

Running Head: MILLBROOK GRAND SLAM

Millbrook Grand Slam Youth Baseball Program

Robb Arndt

Michigan State University

### Abstract

This paper is a proposal for Millbrook Grand Slam, which is a day youth baseball program intended to use the sport of baseball, and instruction in the sport of baseball, to teach and provide youth of Dutchess County, NY with a positive developmental environment, positive adult and youth role models, and introduction to the sport of baseball. The proposal is separated into six categories: Program Context and Participation, Purpose, Daily Structure, Staffing and Costs, Evaluation, and Influences. Using the values of Resiliency, Integrity, Self-Awareness, and Empathy as ultimate outcomes, the Millbrook Grand Slam coaching staff uses baseball-focused activities to teach life skills that are applicable off of the diamond as well. Through active participation in the program's activities and engagement with the educated coaching staff, participants will have fun and gain and develop competencies in each of the ultimate outcome values.

### Program Context and Participants

The Millbrook Grand Slam youth baseball program will begin during the summer of 2017. While Millbrook Grand Slam hopes to eventually grow and expand to take place throughout the entire summer, it will initially be limited to the month of July. The reasons for this are two-fold: a) to allow the area public schools time to complete their academic year and b) to allow families flexibility during the summer months while also giving the program a sizable frame of time (1 month) with the youth to provide and establish the foundational programming.

Millbrook Grand Slam will take place on the campus of Millbrook School, a private, independent boarding school of 315 students located in the town of Millbrook, NY, two hours north of New York City in the Hudson Valley. As a boarding school, Millbrook School campus offers quality athletic facilities, fields, classrooms, and dorms that will enable and, along with counselor supervision, insure youth safety. Millbrook School campus is composed of 800 acres which house 70 buildings, including 8 dormitories, an Arts Center, A Math and Science Center, a Library, a Dining Hall, Athletic Center, and Student Center (Millbrook School). The campus also houses a softball field, baseball field, turf field, football field, and three soccer fields (Figure 1). The program will primarily utilize the Baseball and Softball fields, the turf field, the Dining Hall, the Athletic Center, and academic building, Schoolhouse. The size of campus will enable the program to reach a wide number of youth and make its offerings accessible to as many youth as are interested. Additionally, the campus setting offers myriad number of options for the program in the event of inclement weather.

The program is designed with the youth (of both genders) of the local region in mind. The local area consists of considerable socio-economic diversity and this program aims to bring youth from different backgrounds and means together to promote youth development and collaboration through participation in the sport of baseball. To do this, the program welcomes youth between the ages of 5-12 years. While structured around the sport of baseball, the program does not require previous participation or experience. In fact, the program aims to instill a passion and love of the game in the participants who are unfamiliar with the sport, and reinforce and encourage that passion for those who are. As such, youth participating in the program will simply possess an interest or curiosity about baseball. In bringing the participants to the picturesque campus of Millbrook School, the program hopes to provide a physical symbol of the quality of programming to be found throughout participation in the program.

Figure 1. Map of Millbrook School Campus (Locations Used Labelled In Red)



- 1 – Baseball Field
- 2 – Softball Field
- 3 – Turf Field
- 4 – Athletic Center
- 5 – Dining Hall
- 6 – Schoolhouse

### Purpose

The purpose of the Millbrook Grand Slam program is to provide youth of the area (Dutchess County, NY) with a summer program that uses the game of baseball to instill values of resiliency, integrity, self-awareness, and empathy (RISE) in the participants. Millbrook Grand Slam uses experienced instruction in the game of baseball to create and utilize opportunities to teach these four core values. Through explicit exploration and teaching of these values, Millbrook Grand Slam aims to offer a month-long summer experience that produces youth who find passion and fun in the game of baseball and concrete application of the values learned during the program.

### Daily Structure

The Millbrook Grand Slam program will run for three and a half weeks in July 2017. The program will commence on July 5<sup>th</sup> and use the first week (“Single”: 7/5-7/7) to lay the foundation of the sport and youth development work of the following three weeks. Each week is named after a progressively longer base-hit, thus the second week is “Double”, third week “Triple”, and final week “Home Run.” Thus, at the end of the month, participants have acquired the base athletic, social, and personal skill set in each week to place a runner on each base and, through completion of the program in the final week, hit a “Grand Slam.”

