

5 Criteria for Selecting the Best After School Program

There is an abundance of after school programs with various formats and goals for the students. Many times schools offer programs that allow children to be tutored, play in the gymnasium, and have access to the library. Other programs are offered by outside organizations that give children the ability to learn other skills and utilize resources that may not be available to them at school. So with all of these options, how should you go about selecting the right after school program for your child?

This report highlights five factors that should be taken into consideration before selecting one. This will help to narrow down the search to the programs that will have the most benefit for the student.

Safety

The top priority should be the safety and well-being of the students attending the program. Taking a careful look at what the facility is like and how it is run can prevent children from being exposed to physical or emotional dangers. Having full confidence in the program's ability to maintain your child's safety is a must. Look around and talk with the staff about safety policies and how they safeguard the children.

Things to consider:

- Are the building, toys, equipment, etc. clean and safe?
- What risks or hazards might they be exposed to?
- Is the staff looking after the kids and managing situations effectively?

Growth and development

Many places will watch your child while you are at work, but that time should be spent enriching the child's mind. This is time that can be spent constructively by doing homework, expanding on lessons taught in the classroom, learning new skills and building their confidence.

When looking at the lesson plan or goal of the program, ask:

- What will the children be learning?
- How loosely or tightly structured is the program?
- Will it give them a chance to learn new skills?
- Will they have the opportunity to interact with other children?

Activity level

Children should be active as a way to foster good physical health and allow them to relieve stress. Having the chance to run around and play games will also keep their attention better than sitting in a class-like setting. Although some children will be more comfortable than others playing sports, all after school programs should give them the opportunity to at least get some form of physical exercise.

Consider asking:

- Will children have a chance to be active?
- How long is their play time?
- What physical activities will they be able to participate in?
- How strenuous or tedious will the activities be?
- Are they age appropriate for my child?

Schedule

Get to know and understand the days and times the program is available to use. A program that closes an hour before you are available to pick up your child, or isn't open on days you need it to be probably won't be very helpful to you.

Be sure to ask:

- What are the hours of operation?
- Can it accommodate your schedule?
- Can it accommodate your child's schedule?
- Is there any fee or penalty for missing days?
- If the program is being held off school grounds, are they going to be picked up immediately after school?

Parent participation

While a good after school program will focus on the child, they should also keep the parents informed about the program and how their child is performing. By reaching out to parents, the staff running the program encourages the entire family to support what the child is achieving. Some after school programs even invite the parents to see what their child has learned by displaying student artwork, performing a play, or opening up sporting events to the parents.

- Take parental participation into consideration by asking:
- Can I see what my child has been learning in the program?
- How well and how often will you communicate with me about my child?
- Will I receive regular progress reports on my child's achievements?

Where can I find all these traits? Martial Arts!

Our instructors' number one priority is to provide a safe environment. We teach your child how to defend themselves in a controlled, well supervised fashion by trained professionals. Every kick, every block, every movement is observed for proper technique to ensure the safety of the student and others around them.

Your child will gain self-esteem, confidence and discipline by continually achieving new goals and mastering them through practice. Looking back at where they started, your child will be proud of their achievements.

One thing martial arts highly promote is good physical health. Students of martial arts remain active throughout the lesson and build muscle in the process. And when kids are encouraged to live a healthy and active lifestyle early on, it is more likely that they will carry those traits into adulthood.

Enrolling a child in our martial arts program is a smart choice for parents as well because they offer a range of class times that won't interfere with your hectic work schedule. We even offer transportation services right from your child's school to the martial arts studio. All you have to do is pick them up from our studio at the end of their lesson!

Parents also have the opportunity to see how their child is performing by attending demonstrations and by following their child's progression through the belt rankings. We will also speak with you about your child's achievements and what they are learning.

There are no shortages of after school programs for kids, but by finding the right one, parents can be assured that their child is in good care and that they are growing both physically and emotionally. Enrolling your child in a martial arts program after school is an excellent way to do that.