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Limitless:

Continuing to Learn After the Bell Rings

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Abstract

Most students in grade school have too much free time after school and don't use their time efficiently. These students need a place to go after school where they can spend their time effectively while partaking in educational and fun activities that will help these students learn, grow and succeed. My after school program will guide these students in the right direction and prepare them for adulthood.

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Limitless: Continuing to Learn after the Bell Rings

From the day we are born, we learn from our surroundings and our elders. We are empty books looking for the pages and words to create the story of our lives. Every day is filled with learning and applying the knowledge that we gain during our journey. No matter where we are or what we are doing, our eyes are observing and our brain is learning. Shouldn't parents, teachers, and other educators guide us toward even more learning and greater success? The after school program that I designed will solve the problem of poor use of time after school and help students reach their full potential.

**Introduction and Rationale**

In today's world, many families work long days, or have busy schedules and are unable to be home when their child gets home from school. In communities across the United States, 11.3 million children are without supervision between the hours of 3 and 6 p.m. (Afterschool Alliance. 2014). When students get home, there is no one to guide them to do their homework or use their time productively. This unsupervised time can be detrimental to their education as well as their social and behavioral outcomes. They can fall behind in school and they may start to use their unsupervised time in ways that are bad for their growth.

In addition to the issue of unsupervised time after school comes the issue of students learning process stopping. When students don't continue their learning after school, their learning is confined to what they learn in the classroom. Students need structure and time after school to learn on their own and figure out who they are and what they enjoy doing in this world. If these students fill their time after school with a productive, structured schedule, they will expand their learning to outside the classroom, receive multiple behavioral and academic benefits, and avoid

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the possibility of falling into bad habits that will affect their future. Students' time in school is educational and important, but their learning is confined to what the teachers teach them. Students need to expand their learning outside of the classroom to be able to see what else this

world offers and be able to fail or excel at something they learn on their own.

Many students need to be a part of an after school program where they can receive assistance and tutoring on their homework, as well as build relationships and continue to learn and grow. An effective after school program can improve classroom behavior (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2010), school attendance, academic aspirations, and can reduce the likelihood that a student will drop out (Huang, Leon, La Torre, Mostafavi, 2008). Positive academic outcomes as well as social and behavioral benefits occur when students are a part of an after school program (Reisner and Colleagues, 2007).

I'm starting an after school program where students grades Kindergarten to 8th grade can come to find their passions and expand on their talents, while receiving the support they need with homework and any subjects in which they are struggling. The time after school these students have will be used to further their education and help them prepare for their lives after graduating. To help my students grow and learn to their fullest capabilities, students will be able to keep learning and discovering what they are good at outside of the classroom. This will better prepare students for life after school and help them be able to find a career that best suits their interests and skills.

The mission of my program is to ensure that all the kids learn, grow, and succeed. To ensure this, my program is scheduled around organized activities to help these students progress academically, socially, and behaviorally. I set clear rules that will be followed during the

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program and motivate the students to help each other follow them and stay on task. Team work is a major factor in my program. Regardless of the subject matter, students working in small groups tend to learn more of what is taught and retain it longer than when the same content is

presented in other instructional formats (Davis, 1993). I want all the students to feel like my program is their second home and family. My students will build strong friendships, while helping each other reach their goals. My after school program is from 3:30 to 6:00 and is broken up into different activities that will last anywhere from 15 minutes to one hour. I describe the different activities as well as the full details of my program below.

**Program Design**

**Overview**

My vision is to change the future of students and help them learn, grow and succeed. My program helps students see that they have a place in this world, while creating unforgettable memories, friendships, and skills that they will cherish for the rest of their lives. My after school program is for students grades kindergarten to 8th grade and allows them to find their passions and expand on their talents, while receiving the support they need with homework and any subjects in which they are struggling.

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**Standards**

*I am using Quality Standards for Expanded Learning Programs approved by the California Department of Education After School Division to ensure that all my students are learning, growing, and succeeding through my program. These standards will be evidenced in my program through organized activities, parent and teacher surveys, as well as feedback surveys for the kids on what they think about the program and what might need improved or changed.*

**1. Safe and supportive environment**

The program provides a safe and nurturing environment that supports the developmental, social-emotional and physical needs of all students. *I will provide a survey for the students at the beginning, middle, and end of my program to receive their feedback and thoughts about my program.*

**2. Active and engaged learning**

Program design and activities reflect active, meaningful and engaging learning methods that promote collaboration and expand student horizons. *The students will participate in organized activities every day, where they will have the option to choose from different stations where different activities are provided.*

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**3. Youth voice and leadership**

The program provides and supports intentional opportunities for students to play a meaningful role in program design and implementation, and provides ongoing access to authentic leadership roles. *Good behavior will be acknowledged and awarded with gold*

*stars that will be placed on a board with all the students name on it. Once a student reaches 4 gold stars. that student will be able to lead the group in a game of their choice for 30 minutes.*