In 2018, Millbrook Grand Slam plans to run the week of 7/3-7/8, taking July 4<sup>th</sup> off. After the first half week, the program will run Monday through Friday, from 9AM-3PM. Given prior experience with youth sport camps, this seems to be the optimal time-period in which participants can effectively engage and parents can coordinate their schedules. Millbrook Grand Slam has a goal of offering a trip to a Major League Baseball game towards the end of the program but would need to work with the New York Mets or Yankees to obtain subsidized tickets.

The daily activities of Millbrook Grand Slam are outlined in Figure 2 and will follow a similar structure each day. The daily schedule is designed to provide significant baseball instruction while also capitalizing on the day's instruction and activities to provide reflection and discussion around the value of the day. By bookending the day with a morning and afternoon meeting centered on the value of the day and by giving the participants multiple opportunities to reflect and discuss this value throughout the day, Millbrook Grand Slam aims to provide continued emphasize on the internal assets that participation in the program, via sport and interaction with counselors, develops (*40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents*, 1997). From the morning meeting, participants progress into a standard dynamic warm-up designed to get them moving and loose before the day's activities. This begins with dynamic movements and ends with a static stretch. The program splits by age after this to insure participant safety and provide smaller groups for instruction and reflection.

After splitting, each age group goes through a guided throwing progression that will optimize shoulder health. Emphasis is placed on the initial steps and the form required to build to the more complex later steps. Small group instruction follows that emphasizes general baseball skills, as well as position specific instruction for the older participants. Importantly, the older participants will rotate through the positions throughout the week, gaining exposure to each defensive position, and providing a broad base of skill development (Farrey 2008). While taking the following water break, each group listens to a story from Major League baseball and discusses its relevance to the value of the day. Each group of participants next move into batting stations, again building the foundation skills necessary before moving to complex movements. The following hour and station work will combine offensive and defensive skills that the morning sessions emphasized.

Following lunch, both the Minor and Major Leagues will participate in a reflection period on the morning activities, goal setting for the afternoon/future, and/or a daily question. For the Minor Leagues, this will primarily be a discussion while the Major Leagues will have an opportunity to write reflectively before sharing as a group. These group sessions will be led by the team's coaches and encourage players and coaches to explicitly explore the impact of the program on themselves each day. This creates an explicit learning environment and increases the likelihood of skill transferability by promoting an awareness of the program's values and sets of transfer strategies (Turnnidge, Côté, and Hancock, 2014, p. 207).



The afternoon provides a mix of fun and informal game-like settings. After the second dynamic warm-up, participants practice one event of the “Baseball Olympics” that will occur at the end of the week. The following games provide game-like settings but by removing fixed teams and not keeping track of score, avoid the pitfalls, or distraction, of competition while emphasizing skill development and situational understanding. Counselors supervise, monitor, and control (pitching when needed) these “games” to maintain this environment. They are encouraged to stop the “game” when opportunities to discuss a value or game concept arise. Importantly, all the morning and afternoon activities fall into the first stage of player development, as identified by the Lubbers and Gould. Thus, the program emphasizes, “having fun and developing a love of the game,” by supporting and encouraging every participant (2003).

The “games’ are followed by a popsicle break and Wiffle Ball, designed for all to decompress any stress that a game-like setting may have provided. Wiffle Ball again de-emphasizes the competition and focuses on getting each participant an at-bat and running the bases. The final activity of the day, Afternoon Meeting, follows in which the entire program comes together to discuss the day’s activities, the value of the day, and address any learning opportunities that arose throughout the day. Participants are encouraged to share their experiences and what they learned throughout the day. These last three activities are designed to send the participants home with a sense of fun and the practical applications of the value and reflections fresh in their minds.

### Staffing and Costs

Millbrook Grand Slam will be staffed primarily by the coaching staff and players of the Millbrook Baseball program (see Figure 3). Coaches Robb Arndt and Brian Krauss will each oversee one age group, with Millbrook Baseball players leading smaller sections of participants in each age group (Minor & Major Leagues). The goal of Millbrook Grand Slam is to have groups of participants, regardless of age, not exceeding eight players (a “team”). Two Millbrook School baseball players will oversee each team as Head Coach and Assistant Coach. The Head and Assistant Coaches will be assigned by Coach Arndt and Coach Krauss. In giving the Millbrook Baseball players this opportunity, Coaches Arndt and Krauss look to: a) provide a leadership opportunity for the high school players b) provide a positive role model for the participants of Millbrook Grand Slam and c) engage both coaches and participants in thinking about the values of RISE and their application to the lives of both coaches and players.

