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# How After-School Education Can Inspire Your Child

**CONTINUING STUDIES** When your kids struggle or grow bored with school, extra-curricular programs could rekindle their love of learning.

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Group learning encourages children to explore and problem solve independently, while keeping them engaged in new ideas and challenges.

Is your child hitting a wall at school? “If the love of learning has disappeared from a child, something is wrong,” says Mino Tanabe, the President of Kumon North America, an international math and reading program.

Parents should watch for signs of trouble, like changes in behaviour or avoiding particular subjects, and talk to their child to explore what is happening and what can be done, advises Tanabe.

Today’s education system “perpetuates the conventional one-size-fits-all classroom education where everybody learns the same thing at the same time,” says Tanabe. Students with lower abilities may struggle to get by, while exceptional students may find it all too easy and get bored.

**Igniting a love of learning**  
After-school programs can help your child rekindle their love of learning.

You can choose from formal programs or tutoring designed to improve academic performance or conquer specific issues, or informal programs that ignite your child’s interests.

**Finding a perfect match**  
Tanabe recommends individual tutoring for certain learning disabilities, and for students who respond better to collaborative learning. But the downside is tutoring can be expensive, and sometimes a child can become dependent on a tutor.

Group learning at a centre can foster independent learning, allowing students to move at their own pace through the curriculum with the support of an instructor. In effect, they learn how to learn.


“It’s about creating confidence and a feeling of success that translates to your child’s everyday life, and carries forward into their future.”

“An atmosphere where children learn things on their own is better — where they can have that sense of achievement from saying ‘I did it!’” Tanabe says.




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Good after-school programs have goals and demonstrate student success through quantifiable means, like achievement tests, says Tanabe.

Offerings range from early learning programs focused on pre-reading and pre-numeracy, to comprehension and math programs, to reading and critiquing classics of world literature and advanced mathematics for teens, and much more.

It's about creating confidence and a feeling of success that translates to your child's every day life, and carries forward into their future.

### Independent learning by doing

Programs that fuel your child or teen's interests are another way to inspire self-learning and discovery.

Many science centres, museums, and planetariums offer after-school programs, clubs, and camps that "bring science to life for people," says Stephanie Deschenes, Executive Director of the Canadian Association of Science Centres.

Hands-on programs give kids an opportunity to build things, conduct experiments, and go outside and get their hands dirty exploring the local flora and fauna.

"You play with science," says Deschenes, who says programs cover the whole gamut of STEM education.

"If a student is learning something in class and they come to a science centre at night and they're physically trying something they learned in class, there's exponential learning," she says.

She advises parents to look for age-appropriate programming, and to consider the importance of STEM education for the future.

### STEM for the future

"The jobs of the future are not necessarily the jobs of today," she says. "If you think about how technology has advanced over the last 25 years, understanding technology, science, math, and engineering will be even more important in the future as these children go looking for careers."

For teens, it might help if the program sounds less like 'Physics Night' and more like 'Movie Night' where popular movies like The Hunger Games are followed by a discussion of physics related to the movie.

There are also robotics competitions and space camps.

"It needs to be fun," says Deschenes. "You should consider if your child has specific interests, but you should also encourage them to try different things, especially when they're younger. They don't know they don't like it until they try it."


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