**4. Healthy choices and behaviors**

The program promotes student well-being through opportunities to learn about and practice balanced nutrition, physical activity and other healthy choices in an environment that supports a healthy life style. *The students will be provided a healthy snack as soon as they arrive to the program each day.*

**5. Quality Staff**

The program recruits and retains high quality staff and volunteers who are focused on creating a positive learning environment, and provides ongoing professional development based on assessed staff needs. *Every staff member of the program will have a background check and interview prior to being hired to ensure they have the experience and passion to help the kids in the program learn and grow.*

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**6. Diversity, Access and Equity**

The program creates an environment in which students experience values that embrace diversity and equity regardless of race, color, religion, sex, age, income level, national origin, physical ability, sexual orientation and/or gender identity and expression. *All students will be treated equally and ensured the guidance and attention they need in the program.*

**7. Clear vision, mission and purpose**

The program has a clearly defined vision, mission, goals, and measurable outcomes that reflect broad stakeholder input and drive program design, implementation and Improvement. *The purpose of my program is to have a safe environment for students to go after school where they can continue to learn and expand on their talents. To ensure that all the students are growing and improving, I will provide a survey for the students, parents, and teachers to take at the beginning, middle, and end of my program to receive feedback. I will also provide their parents and teachers with a survey at the beginning, middle and end of my program to report any changes and progress in school and at home.*

**8. Collaborative partnerships**

The program intentionally builds and supports collaborative relationships among internal and external stakeholders, including families, schools and community, to achieve program goals. *My program will have a connection to the students schools and their*

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*parents to keep track of the progress of the students since they started attending my program.*

**9. Continuous quality improvement**

The program uses data from multiple sources to assess its strengths and weaknesses in order to continuously improve program design, outcomes and impact. *My surveys for the students, parents, and teachers will ensure that my program is working effectively and meeting everyone's needs.*

**10. Program management**

The program has sound fiscal and administrative practices supported by well-defined and documented policies and procedures. *My program will have activities to help all the students gain the intended learning outcomes by the end of the program.*

**Intended Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this program students will be able to...

* + 1. Manage their time after school with productive activities
    2. Build positive relationships with other students and adults
    3. Be excited to continue their learning outside of the classroom
    4. Be more successful in class
    5. Develop their social skills
    6. Develop their passions and talents

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* + 1. Choose healthy snacks and meals based on their nutritional needs
    2. Overcome challenges that occur in their lives
    3. Develop leadership skills

**Learning Plan: How the intended learning outcomes will be achieved**

1. Manage their time after school with productive activities. *The students will be able to partake in different activities that include: drawing station, Legos and building blocks station, board game station, science station, music station, and dress up station. These stations consist of activities that keep the students brains working and thinking creatively, while showing them that there are other fun activities they can do after school rather than watch television or play on the computer. These activities are meant to encourage the students to continue their learning outside of the classroom.*

2. Build positive relationships with other students and adults. *All the activities will have the opportunity for group interaction. The students will be motivated to work together and grow as a team, while growing and improving individually. I and the rest of my staff will partake in all activities and games with the students.*

3. Be excited to continue their learning outside of the classroom. *Students will be encouraged to spend time furthering their knowledge and skill in their areas of interest or anything they would like to learn or know more about.*

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4. Be more successful in class. *The students will have 30 minutes every day to work on their homework and have the option to have tutoring in any subject.*

5. Develop their social skills. *The students will be interacting with other students in the program in certain activities and are motivated to help others stay on task and achieve their goals.*

6. Develop their passions and talents. *During activity stations, any students that have certain interests, talents, or passions are able and encouraged to use their time to research, practice, or further their knowledge in that area.*

7. Choose healthy snacks and meals based on their nutritional needs. *Students have a 30 minute snack time as soon as they arrive to the program. The students are provided healthy snacks and before eating we will go over the nutritional facts of the snack as a group and why it is a good snack choice.*

8. Overcome challenges that occur in their lives. *All students are encouraged to talk with a staff member of the program about any issues or problems in their life that they want to talk about. The student and the staff member will come up with different plans of action to overcome whatever may be going on in their lives.*

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9. Develop leadership skills. *Students will be able to choose a game for all the students to play on Fridays when they receive four gold stars. They will have to show the other students how to*

*play and lead them in playing correctly.*

**Main Points**

Wholeness: The ability to manage time after school with productive activities that continue the learning process will improve a student's education and prepare them for life after school and aim them in the direction of success. *Science of Consciousness: When we can manage our time and continue to learn, we come to a realization of the Self and begin our journey to total Bliss.*

* + 1. **Unsupervised Time After-School:** When a child is unsupervised after school, the possibility of bad use of time can occur. Structure and the opportunity to receive help with homework or a subject in school they are struggling in is important for a student's growth and success. *Science of Consciousness: Order is present everywhere.*
    2. **After-School Program:** My after school program provides students with the structure and support they need after school to finish their homework and receive help in the subjects they are struggling in. The students will also have the chance to learn new skills and participate in fun activities with other students and building strong relationships. *Science of Consciousness: Knowledge is structured in consciousness.*

