



AFTER SCHOOL STUDENT CLUB PRACTICES IN U.S. KINDERGARTEN THRU 12TH GRADE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

Student clubs held in after school hours are extracurricular activities that improve the academic performance of students by keeping the students engaged. Through after school clubs, students also explore new areas of interest and enhance social skills. Within this study, certain after school club practices from United States Kindergarten thru 12th grade public schools are reviewed within the context of policies and regulations including attendance and discipline issues; after school club categories that are activity clubs, tutorials, practices, study halls, after school care programs; financial resources; human resources; integration with the extracurricular activities held within school hours and integration with curricular activities.

Key Words: Extracurricular, tutorial, study halls, after school care.

INTRODUCTION

After school programs are widely common in U.S. Kindergarten thru 12th grade public and private schools (Parsad & Lewis, 2009). Effective afterschool programs bring a wide range of benefits to youth, families and communities. After school programs can boost academic performance, reduce risky behaviors, promote physical health, and provide a safe, structured environment for the children of working parents. A national evaluation revealed that over 40 percent of students attending 21st Century Community Learning Center programs improved their reading and math grades and that those who attended more regularly were more likely to make gains (Naftzger et al., 2007). Effective afterschool programs can improve classroom behavior, school attendance, academic aspirations, and can reduce the likelihood that a student will drop out (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2010; Huang & La Torre, 2008). Participation in afterschool programs has been associated with reduced drug use and criminal behavior (Cunha & Heckman, 2006; UCLA National Center for Research on Evaluation, 2007).

After school programs can play an important role in encouraging physical activity and good dietary habits. Participation in afterschool programs has been associated with positive health outcomes, including reduced obesity (Mahoney, Lord, & Carryl, 2005). Working families and businesses also derive benefits from afterschool programs that ensure that youth have a safe place to go while parents are at work. Parents concerned about their children's afterschool care miss an average of eight days of work per year, and this decreased worker productivity costs businesses up to \$300 billion annually (Brandeis University Community, Families and Work Program, 2004; Catalyst & Brandeis University Community, Families and Work Program, 2006).

TYPES OF AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS/STUDENT CLUBS

Types of activities that regularly take place during after school hours are;

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • regular student clubs • study halls • after school care programs | } | paid after school programs that are optional to enroll in |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teacher tutorials for students behind academically • norm-reference test tutorials • projects | } | programs that are free of charge and prior selection process by school is common |



While the first three types of after school programs are reviewed within this study; last three programs that are teacher tutorials for students that are behind academically, norm-reference test tutorials for tests such as SAT, and for science fair projects, science Olympiads and other competitions, are not. As a reason, last three categories are for students usually chosen by the school via a prior selection process and thus there is no admission or payment aspect, while regular student clubs as well as study hall and after school care programs are paid programs that student/parent submits an application for.

First type of programs is usually referred as fee-based stand-alone day care programs. These programs operate primarily to provide adult supervision for students after school, although the programs may also incorporate homework help, recreational activities, and cultural enhancement activities such as arts and crafts (Parsad & Lewis, 2009).

Second type is usually referred as stand-alone academic instruction/tutoring programs that focus exclusively on academic instruction or tutoring to improve student performance in core academic subject areas such as math, reading, and science. These programs include the supplemental educational services (SES) in schools that did not make adequate yearly progress (AYP), other stand-alone programs that focus on improving academic standards of students who are at risk of school failure, and programs that may provide additional academic exposure for students who are doing well in school (Carver & Iruka, 2006).

Supplemental Educational Services (SES) are a component of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as reauthorized by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Under this legislation, schools that did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) are required to provide extra academic assistance for eligible children (No Child Left Behind Supplemental Educational Services, 2011).

Examples to regular student clubs, which is the type of after school program reviewed within this study along with study hall and after school care clubs, are arts and crafts club, book club, chess club, board games club, choir club, drama club, folk dance club, Spanish dance club, foreign languages clubs, e.g. Spanish for U.S., journalism club, yearbook club, digital graphics and animation club, robotics club (students usually present their work in robotics competitions), sports clubs that are separate for lower grades such as elementary school students and higher grades such as middle school students. Example to sports clubs are physical activity and gymnastics club, soccer club, basketball club, table tennis club, American football club, baseball club, table tennis club, karate club, etc. (Grossman, Price, Fellerath, Jucovy, Kotloff, Raley, & Walker, 2002).

