

Chapter 4

Finding Extracurricular Activities for Your Child

Overview

Schools may have before- or after-school programs for your child. Two types of programs are (1) childcare and (2) extracurricular activities. If your child needs a safe place to stay before or after school, ask school staff about childcare. There may be a fee for childcare programs. Schools may also offer extracurricular activities for students, such as sports, art, and music. Student clubs, such as a science or chess club, may be offered as well. Extracurricular activities can help your child make friends and learn new skills. Ask the staff at your child’s school about these programs and encourage your child to join.

Family and Student Rights

As a family member with school-aged children, you have certain rights. This is very important. A parent’s home country, citizenship, or immigration status does not change these rights. These include the following.

- Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) says that school districts must provide the required communication to parents of ELs under Title I in an understandable format and, when possible, in a language that the parents understand.⁵⁰ They must provide information to all parents, regardless of their native language or proficiency in English, about any program, service, or activity of a school district.⁵¹ Additionally, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 requires that school districts and SEAs ensure meaningful communication with LEP parents in a language they can understand and adequately notify LEP parents of information about any program, service, or activity of a school district or SEA that is called to the attention of non-LEP parents. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that consent (agreement or permission) from parents must be requested in the parent’s native language, or through another form of communication understandable to the parents.⁵² Communication with parents may include information about
 - enrollment and registration;
 - information about language assistance;
 - grievance procedures;⁵³
 - notices of nondiscrimination;⁵⁴

⁵⁰ ESEA 1112(e)(4).

⁵¹ U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights and U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division. *Fact Sheet: Information for limited proficient (LEP) parents and guardians and for schools and school districts that communicate with them.* Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/dcl-factsheet-lep-parents-201501.pdf>.

⁵² IDEA, 34 CFR 300.9.

⁵³ A grievance procedure is an internal conflict resolution process that may address formal complaints by individuals. Developing, publicizing, and effectively implementing these procedures gives students and parents opportunities to address concerns at the local level. See <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/grievance.html>.

⁵⁴ The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) enforces several federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination in programs or activities that receive federal financial assistance from the Department of Education. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/frontpage/pro-students/protectingstudents.html>.

“Finding Extracurricular Activities for Your Child” is the fourth chapter of the English Learner Family Toolkit, which is meant to support families of English learners (ELs) in the U.S. education system. Each chapter has five parts: (1) Overview, (2) Family and Student Rights, (3) Suggested Questions to Ask School Staff, (4) Tips for Families, and (5) Resources. Information in each chapter varies. As readers can choose to access only certain chapters of the toolkit, it is important to note that some information may be repeated in multiple chapters.

- student discipline policies and procedures;
 - report cards;
 - requests for parent permission for student participation in district or school activities;
 - parent-teacher conferences;
 - parent handbooks;
 - gifted and talented education (GATE) programs;⁵⁵
 - disability-related services for students with disabilities;⁵⁶
 - magnet and public charter schools;⁵⁷
 - language instruction educational programs;
 - childcare; or
 - extracurricular activities.
- Schools must give equal opportunities for EL students, including ELs with disabilities, to participate in school-based programs and activities offered before, during, and after school. This includes equal access to all school facilities and programs, like performing and visual arts programs, sports, clubs, and honor societies. Schools must ensure that each student with a disability has the supplementary aids and services determined by the student’s IEP team to be appropriate and necessary for the student to participate in nonacademic and extracurricular settings.
 - Students have the right to be free from discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, and disability.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Gifted education programs provide educational practices, procedures, and approaches for children who have been identified as gifted or talented. The main goals of these programs are generally enrichment and acceleration.

⁵⁶ The term “disability-related services” may refer to special education and related services provided to children with disabilities who are eligible for services under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and/or regular or special education and related aids and services provided to qualified students with disabilities under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. See Chapter 3 for more information on disability-related services for EL students with disabilities.

⁵⁷ See definitions in Resources section.

⁵⁸ Educational institutions have a responsibility to protect every student’s right to learn in a safe environment free from unlawful discrimination and to prevent unjust deprivations of that right. The U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights (OCR) enforces several federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination in programs or activities that receive federal financial assistance from the Department of Education. Discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin is prohibited by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (This includes discrimination based on a person’s limited English proficiency or English learner status; and actual or perceived shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics, including membership in a religion that may be perceived to exhibit such characteristics (such as Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, and Sikh individuals)); sex discrimination is prohibited by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; discrimination on the basis of disability is prohibited by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; and age discrimination is prohibited by the Age Discrimination Act of 1975. OCR also has responsibilities under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, which prohibits disability discrimination by public entities, whether or not they receive federal financial assistance.

Suggested Questions to Ask School Staff

The following are sample, optional questions you may ask school staff about extracurricular activities for your child.

Extracurricular Activities

1. Are there any school clubs that will help improve my child's English and help my child make friends?
2. Are there places my child can go for safe and healthy after-school activities? (Community center? Library? Faith-based programs/activities?) Is there a fee? If yes, can I get help if I can't pay the fee?
3. What sports/art/music/theater programs are offered at the school or in the community? Is there a fee (for example, uniform, instrument rental, etc.)? If yes, can I get help if I can't pay the fee?
4. Is transportation available? Is there a fee? If yes, can I get help if I can't pay the fee?

