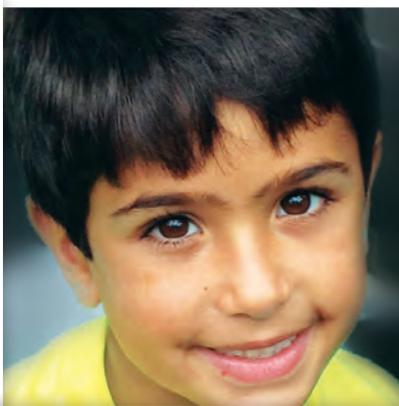


Highlights®

The
State
of the
Kid
2014



The State of the Kid™ 2014

Polling adults about issues related to kids is common. And those of us who care about children — parents, grandparents, educators and others — study the results of these surveys, hoping for insights that will help us better understand kids. But how often do we take the time to ask kids what they think — and then actively listen to what they have to say?

At Highlights, we spend a lot of time thinking about what is best for kids and their families. Our mission is to help kids grow into confident, creative, curious and caring people. We've learned that knowing the perspective of kids is essential to finding the best ways to serve them.

For almost 70 years, Highlights has worked to develop an authentic dialogue with kids. It began with our founders' custom of answering every letter received from a reader — a tradition we continue today. In fact, our mail bag and e-mail inboxes fill daily with letters from kids sharing their artwork, stories and poems — and also their experiences, thoughts and ideas. Kids write to us about their friends, families, school and pets, as well as their hopes and fears. They write. We answer. And we learn.

In fact, we've learned so much that six years ago we decided to give kids a national platform on which to share their thoughts — our annual **State of the Kid** survey. In this survey, kids ages 6 to 12 from across the country tell us about what it's like to be a kid today. This year, we asked them about parental distraction, their attitudes toward school, and their extracurricular activities. We are grateful that they have agreed to give us this glimpse into their lives, and we are delighted to be able to share what they've told us. We hope you find their views as fascinating as we do.

Sincerely,



Christine French Cully
Editor in Chief, **Highlights™** magazine

Purpose & Methodology

Purpose

Each year for our **State of the Kid™** report, we select topics that allow us to give parents and educators unique insight into how kids view the world they live in. We also look for issues that will be of interest to associations and institutions that serve children and families. This year's topics — parental distraction, school and extracurricular activities — met all of these criteria.

Most stories about parental distraction in the media highlight either the safety issue (driving while texting or talking) or the “selfishness” angle. But we felt we could offer two different perspectives:

- 1) Bringing the authentic voice of children into the discussion, as always; not just what adults and experts think about it but what kids actually see and hear and experience as their parents increasingly engage in technology. We also acknowledged this could be the basis for humor, which is why we added the question asking kids to describe what their parents would do if they lost their phones.
- 2) Proposing that if parents aren't paying attention, they're missing the opportunity to really connect with their kids.

Methodology

In prior years we conducted the **State of the Kid** survey ourselves (either as an insert in **Highlights™** magazine or on HighlightsKids.com) and worked with an external research organization to analyze the results. This year, in addition to surveying **Highlights** readers on our website, we engaged C+R Research, a leading market research firm with expertise in youth and families, to ensure that our sampling would be representative of the broader U.S. population of children.

C+R analyzed the demographic data from the **Highlights** survey and then tapped into their kids' panel to provide us with a sample that would be balanced across genders and age groups. They also provided analysis of all data collected.

The survey was fielded in April and May of 2014. A total of 1,521 surveys were completed by children ages 6 to 12, of which half were boys and half were girls. Thirty-nine percent were ages 6 to 8, 31% ages 9 to 10, and 30% ages 11 to 12.

The State of the Kid Today

As a child's world is ever-changing, here's a glimpse into the world of kids, 2014:

- Most-watched kids' TV shows: **SpongeBob SquarePants** and **Phineas and Ferb**. New on young children's must-watch list — **Adventure Time**, **My Little Pony**, **Peppa Pig** and **The Octonauts**. In the older age groups, "real-life" kids' dramas are becoming more popular. Examples are **Girl Meets World**, the sequel to the fondly remembered **Boy Meets World** of the 1990s, and **Sam & Cat**, which won favorite TV show overall at the Nickelodeon Kids' Choice Awards 2014.
- What are kids listening to on repeat this year? The Kids' Choice Awards tell us — by a landslide, **One Direction** wins out for favorite band. **Justin Timberlake** remains favorite male singer for boys and girls alike, while the latter also gravitate toward **Selena Gomez** for favorite female singer. What's the all-time best song of the year? "**Story of My Life**" by, again, One Direction. Topping out other faves are **Katy Perry**, **Demi Lovato**, **Taylor Swift**, **Britney Spears** and **Miley Cyrus**.
- When kids weighed in at the yearly Kids' Choice Awards, their favorite books were the **Diary of a Wimpy Kid** series by Jeff Kinney. For the younger bunch, **Green Eggs and Ham** by Dr. Seuss remains a first-grade favorite; second graders preferred **Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type** by Doreen Cronin. The Children's Choice Book Awards named **The Day the Crayons Quit** by Drew Daywalt as Book of the Year for kids grades K–2. Third and fourth graders preferred **Bugs in My Hair!** by David Shannon, while fifth and sixth graders went for a nonfiction pick with **National Geographic Kids: Myths Busted!** by Emily Krieger.

