Dare to Excel: Activities Beyond School

Kimberly A. Greder
Iowa State University, kgreder@iastate.edu

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Even though a child’s time at school is essential, some equally important lessons can be learned outside of the classroom.

When children become involved in activities beyond school, they can have an overall sense of wellbeing.

Out-of-school activities:
- Offer children the opportunity to learn more about themselves and their world.
- Give them a place for emotional support from caring adults.
- Show them new ways to learn responsibilities.
- Help them to feel important.
- Guide them to become successful and productive adults.

Here are some tips for parents:
- Call local community centers and talk with other parents to find out what is being offered in their area.
- Once a child has decided on an activity, allow the child 6 weeks to warm up to a new group or leader.

Parents are the single most influential factor in their children’s lives. Believing in their abilities helps teach them to believe in themselves and try new things. Being in organized outside-of-school activities can help kids want to stay in school.
Opportunities

- Plan a trip to the zoo
- Plan a family game day
- Sign up for dance lessons
- Take swimming lessons
- Join a school club
- Take gymnastics
- Volunteer in your local community
- Visit a local museum or art center
- Participate in a local camp
- Try out a new musical instrument
- Join a book club
- Visit the science center
- Try out for a sports team
- Join a scouts or 4-H club
- Join an after school program
- Tour the Capitol Building

Impact of After School Programs

For Children
- Give children the opportunity to stimulate their brains, develop self-confidence, and strengthen their belief that they can accomplish goals.
- Promote personal and social skills.
- Improve a child’s ability to handle emotions and have good relationships with others.
- Lower a child’s risk of developing problem behaviors and drug use.
- Enhance a child’s bond to the school and improve academic performance.
- Increase the likelihood that a child will participate in school and complete homework.

For Parents
- Provide a safe environment for children when parents work late.
- Give the security that your child will be in a structured and supervised environment.
- Offer your child new learning opportunities that can improve overall attitudes and personal conduct.

Striking a Balance

Although, outside-of-school activities are important for children, they also need time that is not scheduled.
- Children can become overwhelmed and depressed if they have too many responsibilities and activities.
- A child should spend no more than 6 to 9 hours per week doing extracurricular activities.
- A planned schedule can help children and parents feel more relaxed.

Resources and Information

Locate a Museum, Iowa Museum Association

Iowa Public Libraries
http://www.publiclibraries.com/iowa.htm

The State Historical Museum
http://www.iowahistory.org/museum/index.html

Iowa 4-H
http://www.extension.iastate.edu/4h/

Boy Scouts of America
http://www.scouting.org/

Girl Scouts of the USA
http://www.girlscouts.org/

Art Museums in Iowa