Additional Support for Families Outside of School Settings

1. What free resources are available to help my child with homework and learning English?
2. Where in the community can I find translation and interpretation services?
3. Where in the community can I find help for my child's health, social, and/or emotional issues?
4. Does the community have programs to improve job skills, such as computer skills, for me and my high school student?
5. Are there any places where my child and I can take classes together to improve our English?

Childcare

1. Is childcare available before or after school? Is there a fee? If yes, can I get help if I can't pay the fee?
2. How do I sign up? How do I apply for financial help?
3. What will my child do before or after school? Do the children work on homework? Do childcare providers offer tutoring, or provide fun and games?
4. Is childcare provided by teachers or people from an outside company?

Tips for Families

- Ask other parents what clubs and activities their children like.
- Some schools have before- and after-school programs. Programs may be free.
- Many middle and high schools have clubs, music, art, and sports programs.
- Try to find a program that matches your child's interests.
- Childcare resource and referral agencies (see the website listed in resources) can help you find programs to pay for childcare.

Resources

21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) provides academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours for children, particularly students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools. Check your school district or state Department of Education website to determine whether there is a 21st CCLC program in your community. <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/21stcclc/index.html>

Boys & Girls Clubs of America offers many local programs that support the needs of all young people. Find your local club by entering your location in this search engine: <https://www.bgca.org/programs/all-programs>

Child Care Aware of America has many resources to learn about childcare in the U.S. <http://www.childcareaware.org/about/>. *This resource is available in English and Spanish.*

There are over 400 local **Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R)** agencies in the U.S. Your local CCR&R can help you find childcare near your home or work. Search for your CCR&R here: <http://childcareaware.org/ccrr-search-form/>. The website also includes information on programs that can help pay for childcare here: <https://www.childcareaware.org/help-paying-child-care-federal-and-state-child-care-programs/>. *This resource is available in English and Spanish.*

U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR). (2015) *Dear Colleague Letter: English Learner Students and Limited English Proficient Parents*. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-el-201501.pdf>. This Dear Colleague letter reminds states, school districts, and schools of their obligations under federal law to ensure that English learner students have equal access to a high-quality education and the opportunity to achieve their full academic potential. *This resource is available in numerous languages, including Spanish, Korean, Arabic, Chinese, and Vietnamese.* More information about OCR, including how to file a complaint can be found at <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/index.html>.

Many **YMCAs** offer out-of-school-time programs. Find your local YMCA by entering your location in this search engine: <http://www.ymca.net/about-us>.

Definitions

A **magnet school** is defined in the ESEA, for purposes of the federal Magnet Schools Assistance Program, as “a public elementary school, public secondary school, public elementary education center, or public secondary education center that offers a special curriculum capable of attracting substantial numbers of students of different racial backgrounds.” Magnet schools may offer special instruction in academic content like science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) or different languages. Magnet schools do not charge tuition to families, though they may have a separate admissions process. Magnet schools must comply with local, state, and federal laws.

A **public charter school** is a publicly funded school that is typically governed by a group or organization under a legislative contract (or charter) with the state, district, or other entity. It provides an elementary or secondary education program or both. Charter schools are free from some state or local rules and regulations, but they do need to meet the accountability standards outlined in their charters. A school’s charter is reviewed periodically by the entity that granted it and can be taken away if guidelines on curriculum and management are not followed or if the accountability standards are not met.⁵⁹ Public charter schools vary according to a state’s charter school laws so characteristics such as the curriculum they use or the programs they offer may differ from state to state. However, there are some common characteristics of charter schools. Among these, families choose to apply to have a child attend a charter school and attendance is free. Public charter schools also differ

⁵⁹ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2019). *The condition of education 2021: Public charter school enrollment (2009–2018)*. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cgb.asp.

from traditional public schools because they can use innovative educational practices. Charter schools may offer in-person, online, and hybrid classes.

A charter school that receives federal money must comply with all applicable federal requirements. The U.S. Department of Education's **Office of Elementary and Secondary Education operates the Expanding Opportunity Through Quality Charter Schools Program (CSP)**, which provides money to support the creation of new charter schools and the replication and expansion of existing, high-quality charter schools. A charter school receiving CSP money must meet the definition of a charter school in section 4310(2) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). See <https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-formula-grants/school-support-and-accountability/essa-legislation-table-contents/title-iv-21st-century-schools/#sec4310> for more information.

This document contains examples and resource materials that are provided for the user's convenience. The inclusion of any material is not intended to reflect its importance, nor is it intended to endorse any views expressed, or products or services offered. These materials may contain the views and recommendations of various subject matter experts as well as hypertext links, contact addresses, and websites to information created and maintained by other public and private organizations. The opinions expressed in any of these materials do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education. The U.S. Department of Education does not control or guarantee the accuracy, relevance, timeliness, or completeness of any outside information included in these materials. Mentions of specific programs or products in these examples are designed to provide a clearer understanding and are not meant as endorsements.