Clubs are usually run between 3.00 pm and 4.00 pm since teachers that are still in school can sponsor the clubs and administrators can manage the program. It is common that after 4.00 pm up until 5.00 pm and 5.30 pm, parents request the clubs to be extended. For this reason, students that stay for that extended period of time are gathered in a club named "Study Hall" doing their homework and assignments and supervised for the time being until being picked up. If the number of students stay late are more to be handled in one group, then the second choice is to open a after school care club, which first lower age students are allowed to enroll and separated from older age student playing games at a place such as playground inside school premises or games such as board games if outdoor activities are not possible.

While setting up the after school program, teachers should be approached first as to what clubs they might want to sponsor. Afterwards, parents may be approached directly or preferably through PTOs (Parent-Teacher Organizations) or PTAs (Parent-Teacher Associations) for volunteering or as paraprofessionals (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). As the third resource, part-time personnel may be employed whom could be substitute teachers that come to school to substitute for classes when the need arise and whom are paid on an hourly basis.



ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES OF AFTER SCHOOL CLUBS

Advantages of After School Clubs

It would be convenient to categorize the advantages of an after school club program via students' perspective, parents' perspective and that of the school as these are the three major sides involved in the process (Yohalem, Pittman, & Edwards, 2010). From students' aspect, after school clubs allow students to be kept engaged by

- exploring new areas of interest that they may not have during regular school hours,
- enhancing social skills,
- improving academic performance.

Additionally, through after school clubs students find more time for subjects such as art, music, physical sciences (sports) that are regularly allocated only one or two periods a week in the regular school curriculum. From parents' perspective enrolling their children in after school clubs is very desirable because most parents work in U.S. and this ratio is even higher if the parents are single parents. Thus, especially students of lower ages that are dismissed from school usually on or around 3.00 pm have to be supervised until the parent(s) get out of work, which is typically on or around 5.00 pm, two hours after school dismissal. If students enroll in the private after school care programs outside of the school, it just complicates the transportation adding one more destination. Thirdly, from the perspective of school administration, schools usually employ teachers up until 4 pm or 4.30 pm since teachers are employed full-time and usually cannot work at a comparable job to maintain the status of their teaching licenses and certificates. And because classes end on or before 3.00 pm and the teachers usually are allocated with the planning periods they are legally entitled to during the school hours, after school clubs appear as the best way to keep engaged teachers similar to students during hours after 3.00 pm. Via after school clubs, schools get extra funding for the extracurricular activities and it is always a plus for a school when compared to other schools that do not administer a successful after school clubs program.

Probable Disadvantages of After School Clubs

Despite after school clubs are preferable by many aspects, some general drawbacks come with them that need to be addressed are;

- ensuring safety
- monitoring after school
- attendance
- setting clear goals
- more work for administrators and teachers may mean complaints
- difficulties in collecting the after school club dues; may mean extra work for front office personnel especially if nonpayment is too often.
- motivation of students that get tutoring at after school hours either because they are academically behind or too advanced is weakened because of peers attending after school clubs during the same hours, which are more fun and desirable.

Some of these disadvantages may be kept at minimum by getting help from outside people, students, and parents thus lessening the work that the teachers and administrators have to do for after school clubs. Parents or outside people may volunteer to help. Also parents or other paraprofessionals may be compensated from the after school clubs budget especially if they will be sponsoring a club. Additionally, financial hardships such as difficulties in collecting dues can be lessened to a minimum by accepting payments upfront and by regulating payments only once or twice a semester (Scott-Little, Hamann, & Jurs, 2002). As a consequence, in a school that is midsized, after school program shall be;

- flexible
- there should be different clubs everyday
- parents/students should be able to choose what to enroll in
- fee should depend on the days and the number of clubs that the student enrolls



- the number of students attending after school program shall not exceed a certain number, for instance 300 for a midsize school that has a little over 1000 enrolment, which seems to work the best.