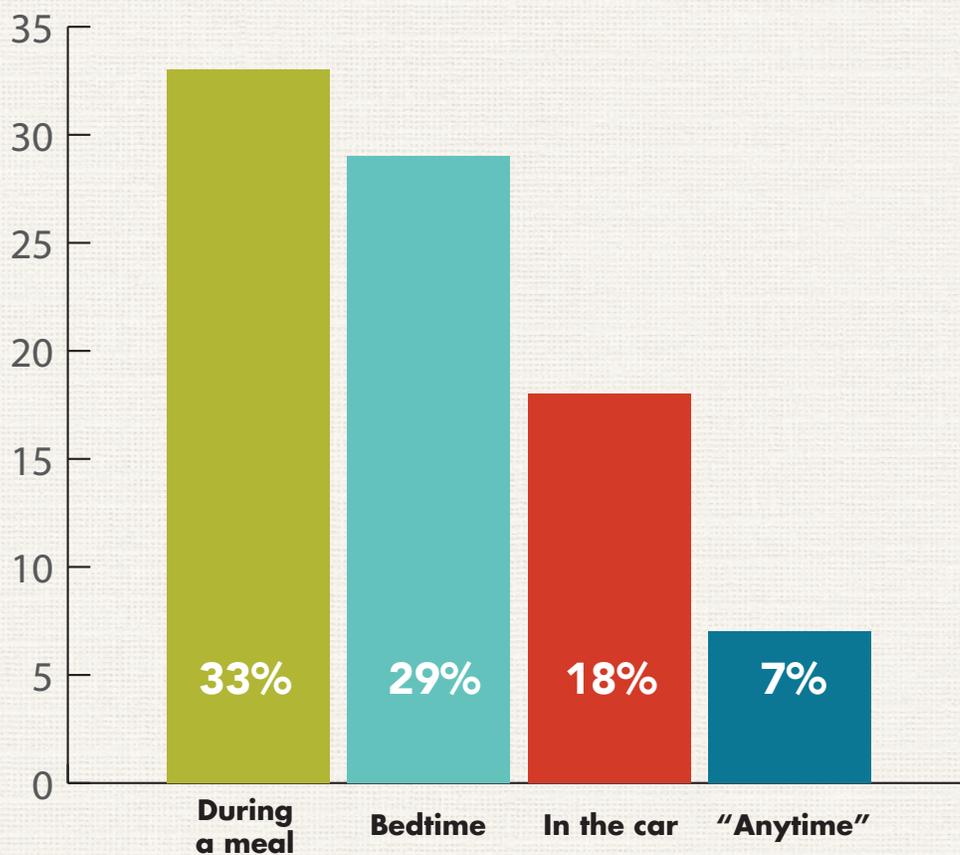


“When you want to talk to your parents about something important, when is the best time to do it?”

One of the hopes we have at Highlights is to support parents in raising kids to be their best selves. We know that communication is vital in keeping families healthy and happy. Given that parents are raising today's children in an increasingly fast-paced, multitasking world, we wanted to explore how children connect with their parents when they have something important to communicate.

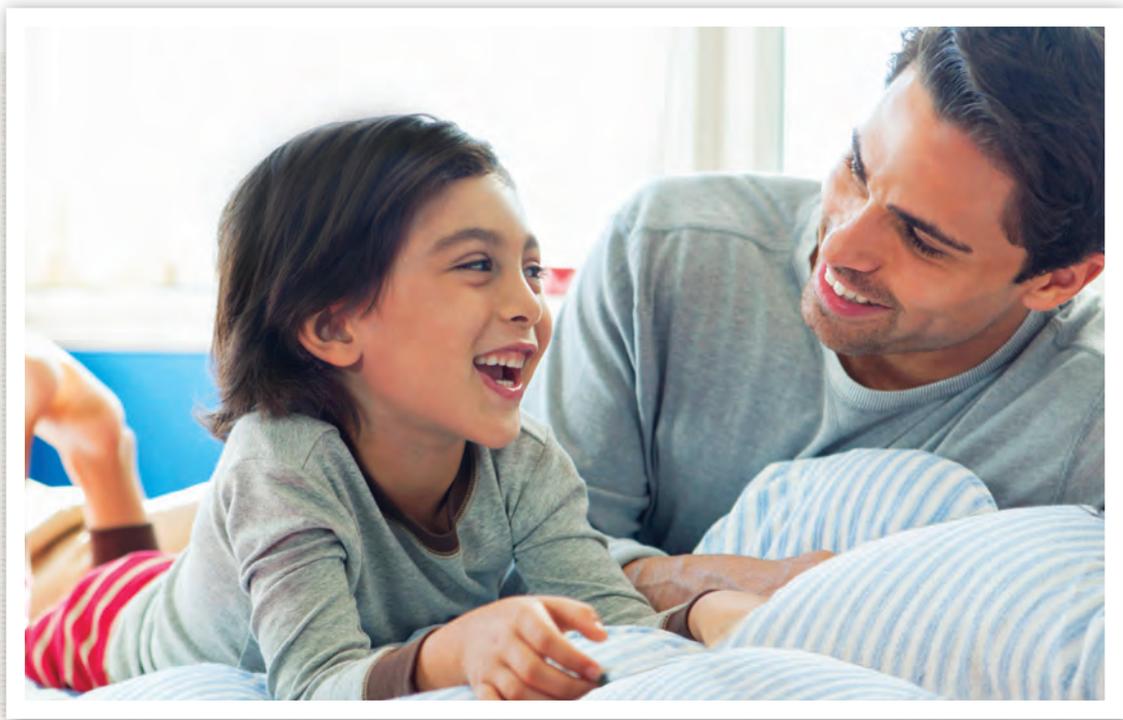
Kids seem to know when their parents are most receptive — and that is when they are sitting

down together during a meal (33%), closely followed by bedtime (29%). This makes sense as mealtime and bedtime are times when families are routinely coming together with a focus on each other, so it's a natural time for the child to open up to his parents. Another ideal time for discussion is when parents and kids are riding in the car (18%) — a time when parents and kids are alone together and can talk in private. Perhaps this is because many parents choose to use car rides as a time to talk to their children.



“When it comes to building bonds with our children, there are no shortcuts. It is only achieved when parents set aside time for quality, face-to-face communication with kids. The simple act of having a family meal together several times a week — with no TVs and phones — can have a big effect on kids’ social and emotional development, as well as academic performance.”

—Dr. Michele Borba



We followed up by asking kids how they knew when their parents were listening to them. Responses were astute:

I know my parents are really listening to me when they are sitting down and not on their phones.
-Girl, Age 10

