SCIENCE CLUBS AND EXTRACURRICULAR PROGRAMS: BOOSTING INTEREST IN SCIENCE AMONG YOUNG LEARNERS

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It is very crucial to encourage young students to have a strong interest in science in today's ever-changing world. Science clubs and extracurricular activities are becoming popular strategies for schools all over the world to awaken students' interest in science outside of the traditional classroom. In addition to fostering curiosity, these programs provide the basis for critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving—skills that are fundamental in our technologically advanced society.

Through science clubs, students can learn scientific concepts at their own speed in a structured but flexible environment. Science clubs provide an alternative to traditional programs by encouraging experimentation and experiential learning. By focusing on activities that bring science concepts to life, such as building simple machines, conducting chemistry experiments, or studying nature, students can interact with science on a practical, experiential level. Additionally, these clubs foster collaborative learning, which is crucial for encouraging teamwork. Collaborating on projects teaches students how to discuss scientific concepts, solve problems as a group, and encourage one another's development. In addition to boosting self-esteem, this social component explains science more for people who may have previously been afraid of it.

DepEd supports and promotes science clubs with the goal of motivating young people and identifying exceptional scientific talent through programs and competition throughout the nation. Every September, DepEd observes National Science Club Month, which science clubs from educational institutions across the country engage in events aimed at encouraging scientific research and environmental consciousness. The activities,

which may include science fairs, exhibits, quiz bees, and competitions centered around various scientific fields, are guided by a particular theme every year. Furthermore, YES-O or Youth for Environment in Schools Organization raises awareness of ecological issues in line with environmental science initiatives. Many science clubs participate in YES-O by planning activities such as tree planting, waste management campaigns, and clean-up drives. Participants in this program are urged to cultivate an awareness of environmental stewardship and apply scientific solutions to practical issues.

While science clubs focus on regular meetings and projects, extracurricular programs offer a variety of short-term activities like science fairs, workshops, field trips, and guest lectures. At science fairs, for instance, students can present their research projects to their teachers, peers, and the general public. By getting ready for these occasions, students gain confidence in their work and learn how to explain scientific ideas clearly. Students may dig deeper into specific topics of interest through field trips and workshops. For example, a biology club might organize field trips to nature reserves to learn about ecosystems, while a robotics club might attend coding workshops. Through these experiences, students gain an understanding of what science looks like in the real world and exposed them to their potential career paths in STEM fields.

Extracurricular activities and science clubs are effective means of fostering a love of science in young students. Students learn more about how science impacts their lives and the world around them through experiential learning, social interaction, and exposure to the real world. These tracks often mark the start of a lifelong love of science that can result in rewarding jobs in STEM fields. As we continue to support and expand these programs, we not only help students achieve academic success but also equip them with the curiosity and skills to become the scientists, engineers, and problem-solvers of tomorrow.

In DepEd schools, young students' love of science is greatly enhanced by science clubs and extracurricular activities. Investing in science education through these clubs

and programs will be crucial as the Philippines' educational landscape develops to equip students to meet future challenges and advance the country. It is indeed that investing in science education through clubs and extracurricular programs is an investment in the future driven by knowledge, discovery, and innovation.

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