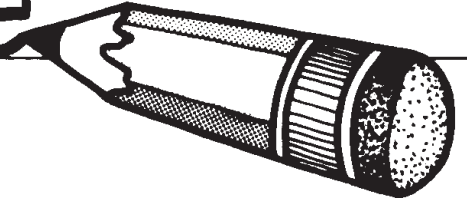
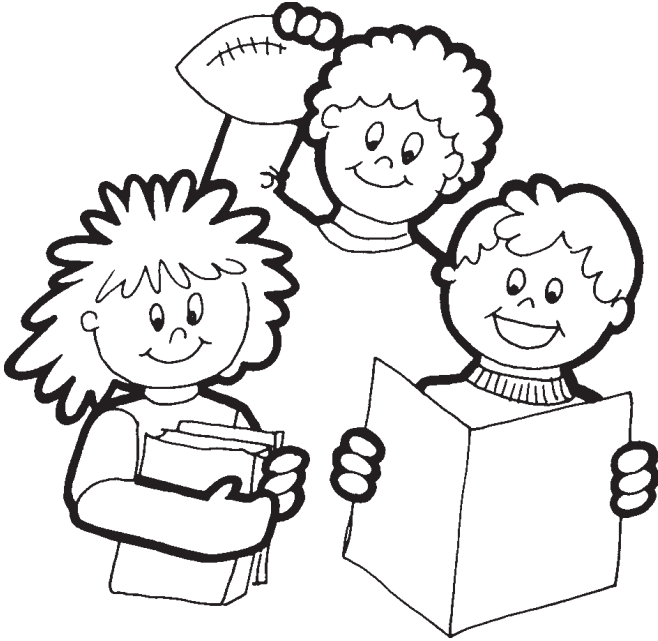


Parenting Pipeline



*A newsletter for parents of second-grade children
from the North Dakota State University Extension Service*



Choices of Children

“As long as the children are happy and having fun!” Have you ever had thoughts like this? It may reassure you, but sometimes it can be misleading.

Parents want their children to enjoy a variety of experiences. Therefore, parents need to provide opportunities for trying different activities. As a child develops an interest, she will want to continue in that experience more often and for longer periods of time. This can be a cue to you in discovering where your child’s interests are. This can also help you determine which activities to emphasize and which should be discontinued.

Children are sometimes expected to follow their parents’ footsteps or to try certain activities because their parents didn’t have the opportunity. Sometimes parents push scholarship or athletic skill or music. The activity becomes so serious that little thought is given to enjoyment. If the pressure becomes too great, children may drop the activity completely for fear of disappointing their parents.

Parents need to remember that every child is unique. Differences in children should be expected and accepted. Children of baseball fans are not all natural athletes, and coordinated parents may have awkward children.

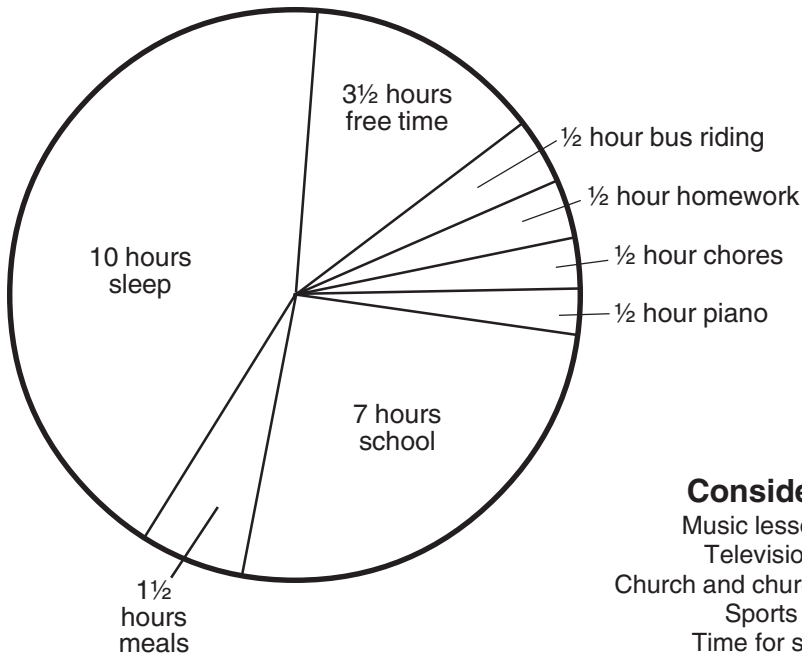
Praising children is great, but sometimes it’s overdone. Promising rewards for achievements is not always necessary. Rewards could give a message to a child that the activity itself will be no fun so more is needed. Rewards may also make it appear that perfection is the goal. Learning and fun should be the goal of activities. If a child believes he must be perfect, he will be easily discouraged and will quit trying.

So Much To Do

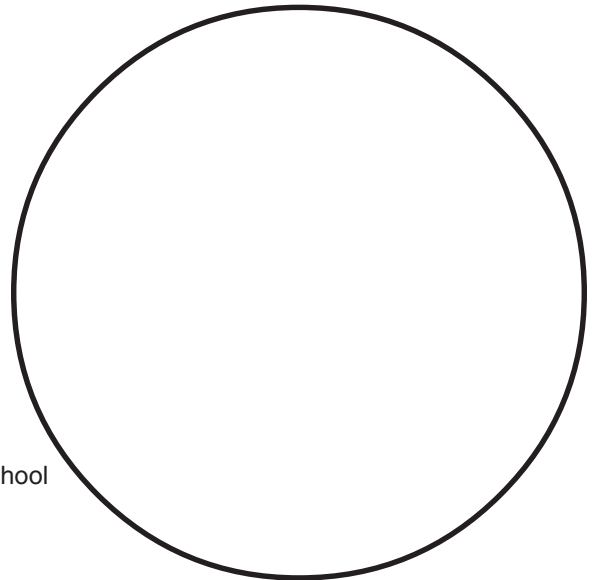
Excluding time spent eating and sleeping, your child has roughly 80 hours a week in which to do things. Subtract another 50 hours for school, homework and chores and this leaves your child only 30 hours a week for everything else.

As you can see, even your child’s time is limited. This means you need to help your child choose which activities are most important. Exploring choices means parents can help their child in identifying, thinking over and evaluating each choice. This is different from giving advice or telling the child what to do.

Make a pie for a day in your child's life, having slices correspond with time spent. Here is how a pie might look:



Consider:
Music lessons
Television
Church and church school
Sports
Time for self
Play



Decision-making steps include:

1. Defining the situation or problem.
2. Searching for alternatives.
3. Exploring and thinking through a variety of solutions.
4. Setting a future time to check on the progress.

It is important for parents to sit down with their child and explain the steps and how to solve a problem or make a decision.

Attitudes are important during this exploration. Parent and child should listen to each other, accept each other's feelings, trust each other and want to resolve the problem. It will help to maintain good eye contact, show interest and encourage your child to explain his thoughts.

Exploring choices works because it motivates the child to carry out the solution and helps her develop critical thinking skills. In addition, it eliminates the need for either parent or child to show power.

If you fail to find a solution, take a break, then go back over the steps. But keep trying. If the process breaks down, search for a hidden problem. Ask, "What is keeping us from finding a solution?"

Exploring choices, resolving differences and making a decision together will help parents and children understand each other and feel good about themselves.

This newsletter is published for North Dakota families with second-graders by the NDSU Extension Service and distributed through your county extension office. See your extension agent for more parenting information and other home economics programs.