My parent would be asking questions. Not just "uh huh."
-Boy, Age 10

My mom makes my sisters go in another room.
-Boy, Age 11

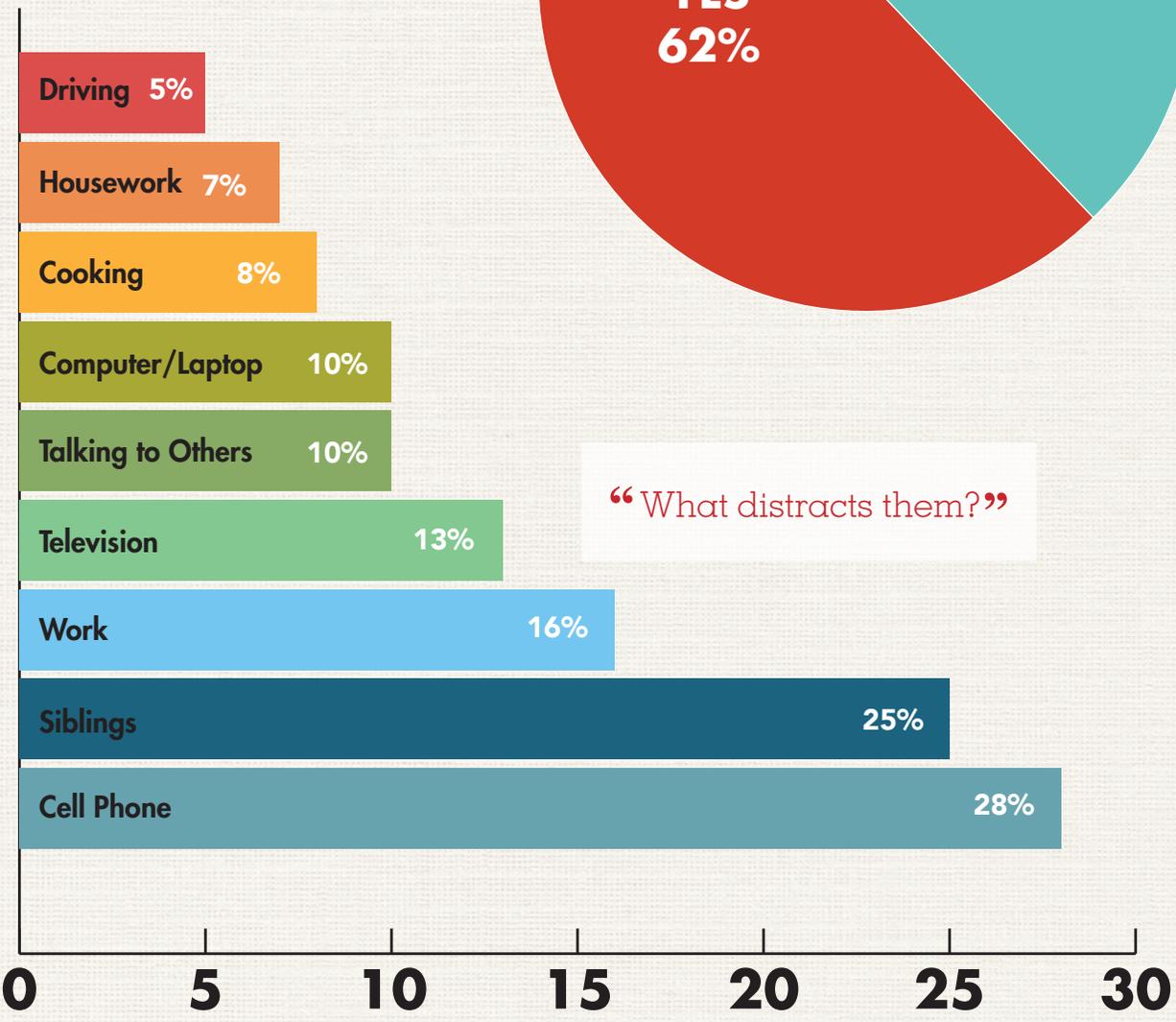
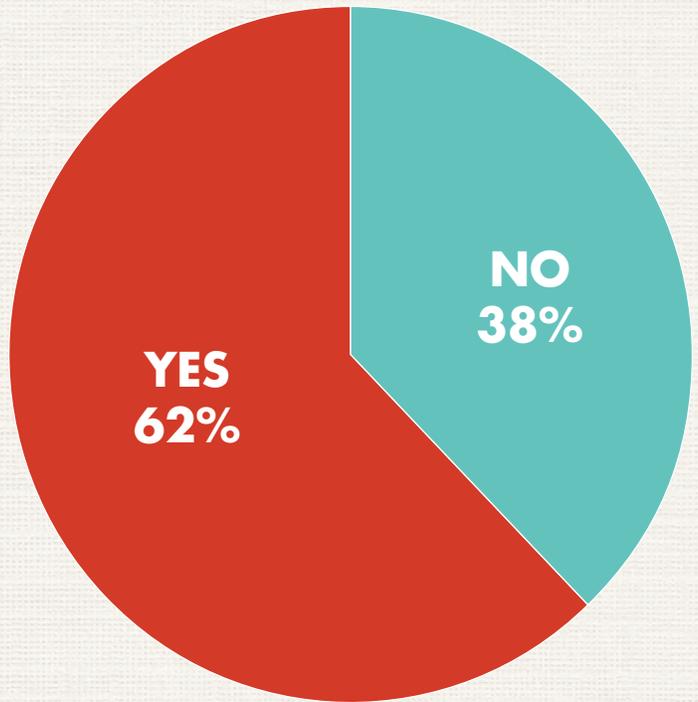
When there are no distractions and they listen and help me figure things out.
-Girl, Age 7

“Are your parents ever distracted or focused on other things when you are trying to talk to them? If so, what distracts them?”

We know that parents are busy and that kids have to contend with many things competing for their parents' attention, so it wasn't too surprising that 62% of kids responded “yes” when asked if their parents are distracted when they try to talk to them. When asked what distracts their parents, cell

phones came out #1 at 28%, followed by siblings (25%), work (16%), TV (13%), talking to others, computers and laptops, cooking, housework and driving. In total, 51% of those who responded cited some form of technology — phone, TV, or laptop — as the distraction.

“Are your parents ever distracted when you are trying to talk to them?”



“What distracts them?”

Can Listening to Kids Improve Their Health?

Parents who took a class in how to be more nurturing (including “spending more time listening”) had children who had fewer health issues related to

body inflammation.

Nurturing parents, researchers found, may indeed be able to help their children develop better resistance to various medical problems ranging from allergies to heart disease to some forms of cancer.

—Strong African American Families Project, University of Georgia



“Parents are more plugged in to technology than ever before, but they may not realize the impact it has on their kids when they are constantly texting or checking e-mail and social media. One strategy for minimizing the distractions is to establish 'sacred unplugged times' during family meals and after school that are reserved for face-to-face communication. Placing limits on your own screen time sends a signal to your kids about your priorities, and it serves as a good example for them to model.”

—Dr. Michele Borba

“If your parents lost their cell phone for a day, what do you think would happen next?”

It's become a bit of a cliché — we all love our phones! We were interested to see how kids might describe the relationship that their parents have with their mobile devices. What would it be like if they were separated? Kids recognize the importance their parents place on cell phones, and feel that their parents would be anxious if they lost their phone(s), and motivated to find or replace it. It's not surprising that the

responses we received from kids on this question were a bit more emotional, ranging from comments that their parents would “go crazy” (just over 11%) if their phones were lost, followed by kids saying their parents would “be mad” (close to 10%), to saying that their parents would simply use another phone! What's most surprising? Eleven percent said their parents would do nothing!



Go Crazy/ Be Mad

My Dad would go crazy! My mom would be glad!

-Girl, Age 6

Freak out, but I'd be happy.

