

## Parent Group Time

### Tips and Ideas on Leading Small Groups

#### General Advice

- The lead teacher will email you information on the small group activities you will be leading a few days before class. Read them once or twice in advance ... internalize the concept of what needs to be done. *LET US KNOW THE BEST EMAIL ADDRESS TO USE.*
- Become familiar with the names of the students in your group in advance. When they introduce themselves, faces and names go together more quickly. Take attendance on your sheet and turn in at the end of the night.
- The above might take you 15-30 minutes and will immeasurably improve the experience had by you and your group.
- Be confident and take the lead (*someone has to and it makes sense for it to be you!*) and project a sense of confidence of the small group plan.
- Regroup quickly when you arrive at your small group space. Introduce yourself right away, tell them what needs to be done, and remind them of the time you have to do it in... and then get at it. *All that communicates purpose and direction.*
- Keep moving! This age group loves to distract through diversion. Someone might pose a “deep” question or something off –topic. Chances are high that this is a diversionary tactic! Use your best judgment for staying on task.
- What if no one says anything? Just call on someone. Invite someone to share. AND, share the sharing – be aware of the “answer hogs” and the kids who wait for the answer hogs to speak up.
- Keep an eye on the clock so we can stay on schedule, since large group waits until everyone is back.

#### When You Are in Large Group

- Sit with your group. As needed, help with crowd control.
- If someone is talking in your area during large group, don't hesitate to request that they pay attention.
- If they're having a hard time staying focused, feel free to rearrange how they sit for the second large group.
- If the lead teacher is not aware of the behavior, mention it at a transition point.
- You can participate, too. Listen to the lead teacher's presentation. Feel free to ask questions of clarification or to offer brief comments. We understand if you have to take a text or a phone call, but leave the group and make it quick. Students are paying attention to whether you are paying attention or not. If you're on your phone during large group, it will send the message that they don't need to listen AND that you're not so interested in being there for Small Group time either!
- TRANSITIONS CAN BE TRICKY. This is a chance to lose the group. Walk with them and keep everyone focused on getting to the small group and getting at the activity.

~over~

## When You Are in Small Group

- Enjoy your group. Most groups on most nights are pleasant and make an effort to participate. These are great kids! Love and patience will serve you well!
- If a group is flat, don't take it personally. It could be them, it could be the material or it could be that they're exhausted from a long day... there's just no way to predict.
- Feel a sense of freedom to lead the group based on the situation and topic. In other words, despite what has been stated above about diversions, if the group activity is to have a discussion, you have complete latitude to shape it and guide it.
- Share your own opinions while encouraging individuals to arrive at their own. Ask questions to help them have a chance to share their opinions with you...even if there may be a few things they aren't taking into account.

## Some Typical Challenges You Come Up Against *(and some responses you can make.)*

- Kids who chatter in large and/or small group. *(Direct their attention to what's going on in large group, separate talkers for the second large group, remind them of your task in small group, avoid shaming people but don't be afraid to call someone on their behavior...for example, "Name, let's focus so we can get this time-line filled in.")*
- Kids who will test you. *Remember, this is the age where they can do so much more, but don't have complete independence or freedom. They are told what to do and Confirmation may be one of those things they don't have a "choice" in. Get to know them. Listen for things they are interested in to ask them about. If you show them that you are interested in them and find ways to praise them when they do offer an answer or are engaged, this will go a long way!*
- Don't let one kid ruin your group... *Be bold and send the student off to the lead teacher or step out briefly and call the lead teacher in if you're having a real struggle. "Name, tonight is not your night to participate, I think it's time to go find Pastor Sherrie."* Short, sweet and to the point.
- Put downs or other inappropriate behavior. Call it for what it is and ask them to stop right away. Phrases like, *"That comment is hurtful"* or just *"I think you know that's out of line"* are direct and keep the attention on the behavior. What you want to avoid is *"defending"* the *"victim"* of a remark. Things like, *"I think that hurts Name's feelings,"* puts that person in an awkward situation and probably invites further abuse.
- Some kids won't speak up during discussions. Some kids are quiet, but active listeners. Not everyone needs to be a talker! Still, some kids would talk but don't know how to enter into the conversation. Give them the chance with lines like, *"You look like you're tracking that, Name, do you agree?"* Or, *"I'd be interested in what your reaction to that is, Name."* Or, *"Can you think of a something to add to that, Name?"*
- Some kids are determined to dominate discussions. Thank them for their opinions and questions and tell them you need to hear from others. *"Name got us off to a great start, who's next?"* Or, *"Thanks, Name, let's hear from someone else right now."*
- The big thing...DON'T BE PASSIVE. Enjoy the time with your group by being engaged.