

High quality after school programs provide:

- choice
- connectedness
- mastery
- inclusivity
- passion
- creativity
- supportive environment

AFTER SCHOOL TIME

How children spend their after-school time can have a considerable impact upon well-being, including positive personal and social development, feelings of connectedness at school, academic success and reduced behavioural concerns. A healthy balance of structured after-school programs, social opportunities and physical activity as well as play and rest are important for children’s thriving and resilience.

After school time, between 3pm and 6pm, is known as the “critical hours” because it is during this time children are most often left unsupervised. It’s an awkward time for many families when there is a mismatch between the end of the school day and the end of the work day.

research

- All after school opportunities are not equal and it matters how an activity is done – often a happy mood and enthusiastic mentor make all the difference. When youth are passionately engaged and motivated in activities, whether arts, physical exercise or service activities, children develop improved brain development, social competence and academic success (Diamond, 2014).
- Participating in meaningful after-school activities can help children build their capacity to overcome adversity and manage stress, boosting their resilience. (Li et al, 2015).
- Challenging and enjoyable after school activities can improve youth’s ability to reason and problem solve, exercise choice and discipline, and be creative and flexible. These abilities are strong predictors of academic, career and life success. As well, they are greatly hindered when children are lonely, sad, stressed or not physically fit. (Diamond, 2014).
- Quiet reflection time and daydreaming is just as essential to brain health and development as active and focused activities (Immordino-Yang, 2012).
- When a child has a long lasting relationship with a caring adult, rather than many temporary supports, the opportunity for a more meaningful connection is fostered.



AFTER SCHOOL TIME

A complete list of action ideas resources can be downloaded at discovermdi.ca/resources

at home

- Ask, "Is there a club, program or team that you feel a positive sense of belonging?" If nowhere, begin to explore what they need from you to be able to participate in a meaningful after school experience.
- Ask children what types of after school activities they would like to take part in. If they are not offered in your community, reach out to your school or community centre to suggest the activity.
- Plan ahead to avoid barriers – find out about subsidies and transit/carpool options at your school or community program.
- Choose activities that reduce stress and loneliness, improve health and that make them happier and more connected. Consider arts, athletics and service opportunities.

in school

- Ask, "What is your school already doing well to help you and your friends with interesting after-school activities?" Then make a commitment to continue to do so.
- Focus encouragement on effort and perseverance, not performance and abilities.
- Allow children who struggle with school attendance to suggest their favourite activity for an after-school program or team. Coordinate with community programming to offer space in your school to reduce barriers to participation, improve their attendance and school connectedness.
- Organize volunteers to pick up students at school and walk them to nearby programs so that kids whose parents cannot pick them up can also participate in after-school activities
- Invite students to share their out-of-school experiences with classmates and integrate their new interests and skills into classroom learning.

in the community

- Ask, "What after-school activities are your friends doing that you would like to participate in?"
- Look at the MDI to see what is preventing children in your community from attending after-school programs and find solutions to address these barriers.
- Provide training for community program leaders in modelling and promoting social and emotional skills in children.
- Evaluate programs for their ability to foster a sense of autonomy, belonging and competence.