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ARE TODAY'S KIDS TOO BUSY?

KidsPoll Finds Many Kids Are Stressed Because They Have Too Much To Do.

Wilmington, DE, June 27, 2006 – Adults might think that kids' lives are carefree and full of free time; however, a recent KidsHealth® KidsPoll shows that kids have quite a different opinion. Of the 882 kids ages 9 to 13 who were polled, 41% report feeling stressed *most of the time* or *always* because they have too much to do. KidsPoll found that even though responses differed when the kids were asked how they spend their time outside school (doing homework, structured activities, watching TV, etc.), most agreed on one thing: 77% wish they had more free time.

So who's responsible for the busy schedules kids keep? Is it parents? Kids? Both?

When kids were asked who chooses their non-school activities, the majority (62%) reported that they choose most of their activities, and 29% said that they and their parents choose together. The KidsPoll results suggest that parents need to help kids decide how to spend their free time to make sure kids have plenty of unstructured time to unwind.

"Don't be afraid to give kids exactly what they're asking for – more free time," says D'Arcy Lyness, PhD, practicing psychologist and behavioral health editor for KidsHealth.org.

"Unstructured free time helps kids learn to entertain themselves, fosters creativity, and helps them discover the things they enjoy doing. Whether it is time spent socializing with peers, reading a book, playing a game, or daydreaming, downtime helps kids recharge their batteries and de-stress."

How can parents tell if their child is too busy? The telltale signs are easy to spot:

- Does your child have to leave homework unfinished or complete it late at night because there's not enough time in the day?
- Is your child often rushing through meals to go somewhere?
- Are you feeling stressed about getting your child from activity to activity?

- Does your child complain about having to go to practice, games, or lessons?
- Is your child getting to bed on time?
- Is your child's overall mood starting to suffer because of a busy schedule?

What can parents do? If you think your child is overscheduled, it may be time to make some changes.

KidsHealth.org, the most-visited resource for children's health information, shares tips for parents:

- **Set priorities:** Help kids learn to make choices about the activities they're involved in. There are lots of interesting activities to choose from, but it's not possible to do it all. Parents can help kids learn how to pick and choose, how to say no to some things, and how to budget time and energy.
- **Check in on homework:** Homework can start to slip when kids are too busy. Take time to make sure your child has the skills to organize, focus, and get the job done. Checking in also lets kids know that parents are interested and can help if needed.
- **Schedule downtime:** It's important to make sure your child has unstructured free time on school nights and weekends to regroup, relax, and slow down the pace. Leave a little cushion of time between commitments so that you can help your child set a pace that's not so busy.
- **Be a role model:** Watch your own pace. If you're overbooked and always running between your own activities, you may be teaching your child the same. Find ways to work downtime into your schedule – and include your child. Play a board game together, go for a walk after dinner, or read a story.

Other KidsPoll findings:

- The majority of kids (82%) reported that on most schooldays, they spend 1 hour or less on homework, compared with 42% of kids who spend 3 or more hours playing video games, watching TV, or using the computer for fun.
- Kids who reported that they spend 3 or more hours each day watching TV, playing video games, or using the computer for fun were nearly three times more likely to want more free time than those who spend less than 1 hour.

The KidsHealth KidsPoll on “Are Kids Too Busy?” surveyed 882 children ages 9 to 13 across the United States at nine member sites of the National Association of Health Education Centers (NAHEC). The survey was conducted by researchers from the Department of Health Education and Recreation, Southern Illinois University Carbondale. Survey questions were drafted with the expertise of the KidsPoll Scientific Advisory Board and Experts: **Leslie Branden-Muller, PhD**, Research Associate, PFG Child Development

Institute, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; **Christopher Laudo**, President, Pennsylvania School Counselors Association; and **Michael E. Wells, PhD**, Education Research Analyst, Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools, U.S. Department of Education.

MEDIA RESOURCES (images for download, KidsPoll results, and tips for parents and kids):
www.KidsHealth.org/media/kidspoll/busy.html

For complete survey findings and methodology, or to view the 2004-2005 KidsPoll archive, visit nahec.org/KidsPoll.

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About the KidsHealth® KidsPoll

A project of the National Association of Health Education Centers (NAHEC), the Nemours Center for Children's Health Media (creators of KidsHealth.org), and Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Department of Health Education and Recreation (project researchers), the KidsHealth KidsPoll gives children a national platform to share their views on health-related issues that affect them. For more information about the KidsHealth KidsPoll, please visit nahec.org/KidsPoll/.

About the National Association of Health Education Centers (NAHEC)

NAHEC is a network of nonprofit health education centers (HECs) and of other organizations that support children's health education and provide products and services to HECs. NAHEC member centers reached over 3 million children, teachers, and parents in 2005. HECs use life-size exhibits, advanced audio-visual technology, and specialized, interactive instructional techniques not generally found in conventional classrooms. The curriculum is designed to support school-mandated areas of study. With programs like "Whodunit? - A Forensic Science Camp," Hummers outfitted with removable organs, and playgrounds modeled after anatomy parts, you'll see why former U.S. Surgeon General Dr. C. Everett Koop proclaimed that health education centers "put pizzazz in prevention." For more information about NAHEC, please visit nahec.org.

About KidsHealth®

KidsHealth creates engaging online, print, and video media about a wide range of parenting and children's health issues. Each year, over 100 million families turn to KidsHealth.org for expert answers – making it the Web's most-accessed site on children's health. KidsHealth's physician-led editorial staff creates the largest resource of health, behavioral, and developmental information written for three distinct audiences: parents, kids, and teens. Recent accolades include the Webby Award for Best Family/Parenting Website, and selection as one of the 50 Coolest Websites by TIME Magazine. KidsHealth comes from Nemours, one of the largest nonprofit organizations devoted to children's health. For more information, please visit KidsHealth.org.

About Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Department of Health Education & Recreation

Researchers from Southern Illinois University Carbondale's Department of Health Education and Recreation conduct the KidsHealth KidsPoll. The research team for this project is led by Stephen L. Brown and David A. Birch, faculty members in the Department of Health Education and Recreation. The department offers a bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degree in health education and a bachelor's and master's degree in recreation. The health education program is recognized nationally as a leader in school health education and graduate-level teaching and research. Graduates of the program are in health education leadership positions across the country. The department includes 11 health education faculty members and six recreation faculty members. For more information about SIUC, please visit www.siu.edu.