

Importance of Incorporating Curriculum Enrichment in an After-School Program Involvement Setting



Parent Fact Sheet #9

After-school programs provide enrichment and development opportunities for kids and young adults beyond the traditional school curriculum. Programs offered after school hours provide youth a safe, supervised place to explore interests, learn new life skills and spend worthwhile time with peers and adults. The most important part of creating an after school program is motivating the children. They should pursue their materials without obvious, strict or overbearing pressure. Youth absorb information best when they are connected and inspired by it rather than being forced to participate.

Key Facts

1. **Improved School Attendance and Engagement in Learning.** There is evidence that children who attend quality after-school programs attend school more often and are more engaged in learning. For example, youth enrolled in the variety of afterschool and summer learning programs offered by Project Exploration were found to graduate at a rate of 95 percent, nearly double the overall rate of those attending Chicago Public Schools. Additionally, 60 percent of former participants enrolled in a four- year college are pursuing degrees in STEM-related fields. (Project Exploration, 2011)
2. **Improved Test Scores and Grades.** After school activities improve school performance, boosting grades and making students more likely to continue succeeding. Youth often learn from the activities; plus, succeeding at outside activities often keeps them motivated to achieve more in school and encourage youth to join other youth serving organizations. Evidence suggests a correlation between frequent attendance in out –of-school time activities and positive outcomes, including an increase in academic achievement, school attendance, time spent on homework, extracurricular activities, improved effort in school and better student behavior. Out- of-school time programs offer supportive contexts for youth development and offer excellent opportunities for youth to develop skills in supervised, safe and engaging environments. (National Institute on Out-of School Time, 2009)
3. **Students at Greatest Risk Show Greatest Gains.** Researchers at John Hopkins University concluded that two-thirds of the achievement gap between lower- and higher income youth results from unequal access to summer learning opportunities. (American Sociological Review, Vol 72, April 2007)
4. **Creates an Environment of Character Building and Family Cohesiveness.** A recent research finding on quality afterschool programs is that connections matter. Relationships among staff, schools, families, youth, and communities are crucial and many after school programs link with schools by aligning curricula and sharing resources. Complementary learning initiatives are growing-and so is the evidence that they may have

tangible benefits for youth, families and communities. (National Institute on Out-of School Time, 2009)

Implications for Parent

Today's society demands a lot from youth. They are expected to succeed in school, as community citizens, and in their extracurricular activities. But, youth can't excel in every field. Youth can't be successful if they sit back and not have an all round development by just reading his or her books. What a child does outside of school through after-school and other activities is equally important. This is an age of specialization and your child can't afford to let it pass. Parents should play an integral part in their child's overall development. Spend time researching your community to find youth programs that are advantageous for your child. These programs aim at the physical, mental as well as the spiritual development of the child. The best part of these programs is that they broaden the child's interest areas, provide places for the child to shine, and yield positive benefits for the child's overall development. These involvements can help develop your child's self esteem, develop interests in new things and sometimes introduced to new career options. After-school programs and activities is a powerful setting for helping children grow to be successful adults.

Resources

- www.afterschoolalliance.org** – “The Afterschool Alliance is working to ensure that all children have access to affordable, quality afterschool programs. Afterschool programs are critical to children and families today, yet the need for programs is far from being met.”
- www.wallacefoundation.org** – “The Foundation develops and test promising ideas on the ground, study the results, research related issues – and share what they have learned broadly to help improve children's lives.”
- www.noist.org/pdf/factsheet2009.pdf** - Making the Case: “A 2009 Fact Sheet on Children and Youth In Out-of School Time.” Learning Point Associates, November (2007). *The promising afterschool programs study.* *American Sociological Review.* Vol 72, April 2007. Retrieved 9/24/11, from <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org>

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