

## THE HOLISTIC EFFECTS OF SAILING ON EDUCATION

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New sailors eagerly hit the water, leaving their parents behind on the beach, worried about the fate of their children in the strong winds and rough seas of the Gulf (of Siam/ editors comment), in disbelief that their off-springs would be able to sail their boats by themselves within a week! And . . . they all succeeded, all eager to go out sailing again the next weekend.

Learning to sail is a great accomplishment for kids. It develops independence and confidence.

The ability to take a boat, sail it, and be comfortable, all by themselves in the largest treasure of nature, the sea, gives a great sense of accomplishment to children.

Almost everything in a child's life is controlled by the adults surrounding them and their decision making depends on what these adults have taught them. Children would like their parents to be proud of them and act accordingly in their decision making in almost everything they do. Except when sailing ..... Every decision in a young child is a accumulation of their parents expectations.

Now, put a child on a boat all by themselves with nature and they soon find out that every decision they took has its own consequence and no one else but themselves can be responsible for the result of their decision.

The confidence gained, the increased independence and their new reflection on consequences of their own actions, makes them accountable human beings. All these gains will reflect upon the child in their school performance as well.

Sailing is a great alternative to the digital world children live in today. It gives families a chance to do something active together, rather than sitting around

watching television on the weekends or hanging around in shopping malls. As the Junior Sailing secretary my personal aim for the program is to get kids enthusiastic and motivated about sailing. They have to enjoy it and make their own decision to rather go sailing, than playing with their game-boys and smell the Bangkok fumes.

Sailing is more than only the skill:

Having to put their boats together and make sure they have everything when they are on the water, teaches them organizational skills and responsibility.

Helping other kids get ready and putting boats in the water together, teaches them care and team spirit.

Sailing itself teaches them confidence, independence and consequences for their actions.

Having to look after and take care of their boats, teaches them self discipline and responsibility.

Team racing teaches the leadership and either success or how to cope with defeat

Fighting the ever changing elements of sea and wind, teaches them to respect and love for nature.

I have received so many positive responses about the impact of sailing on children's education. The most rewarding were the regarding kids that had difficulties with schoolwork.

One boy who is always chased to do schoolwork and has that burden of bad marks on his shoulders, one day made the try-outs for a big international sailing championship. This made him have to do extensive sailing training, so we discussed his very tight schedule, which would not allow him much time for homework. So he needed to be efficient, fast in cleaning up his boat, no hanging around and use every minute of his time, get up quickly, get his books and set himself targets on what he had to finish that day. The next week, when he came off the water after a practice race he had the biggest smile on his face and shouted to me: "I did well in everything: I had an A star

for my science and just now I came third in the race.

Another example was the kid that had to go to the educational specialist to test his learning disabilities and the mother had to fill out a long questionnaire. About half way through she said to the guy that the answers she gave were so different than what she would have answered three months before, when she made the appointment to see him. He asked what brought the change and she said that the kid had started sailing 3 months earlier. The educational specialist told her " What you do is take the questionnaire home, keep the kid sailing and if you ever have a problem in the future you can always come back". The kid never went back, is now a top sailor, works hard and is a student that has A's and B's!

These kids gave me the evidence of what I have believed in so strongly, the positive impact of sailing on their education.

So keep your kids sailing and for those who don't sail yet..... get your boats ready!

Yours in sailing

Malee Whitcraft