

### **The benefits of a variety of extracurricular activities**

by Natalia Ouspenska © June 2013

The topic of exposing children to extracurricular activities has long been a subject of a debate among parents, teachers, and academics. On one hand, there has been proven positive impact of extracurricular activities on the development of a child. On the other hand, the degree of such involvement has been a hotly discussed matter.

There is a myriad of various extracurricular activities offered. They generally serve at least three purposes: skills acquirement, social and intellectual enrichment, as well as character development.

### **Benefits of a variety of extramural activities**

Through exposure to a variety of extramural activities, a child can develop various skills, including important life skills such as swimming, cooking, etc. Some other activities, such as different kinds of sports, may promote emotional and physical well-being of a child and create healthy life-long habits. Extramural activities have shown to provide intellectual stimulation and have positive influence on academic performance of children. Exposure to a multitude of various activities provides an opportunity to broaden the child's view and appreciation of the world. It also helps maintain the natural curiosity and passion that all kids are born with and that fades away as they grow up.

Involvement in a variety of activities creates opportunities to find and develop a child's passion, which will promote happiness and a balanced life in the future. Through their activities, kids can develop friendships with peers sharing the same interests. Kids who benefit from a variety of extramural activities have an opportunity to influence other children in a positive way by sharing their skills and knowledge.

Exposure to a variety of extramural activities contributes to the development of many character traits that are crucial to a child's growth into adulthood. These include fair play, sportsmanship, honesty, integrity, dedication, motivation, perseverance, teamwork, friendship, time management and accountability. A child can learn that any activity will require a certain degree of commitment in terms of attending lessons,

preparing for lessons, taking care of their sports equipment or music instruments and, most importantly, seeing the season or a course right through to the end, even if the child's interest has diminished. Not quitting, especially when things get a bit harder or when there is a temptation to walk away to play, is an important character trait to acquire. Involvement in extramural activities also offers an opportunity to become more independent and raises self-esteem of children.

### **Important things to consider**

A choice of an activity may be influenced by a parent who would like to see their child develop in a certain way. For instance, a parent may want to develop an artistic side in a sports-inclined child. However, an activity should not be forced on your child. The variety of activities should depend on the age of a child. Younger children may get exposure to a lot of various activities to explore their interests and find out their abilities. The older the child, the more serious and specialised activities may become. Some activities may be tried and stopped once a skill is learned.

A child should not be allowed to take on too much. There must still be time for family activities and just chilling out. Parents should make sure that the academic work does not suffer because of the child's involvement in too many activities.

### **Conclusion**

Participation in extramural activities promotes creativity and imagination, expands social, emotional and intellectual skills of a child. A parent's decision on whether to involve a child in extracurricular activities, to what extent, and at what stage of their child's life is largely influenced by the child's age, personality and interests, parent's own background, their vision for the child's future, and, not the least, financial resources. One has to remember that it is a parent's responsibility to help the child find a passion for life, something that will enrich their life experiences and help maintain their life balance. This can be helped by the exposure to a wide variety of activities at different periods of times.