

The Learning environment

There is often a trap in the words 'after school activities'. One may easily believe that since these activities are after school, they are not of much importance. But, one couldn't be more wrong. Research suggests that children pick up some of their most important skills from after school programs. That is why children who do not participate in any extra curricular activities are generally slow and less vibrant.

The learning environment that one fosters in after school activities must be as disciplined and as functional as that found in the school. This is especially true of educational after school programs. This is the best place to teach the child important skills like time-management and goal setting. Time-management is a vital skill, but it is not achieved easily. Children need to feel the discipline that is needed to finish a task and the happiness of finishing the allotted work in a specific time frame.

Children look for different things in an after class program. The learning environment should be attractive, colorful and informative. Use charts, pictures, posters and drawings to liven up a class. Additional resources (resources that are not easily available in the school) will make the classes interesting. For instance, when teaching a biology lesson, allow the child to see through a microscope or see slides of bacteria. This will add to his knowledge and also make him more enthusiastic about his after school program.

Discipline is a must in after school activities. In fun or sport-based activities, it is easy for children to step out of line and wreck havoc. While children should be allowed to have fun, they should be curtailed from unacceptable behavior. The best way to enforce discipline is to lay down the rules at the very beginning. Let the children know what is unacceptable, right at the beginning.

Rewards are an important part of any learning process. The reward can be a simple pat on the back or a token of appreciation. Motivate your children to aspire for higher things by rewarding their achievements. Holding competitions or sport activities where the children can show their proficiency is a reward in itself.

Children can get bored easily, especially in the case of an educational program. The main thrust of an academic program is to repeat what has been taught in class and to allow the child to learn it quickly. It is difficult to pique the child's interest a second time, especially when the

child is already tired of one dose of the same lesson. It is best to thwart boredom by using creative techniques like an impromptu extempore on any topic, a quiz program or a slideshow.

After school activities are becoming more popular by the day. Parents want their kids to learn more. Children too have an insatiable quest for knowledge. In an after school program, it is possible to pay individual attention and quench this thirst using various effective techniques.

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