



After-school Programs

After-school programs provide school age children with activities and support in a supervised environment. From homework help and tutoring to basketball drills and ballet practice, educators are discovering that quality after-school programs provide rich opportunities for students' continued academic and social development¹.

When selecting an after-school program, keep the following in mind provided by the:

(adapted from *Selecting a Quality After-School Program for Your Child-ChildCareAware*)*

- *Look at the staff and children...*

- o Are they happy to be at the program?
- o Do the children seem engaged in their activities?
- o Is the staff involved with the children?
- o Are snack menus healthy and plentiful?

- *Listen to the sounds of the program...*

- o Do you hear laughter and lively conversation?
- o Do you hear staff engaged in conversation with the children?
- o Have staff received any training, such as CPR and first aid?
- o Does the staff receive ongoing training and development?
- o Is there a parent board or council?
- o Are children involved in planning activities?

- *Questions to ask and what to look for when visiting an after-school program...*

- o Does the program provide a rich learning atmosphere that supports children's education?
- o Does the program offer family references?
- o Is the program accredited? Licensed?
- o Do they offer any financial assistance?
- o Can parents/guardians request copies of the program's policies?
- o What is the program's mission and philosophy?

- o What is the program policy for sick children?
- o Does the program seem safe, clean, and organized?
- o Does the staff seem to work well together?
- o Are the children busy with activities?
- o Are there adequate materials and space for a variety of activities?
- o Do the bathroom and food preparation areas look and smell clean?

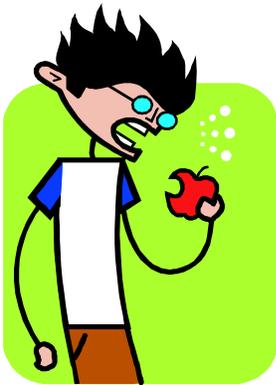
*(The entire brochure can be found at <http://www.childcareaware.org/en/tools/pubs/pdf/105e.pdf>)

Research shows that successful school-based programs tend to share several characteristics.



Quality programs:

- Involve the community
- Have the support of school staff and leadership
- Respond to the needs of students and their families
- Provide students with consistent, caring relationships with adults
- Give students a safe place to go and reinforce sound health and nutrition practices²



¹ NorthWest Regional Educational Laboratory. <http://www.nwrel.org/nwreport/april99/article11.html>

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Successful after-school programs are designed to enhance social, physical, and emotional development; and to foster academic achievement and civic participation. After-school programs keep students safe and engaged, often until as late as 6 pm, when they can be returned to the care of their parents or guardians.

Useful Web Sites:

- ***National School-Age Child Care Alliance***

www.nsaca.org

(The National School-Age Child Care Alliance (NSACA) is the national membership organization representing the entire array of public, private, and community-based providers of after-school programs)

- ***Afterschool.gov***

www.afterschool.gov

(Search for a variety of after-school activities by state, and browse additional links provided. Answers to frequently asked questions, tips for starting after-school programs and current related news are also provided).

- ***Child Care Aware***

www.childcareaware.org

Child Care Aware is a national initiative committed to helping parents find the best information on locating quality child care and child care resources in their community.

- ***A Guide to Choosing an After-school Program***

<http://www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content4/choose.after.school.html>

This site provides guidance for parents on differentiating and selecting appropriate after-school programs for their children.

- ***Connecticut Commission on Children***

<http://www.cga.ct.gov/coc/>

Provides information on government after-school initiatives through the Connecticut After-School Network at <http://www.csaca.org/review/aboutnetworktest.html>