-Girl, Age 8

I think my mom would go crazy and have a heart attack. And then faint.

-Girl, Age 8



Look for It

Wow, I can't imagine. Probably Mommy would go nuts looking for it, search everywhere until she found it. Not a good time to talk to her.

-Girl, Age 7

They would worry alot and make us help them hunt for it.

-Boy, Age 7

They would look for it and ask me for help.

-Boy, Age 10



Buy a New One

Dad would be mad and buy another one, mom would be ok.

-Boy, Age 6

If they couldn't find it for a long time, they would get a new one.

-Boy, Age 10

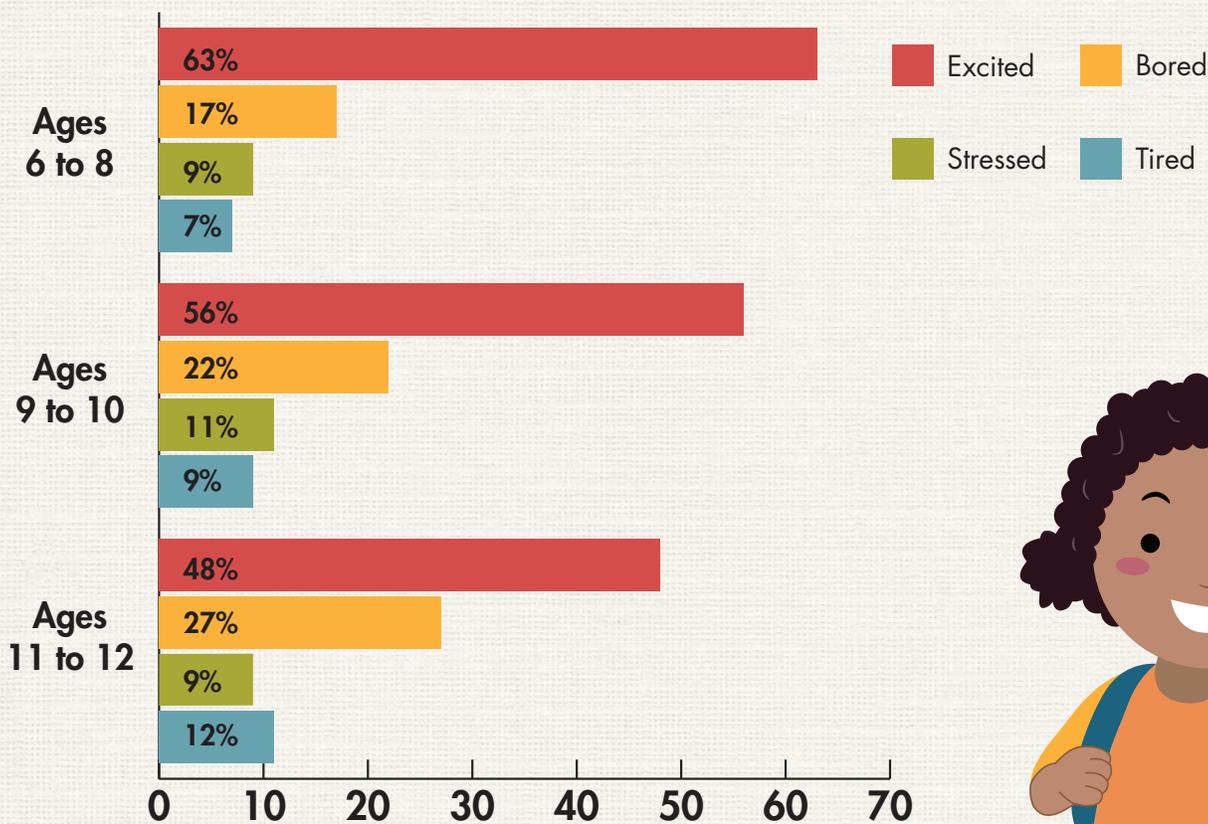
We would have to get a replacement very fast.

-Girl, Age 9

“When you go to school in the morning, which of the following best describes how you feel?”

With so much changing in education today — from Common Core to teacher tenure — along with the emphasis on testing and accountability, we wanted to explore children’s feelings about going to school. Our survey found that most kids are excited or happy as they head out for school in the morning (56% of respondents), but these positive feelings do decline as kids get older (48% of 11- to 12-year-olds).

Twenty-two percent responded that they were bored in school (slightly higher among boys at 25% and with older kids, 27% of 11- to 12-year-olds). Another point to note is that 9.2% of kids said they were sleepy or tired as an unprompted answer. This aligns with a result we saw in our 2009 **State of the Kid™** survey, where we asked kids if they had an extra hour in their day, what they would do with it — 6.6% said sleep.



As kids age, boys and girls experience different feelings as they head off to school. More boys than girls experience boredom at an earlier age. By 5th grade, more girls than boys feel nervous and stressed.

Is Lack of Sleep Affecting Kids' Ability to Focus on School?

A study from the National Sleep Foundation (NSF) indicates that many children, particularly those between the ages of 6 and 10, are not getting as much sleep as they need. The NSF recommends that children ages 6 to 10 get 10 to 11 hours of sleep per night, but a 2014 poll of parents found that most kids in this age range are only getting an average of 8.9 hours. A study by the Autonomous University of Barcelona found that 6- and 7-year-old students who slept just 8 or 9 hours each night performed

more poorly in school than those who slept 9 to 11 hours a night. According to the study's authors, missing sleep and bad bedtime habits had a significant negative effect on certain skills linked to academic performance.



