

TRANSITIONING Parents of Preteens



Communicate.
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You can never communicate enough times or in enough ways.

This is one time in your ministry to definitely over communicate.

If you have some kind of printed parent guide for your ministry, share it as a pdf and or make it available easily for parents in your church to pick up who have the incoming class of preteens.

Make sure your website is up to date.

Create an email group just for these parents of incoming preteens and send them emails in the months leading up to the transition.

Utilize social media to connect with them and remind them of important dates and events as they get ready to transition into your ministry.

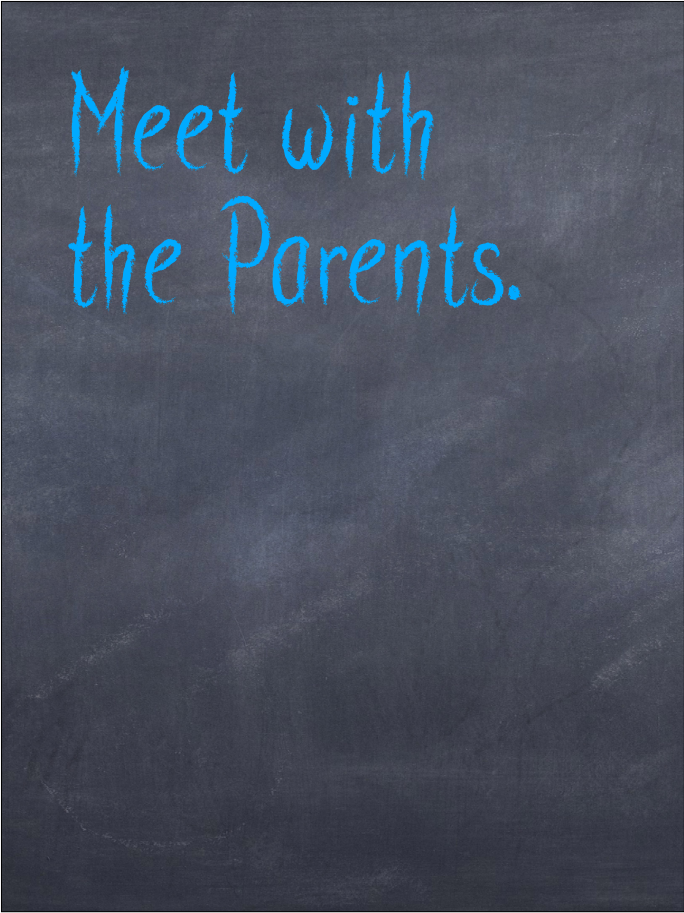
Highly consider using video as it is so popular and shareable right now - even just to introduce you and your team and give a quick tour of the preteen space or an overview of what Parents and/or Preteens can expect.

A chalkboard with green chalk text that reads "Learn from local schools and/or teachers." The text is written in a casual, handwritten style. The chalkboard is dark and has some faint, illegible markings at the bottom.

Schools are usually very intentional about communicating with parents in getting them ready to transition from one grade to the next and especially from one building to the next.

Meet with teachers and/or administrators to talk with them about their process and what they have seen to be most effective over the years at making sure parents are ready for the transition.

Consider connecting with a few parents going through this kind of transition and ask them what has been most effective and helpful for them and their soon-to-be preteen.



Meet with the Parents.

I know people say "No one will show up," but for a meeting where there is a pressure point like this, you'll get more parents than usual.

Be smart about when you offer it.

Keep it to an hour.

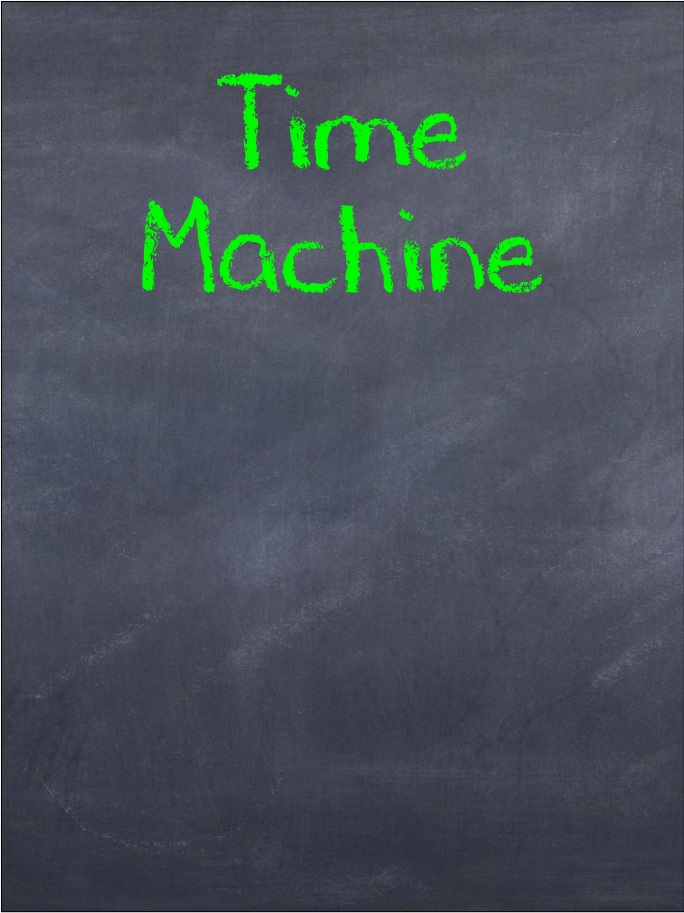
Offer food - coffee, desserts, snacks.

