



# After-school Science club

## How-to Manual

The materials presented in this How To Manual are designed to help your school efficiently and effectively implement a successful Mad Science After-School Science Club. Most, if not all, of your questions should be answered in this manual. Please feel free to contact the Mad Science office at any time should you have additional questions.

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### **What is Mad Science?**

Founded in 1985, Mad Science has grown to over 220 locations in over 25 countries. We are the world's leader in fun science for children. Our Mad Science office conducts educational, entertaining and hands-on science activities for elementary age children throughout Tampa Bay. Our unique brand of exciting, interactive activities instills a clearer understanding of how science affects the world around them.

Through Mad Science, your students will be able to touch, see, hear, smell and taste what science is really all about. Our goal is to instill a love of learning in children that will last a lifetime. Our Mission: By making science fun we aim to inspire an interest in science and a love of learning in children that will last a lifetime. We teach with the idea that the children we might inspire might someday: Lead the first mission to Mars, or Cure Cancer.

#### **Is this a stand-alone after-school program?**

Mad Science takes all the hassle and frustration out of running an after-school program as we do all the work for you. We are typically sponsored by the PTA or school administration and run our science clubs separate of any other programs at your school. Should your school have an existing after school enrichment program we will be very happy to work within it.

#### **What is our time commitment to your program?**

If you elect to use our turn-key approach, other schools have told us they have implemented a Mad Science program with only 2 to 4 hours of time investment. Your commitment typically occurs before the registration period to finalize the program details (Schedule program dates and a promotional kick-off, find classroom space needed).

#### **How long are your programs (weeks and hours)?**

Our standard program runs 6 weeks, 1 hour per week and held immediately after school. Because of the flexibility of our programming, Mad Science can at times accommodate program requests of 4 to 12 weeks. See "What are Your Suggested Program Start Dates?" below for how your school can offer after-school science enrichment throughout the school year.

#### **How many programs a year do you offer?**

With the ease of implementation, the popularity and variety of our instruction and the no obligation nature of our programs, most schools elect to offer Mad Science multiple times throughout the school year. We typically offer a 6 week program, each semester. In order to accommodate all our schools we offer two six week series during the semester with the first starting 3-4 weeks after the start of the semester and the 2<sup>nd</sup> after the first series ends. In the fall semester the 1<sup>st</sup> series starts around Mid September and runs until

Late October and the 2<sup>nd</sup> series ending just prior to the winter break. In the Winter/spring semester the 1<sup>st</sup> series starts in Mid February and the 2<sup>nd</sup> starts usually just after spring break in early to mid April ending nears the end of May.

### **What is the cost?**

There is never any cost to your school or PTA to sponsor a Mad Science after-school Science Club. There is never a registration fee, deposit or cancellation fee associated with our programs. The cost for a standard 6 week program ranges from \$70 - \$82 per student depending upon which program we are offering and the distance of the school from our office. This is an all-inclusive, one-time fee for the participants. Mad Science provides all equipment, materials, take homes with every session and instruction.

### **How long does it take to implement a program? How much lead time is necessary?**

The most important part of the process is to register your interest in having a Mad Science after-school program. To do this, simply fill out the program registration form and email or fax it to our office, or give us a call. **It is critical that you do this as soon as possible because our semester schedule fills out quickly.** There is never any financial obligation to your school or organization. We will contact you to finalize the program details [schedule the free registration kick-off, program day(s) of the week, start and end dates, etc]. Typically setting up your program looks like this:

- **3 weeks before our science club begins** – Your school assembly or Mad Scientist TV news interview is conducted to introduce the program Registration materials are delivered to your school to be sent home with your students Students typically have 10 – 20 days to return their registration forms.
- **1 week before class begins** – Registration ends and Mad Science processes enrollments Space requirements are finalized (how many rooms we will need) Class rosters are delivered to your school. *This process can be expedited depending upon your school time constraints.*

### **Do you have a minimum class size?**

Our classes require a minimum enrollment of 12 paid students. To ensure the hands-on, interactive nature of our instruction, class size will be capped at 20. Registrations for numbers 20 through 22 will go on a wait list. With the 23<sup>rd</sup> registration, Mad Science will divide those registered into 2 classes, at 40 we divide into 3 classes, at 60 four classes, etc.. The ability to offer additional classes may be subject to instructor availability. Mad Science may elect to offer a program even if the class minimum is not met. This decision is at the sole discretion of Mad Science.