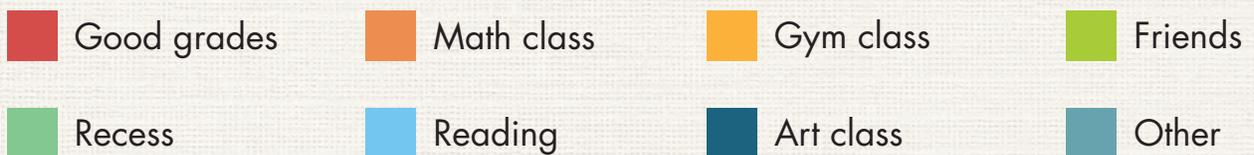
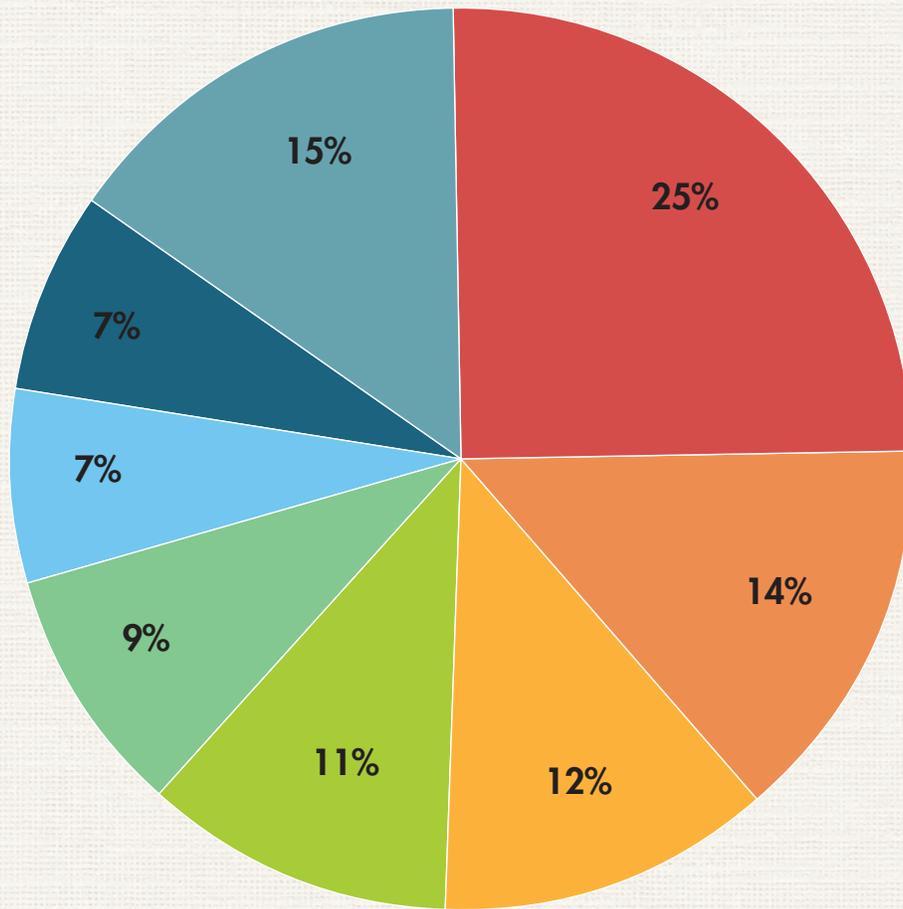
“The number of children who say they feel tired at school is concerning. A lack of sleep can have a serious impact on children’s ability to learn and perform at school — and many parents believe their children are getting enough sleep even when they are not. Setting consistent bedtime routines and limiting screen time before bed can go a long way toward helping children feel more rested during the day.”

—*Dr. Michele Borba*

“What part of school makes you feel good about yourself or proud?”

While good grades are a timeless source of validation and pride for kids, other aspects of school also engage school-aged kids and vary by both age and gender. A quarter of the respondents (higher among 11- to 12-year-olds) mentioned that good grades made them feel proud, while 14% (higher among

6- to 10-year-olds) cited math class, followed by gym class (higher among boys) and friends (higher among 11- to 12-year-olds). Recess (higher among the 6- to 8-year-old set), reading (higher among girls and ages 6 to 10) and art class (higher among girls and 6-to-10 age group) rounded out the responses.





Going to art and computers class, because it is my favorite class.
-Boy, Age 6

At lunch because I like to
hear the birds chirp.
-Girl, Age 8

When I do my math and my teacher says
I'm on fire because I get the answers right.
-Boy, Age 8



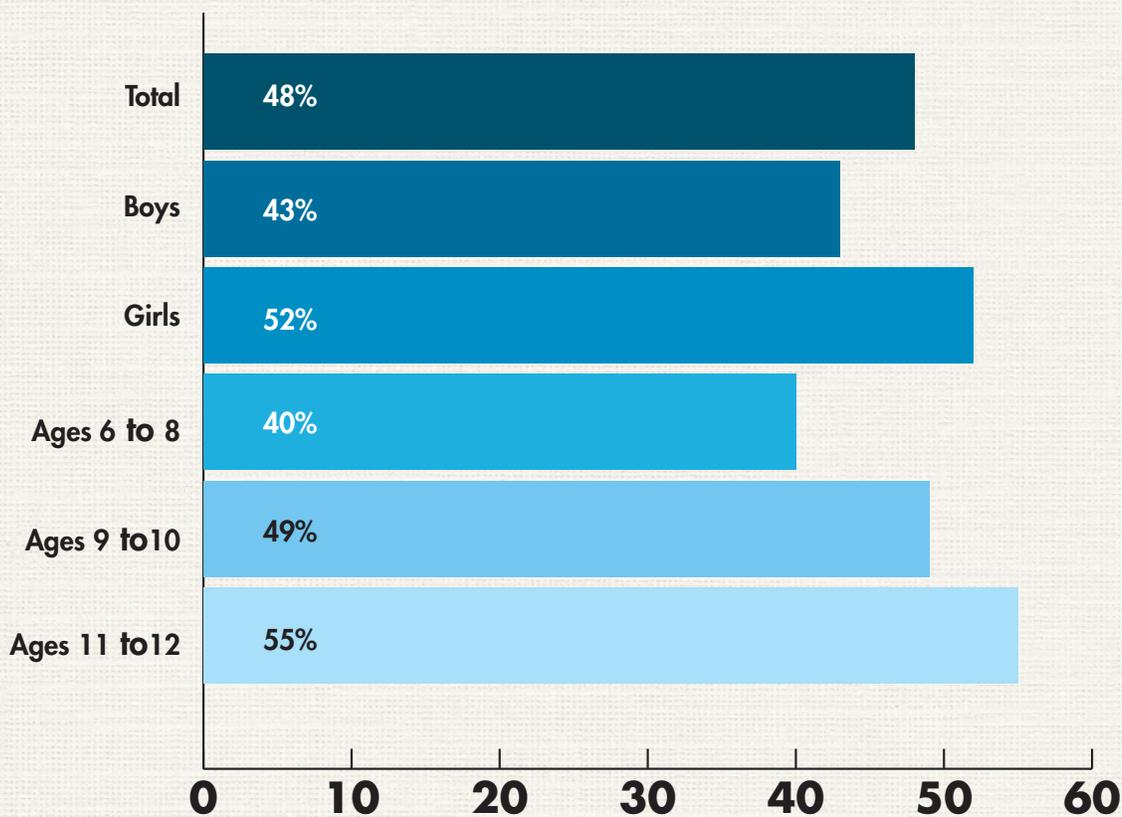
Fourteen percent (higher among 6- to 10-year-olds) cited math class as the part of school that made them feel most proud.