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* + 1. **Improved behavior, social skills, and school performance:** Research shows that students who participate in after school programs have improved academic performance, social interaction skills, and better behavior. *Science of Consciousness: The whole is contained in every part.*

**Program Overview Chart**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Monday-Thursday** | **3:30 - 4:00**  Students arrive and have a healthy snack | **4:00 - 4:30**  Students that have homework start to work on it and receive guidance if needed. Students that want help in a certain subject are offered tutoring. All other students are able to go to the available activity stations that include: drawing station, Legos and building blocks station, board game station, science station, music station, and dress up station. | **4:30 – 5:30**  All students will have free time to go to the activity stations. Some days, depending on weather, we will go outside and play games as well. | **5:30 - 5:45**  All students participate in cleaning up all the stations to the way they were when they arrived. | **5:45 - 6:00**  All students gather their belongings and prepare to be picked up by their parents. |

\*On Friday Fun Day, any student that has four gold stars on the board for extra good behavior can choose a game for the whole group to play. If no one on has four gold stars, then all students will vote on a game for everyone to play.

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**Program Evaluation Plan**

Each student's progress will be evaluated through surveys that will be given at the beginning, middle, and end of my program. These surveys will be for the student's teachers and parents, as well as the students themselves, reporting their progress in behavior, focus, work, and social interaction with the other students since attending my program. My surveys will help me track the progress of the students to ensure they are growing in these areas. I will use the parent and teacher surveys to see what areas the students are progressing in and which areas they are not. I will then meet with the students individually to go over the area in which they have not progressed and create a plan of action to help them improve. Some students may need to improve in some areas more than other areas. All students will come to my program with different needs and areas to improve in. My surveys will help me keep track of where my students are progressing and where they might need more attention in order to improve. The student surveys will also help me incorporate more activities for the students and make any adjustments to the program to help the students be more engaged and help them reach their goals while having fun. Please refer to the Appendix to see the parent, teacher, and student surveys.

**Consciousness-Based Education**

My focus of my program is to help students in areas of school they are struggling in, as well as areas in their life, in order to help them reach their goals and live a fulfilled and successful life. Consciousness-Based education has a similar goal. The purpose of CBE is to help students learn more through transcendental meditation, which has scientifically documented benefits such as increased energy, alertness, and creativity, and a broader perspective. That

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means that when students practice TM they are growing in clarity of mind and inner balance, and are continually expanding their ability to assimilate and understand sophisticated and complex topics, which is a great aid to learning.

So as a whole, my program and CBE have a very similar goal and outcome. The only major difference is the approach to acquire the overall goal. For CBE, in order to learn more and gain access to deeper levels of education, one must partake in TM. For my program, in order to learn more and prepare themselves for life after school and have success in a career, my students will need to learn how to overcome learning obstacles in their lives and find out what they are

passionate about and good at so they can gain as much knowledge in that area. My program helps these students do that by helping them organize their time to find out what that might be that they are good at and have the time to learn more in that area to prepare them for a job after school.

Overall, CBE and my program have the goal of helping students further their education in order to have a more fulfilled life. Through more knowledge and a better understanding of ourselves we can accomplish our goals and be prepared for life after school. Whether it's through TM and CBE or my after school program, students can acquire the tools to further their education and reach their life and career goals.

**Conclusion**

My program gives students the tools they need to accomplish their goals and succeed after school in a career of their interest. Our education system has a major learning gap that affects the education and growth of our students. My program helps close that learning gap and

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guides students to continue to learn, grow, and succeed to ensure they meet their career and life goals after graduating. I care about our students' future and success and have developed my program to meet the needs of all students. I may not be able to ensure that all parents, teachers, and other educators help our students learn more and be successful, but I can do my part by providing my program to help as many students as possible do so and encourage others to do the same.

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**Appendix**

Parent Survey

Answers: Each question should be answered with a yes or no. If the answer is yes, please explain how.

* + 1. Has your child been more independent with his/her homework?
    2. Has your child been behaving better at home? Any behavioral differences?
    3. Has your child been more productive with his/her time at home after school?
    4. Has your child been choosing healthier snacks and meals at home?
    5. Has your child been interacting and socializing with other kids more?

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Teacher Survey

Answers: Each question should be answered with a yes or no. If the answer is yes, please explain how.

* + 1. Has this student improved in any subject? If so, what subject and how has he/she improved?
    2. Has this student behaved better in class or helped other classmates stay on task?
    3. Has this student been more focused or less disruptive in class?
    4. Has this student socialized more or interacted better with other students?
    5. Has this student kept up with homework and class work?

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Student Survey

Answers: Each question should be answered with a yes or no. If the answer is yes, please explain how.

* + 1. Have you felt more comfortable with homework and more prepared for class?
    2. Do you feel like you've improved in any subjects? If so, which one(s)?
    3. Do you feel like it's easier to focus in class?
    4. Have you made any new friends since the program?
    5. How do you spend your time after school?
    6. Are there any changes that you think should be made or any activities that should be added to the program? If so, what are they?