### **What ages/grades can register?**

Mad Science offers instruction in an age and grade appropriate manner for children in grades K- 8. We utilize different teaching methods and concept emphasis for different age levels to ensure each participant benefits from the instruction. For example; children in grades K-2 who do yet know of atoms and molecules are presented the “nature of matter” differently then those in higher grades. Larger enrollments actually work in favor of the children, as the more children enroll the greater we can divide them into more age appropriate groups. Typically for a school with 2 clubs we have one for grades K-2, and one for grades 3–5, with 3 clubs one for grades K-1, 2-3, and 4-5.

### **How can we predict enrollment?**

A good rule of thumb is to **assume at least 10 - 25%your student body will register.** Response may be affected by many factors including public or private school, day of week, season of year, transportation needs, and familiarity with Mad Science of students, and of course the economy. However, it is best to plan for at least a 10 - 20% response.

### **How many spaces will be needed for the science clubs?**

Depending upon the factors listed in the previous question we can give you an educated guess as to how many students might enroll. Enrollments for our program at schools have ranged from the minimum of 12 to over 200. If you would like to limit enrollment to certain maximum of spaces just let us know what that is and we will cap our enrollment at that number. Enrollment is done on first-come, first serve basis. We update you during the registration process to let you know how many spaces will actually be needed.

### **What day of the week should we schedule our science club?**

Mad Science has the flexibility in scheduling and instructor availability to conduct classes on any day of the week and on multiple days during the week at one location. Availability on some days may be limited so it is best to confirm your dates with Mad Science as early as possible. We recognize the importance of other after school enrichment programs and ask to schedule our science club on a day of the week where there is the least amount of conflict with other existing popular programs. This is a good way to work with other enrichment providers and allow all the students that want to enjoy Mad Science to have that opportunity.

### **What time of the day does the program start club?**

We are flexible and can start any time after school releases you would like but typically our science clubs start within 5 – 15 minutes from the dismissal of school. This allows the teacher in the room time to release their students and the instructor time to prepare the room and equipment for the day's instruction.

### **What happens on shortened days? (*School improvement planning, teacher in service, etc.*)**

Again we are flexible and can start our program earlier but typically we skip these days and extend the program a week later to make up for missed days. This is stated on the schedule delivered to all parents

### **How do you introduce the program to the students?**

Just passing out registration forms to students typically results in low participation. I.e. Science on “paper” doesn't not look like that much fun. Children typically have to “experience” how much FUN our programs can be. We can do this by one of three methods, and you can choose whatever is most convenient to your school.

1. A free Mad Science assembly - This is a 30 minute dynamic event(s) offered to the school. We typically divide your school into groups no larger than 275 (e.g. grades K-2 and 3-5).
2. A “Mad About Science” News Spot- This is a few minute presentation on your school closed circuit morning news broadcast, where we perform a couple of exciting and educational experiments working with your student news team to thrill your whole student body watching.
3. Mad Science Video - We can send a 5 minute video to your school to play on one of your morning news broadcasts and/or or passed around to classrooms to play separately.

### **How is registration handled?**

On the day the program is introduced we distribute our registration forms to the school to give to all students. We typically handle registration all ourselves but can work with any school that wants to do it themselves. With us doing registration all registration forms and payments are submitted directly to Mad Science usually (currently about 95%) via our online registration system on our website. Parents also have the option to fill out the tear off section of their registration form and mail it into us.

If you decide to handle registration and payment processing Mad Science will invoice you for the number of participants. If you decide to process your own registration, participant information and class rosters will need to be provided to Mad Science

### **What participant information is required?**

Please see (or ask for) our sample registration form for all the information required.

### **When is payment required?**

From parents: Payment is required at the time of registration. Mad Science can accept checks or credit cards. From your school: Should you elect to process registration and payments, Mad Science will invoice you for the number of participants during the second week of class. This allows students to “test drive” our program the first week and receive a full refund if it is not to their liking. Also, late comers are more easily accommodated through this schedule. Payment on invoices is expected within one week of receipt.