“Is there any part of school that makes you feel worried or stressed? What part of school makes you feel worried or stressed?”

Nearly half of kids feel stressed by school, a feeling that is more prominent among girls and older kids. Not surprisingly, tests are a primary source of kids' stress (33%, higher among 9- to 12-year-olds), followed by math class at 17% (higher among girls), bad grades at 10% (higher among 10- to 12-year-olds), and homework at 6% (higher among 10- to

12-year-olds), with reading class at 5% (higher among 6- to 8-year-olds) and bullying, also at 5% (higher among boys). These findings align with results from our 2009 **State of the Kid™** survey, in which we asked kids what was their biggest problem right now — the top response (23.4%) was schoolwork/tests.

Kids who responded **YES** when asked:
“Is there any part of school that makes you feel worried or stressed?”



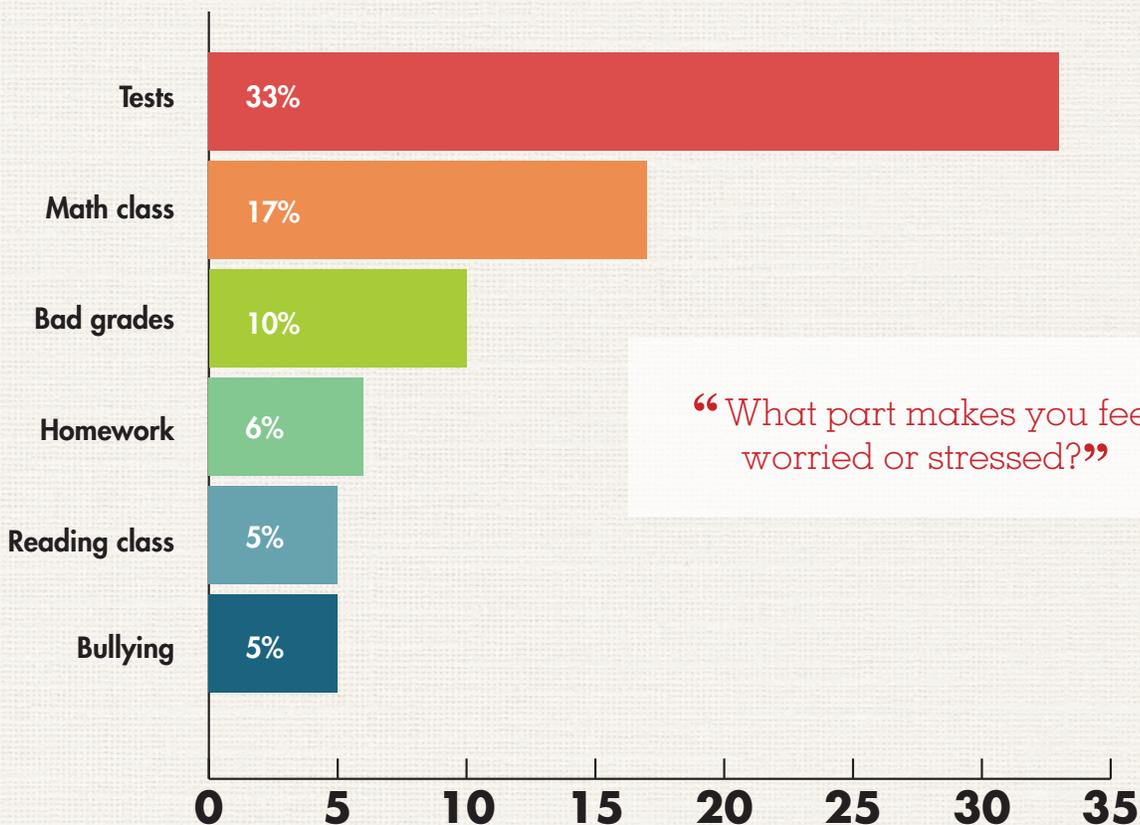
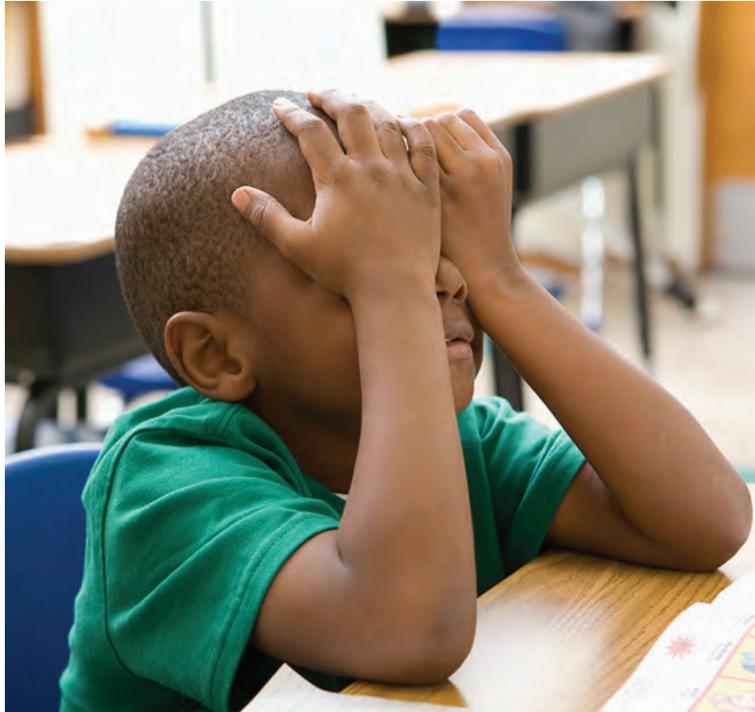
“While some stress is a part of life, many kids today are experiencing stress overload, and it is taking a toll on their physical and emotional well-being. The key to reducing and managing these stress levels rests with parents, who need to be aware of the signs that their children may be feeling overwhelmed, such as inability to sleep, changes in appetite and excessive irritability.”

—Dr. Michele Borba

Are Parents Aware of How Stressed Kids Feel?

Although the number of children who report feeling stressed continues to grow, parents tend to underestimate the effect that stress has on children, according to a 2010 study by the American Psychological Association. The

study found that while one-fifth of children report that they worry a great deal, only 3% of parents rated their children's stress as extreme. The findings are concerning because chronic stress left untreated can contribute to psychological problems as well as physical conditions.