AFTER SCHOOL CLUB POLICIES

Admission Policies

As minors, students must be enrolled in programs taking place after school hours by a parent or a legal guardian only. After school club program is an entirely optional program and different than the legally required attendance during regular school hours that is usually between 8.00 am and 3.00 pm. Managing admissions on a “first come - first serve basis” is the usual implementation (The Child Care Bureau, 2005). In some cases however certain students may have priority to enroll in some certain clubs due to the requirements to enroll in the respective clubs. For instance, students that are already members of a sports team of the school may have privilege enrolling in relevant clubs. Honor students or students that are gifted and talented may enroll in clubs that prepare its members for certain academic competitions. Students that are already involved in activities directly related to the club content such as students that are in yearbook committee may have privileges over other students to enroll in yearbook club.

Once the limit of number of students that can be enrolled in a club is reached, the students may be placed on a waiting list and student/parent(s) are notified once a spot becomes available. The maximum number of students enrolled in a club may vary depending on the type of the club, on the capacity of the physical location where the club is going to be held, on the limitations by the club sponsor as to what would be the optimum or maximum number of students for the club to be managed effectively, etc.

If after school club program could not be settled entirely within the first few weeks of the school, due to late decisions of enrolment by students and/or late decisions by club sponsors such as teachers as to whether to sponsor a club or what type of club, then it is better to start with clubs that are ready and provide after school care or study hall clubs for all other enrolled students.

Changing the clubs should be made possible only at certain intervals such as at the end of each month, 6 weeks period, after completion of the duration which the payment is made for however based on a policy. Within this policy, students may be given the opportunity to change a club only with a written note from a parent/guardian. It shall be communicated to the student and parent that changes may be only possible depending on the space availability in the desired club. Additionally, the student/parent may be subjected to extra fees if the desired club costs more.

Re-registration to clubs after the duration that corresponds to the first payment ends, e.g. after first semester, may be managed by giving priority over students who enrolled in the same club in the first semester. The rest may be enrolled on a first come first serve as it is in the beginning of the school year depending on the available space in the respective club.

Attendance Policies

Although students are not legally required to attend the school during after school hours, attendance may be required by the school as a pre-condition to be enrolled in clubs (Beckett et al., 2009). Having a regularly attending group of students might be important for successful training of club content as it is for a regular class during school hours. Attendance is usually important for the following clubs;

- clubs that teach content based on previous taught knowledge such as foreign language clubs.
- clubs that have objectives such as yearbook club in which the purpose is to get the yearbook ready by the end of the year; journalism club publishes periodical newsletters or magazines; folk dance, choir or drama club might have a scheduled performance at school to take place on certain days; arts and crafts club members may make preparations for an arts and crafts gallery display at school, etc.
- sports clubs such as a soccer club in which members may be prepared for a tournament.
- other clubs that require some sort of structure such as karate club, which may require attendance even if there is no scheduled tournament or performance ahead.



For clubs which attendance is important, it may be required that students cannot miss the clubs more than 3 times unexcused or they will be dismissed from the clubs and no refunds will be given, etc. Conditions of an excused absence may be exactly as it is for the excused absences during regular school hours such as documented sicknesses, religious exemptions or the conditions on excused absenteeism may be eased to some extent by school administration.

Attendance may not be mandatory for clubs such as after school care club, study hall club, board games club, etc. however even for these clubs daily attendance should be taken and recorded for administrative purposes and has to be filed along with pick-up and drop-off letters signed by the parents; thus it is established that if the student does not attend the club, then the parents pick-up the child.

For coherence and financial purposes, a minimum number of enrolled students should be required to enroll for opening a club. This number may vary depending on the nature of the club and the relevant financial conditions however in general 5 enrolled students may be deemed sufficient. However, financial issues such as the payment made to the sponsor of the club or the trainer may increase this number so that the costs can be compensated.

