

## *Starting an after-school program*

**Create a “school (name?)”** that provides an interdisciplinary project based learning for **after-school students**... high school, home school and drop outs  
Essential skills not generally taught in schools... ***problem solving, thinking skills, collaboration, process methods, communication with others, continuous improvement, quality processing, risk taking, learning from failure, values, character development***

### **Elevator speech:**

“Present education leaves students bored, not engaged in learning and finding it difficult to manage the complexities of life relating to the interface of society, schools and business. Our after-school program will provide a fun environment around interdisciplinary project based learning for charter, public high school, home school and drop outs. We will provide the missing skills like problem solving, creative and critical thinking, questioning, character development and society values needed in today’s environment. Assessment will be by the skills and innovative approaches in problem solving and involvement of the community.

Our mission is to get students excited about learning and have the skills to manage in today’s society.”

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**Foundation thought:** Engineering design and thinking skills are the glue (engagement, ownership, fun, innovation & collaboration) that connects Mathematics, Language Arts, Science, Social Studies and Soft-Skills for learning that enhances the school year.

**What I want you to take away from this presentation**

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We are providing a step in helping the students see that they can achieve success in their lives by having an innovative outlook and values for a better society. Our process simulates learning by combining thinking skills, values and problem solving collaboration in a fun environment.

### **Needs:**

The skills needed in our vastly complicated world, whether to earn a decent living or to be an active and informed citizen, are radically different from those required historically. Quite simply, the world has changed, and our schools remain stuck in time. “Knowledge workers” have become obsolete. What the world demands today are “smart creatives,” the term that Eric Schmidt and Jonathan Rosenberg use to describe the kind of people Google needs to hire in their book *How Google Works*... .. ***Most Likely to Succeed: Preparing Our Kids for the Innovation Era***

### **Proposed Ideas:**

- Create after-school programs that provide supplementary skills to students. These skills are not subject matter skills but life skills to support the student in work, dealing and interface with society, and citizenship.

Area	Tools
Society	Character traits, Problem solving, Design thinking, Soft-skills
Citizenship	Thinking skills( creative and critical thinking, questioning, reflection), Values, Character development
Work	Process methods, Collaboration, Innovative thinking, Financial

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	understanding
Lifelong learners	Excitement in learning, Risk taking, Feedback, Values

### Follow-up ideas:

- Program for pre-college students in preparing to excel with life skills

### Process:

A set of meeting will be held with the community to determine perceived needs. The school will focus on providing learning around developing character skills; business processes, financial understanding and doing collaborative project based learning exercises. The school will have a learning culture where projects are owned by the students and set their own project learning targets. The school will use commercial tools that are used in industry for support of their projects as well as connection to companies and community organizations. Students will have ownership of the planning and managing the relationships.

The after-school program year will be split into four semester's all doing project based learning with emphasis on Society, Education and Business. Each week of study will be 6-8 hours.

Semester	Activities
1 Society	Soft-Skills, character development
2 Education	Learning how to learn
3 Business	Build a repair and recycling business
4 Reflection	Putting it all together

Students will be initially assessed on their strengths and

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learning plans will be developed for the calendar year that build on those strengths. They will work in collaborative teams doing project-based learning in the 3 disciplines of society (community), education and business.

Students will be taught the importance of measurements for assessment, Feedback and using them to track their progress. They will set and use their own learning targets. They will learn the importance of having conversations with themselves when things are not quite right and changes needed. The basic learning will be using problem solving and building a community that adds value.

Integrated within their projects will be the use of soft-skills (problem solving, executive functions, character development, communication, organization, etc.) between students and the school community.