Given the number of available players to participate as coaches, the Millbrook Grand Slam program will be limited in its first year to 64 participants. The program’s goal is to have 4 teams of 8 in each league, for a total of 32 participants in each age category. This coaching structure will create a direct coach to participant ratio of 1:4 and an indirect (including Coaches Arndt and Krauss as supervisors and travelling coaches) of nearly 1:3. Additionally, this structure enables participants to form close bonds with their Head and Assistant Coaches as they will play on their “team” and these two coaches will lead the daily reflective sessions for their team. The goal of Millbrook Grand Slam is to grow each year, adding campers and coaches. As

the program outgrows the number of coaches available via the Millbrook Baseball program, Coaches Arndt and Krauss will turn to the local public school system's programs to look for players. By hiring high school baseball players as coaches, the program aims to provide coaches who are relatable to the participants and have a level of familiarity with the game of baseball. As detailed above, working as a coach has the potential to provide a positive developmental experience for the high school players as well.

Based on conversations with current players, coaches will receive \$250 week, with a prorated compensation of \$150 for the first partial week. Thus, each coach will receive \$900 for their work throughout the month. Millbrook Grand Slam will utilize the resources of the Millbrook Baseball program, which includes balls, tees, plastic bases for use on the turf field, and various equipment for specialty offensive drills. Millbrook Grand Slam will need to provide age appropriate bats and catcher's equipment. Using Coach Krauss's connection to the local Little League program, these can be obtained with no cost to Millbrook Grand Slam. Millbrook Grand Slam will purchase 3 dozen Incrediball baseballs (\$150), primarily for use in the Minor-League program. Tennis balls offer a safe alternative to these youth baseballs and the program has access to these via Millbrook School as well.

Figure 2. Millbrook Grand Slam Daily Structure

8:30 – 9:00	Drop-off; supervised baseball activity (wiffle ball, pickle, home run derby, etc) while participants wait for all to arrive
9:00 – 9:10	Morning Meeting – discussion of the week’s value and goals. Explicit exploration into previous day’s activities (or introduction if first day of week) and application of week’s values in those activities
9:10 – 9:25	Dynamic Warm-Up
9:25 – 9:30	Participants split according to age (Minor League: 5-8 – turf field & Major League: 9-12 – softball field)
9:30 – 9:40	Throwing Progression
9:40 – 10:10	Minor Leagues: General skill of the day instruction (base-running, positional introduction, bunting  Major Leagues: Position specific instruction
10:10 – 10:20	Water break (featuring story from MLB demonstrating week’s value)
10:20 – 11:00	Batting Stations (minor leagues on turf, 9-10 year olds on softball field, 11-12 year olds in batting cage – Major League alternate throughout week)
11:00 – 12:00	Station work (select offensive and defensive stations mixed each day – 3 15-minute stations)
12:00 – 12:45	Lunch in Dining Hall
12:45 – 1:00	Minor League: Oral reflection & Goal setting (guided partnered and group

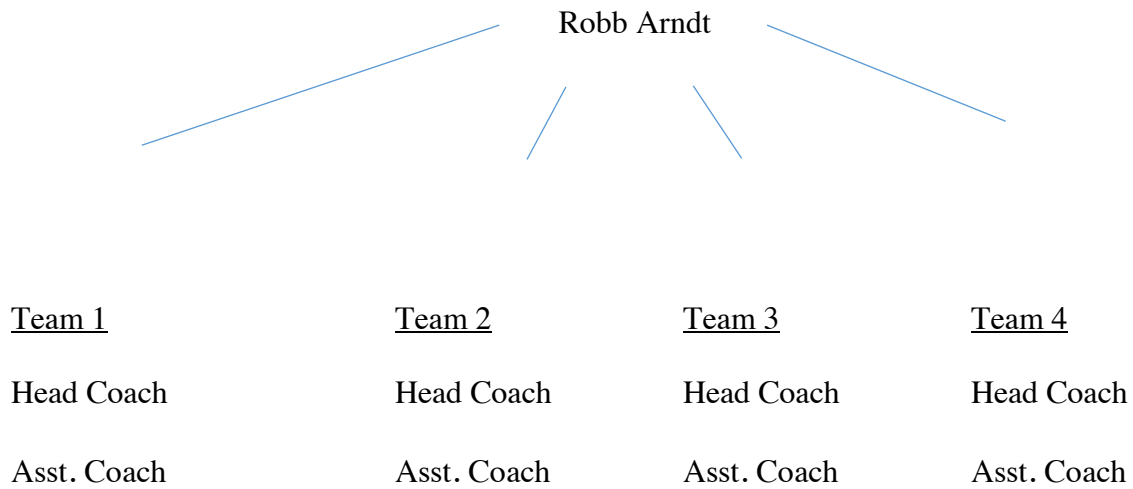
sharing on morning work and activities)