Discipline Policies

Disciplinary rules implemented during the after school program should not be different than the rules and regulations outlined in the school's student handbook and applied during regular school hours since due to its relaxed nature students may tend to cause disciplinary problems during after school programs and easing up the rules may just elevate this tendency. For instance, students should stay at their assigned places during the after school program period and may not be allowed to go to their lockers or loiter at the hallways and cafeteria ([Harmony Public Schools Student/Parent Handbook, 2011](#)). However, out of necessity certain rules such as dress code may be eased for certain clubs. For instance, in drama club students may wear their costumes; in karate club students may wear their sportswear and gears; students that earned free dress day due to academic achievements, good conduct, etc during regular school hours may be allowed to continue to have their free dress during after school club hours as well.

Failing to follow school rules should result in the regular consequences that are verbal warnings, written warnings, detentions, suspensions and expulsions (Texas Response to Intervention Document, 2009). For instance, if a student fails to follow school rules for the first time, the parent may be informed and the student gets a warning. If the office receives another discipline referral from the same student then a parent conference may be held and the student may be expelled from that certain club and also suspended from the after school program in general for one week. If the same or a different discipline action requiring sanction happens for a third time, student may be expelled from the program and he or she may not enroll for the existing academic year. No refunds are issued if the student receives detention, suspension and/or expulsion. If the parent paid the full amount, refund is issued only for the following payments of that semester/year.

In certain cases, depending on the severity of the disciplinary problem, student may be suspended or expelled from the school as well; e.g. possession of a weapon, drugs, other intoxicants, fights leading to injury, displays of affection, etc. ([American Academy of Pediatrics Policy Committee on School Health Out of School Suspension and Expulsion, 2008](#)) Although after school clubs are paid activities and thus different than the regular school activities held during regular school hours; funds received are still to be used for the school and any disciplinary case may be treated as it occurs during regular school hours. A reference to this matter should be mentioned in the after school club policies and regulations booklet or student handbook signed by the parent/legal guardian ([Dallas Harmony Charter Schools Student Handbook for Elementary School Students, 2007](#)).

It is often a good practice not to enroll students in clubs that has an "N" (needs improvement) or "P" (poor) as conduct grades assigned in report cards. As a reason, after school club hours are times when discipline issues may be more probable due to nature of the clubs and lessened rules compared to regular school hours, such as



no school uniform in some clubs, no grades assigned, etc. Also the students and the supervisors are relatively tired of the day and any disciplinary problem may spoil a smoothly running after school program.

Medication Policies

Medication may become a more important of an issue during after school program due to the nature of some certain clubs involving physical activities and due to both students and school personnel being tired of the day and out of focus. Thus, after school hour times may be more prone to injuries and sicknesses. There are usually two types of sports clubs at the after school program that are indoor and outdoor sport clubs. The parent/guardian is responsible for any medical costs incurred in the event of an injury. Out of school premises club activities may be subject to extra permission slips to be approved and signed by the parent/guardian.

For medication, the policies signed for the regular school period are valid and the authorized personnel are school nurse or other assigned paraprofessionals. That is, medicine is not to be administered without written permission from the parent or legal guardian and a parent or guardian is called to pick up a child who is sick or injured during program.

Dismissal and Pick-up Policies

Establishing dismissal times for each and every student attending after school clubs is important both because of safety reasons to locate the student's whereabouts at all times until picked-up by the parent and also because the work hours usually end for all school personnel as the after school program ends so nobody is left on or around school premises to supervise unattended students. There are usually two time slots when the students are dismissed from after school clubs; first time slot is after the end of student clubs, that is usually on around 4.00 pm and the second dismissal is after the end of after school care or study hall on or around 5.00 to 5.30 pm. Students who are not picked up at the first pickup time slot are placed to the next available after school program and their school accounts are charged the corresponding amounts. Students should not be in the corridors, at their lockers, or in the school building after 10 minutes of the dismissal unless accompanied by a staff member. Students must sit and wait at the waiting area until their rides arrive. Students should follow all the school rules at the waiting area.