Face-to-face if at all possible.

Then offer a separate date and time where you can meet with parents virtually over zoom or something similar.

Don't just put up a camera to share a live meeting. You want to be able to interact and answer questions virtually just like you would in person.

Do this about two months before students transition into your ministry. That seems to be the "sweet spot."



Time Machine

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In your communication and definitely in your meeting, ask parents to pause and think about what they were like and their life was like when they were preteens.

Ask them to write down a few notes and if they are willing to share with the group.

Nothing helps create more empathy for the wacky world of preteens than for a parent to remember what life was like for them as a preteen.

Be prepared! This can often be a really emotional experience for parents since, unfortunately, painful experiences and memories tend to be strong during this time of life.



Phase Guides

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There are great resources out there to help you think intentionally about the world of preteens.

For parents, one of the best are the Phase Guide books by Orange.

phaseguides.com

These walk parents through conversations they should be having, changes happening in their child, and all sorts of great content specific to each grade.

You might even consider doing a giveaway and giving out a few copies at your parent meeting.

A chalkboard with the words "Personal Postcard" written in green chalk. The text is in a casual, handwritten style. The chalkboard has a dark, textured background.

Personal Postcard

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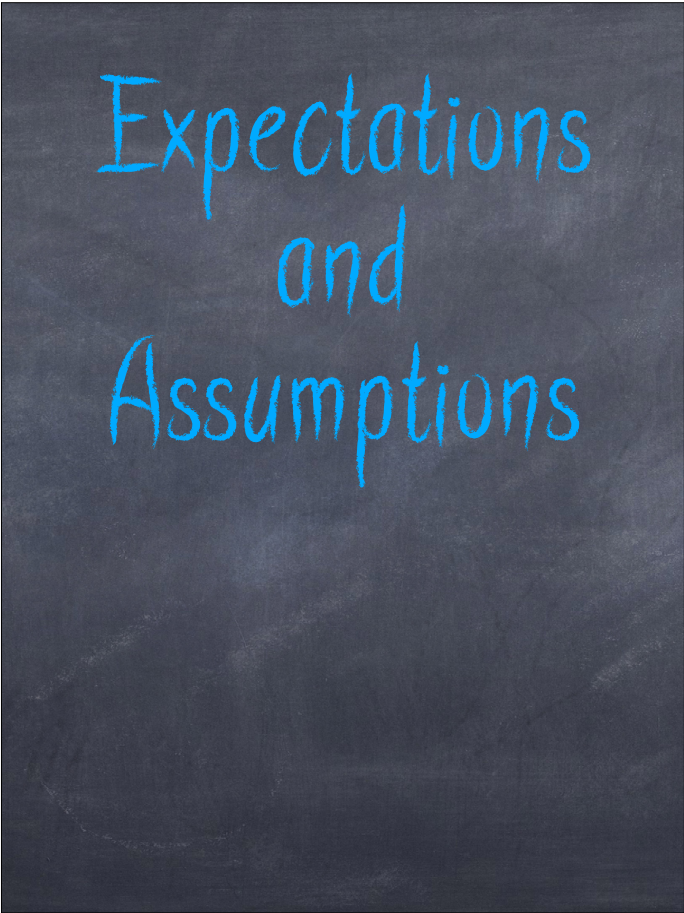
Personal, hand-written mail is rare these days.

So, use that to your advantage.

Take some time to sit down and hand write out postcards to preteens welcoming them and telling them you are excited to get to meet them and know them in your ministry.

Share this opportunity with your volunteers.

And if you are really up to it, send similar notes to their parents.

A chalkboard with the words "Expectations and Assumptions" written in blue chalk. The text is in a casual, handwritten style. The chalkboard has a dark, textured background.

Expectations and Assumptions

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Parents have expectations and assumptions about your ministry.

Will they always be 100% accurate and correct? No.

But - perception is reality.

One of the best things you can do to build trust with parents of incoming preteens is to ask for, address, and clarify expectations and assumptions.

This will mainly revolve around what is similar and what is different to what they have been experiencing.

And you can turn this into an FAQ document to share or a page on your website!