



An Afterschool Program for Middle-Schoolers

Proposal: Connections Church is seeking to launch an afterschool program that would serve middle-schoolers, primarily students from Ben Steele Middle School.

Why an afterschool program? While many great church youth programs exist in Billings, the afterschool timeslot is wide open. Many middle schoolers go home to an empty house afterschool and get into trouble. We seek to create a safe, fun, and Godly environment for middle schoolers to connect after school.

Proximity: Connections Church is located directly across the street from Ben Steele Middle School. So, we have a golden opportunity to focus our efforts at Ben Steele. The church has already spent four school years developing a solid relationship with Ben Steele Middle School.

Invitation Friendly: We're envisioning creating a safe, fun space for students to come hang out together, make friends, and receive an intro to the Gospel. We seek to create a fun, relational, and Godly environment that's easy for a middle schooler to invite a friend. The program will be free of charge.

Gospel In-Roads: We plan to include a variety of "Gospel in-roads" to give middle schoolers a taste of who Jesus is and invite students into deeper church involvement. Examples include:

- 20–30-minute devotional or worship time.
- Summer Camp & Winter Retreat engagement.
- Invitations to church involvement.
- Invitations to D-Groups that will get deeper into discipleship.

Nuts & Bolts:

- **Program Director:** We will need to hire a program director to lead the effort to launch and run the afterschool program. (Likely ½ time or ¾ time to start)
- **Volunteers:** We are expecting to recruit adult and High School volunteers to serve as intentional leaders, investing in these students.
- **Interns:** Eventually, we see a program like this as a fantastic environment for ministry interns to gain experience ministering to students.
- **Partnerships:** An afterschool program like this doesn't need to just be a Connections Church thing. We hope to involve area youth pastors as guest speakers and find other ways for partnership. This program will likely serve students who are connected to other churches AND students who are disconnected from church.

Programming: From our experience with afterschool events so far, we've discerned that the time with students must be planned with activities. Otherwise, chaos will quickly ensue! This will be a primary responsibility for the director, but here's a sample.

- 3:15 – 3:30 PM – Free time with snack bar and activities set-up throughout church property.
- 3:30 – 4:30 PM – Programed event. (Dodgeball, Nerf war, Family Feud, etc.)
- 4:30 – 4:50 PM – Devotional Time. (Teaching, worship, testimony, etc.)
- 4:50 – 5:00 PM – Pick up time / free time.

Timeline: Our timeline will be partially subject to fundraising efforts and hiring a program director. Below is our desired timeline:

- Feb. – April 2024: Fundraising.
- April – June: Conduct a search for the program director position.
- August 1st: Start date for program director.
- September: Launch program with the beginning of the school calendar.

Financial Needs: Connections Church is growing in size and fruitfulness, but we do not have enough resources to independently fund this program from the church operating budget. We believe God is leading us to step out in faith to launch this program, but we need some help getting it off the ground. We will take steps to launch the program once we've raised enough to cover the first year of expenses. We are encouraging Connections Church attendees to contribute toward this special project, and we are seeking outside funding.

Budget Examples:

Year 1 (2 days per week)	Cost:
Payroll (Part Time – 10 mo.)	\$28,842
Programming	\$4,000
Equipment	\$2,000
Promotional Material	\$1,000
Internship	\$2,000
Total:	\$37,842

Year 2 (3 days per week)	Cost:
Payroll (Part Time – 10 mo.)	\$33,649
Programming	\$6,000
Equipment	\$2,000
Promotional Material	\$1,000
Internship	\$3,000
Total:	\$45,649

Why now? We'll always be able to think of excuses and roadblocks as to why we should wait. The time seems ripe for launching this program. The need is here now, why would we wait?

How can you participate?

- Prayer partners: Pray for fundraising, connections, hiring a program director, etc.
- Volunteers: Would you be willing to volunteer in such a program?
- Connections: Perhaps you could help us recruit volunteers or know of a potential candidate for the Program Director or Internship.
- Financial Support: Any financial support is welcome. Please continue to contribute to your church as normal, this is a special project. Financial gifts should be designated to the "After School Program."