Major League: Personal journaling reflection on daily question, morning activity & goal setting

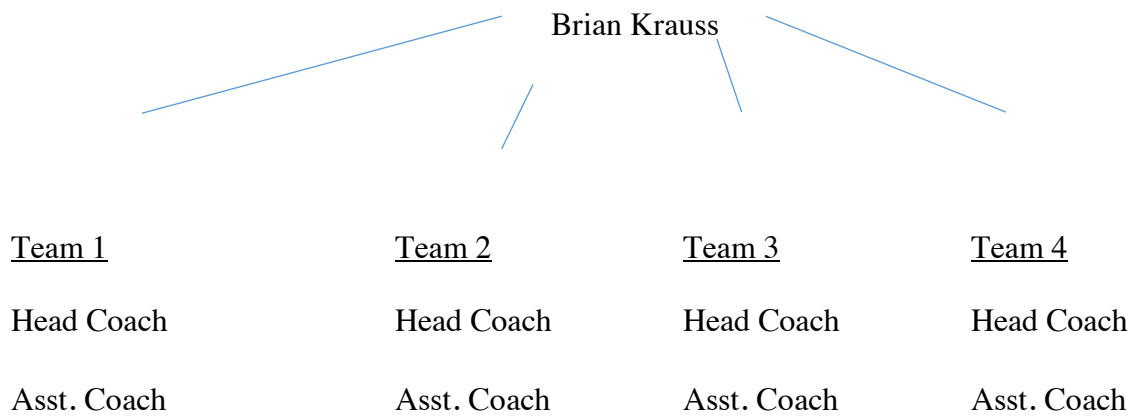
- 1:00 – 1:10 Dynamic Warm-up. Minor/Major Leagues split afterwards
- 1:10 – 1:20 “Baseball Olympics” Event (Throwing Accuracy, Throwing Distance, Batted Ball Distance, Running the Bases, etc)
- 1:20 – 2:20 Small-sided “games” (participants rotate through batting and playing each defensive position – coaches add/subtract runners and outs to simulate different situations)
- 2:20 – 2:30 Popsicle/water break
- 2:30 – 2:45 Wiffle Ball
- 2:45 – 2:50 Clean-up and all camp gather
- 2:50 – 3:00 All camp debrief on daily value and guided reflection.
- 3:00 – 3:30 Parent Pick-Up and Departure

Figure 3: Staffing Diagram

Major League



Minor League



## Evaluation

Millbrook Grand Slam will evaluate itself according to the standards and guidelines of the theory of change approach (Izzo et. al.). A portion of the evaluation process (weekly surveys and staff meetings) is outlined in the “Influences” section. To most effectively use the theory of change evaluation approach, Millbrook Grand Slam identifies the RISE values (resiliency, integrity, self-awareness, and empathy) as the program’s “ultimate outcomes.” As such, Millbrook Grand Slam expects to see an increase in each value from its participants because of participation in the program. These results will be measured using a pre-participation survey, a post-participation survey, and an extended post-participation (6 months after program completion) survey to determine sustainability.

While the three larger surveys will produce data concerning pre and post participation, the mid-program surveys outlined below will provide immediate feedback to the program supervisors, a pseudo-progress report as the program progresses, allowing them to react and reshape the program as needed. Working backward from the RISE values gives Millbrook Grand Slam the flexibility and focus to respond to the events of each week of the program. Additional feedback from parents and staff will enable the program to react further.

To achieve the ultimate outcomes, Millbrook Grand Slam identifies engagement in daily activities and investment in team as the intermediate outcomes for each participant. Building to these intermediate outcomes are the immediate outcomes of a caring relationship with a coach

and an improvement in some baseball-related skill. These outcomes (from immediate to ultimate) will be achieved through the daily activities outlined in the “Daily Structure” section.