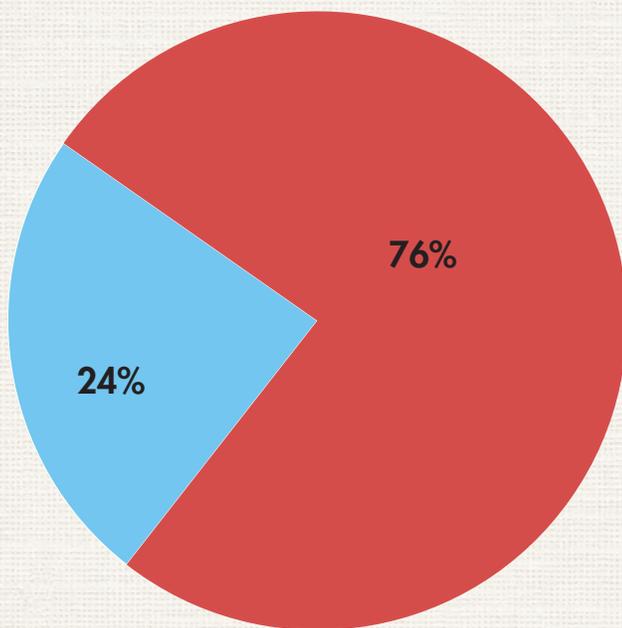


“When it comes to doing well in school, what’s more important: being smart or working hard?”

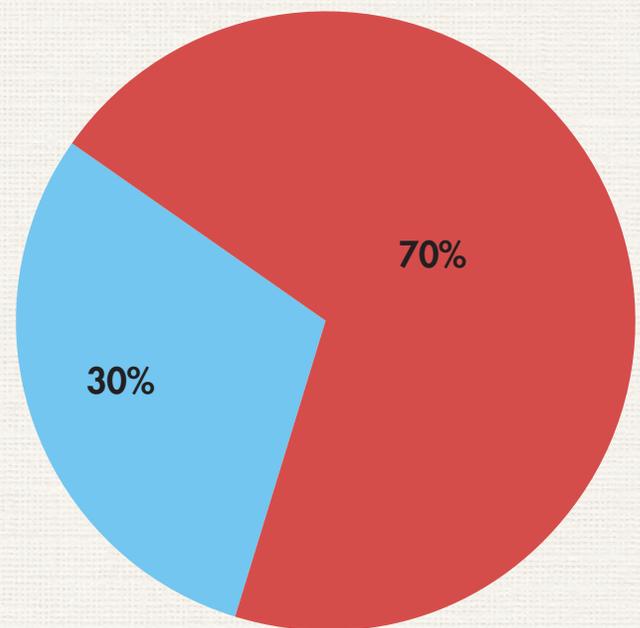
All those years of hearing “A for effort” from their parents and teachers must have paid off, as most kids (73% vs. 23%) feel that putting forth a good effort by working hard is more important than just being smart. If we look at gender, there are slight differences: 70% of boys cited effort over smartness vs. 76% for girls. Looking at it from an age point of view,

68% of the oldest kids (11 to 12) value effort, while 79% of 9- to 10-year-olds cited working hard as more important (only 21% of this age group responded that being smart was more important). The youngest age group (6- to 8-year-olds) closely mirrored the overall total: 72% said working hard was more important, while 28% put more value on being smart.

GIRLS



BOYS



■ Working hard ■ Being smart

“It’s encouraging to see that kids are recognizing the value in hard work and persistence — and it may reflect a shift in the way that parents are praising their children. Studies have shown that kids have higher levels of achievement in school when parents praise their efforts, rather than a specific outcome such as good grades.”

—*Dr. Michele Borba*

Effort, not Intelligence, is Key to Success

More than three decades of research shows that a focus on effort — not on intelligence or ability — is key to success in school and in life. Our studies show that teaching people

to have a “growth mind-set,” which encourages a focus on effort rather than on intelligence or talent, helps make them into high achievers in school and in life.

—Carol S. Dweck,
Scientific American
Mind, 2007



While most kids said working hard is more important than simply being smart, older kids were more likely than younger children to choose intelligence over effort. This may reflect a greater emphasis on grades and test scores as children move into 5th and 6th grades.



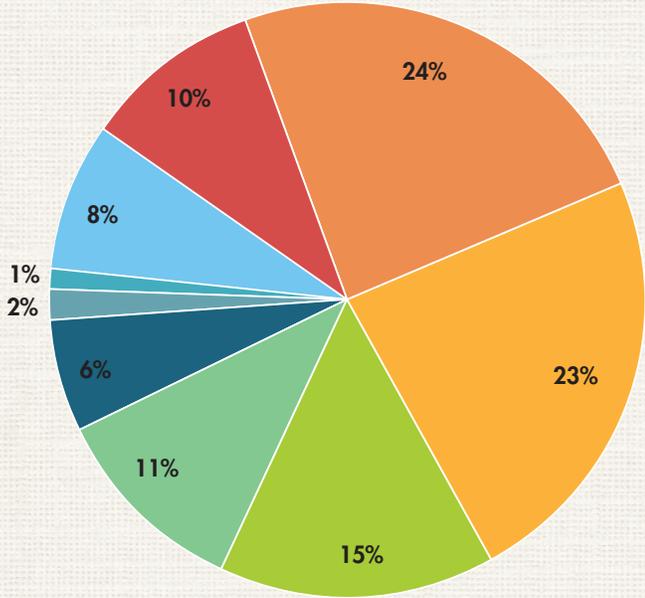
“How many activities, groups or lessons outside of school (such as sports, clubs, band, drama, etc.) do you participate in? Who chooses your activities and decides how many you’ll do?”

We hear a lot about overscheduled kids these days — and there is a healthy debate over whether it’s better for kids to have structured or non-structured time after school. Our survey results found that in grade school, more girls are involved in extracurricular activities than boys — and girls participate in more activities. Ninety percent of girls were involved in 1 or more activities, compared to 80% of boys.

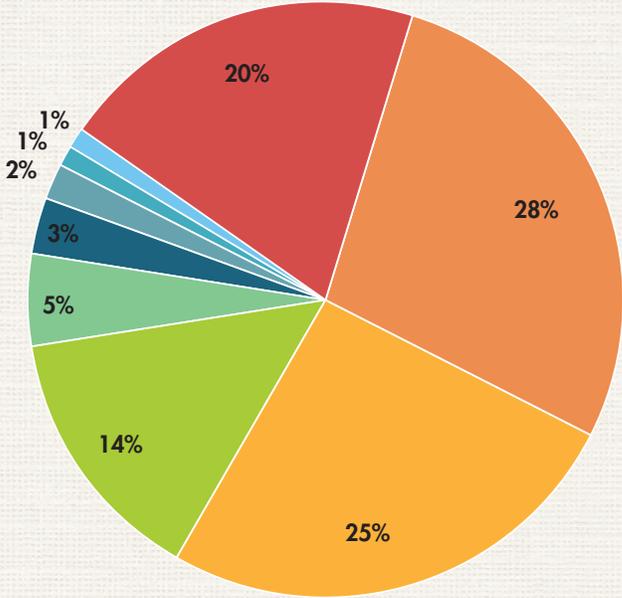
Overwhelmingly, parents and kids choose activities together, but as children age they have slightly more responsibility for choosing what they want to participate in (15% of 6- to 8-year-olds make their own choices, which grows to 20% of kids ages 11 to 12), but for the most part, parents and kids make this decision together.

