University School works to find the best in all of our students. Part of that process is often found somewhere outside of the traditional classroom. It is important for a child to participate in extracurricular activities to learn positive social skills and build healthy self-esteem. Our strategy is to present a broad range of arts, athletics, club activities, and community service to develop well-rounded students. We also work to educate the heart as well as the mind. Every child needs nourishment outside of school, socially and recreationally. The Middle School years are a time to help your child find a balance between activities they have enjoyed in the past and exposing them to new experiences they might not otherwise seek out themselves.

Every year, our students put on a theatrical performance in the fall and a musical in the spring. Even if your student is not an actor, there is always a place for them to become involved. It could be through set design, working the sound boards, lighting, or costumes and makeup.

If the arts is not the niche for your child, we have 17+ athletics teams for students to join and explore. Despite having a competitive athletics program, we encourage students to join a sport even if it is just to learn the game and be a part of the team. This experience will be valuable and memorable for them during their middle school years.

Additionally, leadership and community is fostered through the 15+ clubs and organizations at the Middle School. We have opportunities for students to shine in community service clubs, NJHS, art club and much more. If we do not have the club, we will create it.
The extracurricular programs at University School offer more to our students than just “things to do.” These activities offer opportunities for students to learn the value of teamwork, individual and group responsibility, physical strength and endurance, competition, discipline, diversity, and a sense of culture and community. Extracurricular activities provide an avenue for reinforcing the lessons learned in the classroom, offering students the opportunity to apply academic skills in a real-world context. We find that students who participate in extracurricular activities have an increased sense of engagement and attachment to school. Most importantly, students who participate in extracurricular activities have a healthy outlet to release any stress or anxiety they may be feeling. This is extremely important in the social-emotional and physical development of adolescents.

When planning a schedule of activities for your child, it’s important to remember that all children require time to rest and sleep each night to be their best the following day. In addition to their academic responsibilities, it’s also important to take into account your child’s social and extracurricular life as they are building social skills, self-esteem and staying healthy. Overscheduling is a common problem as students enter Middle School and have a smorgasbord of exciting choices. Some children will excel at learning a new language, playing an instrument or taking an art class, while others need physical activities such as soccer, gymnastics or swimming. Any of these activities will provide them an opportunity to make some decisions, feel proud of themselves as they learn new things, experience challenge and make new friends outside of the classroom.

We recognize that University School students are also involved in family activities outside of school. These outlets are incredibly important for our adolescents to continue their growth in a variety of areas. We support these endeavors and will work with your students as they navigate these valuable commitments.

Additional Readings:

The Importance of Extracurricular Activities for Children by Dr. Everson and Dr. Rials,
www.pbbhw.com

http://family.go.com/parenting/

Science or Soccer: How Important are Extracurricular Activities?
www.educationworld.com/a_curr/curr237.shtml