Parents can pick students up at designated locations or may have them paged in the front office. Parents should not walk through the school, unless signing in at the front office first. After the designated amount of time, e.g. 10 or 15 minutes, if the student is not still picked-up then the school charges the student's account a certain amount of fee and there is usually a %10 late fee each month for the payments that have not done on time. School Administration has a right to call Department of Human Services (DHS), Child Protective Services (CPS), Police Department, or related authorities for the students who are not picked up after the pickup time slot and if students are in the facility after these times. If the parent/guardian cannot pick up the child because of traffic congestion in the school premises, there will be no fee assessed. The school assumes no responsibility for any student in the facility after designated hours.

Payment Policies

Payments are often made to the front office or to the accountant if a separate accounting office is available at school. The exception is if school has the setting to accept online payments. Payment methods are usually via credit cards or checks made payable to the school. Cash is not a preferred method of payment since it is more difficult to keep record of and because personnel are not wanted to hold cash. However, in cases where other payment methods are not possible cash payments may be accepted. Partial payments should not be accepted unless the period that the payment covers is more than one semester. For payments not made on-time that is until the start of the program late notices are issued absent any written and approved notice from the program coordinator. Nonpayment results in discontinuing of program enrollment. If such situations happen more than once, the student is not accepted to the program for that entire academic year. A certain amount of late fee occurs for payments that are not made on time, e.g. 10%.

If school closes a club, parents whose children participated in that club are refunded for the time portion of club closing and the last day of the program unless they were to choose to attend another club that has space availability as a replacement. If a student does not attend a club for any reason, there are no refunds issued.



If a student switches from one club to another with the approval of After School Program coordinator, no payment is necessary if both clubs have the same fees. If the new registered club is more expensive than previous club, After School Program coordinator will inform the parent about the fee. No refund is issued if new club is less expensive. If a student needs to drop a club, they must fill out a club drop form from the front office and have a parent or guardian signature. Failure to fill out a drop form results in continuing payment for that club.

There are no refunds for the announced or unannounced official holidays, school holidays, early dismissal days, etc. No refund is issued if club teacher cannot attend the club because of sickness or any other reason. In such cases, students are sent to another appropriate club and supervised by another teacher/supervisor.

OTHER RELEVANT ISSUES

After School Program Duties for Teachers and Administrators

It is common and convenient to assign two sponsors (teachers) to a club. These two teachers can work together to arrange a schedule that fits their needs. Teachers need to report to club, tutorials, or study hall on a timely basis. For any reason that a teacher cannot attend, after school club coordinator has to be notified for necessary arrangements to be made. An activity plan for the club that is sponsored should be submitted to after school club coordinator by the start of clubs. This activity plan shall include activities to be realized preferably for one semester, which is usually the duration that the club dues need to be paid. For equipment or supplies needed for the sponsored club, requests are to be made to the after school club coordinator on a timely manner.

Coordination with Activity Coordinator

Coordination of after school clubs and the activities organized therein with other activities organized to take place during regular school hours is important for the successful implementation of both programs (Beckett et al., 2009). Activity coordinator of the school and the after school program coordinator may be the same person possibly leading to a better coordination of both programs, however this is not usually the case for midsize or bigger school schools that enroll more than 500 students.

The coordination of both programs is important so that similar activities are not repeated and also if there are activities that aim to serve the same purpose they could be worked together, e.g. publishing a yearbook is very common and important as an activity in most schools. Due to nature of the content of the work, the responsible students in the yearbook committee should be able to work during regular school hours to access all the resources, talk to the teachers and students. During regular school hours, this work is done by the yearbook committee and only eligible students are admitted. Often, students that may not be elected to the committee in the first place may want to participate in the yearbook activities. Additionally, usually there is more work to be done by the yearbook committee that cannot be finished during regular school hours. For these reasons a yearbook club may be constituted during after school hours and may work in conjunction with the yearbook committee. Another similar example is the committee that organizes the graduation ceremony and/or prom night and the after school club that helps with the organization of the event.

Often PTOs (Parent-Teacher Organizations) or PTAs (Parent-Teacher Associations) are involved in the organization of major activities such as yearbook and prom and usually after school hours are times that they are available to provide volunteer support after work hours. Thus via after school clubs they are also more conveniently involved in these activities. For effective coordination of both programs, an activity calendar that includes activities run usually during regular school hours and types of programs and clubs those will be established and realized during after school hours must be ready by the beginning of the academic year.

