

provide opportunities for parents and their children to strengthen their bonds through shared experiences. Busy parents also may find that participating in their children's extracurricular activities gives them more time with their kids. Without such participation, parents may be more inclined to work long hours.

Extracurricular activities run the gamut from team sports to music lessons to academic clubs. Kids' interests may not always align with their parents', but even in such instances parents can explore various roles to get involved in the activities their children participate in after school lets out.

- **Coach:** Volunteers are the backbones of many youth sports leagues, and parents can volunteer to serve as coach or assistant coach of their youngsters' teams.
- **Driver:** While it might not be a glamorous role, serving as chauffeur for busy kids gives parents one-on-one time with their children. Parents can use this time to discuss kids' days at school or simply to joke around and let kids be kids while they relax during the downtime between

school and extracurricular activities.

· **Teacher:** Parents can contact their children's school to offer their services when the school day ends. Parents' professional experience can be put to use to provide unique extracurricular activities that might otherwise not be offered. For example, parents who work in the field of finance can offer an "Investing Club" where kids learn the ins and outs of investing. Regardless of their professions, parents' professional experience can no doubt benefit local youth, including their own children.

· **Volunteer:** A 2018 analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau conducted by the University of Maryland's Do Good Institute found that roughly 25 percent of teenagers volunteered in 2015. Parents of young volunteers can join their children to help a good cause and get more quality time with their kids.

Extracurricular activities benefit students in numerous ways. Such activities may prove more enjoyable for kids if their parents get involved.

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**Courtney Money**  
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**Ginger McCoy**  
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**Greg Newton**  
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**Jayme Lively**  
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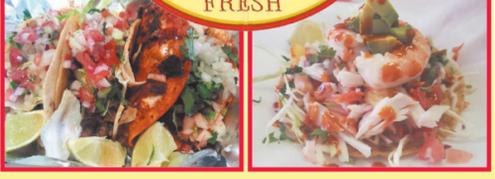
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