### Influences

At the most foundational level, Millbrook Grand Slam aims to provide a program “that emphasizes services and opportunities to support...young people in developing a sense of competence, usefulness belonging, and empowerment” (Publications). Millbrook Grand Slam believes that the program outlined in this proposal will create an environment that offers participants an opportunity to experience a set of experiences that will foster positive youth development. Importantly, Millbrook Grand Slam makes this happen by focusing on the eight features that Larson, Eccles, and Gootman identify as key to creating a PYD environment: physical and psychological safety, clear and consistent structure and appropriate supervision, supportive relationships, opportunities to belong, positive social norms, support for efficacy and mattering, opportunities for skill building, and integration of family, school, and community efforts (Larson, Eccles & Gootman, 2014).

To ensure that Millbrook Grand Slam is able to provide the eight features mentioned above, supervisors Robb Arndt and Brian Krauss will conduct coach training sessions for the high school coaches on July 3<sup>rd</sup> of the first week. This training session will focus on instructing these high school coaches in the best practices of coaching youth. Namely, the value and effect



of “technical instruction, reinforcement, and mistake-contingent encouragement” (Gould & Weinberg). The coach training session will also introduce these young coaches to the teachings of the Positive Coaching Alliance, specifically the idea of a “Double Goal Coach” and the “Positive Charting” worksheet (“Resources for Coaches”). By limiting the coach training session to these materials, Millbrook Grand Slam aims to provide a manageable amount of education for these young coaches to put into practice. As a program, Millbrook Grand Slam places enormous emphasis on appropriately framing the idea of failure for its participants. It is essential that each participant understand “failure” is a perception and that the coaches reinforce that perceived failure only creates opportunity for future success. By promoting this thinking, Millbrook Grand Slam hopes to create a supportive, enjoyable mastery climate which limits the “Characteristics of Children at Risk for Heightened Competitive State Anxiety” (Gould & Weinberg). By providing these high school players with this education and coaching opportunity Millbrook Grand Slam aims to provide a meaningful sense of empowerment that enables them to develop significant leadership skills (Gould & Voelker 2010).

Despite the intentions identified above, the work of Stoll and Smith makes it clear that intention and perception can be drastically different (Smith and Stoll, p. 213). To combat this and make sure that the coaching and participant experience is in line with the program’s goals, Millbrook Grand Slam will administer participant surveys at the end of each week. These surveys will ask each participant to rate the quality of experience, coach, and activity of the previous week. The goal of these surveys is to provide the supervisors and coaches with

immediate, actionable feedback on coach behavior and effectiveness of activity to optimize the success of the program throughout its lifespan.

Importantly, each week will also conclude with a staff meeting in which the coaches are encouraged to voice their opinions and reactions to the week's activities. As most of the coaching staff consists of high school players, the program aims to use this time as an opportunity to authenticate the voice of these youth coaches and encourage collaboration between the youth and adults involved in the program (Mitra, 2006).

As previously discussed, the reflective periods of each day are designed to create a group explicit learning environment. These sessions are also heavily influenced by the work of Don Hellison and his identification of the four instructional strategies: awareness talk, lesson, group meeting, and reflection time (Hellison p.42-43). While Millbrook Grand Slam does not anticipate structuring each session to hit all four of these strategies, the program plans to address at least two each day.

In all, the Millbrook Grand Slam program recognizes that, "the difference between whether sports build character or character disorders has less to do with the playing of the sport and more to do with the philosophy of the sport organization, quality of coaching, nature of parental involvement, and participants' individual experiences and resources" (Petitpas et al., 2005, p. 63). As such, the program aims to provide participants with educated coaches

committed to a “task-oriented motivational climate” (Weinberg & Gould, 1995, p 584), rather than one that focuses on outcomes. This climate will allow each participant to focus on their own progress, rather than comparing themselves to others. By providing the participants with educated coaches committed to their individual progress, Millbrook Grand Slam creates caring relationships. In the words of Nel Noddings (2005), “caring relations also provide the best foundation for moral education” (p. 5). While the program is built around baseball, it is merely a tool to establish these caring relationships for the participants and youth coaches to create a fun environment that is clearly, deliberately, and explicitly conducive to and an opportunity for positive youth development.

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