

Starting the Year

Give your youth ministry momentum by starting the year with these three meetings:

1. A meeting of all youth leaders: this would include the youth sponsors (both outgoing and incoming), Sunday School teacher, Christian Education chair, mentor coordinator, and pastor. It is also be a good idea to include one or two parents and one or two of the youth.
2. A planning meeting with the youth.
3. A meeting of the youth sponsors.

Agenda for meeting #1:

- a. Review the goals and accomplishments of the previous year. Ask:
 - What went well? What did not go so well?
 - What were the goals for last year and how well were they met?
 - What needs arose among the group and how can they be addressed this year?
- b. Ask the question: What does God seem to be doing among our youth? List these.
- c. Ask everyone to answer the question: What is your dream for the youth of our congregation?
Talk together about what you hope and dream for youth ministry in your church.
- d. Prayerfully brainstorm possible goals for this year, building on what has already happened, what the youth have said and done, and what the Holy Spirit is saying to you. Make a list of these. Pray together and then choose one or two as the goals for the year.
- e. Now talk together briefly about how you will know when you have achieved these goals. What specifically will that look like?
- f. Next, take these goals to the planning meeting with the youth.

Agenda for meeting #2: This meeting needs to involve as many of the youth as possible. Many youth groups have a traditional way to kick off the year. Be sure the meeting includes the following:

- a. Present the goals to the youth, explaining how and why you came up with them. Ask them if they can affirm them and if they have any further suggestions. Revise the goals if need be. If the youth suggest significant changes, the sponsors should take a few moments to confer privately together and agree to the changes among themselves before agreeing to the changes with all the kids. You all need to be willing to put your energy behind these goals!
- b. Brainstorm together with the youth HOW to meet the goals through youth group activities. Have them suggest activities that would meet the goals.

Some further suggestions:

--Throughout the year, involve the youth in planning every meeting as much as possible. The more they take the initiative to plan meetings, the better. The role of the sponsors is ideally to guide them as they plan, not to do all the planning.

--As a rule, try not to do any youth group activity that does not meet one of your goals. By the same token, think of ways to make any kind of activity an opportunity to meet one of your goals. This will help you stay focused.

Agenda for meeting #3:

The youth sponsors **must** meet together on a regular basis to build relationships with one another, pray together for the youth group, and evaluate how things are going. As sponsors you will only be effective to the extent that you become a team in the true sense of the word. Decide at the beginning of the year when and how often you will have this regular meeting. **Meet at least once every other month.** Sunday dinner or before or after youth a group meeting would be good possibilities. Focus on building trust and good communication. Every time you meet, do these three things: Listen to one another, Evaluate how things are going, and Pray together. You will be amazed at how God can work through these simple practices!