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6 Benefits of Afterschool Programs

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www.understood.org

A good afterschool program can turn the aimless hours after school into productive learning time. That's a big benefit for kids with learning and attention issues. Here are six things a high-quality afterschool program can do for kids.

1. Create a sense of belonging.

If the afterschool program isn't run by the school district or a facility nearby, children can get to know different kids than those they see at school. That means they don't have to deal with the same cliques and social issues. If it *is* run at your child's school or nearby, the program can give your child a chance to connect with familiar kids in a different environment.

2. Improve social skills.

A good program promotes cooperation, support and respect. This can help kids feel more secure about joining a game or starting a conversation. And if they slip up, a sympathetic staffer should be on hand to remind them to take turns or stop interrupting.

3. Provide academic support.

Many after school programs offer structured homework help. Homework can often cause friction between kids with learning and attention issues and their parents. So, getting it done during the program can make everyone's evening more pleasant and relaxing.

Make sure that the aides or other children aren't doing the homework for your child. Some centers don't have teachers or aides who are equipped to handle kids with learning and attention issues.

4. Make learning more fun.

Some afterschool programs offer classes in areas like science or computers. In these sessions, there aren't tests and students may work together in groups. For kids with learning and attention issues, these classes can be stress-free, fun and meaningful. Programs may also offer arts options like drama and music, which can help kids find new interests.

5. Provide safety and supervision.

Sadly, kids with learning and attention issues are more likely to be victimized or to engage in risky behavior. Research shows that the hours between 3 and 6pm are when kids are most likely to commit crimes, drink or use drugs or become the victims of crime. But keeping kids busy can prevent them from engaging in risky behavior. Studies also show that being in an afterschool program can result in better grades and fewer behavioral problems.

6. Build confidence.

For kids with learning and attention issues, an afterschool program may feel more forgiving than school does. The stakes may not feel as high. As a result, they may be more willing to try new things and take more risks. This, in turn, can lead to higher self-esteem.