



Introduction

When children arrive at the after school service, they have already had a full and busy day at school and they come in with various levels of energy and temperaments. Some children will want to pursue familiar, relaxing and non-challenging activities. Others will look forward to the opportunity to develop their interests, skills and abilities.

Activities need not be limited to sports, games and crafts, but should also include cooking, swimming, nature walks, natural science, drama, ceramics, puppetry, woodwork, sewing, photography, language and cultural awareness activities, community involvement, computer skills and gardening.

After school educators can create a sense of structure in the service through an established programme. However, there must also be a fair amount of flexibility built into the plan to allow children to pursue interests and finish projects beyond timetabled activities.

It is also important to develop opportunities for children to gain a sense of ownership, develop responsibility and select activities that reflect their own interests.

The children should be asked for their ideas on what activities they would like included in their service and should always be involved in planning and leading activities. Parents should also have the opportunity to make suggestions and to offer their skills for the development of programmes and activities, for example, a parent who is a chef, gardener or beautician may be willing to come in and demonstrate their skills.

For a service to succeed with an effective after school programme, it requires staff who are committed, caring and well prepared. Having experienced, trained staff who have selected and planned activities carefully, have involved the children in the selection and planning, and who get to know the entire group and connect well with them, will benefit children greatly.

On this CD we have put together a collection of activities and opportunities for services to browse and select from. All of the activities will support the physical, social, intellectual, emotional and language developmental needs of the child as well as reinforcing the Primary School Curriculum, in a fun and enjoyable way. For most of the activities you can introduce Irish words, research the history of the activity and examine its use around the world to extend the activity.



CD Sections

On this CD, activity and opportunity ideas are displayed in alphabetical order in each of the three sections outlined below.

CD Section One – Everyday opportunities

Everyday opportunities cover a wide a range of activities that are always available for children to explore and experiment or relax with. Provide familiar daily options that allow children to choose how they spend their time at the service.



CD Section Two – Experiential or project-based learning opportunities

Experiential or project-based learning opportunities give children a chance to develop hobbies, skills and interests, and get excited about learning. They also provide opportunities for children and young people to develop self confidence as they find new talents in areas they might not otherwise have the chance to explore and that are not typically addressed by the majority of after school services.



CD Section Three – Community service learning experiences

Community service learning experiences will provide various opportunities to prepare and / or engage children and young people in the positive activities of their community. Such experiences teach children valuable skills, help them to realise their potential to meet community needs and foster a sense of civic responsibility or active citizenship.



For each of the activities the following information is provided:

Activity: The name of the activity

Suitable to Support:

Areas of Children's Development

Subjects in the Primary School Curriculum

The named activity has the potential to support children's learning in both developmental and primary school subject areas. As many staff working in the area of after school have come from an early childhood care and education background and are possibly more familiar with the various domains of children's development (physical, emotional, social, intellectual, linguistic) than they are with the primary school curriculum, we include information on how all activities enhance each area of a child's development as well as subject areas within the primary school curriculum. While the experiences that children have in after school may complement their learning in school, the focus within the after school setting should be on providing a variety of rich opportunities that extend beyond the school curriculum.

Age Range Suitability:

Some activities are more suitable to specific age groups, however in many cases they can be adapted to suit various age ranges. This may depend on the training and experience of staff or the type of materials and equipment provided.

Space Required:

The space available for an activity will depend on the type of building the service is housed in. For some activities a larger space is required. Don't forget, many activities could be taken outside or other community space could be used.

Equipment and Materials:

The basic equipment and materials are listed and services can use their imagination to introduce other suitable items. Also ask the children what they would like to include.

Course of Action:

All weblinks are active at time of going to press.

The guidance provided on this CD only gives a basic outline of how to proceed with each activity. Weblinks are given for most of the activities for further information, just click on the links provided. There are thousands of video tutorials on YouTube covering all sorts of activities. For the children to enjoy the best experience from each activity, careful planning is required. Research the activities thoroughly. Use publications, the internet, ask the experts in your area. Ask the children how they would like to extend the experience.

