

## **AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS: NOT JUST FOR FUN**

When thinking about what school your toddler will eventually attend there are lots of issues to consider: academic quality, social/cultural fit and location. There is another factor that parents may overlook which can have a big impact on their child's success in school, their safety and the family 'stress level'. That factor is *after-school* opportunities.

After-school or 'out of school time' as it is sometimes referred to, is an important issue for parents to consider whether there is a parent in the home after-school or not. What will your child do with those hours between the end of the school day and dinner time? Will she/he be in a safe place? Will she/he have things to do which build on what she/he learned in school that day? Will her/his social/emotional growth be stimulated or will she/he sit and watch TV or play video games all afternoon?

### **Benefits from Afterschool Program Participation**

A properly designed afterschool program can have strong positive effects on children's academic, social, and emotional lives. This is especially true for students whose personal circumstances put them at higher risk of school failure. Some research even suggests that what students do during their out-of-school time has as much bearing on their success as what they do during the school day. (National School Board Association. (2005). Building and sustaining afterschool programs. Successful practices in school board leadership. Alexandria, VA: Author.)

Evidence suggests a correlation between frequent attendance in out-of-school time activities and positive outcomes, including an increase in academic achievement, school attendance, time spent on homework, extracurricular activities, improved effort in school, and better student behavior. Out-of-school time programs offer supportive contexts for youth development and offer excellent opportunities for youth to develop skills in supervised, safe, and engaging environments. American Youth Policy Forum. (2006). Helping youth succeed through out-of-school time programs. Retrieved January 4, 2007 from <http://www.aypf.org/publications/HelpingYouth OST2006.pdf>.

### **What Is Available in the Boulder Valley School District?**

We are fortunate to live in a place where wide choices of after-school programs exist. Parents can select occasional enrichment classes such as cooking, fiddle playing, robotics and yoga offered through Lifelong Learning, the Family Resource Schools program and others. Or, parents can enroll their child in daily structured programs such as the YMCA of Boulder Valley's School Age Program and the school district's School Age Care program. After-school opportunities don't stop at the elementary level. Studies show that after-school programs benefit youth at all levels, from elementary to high school. In fact, middle and high school students may often benefit most from these programs. (National Youth Violence Prevention. (2005).

Afterschool fact sheet. February 1, 2007 from <http://www.safeyouth.org/scripts/facts/afterschool.asp>)  
Boulder offers a myriad of choices for middle and high school students.

**A CHANCE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT AFTER-SCHOOL IN BOULDER**  
***LIGHTS ON AFTERSCHOOL! OCTOBER 18<sup>TH</sup>***

You can learn more about what is available in Boulder by coming to Boulder's first *Lights On Afterschool (LOAS)* celebration. Sponsored by Boulder Valley Afterschool Network, the City of Boulder, and the Boulder Valley School District, the Boulder event will be held on the 1300 block of the Pearl Street Mall from 3:30 to 6:30 PM, Thursday, October 18<sup>th</sup>.

*Lights On Afterschool* is celebrated nationwide to call attention to the importance of after-school programs for America's children, families and communities. *Lights On Afterschool* was launched in October 2000 with celebrations in more than 1,200 communities nationwide. The event grew in 2001 to more than 3,600 events and more than 7,500 in 2005. Last October 2006, 1 million Americans celebrated *Lights On Afterschool!* This year Boulder will be joining the celebration.

It will be a fun celebration of the more than 50 after-school programs available to Boulder Valley School District children. Boulder's *LOAS* will include: Jared Polis, Former Chairman of the Colorado State Board of Education, Chris King, BVSD superintendent and Mark Ruzzin, Boulder Mayor, talking about the value and importance of after-school programming; information and displays from many who provide after-school programs; and most importantly, demonstrations by children of the many things they learn after-school, such as art, music, language, dance, science, sports and community service.

This event is a chance for you to learn more about the importance of quality after-school programming and the specific programs available in Boulder. For more information go to [www.bouldercoloado.gov/cyfhs/loas](http://www.bouldercoloado.gov/cyfhs/loas) & [www.afterschoolalliance.org/](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/) or call Kathryn Coleman at (303) 441-3344.

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