Middle school students are at the right age to get involved in activities, projects, and clubs. It often takes a little prodding to get them to join initially, but they are at a very social age, so this is natural for them. The video *The Importance of Getting Involved* stresses the benefits, both personal and academic, that students gain through involvement in extra-curricular activities. The accompanying lesson urges students to think of involvement as more than just a laundry list of club memberships on a résumé or an application. It encourages students to discuss ways they can use experiences in clubs and organizations to enhance their own skills and bring value to school and community efforts. Beginning their involvement in middle school may also spark an interest in a subject or career and begin to set goals for their education and career aspirations.

Suggested Activities

1. *The Importance of Getting Involved* features several high school students who talk about what they have gained by being involved in various clubs, organizations and service projects while in school. Ask students to listen to the advice from these students and jot down their reactions so the class may discuss after the video.

2. After the video, ask the following questions:
   a. What were some of the clubs or organizations that the students in the video chose to join? What were their roles?
      
      **Answers:**
      
      Mindy
      • drama club, head of the club
      • band, member
      • Key Club, member
      • local children’s theatre, volunteer
      
      Dale
      • animal shelter, volunteer
      • picking up litter, volunteer
      • brother’s soccer team, assistant coach
      
      Shawna
      • student council, president
      • school newspaper, on the staff
      • local community clinic, volunteer

   b. What do the students list as some of the benefits they see in getting involved?
      
      **Answers:**
      
      • Lets you grow and show your academic skills
      • Practice responsibility, leadership, communication, time management
      • Learn to interact with different groups
      • Contribute in real ways
      • Have fun and have something to do at school other than attend class
      • Can help you decide on a career path
      • Shows that you’re mature, concerned, and able to put your talents to good use
      • Helps benefit from the work experience and meeting new people
      • Feel good about lending a hand

   c. How could this involvement help them in the future?
      
      **Answers:**
      
      • Colleges are looking for motivated students who can really manage their time and who have an interest in giving back to their school and their community. Basically, colleges want to know that you can really put your education to good use after you graduate. After all, your success also reflects on them.
      • These are the kinds of skills employers are looking for—being involved over a long period of time shows them you are persistent and dedicated.
      • Involvement demonstrates you are able to work successfully with various groups of people.

Journal

Use these journal topics to gauge students’ interests and goals with respect to involvement.

- What activities, clubs, or service organizations are you involved in currently?
- What would you like to be involved with in high school? Do you know what is available?
- If you wanted to learn about something else or participate in something new, where could you find out about them?
- What skills would you like to build?
- What are you passionate about or interested in? Which groups or organizations support your interests?
- What can you do now to help reach your goals for the future through involvement?

Possible Extension

4. For middle school students, a discussion that focuses on others, and not directly on them, will encourage more responses. They are extremely conscious of their peers and do not wish to be singled out by responses about themselves. Use the attached educator guide and the student handout to guide students through a longer discussion about the broader effects and outcomes of involvement. This may be most effective with a small group or in a one-on-one session.

A deeper discussion on goal-setting and lifelong learning could occur with individual or small group discussions with a counselor, social worker, or a mentor.
THE IMPORTANCE OF GETTING INVOLVED

The student stories in *The Importance of Getting Involved* are based on three topics related to involvement: students’ skills, passions and interests, and motivation. Though these categories are outlined separately, a rich discussion will often include all three of these interrelated concepts. This lesson can be a first step in helping students find ways to set goals for themselves through experiences at school and in the larger community.

This document, with prompts, can help guide a discussion as a group or individually. A student handout is included, too, so students can take notes during the discussion.

1. Why do you think Mindy got involved in the clubs she did?
   *Prompts:*
   - She was interested in lots of different things, including drama, band, service organization, local children’s theater, and the animal shelter.
   - She had some skills in those areas and enjoyed using them to help others.

2. She mentions a number of skills. How do you think she used them and learned others through her clubs?
   *Prompts:*
   - Practicing her academic skills and talents in different ways helped her learn new skills and use problem-solving skills because the situations required it.
   - Involvement helped her learn responsibility because she had to show up and do her part for the good of the cause.
   - Leadership skills and communication skills were important for her to use when she worked together with others.
   - Time management (calendars, follow-up on details, setting deadlines, etc.) and academic skills were important to accomplishing goals effectively and efficiently. She was able to practice all of these skills, learning what works best when interacting with different groups.

3. Are there other skills that she doesn’t mention that you think she could learn?
   *Prompts:*
   - She may develop new friendships with people she would not have known otherwise.
   - She might learn what she doesn’t want to do in the future.
   - She might find a mentor, or learn about an internship or a job through her involvement.
4. Why does Dale think that picking up trash is important? It seems like a messy job. Why is he willing to do this for no pay?

Prompts:
• He is interested in helping his community through work with the local parks foundation.
• He is interested in a career related to research and climate change and may feel that even small changes make a difference.
• He likes soccer and sees that his brother’s team needs a coach.
• He can gain experience in doing jobs that are not popular and this is a good way to show he is mature and willing to work hard.

5. Shawna eventually became a pediatric nurse. How could her involvement with the school newspaper staff and as a volunteer at a local community clinic help her in pursuing her interests in medicine and nursing?

Prompts:
• Working on the school newspaper, she learned to work with a staff and possibly learned how to compile reports and show the results of her research.
• She had to meet deadlines and show an interest in other people and events. She would use all of these skills in nursing.
• At the local community clinic, she would interact with the public and help people who needed medical treatment. She could see firsthand what was required for a career in pediatric nursing.

6. Do you think that the characters in the video were scared or intimidated when they joined a new club?

Prompts:
• They were probably unsure whether they could do the tasks, wondered if they would like the other members, and were possibly concerned about older classmen who were in the club or group.
• They might have joined with a friend so they would not be alone at first.

7. How do you think they learned not be worried about working with people they did not know?

Prompts:
• Often they will learn to not be afraid of new people when they actually start working on projects together.
• They see that everyone is there to help and to learn together.
• They may see that they have skills that others do not have and vice versa.
• Learning from each other to achieve a common goal is extremely rewarding.
The Importance of Getting Involved

Involvement in clubs and organizations is about more than having a long list of activities. Clubs can help you to build skills and explore interests—all while helping your school or community. The Importance of Getting Involved video talks about three topics related to involvement: skills, passions and interests, and motivation. Use the questions below to think of ways to set goals for yourself to get more involved.

SKILLS
- Why do you think Mindy got involved in the clubs she did?
- She mentions a number of skills. How do you think she used them and learned others through her clubs?
- Are there other skills that she doesn’t mention that you think she could learn?

PASSION/INTERESTS
- Why does Dale think that picking up trash is important? It seems like a messy job. Why is he willing to do this for no pay?
- Shawna eventually became a pediatric nurse. How could her involvement with the school newspaper staff and a volunteer at a local community clinic bank help her in pursuing her interests in medicine and nursing?

MOTIVATION
- Do you think that the characters in the video were scared or intimidated when they joined a new club?
- How do you think they learned not to be worried about working with people they did not know?