

TRANSITIONING Preteens Into Your Ministry

Develop
healthy,
working
relationships.

Develop healthy relationships and work with the staff and/or volunteers who work with the younger elementary aged kids.

Find out what you can about this year's incoming class - not to label them, but to learn about them and be prepared to work effectively with them.

Become
a familiar
face.

If possible, think two years out on this. How can kids start getting to know you and your team two years before they are in your preteen ministry?

You and your preteen ministry volunteers should help with game nights and special events for this younger age group, as well as guest teach, but we'll talk more about that in the volunteer session.

However, if you can be a guest teacher

or game leader 2-3 times in the spring semester before kids join your preteen ministry, it will help make that transition into your ministry easier because you will be someone they kind of know or at least recognize.

You also should start getting to know and communicating with parents, but we'll talk about that in the parents session.



If possible, plan an event where the incoming preteens get to play some games and get to know students and leaders currently in the preteen ministry.

Doesn't have to be big or elaborate.

Have some food.

Have some fun games.

Do some introductions.



Whatever the first week is that preteens step into your ministry, plan extra time for intentional fun.

Use ice breakers to help preteens get to know each other and the existing preteens in the ministry.

Use "clump builders" to help them see what they have in common.

And involve Volunteers in as much of this as possible whether in front of the

group or participating alongside the preteens so they can be known as well.

If you really want to earn some points with your preteens, have a picture or some pictures of you when you were a preteen and share a couple stories with them to remind them of your humanity.



Depending on what is allowed in your area, find ways to hang out and get to know preteens outside of your regular programs or services.

For example, food. One group would schedule an "out to lunch" each week and just tell parents where to drop off their preteens. A few leaders would meet there and just hang out, eat lunch, and talk with the preteens.

Another made this an event at their church and catered in the food to have a more controlled environment.

If you want to take it up a notch, find a place that has miniature golf, go-karts, or other fun, outdoor activities and plan an event there. If you're able to bring in lunch so the day can last longer, the better it will be.

These types of events are also great ways to meet and get to know parents too, both as they drop-off and those who stay to help.



Learn Names.

This is HUGE! (And can be hard.)

You have a little grace when everyone is new.

You can set up a little photo booth with a tablet, like an iPad, and a stand. Have students film a 10-30 second video introducing themselves and telling you 3 things about them. You can list off things like school, grade, and hobby or let them pick.

When you are done, you can watch the videos to get to know the preteens and you can capture still images and make flash cards to help you learn names either on actual cards or using the Quizlet app.



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