

Where are kids' social lives?

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Homework, Sports, Clubs, Community Service; kids do all of these things and more in a short seven day week. Where on the schedule is going to the movies with friends or sleepovers on the weekends? NO WHERE! A typical junior high students' day consists of getting up at 5: 30 to 6: 00 in the morning, going to school from 7: 30 to 2: 40 then having sports or clubs or both till 3: 30 for clubs and 5: 00 for sports. Then sometimes kids have games that go till 7: 00 or later at night.

Could you imagine after all that kids still have homework to do? The average time for doing homework for a seventh or eighth grader is about an hour and a half to two hours each night. At what point do kids get to text or call their friends? And when they do get that little window of opportunity most parents will say, “ no you can't call your friends tonight it's too late. You had all day to talk to them in school.” Try again! Kids rarely get the chance to stop and say hi to their friends in the hallway. Being late for class is the second biggest fear in middle school kids.

In 95% of the schools across the country kids have a total of four minutes in between each class. That means four minutes to get their books, go to the bathroom or get a drink of water and get through hundreds of kids, also trying to get their next class. That's a lot to do in a short amount of time. Weekends, you ask? Forget that. Students are filled to the top with stuff then too, from homework to community service. That's right, homework on the weekends.

On the weekends kids have an average of an hour of homework. Now I know that doesn't sound like much, but weekends are supposed to be student's

days off from school. Homework is not a day off. Kids also do community service on the weekends too. For some this means hours and hours out of their weekends and after school time.

For example, one eighth grader at East Hampton Middle School is involved in a community service project to re-vegetate a beach with native plants and beach grass with two other girls. That is a big project for three kids. The student is also Captain of her school soccer team, on Yearbook Committee, Waves (a poetic magazine committee), her school math team, and a part of the Student Association. And yet she continues to keep up her grades. So weekends are out of the question. Now what about kids when they were younger? They had plenty of play time then right? Sure, do you ever remember watching a lot of TV when you were younger? What about playing with blocks? Well, according to scientificamerican.com kids who played with blocks when they were younger are known to score higher on the ELA state test. They say it has something to do with finding a way to build the blocks up without making them fall, just like you have to do with a story. This proves that play time or free time and intellectual skills go hand in hand. So parents might argue this and say my child is focused deeply into his/her studies and doesn't spend time "fooling around." Okay this may be true because for a period of time every child is capable of going a week or two without play time but after a little bit they will start to snap; even if it's not right away. Their grades could progressively start to drop as well as the mental stability.

Without breaks in their daily lives kids will start to act erratic or have mental break downs for no reason. This is because free time is made to empty kids
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mind of thoughts, give their brain a brake, without this kids brains, that are still developing, will over load and kids sometimes have to become hospitalized for mental stability problems. There is something we can do though. Let kids go outside or at least have a break. It is as simply as that. No major changes or anything just a little break in their day.

Now sure, kids get recess but most schools have clubs and activities going on during that period, so some kids never go to lunch or recess. Schools should make it a policy that kids are required to go to lunch/recess at least twice a week at the minimum. That's not a lot of days out of a five day school week. Another thing we can do is minimize the amount of homework that kids get. Now I don't mean abolish it forever but have a limit on how much homework a day kids have.

Instead of two hours make it one. These little things can help kids develop in the healthy, active young adults.