



REPORT TO PARENTS

RP 24:5

Over-scheduled Kids

Do your children have time to play every day? To just hang out? Or are their lives—and yours—ruled by their after-school and weekend activity schedules? According to a recent study, American children are increasingly losing out on play time as their parents schedule more and more activities for them. So it's a good idea not to pile too much on your children.

Beware of Burnout

• *How are their grades?*

Children can be so busy with after-school and weekend activities that they don't have enough time to do their homework or study. A hectic schedule also means that children aren't getting enough sleep, leaving them drowsy and unable to pay attention in class.

• *How are their moods?*

Kids, like adults, can develop a short fuse when they're stressed. Is your child cranky? On edge? Having time to "veg out" can sometimes be more important than yet another dancing lesson or scout meeting.

• *Are they really interested?*

Make sure that your children are involved in activities that interest *them*, and not necessarily because they interest *you*. If, after trying a suggested activity for a while, it's clear that your child's heart isn't in it, it might be wise to drop it. You can always try again when your child is older or shows more interest.

Be Selective

• *Keep activities to a minimum.* An activity that meets once or twice a week is ideal for elementary

school children. Let them join recreational teams or hobby groups at your local YMCA or community center. But one activity at a time should be the limit.

• *Go with the seasons.* Give your children variety by encouraging them to try different activities for a month or two at a time. Take advantage of the seasons with activities like soccer in the fall, an art class in the winter, tennis in the spring, and theater workshops in the summer.

• *Avoid "over-competitive" coaches and teachers.* The goal of recreational and other out-of-school activities is to help children learn and have fun, and not to pressure them to excel. When signing up your kids for after-school and summer activities, look for coaches and teachers who remember that they are children, and not "small adults."

Make "Down Time" Count

• *Give them a break.* Make sure there's some time in your child's day that's totally unscheduled, when they can unwind, play, or pursue whatever interests them.

• *But don't let them just sit.*

It's great to let children relax, but don't go too far the other way by letting them become TV couch potatoes or computer geeks. Encourage them to play and interact with others.



A final thought: Find a Georgia commemorative quarter and carry it with you. Before you sign your child up for yet another class or sport, pull out the quarter and read the state's motto: "Wisdom. Justice. Moderation." That last word may be engraved in silver, but its message is as good as gold.