

Are Extra-curricular Activities a Must for Every Student?

Ada Tse is a Primary Four student who goes to school in Shatin and has extra classes, which are arranged by her mother, after school every evening. On Monday, she has an extra English class. On Tuesday, she has a swimming lesson. On Wednesday and Thursday, she plays the piano and has a badminton class on Friday. In spite of these, she still has to find some time for her homework and leisure reading. This is a common scenario for children in Hong Kong nowadays. It is because many middle-to-high-income families wish to increase their children's chances of getting into a good by enrolling them in different classes. In this issue, I am unwilling to see children joining lots of extra-curricular activities.

Taking part in too many distinct classes puts pressure on the children which can harm their physical, emotional and mental health. Children do not get enough time for homework and preparation as most of their time is spent on extra-curricular activities. Their whole day is likely to be covered with lessons, classes and books with no free time for relaxation, resting and playing. In this way, they easily have emotional disorder because of the heavy stress and the lack of easing up. They may have health problems as well if they do not eat regularly and sleep sufficiently. As time passes, children may develop anger and arguments with their parents, affecting their relationship with parents. Too many classes lead to numerous problems.

Extra-curricular activities are not the only way to enhance children's intelligence. At the same time, high intelligence does not equal to a place in a good college. There are lots of other things which can strengthen children's IQ, such as sports, books, toys, music, even television programmes. Parents should realize that different people have different potentials and children can still get a good job even they do not get into a good school. Moreover, these extra classes may not reinforce children's life skills. Self-confidence, politeness, commitment, responsibility, sociability, creativity, honesty and suchlike, are the significant abilities for children in their lives and job. Can extra-curricular activities cultivate children's life skills? This is a point which parents should think about.

Besides parents' wills, the thought of children is important too. Parents should consider whenever their children like to attend the extra-curricular activities or not. In fact, children love being at home with mum and dad, have normal day-to-day activities rather than having classes outside. Getting along with parents can be a vital lesson for children and it can be fun and it serves as a bridge of communication. Children's own willingness is the key point of the success of parents' decisions.

Although Hong Kong is full of competitions and entrance examinations, parents should have a faith that children's potential can be enhanced in a unstructured environment and do not over-burden them with a busy timetable.