

## Why Getting Involved and Staying Active Is Important

(from the desks of your school social workers)

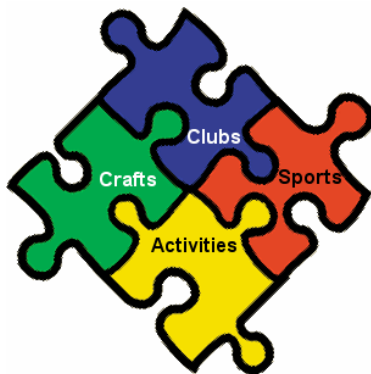
Did you know that children and youth who stay active and engaged are less likely to engage in at-risk behaviors? Research shows that youth engagement plays an important role in:

- Preventing substance abuse
- Decreasing the rate of criminal acts
- Increasing connections to the community
- Increasing academic performance



Youth who experience more risk factors, such as poverty, lack of parental involvement, family history of mental illness, etc., are more likely to use substances and engage in other problematic behaviors. According to the Partnership for Drug-Free Kids, some of the reasons why teens use drugs and/or alcohol includes boredom, instant gratification, lack of confidence, and as a way to escape or self-medicate.

Getting your child involved is a key factor to decreasing at-risk behaviors. When positive outlets are available, healthy behaviors will be the result. Participating in co-curricular activities allows students to focus on their strengths outside of academics. It helps students develop skills such as self-discipline, teamwork, cooperation, respect and much more. Furthermore, students develop a sense of belonging and connectedness to the school community, which has been proven to decrease risky behaviors.



Positive activities children and youth can participate in includes:

- Organized sports
- After school clubs
- Organized church groups
- Music and the Arts
- Volunteering

Each school offers different athletic and co-curricular activities. Stop in the main office or talk to the Athletic Director at your child's school to learn more about the different activities and programs offered. You can also find more information on the district's website at [gbaps.org](http://gbaps.org).