### **What are the learning outcomes:**

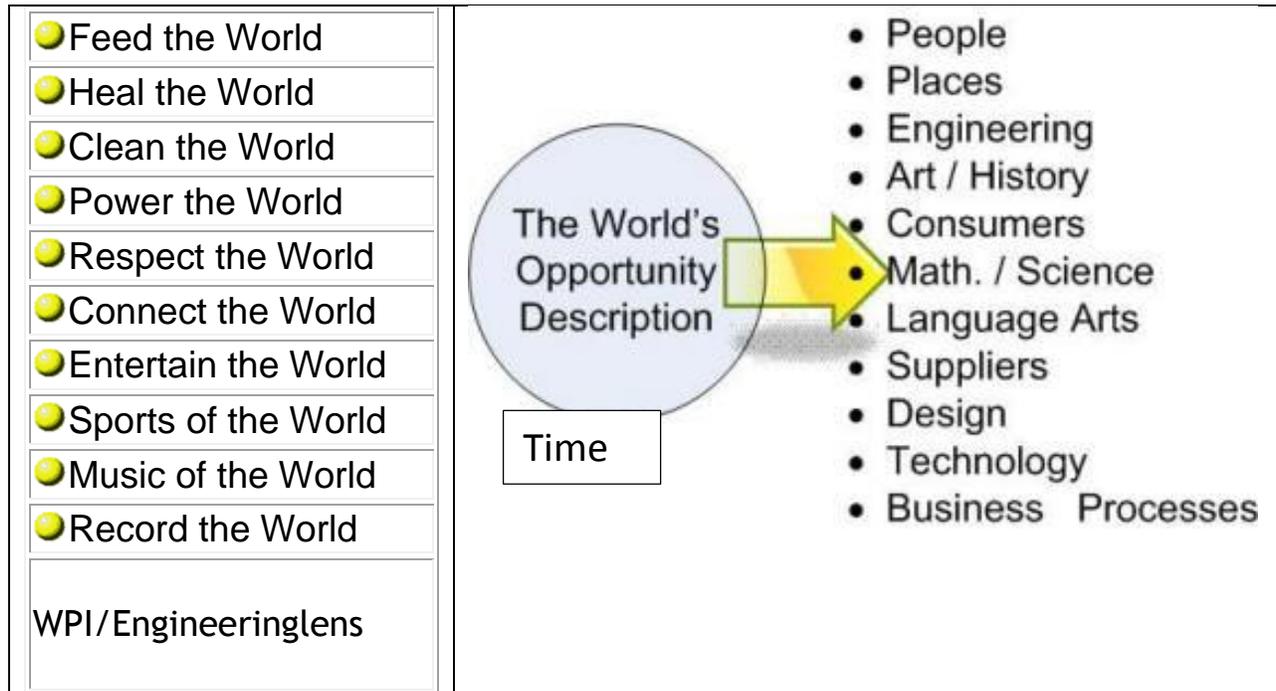
By the end of this course, the students will be able to:

- Clearly articulate the nature of the design process
- See the World as a place of excitement and inspiration
- Use assessment strategy and feedback as learning tools
- Use of relevant soft-skills in their life and interface with society
- Begin the steps to become a lifelong learner
- Understand the processes within a business and personnel finance
- Understand that problems are opportunities in life

Example Projects

*Areas of discussion ...can be tailored to local needs such as the local community.*

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Listed below are areas of team discussion and action regarding the project:

How are we going to organize ourselves?

Setting the environment for the students:

- •Imagination
- •Have doubt and wonderment
- •Testing / failure
- Quality processing
- •Consultation / collaboration
- •Extensions, refinements and elaboration
- •Synthesis
- •Thinking skills development (creative, critical, questions and meta-cognitive reflection)
- Guidelines for working together
- Students are viewed as **active authors** of their own development

Which problem will we work on?

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What is the problem we are going to solve?	
Frame the problem and write it down	Your frame is how you narrow and pinpoint what you choose to solve. Better framing leads to better solutions.
What facts do we know?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the constraints / requirements?</li> <li>• Areas of discussion and inclusion</li> <li>• How do we integrate social skills, emotional skills and thinking skills into this project?</li> </ul>
What do we need to know more of?	
Finding lots of options	Reflection. Creative thinking
Narrowing the choices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mundane</li> <li>• Innovative</li> <li>• Magical</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical thinking</li> <li>• How are we going to test our approach?</li> <li>• What requirements do we have to achieve?</li> </ul>
How do we know we are successful?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop rubrics (learning targets) and review requirements</li> </ul>
Incorporate in the learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thinking skills</li> <li>• Character/Strength's</li> <li>• Social skills</li> </ul>
Sketch and Map the best fits	Test
Update the possible solution	Review other approaches, Test and reflect
Report and defend work, using verbal, art and written media	Reflection

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### **Uniqueness of the program:**

- Teachers do development/ assessment and research on learning
- Organization structure is non-silo based
- Students do their own assessment on how to judge projects and their learning
- Focus on students strengths
- Learning by developing solutions to real issues verses a scripted approach
- Focus on stretched goals/objectives
- A culture of support for the students

### **Open Issues:**

Facility, Financial, Organization structure, Partners (help to start and lead; Marketing, Curriculum)

### **Possible short-term process to begin school:**

It is the author's assumption that the last semester of the senior year, little is done in academics. Why can't this time be turned over to this type of learning?

### **Space needed:**

An open type room with moveable tables, a few white boards, and workbenches are needed. High speed Internet access; computers with work areas are needed. Simple supplies of paper, construction material to breadboard ideas is needed as well as a few computers for web searches. Some electronic test equipment would also be used.

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### **Examples: Community project**

While in the island of Oahu, Hawaii, I noticed how there was a total lack of signs, well done paths, information in their public access sites. A class project could address this using the tools of problem solving, internet, art, map making and writing projects, project planning, Blogs, community interface, selling your ideas, etc.

Even street signs and location pointers were missing along roads in many cities I visited.