Club list must be made ready by the after school program coordinator and the activity calendar must be made ready by the activity coordinator. Both parties must share this information with one another in the presence of a supervisor and revise their programs if needed to make the most of time, financial and human resources. A



club list includes the types of clubs, the sponsors that are teachers, parents or other paraprofessionals, time frame including the days and hours that the clubs are held, etc.

An activity calendar looks like an academic calendar and may consist of sub lists such as field trip calendar. A well-established activity calendar is separated into months or longer or shorter periods of time depending on the number of activities proposed. Such a calendar will also have exact names and dates of the activities as well for which grade levels the activities are intended for. A sample activity calendar draft may be as the following;
September 2008

Sept. 2 Picture Day
Sept. 15 Reading Program Begins
Sept. 18 PTO Meeting/Bake sale; Program-Meet the teacher night/PTO board elections
Sept. 22 Elementary Snack and Soda Drive Begins thru October 17th
Sept. 25 Grandparents Night

October 2008

Oct. 6 School Wide Fundraiser Begins
Oct. 9 Elementary Award Assembly (1st Six Weeks)
Oct. 15 Picture re-take
Oct. 23 PTO Meeting/Bake sale; Program –Talent Show-Elementary
Oct. 25 FALL FESTIVAL
Oct. 28 Pre-K thru 6th grade Fire Safety program- Fire Safety House

November 2008

Nov. 3 School Wide Can Food Drive thru Nov. 21
Nov.8 Parent Picnic
Nov. 10-14 Book Fair-Theme Week
Nov. 20 PTO Meeting/Bake sale; Program –Talent Show-Middle/High

December 2008

Dec. 5 Mobile Dentist Clinic on campus
Dec. 18 PTO Meeting/Bake sale; Program – Multi-cultural Celebration
Dec. 19 Staff Holiday Party

January 2009

Jan. 9 Muffins with Moms
Jan. 16 Donuts with Dads
Jan. 23 Middle and High School Award Assembly (First Semester)

February, 2009

Feb.11-13 Mini-Fundraiser-Buy a Valentine Gram
Feb. 12 Take Class/Club Pictures
Feb.13 4th – 6th Grade Game Night
Feb. 20 Middle School Spring Dance
Feb. 26 PTO Meeting/Bake sale; Program –Black History Program

March 2009

Mar. 5 Elementary Award Assembly (4th Six Weeks)
Mar. 9-13 Book Fair-Theme Week:
Mar. 26 PTO Meeting/Bake sale; Program – Book Fair
Mar. 27 High School Spring Formal Dance

April 2009

Apr. 22 Middle and High School Field Day
Apr. 27 Elementary Field Day - Pre-K and K Grades



Apr. 28 Elementary Field Day – 1st thru 6th Grades

May 2009

May 29 6th Grade Graduation

May 30 Kindergarten Graduation

Field trip calendar may be distinguished from the activity calendar for convenience. Field trips are usually realized under convenient weather conditions usually during early fall or late spring. A sample draft field trip calendar may be as follows;

October 25, 2007- Pre-K and K	Bill Bates Ranch, Pumpkin Patch
November 6, 2007- 3 rd Grade	Museum of Nature and Science
November 7, 2007- 11 th Grade	Southern Methodist University, Blanton Building
November, 28, 2007-2 nd Grade	Heritage Farmstead Museum
November, 29, 2007- Pre-K and K	Dallas Aquarium
December 12, 2007-1 st grade	Dallas Aquarium
December 13, 2007-10 th grade	University of Texas, Dallas
January 24, 2008-9 th -11 th	Parkland Hospital
February 28, 2008-Pre-K and K	Frisco Fire Safety Town
March 10, 2008-Juniors	Holocaust Museum
March 5, 2008-6 th Grade	Texas Discovery Gardens
April 17, 2008- Pre-K and K	Dallas Zoo
April 24, 2008- 2 nd Grade	Dallas Arboretum
April 29, 2008-8 th Grade	Palace of Wax
May 1, 2008-7 th grade	Incredible Pizza Company
May 13, 2008-5 th Grade	The Heard Natural Science Museum

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