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Beyond the Classroom:

Educational Programs That Enhance Traditional Learning

by Ruksana Hussain



THE METRO ATLANTA AREA IS HOME TO A WEALTH OF TOP-NOTCH SCHOOLS that provide a superb educational experience for your child. But the learning doesn't stop once the school bell rings at the end of the day, or once the school year's over. From dual-enrollment and after-school programs to internships and summer classes and workshops, Atlanta schools and organizations offer a number of diverse and unique educational opportunities to supplement their classroom instruction, broaden their horizons and even provide a head start on their college education.

The Georgia Department of Education offers a number of dual-enrollment programs that allow high school students to take college courses for both high school and college credit, enrolling full-

time or part-time in college courses before graduating high school. Among these programs are Accel, which offers public and private high school students the opportunity to earn credit hours toward an Associate or Baccalaureate degree; Move on When Ready, which allows students to attend college full-time during their junior or senior year and receive high school and college credit simultaneously; and the Dual HOPE Grant for students seeking technical certificates or diplomas from institutions in Georgia's technical college system.

Internships and Before- and After-School Programs

Internships are offered at many high schools to allow students to gain experience in a field they may wish to pursue in college, often receiving school credit. The Paideia School offers internships as part of a larger, school-wide initiative designed to strengthen the school's community stewardship ethic and deepen learning through volunteerism and civic involvement. Students can choose from weekend, summer, short-term and after-school options with organizations such as Atlanta Children's Shelter and the Be the Match Foundation.

Many schools offer additional learning opportunities before and after the regular school day. These classes traditionally focus on enrichment, building character or learning new skills.

Atlanta Public Schools (APS) partners with individual schools and outside child-care providers for its Expanded Day programs, which offer assistance in academics and the development of social skills. In addition, APS offers special enrichment programs in conjunction with local cultural organizations. These include the City Scientist After-School Program, in which staffers with the Fernbank Museum of Natural History serve as instructors for two-week classes for grades 3 through 5. These classes are held at local schools, culminating in a visit to the museum on the final day. Similarly, the Atlanta Botanical Garden's after-school program offers a four-week science-focused program for grades 3 through 5, held at the Garden. And the High Museum of Art presents a three-week program for grades 3 through 5 that focuses on reading, writing, math and art.

Many independent schools offer their own after-school programs. The Lovett School offers afternoon enrichment programs that encourage students to learn, grow and have fun by providing high-quality programming in a safe, nurturing environment outside of the classroom. Classes are offered right after school and are conveniently located on Lovett's campus.

"Our afternoon enrichment programs help students get to know their teachers on a different level," says Cynthia Coleman, director of afternoon enrichment and summer programs. "Some of our most favored classes are karate, chess, tennis, cheerleading and swimming, especially when training for swim teams." These programs are open to the public and available to students outside the Lovett community.

Continuing Education and Study-Abroad Programs

Continuing education programs are usually open to various age groups, from young children to adults, who want to learn new skills or enhance their existing knowledge in a particular area. The Savannah College of Art and Design's Atlanta campus offers "summer seminars" for high school students who have completed their freshman, sophomore or junior years and want to explore the worlds of art and design. These weeklong programs include field trips, lectures and studio work, and conclude with an exhibition of student works.

Kennesaw State University offers Summer University, a series of one-week camps for children in all elementary grade levels. "With traditional classrooms being so structured these days, there is no option for teachers or children to be creative," says Program Director Michelle Girage. "These

camps offer a great avenue to channel that creativity,” Courses include LEGO robotics, cooking, improv and computer game design.

Some schools also provide the opportunity to study abroad. Brandon Hall School is currently offering a four-week summer program in conjunction with Shanghai Jiao Tong University that will allow students to participate in classes in Chinese language and calligraphy in China.

Summer Programs

Atlanta-area theaters, museums and other organizations also offer summer camps and workshops for young children and high school students. The Fernbank Museum of Natural History offers an educational summer camp for kids in kindergarten through fifth grade. Other organizations with summer offerings include the Georgia Aquarium, the Atlanta Young Writer’s Institute, Zoo Atlanta and the Alliance Theatre, which hosts a summer drama camp for children interested in the performing arts, available throughout the summer for all grade levels.

At the Alliance Theatre, “We offer programming in two formats—one is musical theater, with a focus on acting, singing and dancing, and the other is stage-based, which includes improv skills and creative writing,” says Education Coordinator and Producer of Drama Camps Christina Dresser.

Camps are taught by Atlanta-based actors and culminate in a 30-to-40-minute showcase performance on the final day. “Sometimes talent from these camps is recruited by the Alliance Theatre,” Dresser says, noting that Tiny Tim from last year’s A Christmas Carol was a student from the drama camp.

With so many options, there’s sure to be a supplemental education option that fits your schedule and budget as well as your child’s interests.

Atlanta-area theaters, museums and other organizations offer summer programs for young children and high school students.

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