



Beyond textbooks AND HOMEWORK

FOR STUDENTS IN TODAY'S SCHOOLS, THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO GET INVOLVED AFTER THE BELL RINGS AT THE END OF THE SCHOOL DAY.

In addition to seasons of sports and student government, there are academic groups such as National Honor Society or forensics teams. There are career-oriented clubs such as Future Farmers of America. There are community-engagement organizations such as Key Club. And they all share the same thing in common: expanding students' world of learning beyond textbooks and homework.

"There are so many life skills that come from service projects," said Leah Luke, the 2010 Wisconsin Teacher of the Year.

At Mauston High School, Ms. Luke is adviser to the Key Club, an affiliate of Kiwanis International that stresses leadership and community engagement. Student members of Key Club participate in civic fundraising such as food drives and aid charitable organizations such as Meals On Wheels and UNICEF.

<< LEAH LUKE
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DID YOU KNOW?

Extracurriculars, electives and foreign language classes are often the first programs cut in tough budgets. Consider foreign language: According to the U.S. General Accounting Office, the U.S. government has expressed a need for fluent speakers of languages other than English, particularly in less commonly taught languages such as Arabic and Chinese. Ask your child's school to start language clubs.

Service groups, academic clubs and sports teams are proven to boost what a student learns in classrooms. The more engaged students are after school, the more engaged they are during school.

Ms. Luke said that extracurricular activities give students a bond with their school, their peers and their teachers. When students are energized for activities after school they are motivated during school, keeping their grades up to stay on a sports team or finding an interesting topic to study.



"When kids – especially at the high school level – find something they can connect to in the building, the more ownership they have to the building and what goes on in it," Ms. Luke said.

Ms. Luke, a Spanish and English teacher, has advised a number of school groups in addition to her daily instructional assignments. She has overseen student council, National Honor Society, Spanish, Academic Decathlon and forensics groups in addition

to the Key Club, which quadrupled its participation during her time as adviser. She got involved in the groups to help broaden students' lessons and their understanding of the community around them.

"I want to make sure my students are involved in these groups because they can find their passion in one area that spills over into other areas," she said.



PICKING AN EXTRACURRICULAR MEANS EXPLORING AN INTEREST

How do you help your child pick an afterschool activity to join? Mauston teacher Leah Luke, an adviser to her school's Key Club, says you can guide your student by building on:

ACADEMIC OR SOCIAL INTERESTS

Does your child respond particularly to Spanish or public speaking? Many schools have academic teams dedicated to subjects such as foreign language or government.

A FAVORITE TEACHER

Is your child inspired by a certain educator? See if he or she is involved in an afterschool activity. "That adviser is a great role model" Ms. Luke said. "It's another adult your child can look to."

WHAT FRIENDS ARE JOINING

Sometimes young people would be more comfortable joining a club if their friends are also taking part. That support could be a great way for your children to get more involved in their school.