### **What does Mad Science need from our school?**

The instructor will need a table every week in each space we are using on which to set up their equipment. We have students work cooperatively teams as scientists do in real life and thus science and

art rooms which are typically set up with tables tend to work the best. Classrooms where desks are set up in groups also work well, but any classroom will do. Classrooms in grades 3 and above are preferred. We will also need access to electricity, and nearby water, and the ability to darken the room is also desired. Volunteers are not necessary with our program; however they are welcomed. See "Do you offer scholarships" for information on free enrollment for the children of volunteers.

### **What is your refund policy?**

A full refund will be made to any parent who withdraws his child prior to the second week of the program. Withdrawal after the second week is not subject to a refund, but will be handled on a case-by-case basis. Consideration will be given to these students for future Mad Science programs.

### **Do you have a quality guarantee?**

The Mad Science guarantee is simple – your school, your students and parents will be satisfied with the Mad Science experience or we will do whatever it takes to make it right.

### **Who are your instructors?**

All of our Mad Scientists (instructors) have documented and verified experience working with groups of children. Most are current or former teachers and current college students working towards a degree in education. All of our instructors undergo level 2 Florida school district required background checks. Our instructors also undergo extensive training with our programs and are excited and enthusiastic presenters.

### **Do you offer scholarships?**

Our mission is to bring fun science to all children. To this end Mad Science offers several scholarship opportunities to our classes. All scholarships are awarded after the paid class minimum is met. Administration of scholarships is left to your school. Please inform Mad Science of the recipient(s) to ensure proper record keeping and invoicing.

- One scholarship is awarded to the After-School Program Coordinator.
- We usually offer one scholarship per every 25 students registered
- At some schools we offer a scholarship to a parent or guardian who commits to serve as a club volunteer for the entire length of the program. This is limited to one per class

We do offer scholarships over and above those listed above at the sole discretion of Mad Science.

### **Do you offer incentives for the use of teacher's classrooms?**

As a reward for teachers who allow Mad Science to use their classrooms, Mad Science will donate a free Event (retail value \$275). To those teachers combined at a convenient time for them. We on occasion reward teachers with hands-on workshops. These are, interactive and highly correlated with sunshine state grade level standards. These programs must be used during the semester the program is held. We alternatively offer teachers a scholarship for their child or some child in their class if they would like.

### **What are the expectations of the students and the parents?**

Mad Science strives at all times to provide fun and safe science activities for all children participating in our classes. To fulfill this commitment, we ask that all children enrolled adhere to basic behavioral guidelines. Our instructors set clear boundaries and expectations as to appropriate conduct and we will hold all students to these expectations. In addition, Mad Science will follow all of your school's rules and policies regarding student behavioral expectations. We stress at the beginning of each class that the school rules are still in effect and will be enforced. When a child interrupts our positive learning environment we will take corrective action and parents will be notified. Mad Science also has expectations of the parents whose children are enrolled. An approved guardian must pick up each child at the dismissal of the club. Parents are welcome and encouraged to observe any club session and to participate where appropriate. We expect all parents to support the learning process at home and encourage them to participate in the "experiments to do at home" given to all students on their take home cards.

**What is your inclement weather/class cancellation policy?**

Mad Science will follow the inclement weather and school closure policy of the school. We leave enough room in the schedule to accommodate a possible make-up day and will attempt to reschedule weather-related class cancellations or other events beyond our control or planning, but with no guarantees. No refunds or credits will be given in the event a class cannot be made up under these circumstances. Since we have started offering our after school programs in 2005 we have NEVER not made up a class. Cancellations due to school-related issues such as improper planning *may* be rescheduled at the sole discretion of Mad Science. No refund or credit will be given under these circumstances regardless if the class is rescheduled or not.

**Are we guaranteed a Mad Science program at our school?**

The demand for our programming is growing rapidly. As a result we must limit the number of classes we offer in any instruction period. We schedule programs on a first come, first served basis. Our programs for each semester typically sell out. Because of this popularity and of the challenges sometimes associated with securing qualified staff, it is imperative that you adhere to the planning timelines when requesting and implementing a Mad Science after-school program. We have always met our staffing obligations but should the enrollment for your school exceed the norm, we cannot guarantee that an additional instructor will be available. Should Mad Science have to cancel a program because we could not supply a qualified instructor we will make every effort to reschedule the program as quickly as possible. We realize the great inconvenience and disappointment a program cancellation would cause. Should this occur, any funds collected by Mad Science for a canceled program will be promptly returned.