



Afterschool Maker Spaces

Creating opportunities for students to extend their learning with afterschool clubs can be challenging. But it can also be incredibly rewarding!

A Maker club can include any number of STEAM-related projects, such as art, video game design, drones and robotics, for example. Starting an afterschool Makers Club is a powerful way of promoting a culture of making at your school, especially if it difficult to instill making during traditional class time. It should be a vibrant place for students to deep-dive into their favorite hobbies or passions. An afterschool Maker club can start small, especially considering how difficult it can be to get some students (especially in magnet schools) to stay after-school.

A successful club depends on teachers and faculty members who are willing to go the extra mile, who can help students get into the spirit of “making” and take their interests to new heights. Having the students come up with a name will help them to bond and feel like they are part of a community.

It’s important to establish structure early on in the process so that club time is spent on making. Routines such as regular “clean up” can help make efficient use of time. Also, setting basic rules such as respecting the ideas, projects and materials of others makes for more respectful making! Be sure to have answers for common questions such as: What materials are students allowed to use? Where are projects stored in between club meetings? What does a student do if something breaks?

Design challenges can ignite creativity while keeping students focused by providing a specific theme while “free” allow students to try out new tools or pursue their unique interests. It’s best to not have too many free days as some students can lose momentum and succumb to poor behavior. A balance will keep students on task while allowing them their freedom.

Above all, Maker clubs encourage students to break the mold of standardized education and do something amazing with their ideas: where students not only experience education, but help to make it.

Find ways to have students reflect on what they’ve created. This could be pictures along with notes and captions, or student blogs, journals and worksheets. Students could write a few brief sentences or draw some sketches for each step of the design process. Student sharing is also a key part of the Maker process. Students can share with the rest of their club, at a school Maker Fair, or even with other schools via Skype or Google Hangouts. Promote the projects and events using social media to help spread the word.

Maker clubs challenge kids to follow their passions and their ideas to foster the kind of creativity and passion-driven student projects that are so important to developing vital 21st-century skills. They can also make a case for “making” to other educators and administrator, introducing this mindset into a school’s learning culture. Above all, Maker clubs encourage students to break the mold of standardized education and do something amazing with their ideas: where students not only experience education, but help to make it.