

Getting the Most From Afterschool: Information for Families with Elementary Age Students

Afterschool programs provide many benefits to participating youth and their families. Attending an afterschool program can positively impact a student's school success, increase school day attendance, and positively impact a child's confidence. When families take an active role in their child's afterschool program, their child can get the most from their afterschool program.

How Can My Child Get the Most From an Afterschool Program?

- **Attend the afterschool program regularly.** Research shows that youth that attend their afterschool program regularly and for the entire school year benefit more than youth who attend less frequently.
- **Check your child's homework after you pick them up.** Afterschool programs typically provide some homework support, but it is still important that parents review and help students complete their assignments.
- **Make sure your child is interested in the afterschool program activities.** Ask your child how they are enjoying the afterschool activities and work with program staff if your child is not engaged. Research shows that youth benefit most from programs when they are interested in the activities.
- **Communicate with the afterschool program staff.** Talk with afterschool program staff when you pick up your child or at scheduled times to stay informed about program activities and your child's participation. Take part in parent conferences or family events to get to know the afterschool program staff and their understanding of your child. Many afterschool programs seek family members as volunteers for program activities, field trips, or special events.

How Does Regular Attendance in an Afterschool Program Benefit my Child?

Research shows that youth who attend afterschool programs more frequently and for longer periods of time are more likely to benefit in the following ways:

- **Keeping your child safe.** Afterschool programs help children from engaging in risky behavior and protect them during the peak hours of juvenile crime, which are between 3-6pm.
- **Supporting your child's success in school.** Youth that regularly attend their afterschool program demonstrate increased confidence in their academic skills, enjoyment of learning, connection to their school, and school day class participation. Specifically, research also found that youth who attend their afterschool program regularly are more likely to also attend school regularly, which can significantly increase their school success.
- **Helping your child with homework.** Youth that regularly attend their afterschool program demonstrate higher rates of homework completion.
- **Helping your child enhance their English if they are English language learners.** Youth designated as English language learners that regularly attend afterschool programs demonstrate more confidence and proficiency in their English language skills. Afterschool programs provide these youth opportunities to practice their language skills with staff and peers in a comfortable environment.

If you are unsure of the attendance requirements of your child's afterschool program, be sure to talk with program staff. Many programs are reimbursed based on attendance, so in addition to children missing out on the benefits outlined above, a program may lose money as a result of a student's irregular attendance. Afterschool program staff want to help your child and family participate as much as possible in their program offerings.

San Francisco Afterschool for All Initiative

Since 2006, the city, school district, private funders, parent representatives, and community partners have been working together through a citywide task force called the *Afterschool for All Advisory Council* to ensure all elementary and middle school youth have access to afterschool options. **For more information:** <http://sfafterschoolforall.blogspot.com> or afterschoolforall@dcyf.org