“How many activities, groups or lessons outside of school do you participate in?”

GIRLS

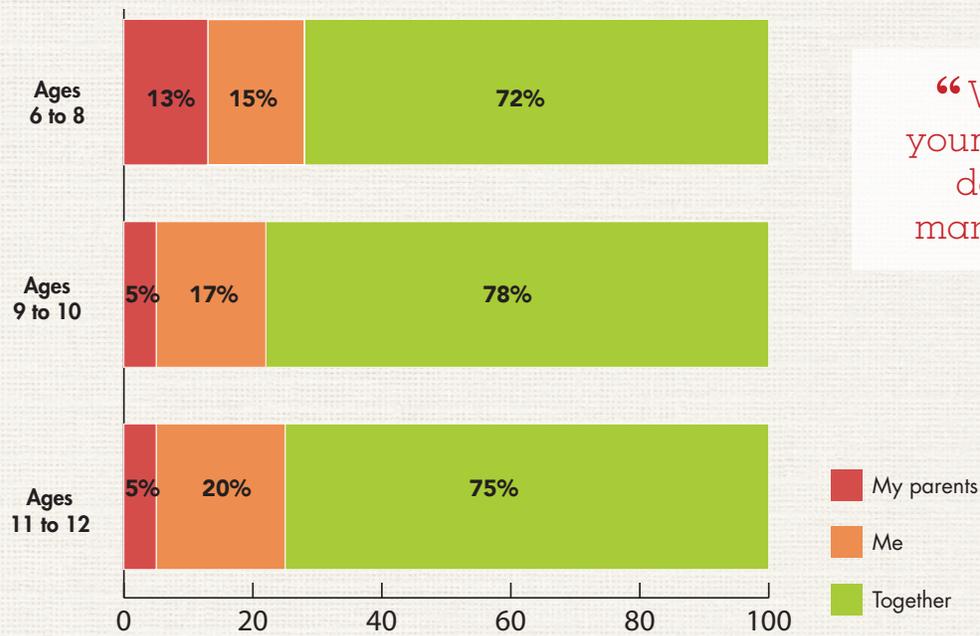


BOYS



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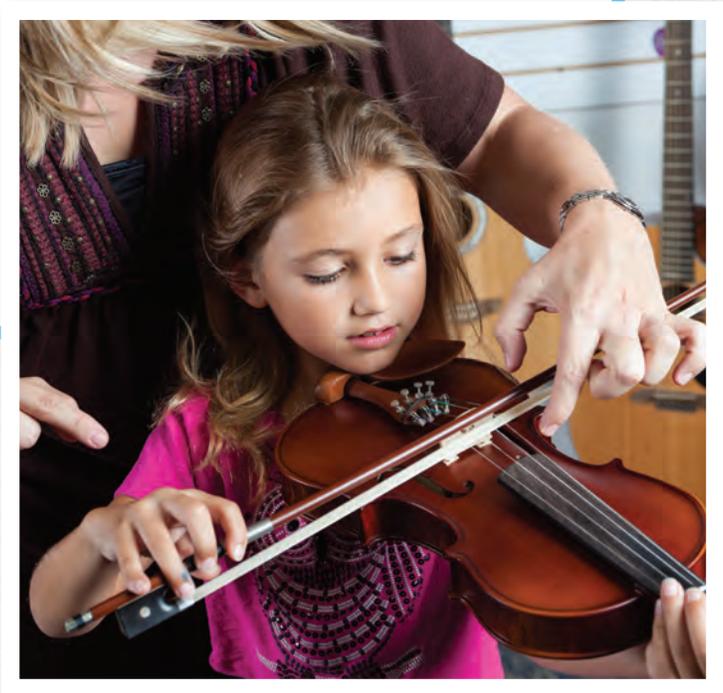
“While there are many benefits to involving kids in organized activities, research also shows that letting kids engage in self-directed play has immense value for their social, emotional, cognitive and physical growth.”
—Dr. Michele Borba



“Who chooses your activities and decides how many you'll do?”

Do Kids Have Too Many Structured Activities?

A research study published by the University of Colorado in July 2014 indicates that kids who spend time in structured activities, such as lessons and sports, were less able to use their “executive function” — a broad range of thinking skills that include planning, problem-solving and decision-making — than children who spent more time engaged in free play. Study authors say having more free time may help kids develop broader life skills that may be important for them, especially as they become more independent.



About Us

Highlights

Devoted to **Fun with a Purpose™**, family media brand Highlights for Children, Inc. (Highlights.com) has helped children become their best selves for generations. In addition to **Highlights**, the company's flagship magazine, Highlights for Children's other offerings include a preschool magazine (**High Five**), an infant magazine (**Hello**), a children's book division (**Highlights Press**), puzzle book clubs and a variety of digital products.

Dr. Michele Borba

Michele Borba, Ed.D., is an internationally renowned educator, award-winning author, and parenting, child and bullying expert. Dr. Borba is an NBC contributor who has appeared more than 100 times on the TODAY show and has been featured on countless national media shows. She is the award-winning author of 22 books translated into 14 languages. Her latest book is *The Big Book of Parenting Solutions: 101 Answers to Your Everyday Challenges and Wildest Worries*. Dr. Borba is a former classroom and college teacher and has had a wide range of teaching experience, including working with children with learning, physical, behavioral and emotional disabilities. She received a doctorate in educational psychology and counseling from the University of San Francisco and earned a life teaching credential from San Jose State University.

C+R Research

C+R Research is a full-service marketing insights agency that brings more than 30 years of experience in the youth segment, with two syndicated youth lifestyle reports (YouthBeat & YouthBeat Jr.) and a COPPA-compliant online panel of 25,000+ U.S. kids under the age of 13. C+R specializes in delivering custom quantitative and qualitative research to help youth-targeted companies better understand the needs and motivations of kids and parents.

**Special thanks to the kids who sat down to write
Highlights about their lives.**

**To learn more about Highlights' State of the Kid™ results or to read past reports,
please visit www.highlights.com/state-of-the-kid.**

Highlights®



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