

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

"...let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth." 1 John 3:18 (NIV)

JustLead Connecting Strategy: Relationship Building

Building stronger and more positive relationships with family, peers, and other adults

RECONNECTING YOUTH AND ADULTS



Today's neighborhoods, social activities, and even church youth groups isolate young people from adults and subsequently do not adequately prepare youth to enter adulthood. Rather than receiving guidance from caring adults, children are increasingly being indoctrinated with the messages and values of secular pop culture through television, music, and the Internet. In short, youth are disconnected from crucial relationships with adults at school, at home, in the community, and even at church.

Mark DeVries criticizes church youth programs that regularly and systematically separate youth from "regular adults" (adults who are not youth workers). He stresses 1) the importance of assisting the nuclear family in transmitting Christian values and 2) the development of an extended church family around each child. JustLead promotes the establishment of relationships between youth and caring adults in the congregation.

Mark DeVries. Family-Based Youth Ministry: Reaching the been-there, done-that generation. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994.)

DEVELOPING A NETWORK OF SUPPORT

While all four JustLead connecting strategies are relational, Relationship Building is a specific strategy that implements the following four activities:

Field Trips

Field trips are excellent ways to promote relationship building among JustLead adults and young people. Field trips may be outings to a local park or museum with several congregation members and a few students, a Five-Day Site going on a fun trip as a group, or a handful staying at the church building for a movie. Though the trips may vary, the goal is always the same: to build relationships.

Youth and Family Contacts

Youth Contacts are intended to connect each young person with at least one adult who meets with them outside of the regularly scheduled JustLead activities. Family Contacts build relationships with the families of participating youth. These contacts may take place in the home of the family, at a community event, or even over lunch after church. The goal of these contacts is to build relationships and discover new ways we can reach out to the youth and families in our program.

Campus Visits

Teachers and administrators are included in the network of support around each student. Regular communication with school personnel allows JustLead Adults to provide enhanced academic support to students and aids the school in its efforts. This also includes school lunch visits to spend time with students on their turf. We hope that JustLead has a positive, active presence in all schools in the JustLead Zone.

For too long, young people have been told that their greatest problems are drugs, sex, and alcohol, etc... These are, in fact, only symptoms of a much greater problem. The disease of youth is [that key relationships] are in disarray – their relationships with God, self, parents, friends, and the world.

-Charles Warren

Family Faith Conversations

Several times a year, families receive a tool designed to help them spend time as a family discussing their faith. Research continues to show the importance of these kinds of interactions. Most often, these tools are sent to homes around Christmas and Easter, during the summer, and around other reasonable times.

RELATIONAL RECRUITING

Who is JustLead for?

Targeting youth who are likely to be successful in JustLead is important:

- Engage congregation children and youth.
- Target neighborhood kids.
- Recruit from as few schools as possible to facilitate logistics and create a greater impact within the school. Project GRAD schools are currently targeted in Knox County due to efforts to align with their curriculum.
- Always target children who are likely to engage in all four JustLead Strategies, especially Faith Development and Academic Reinforcement. Wednesday nights are a good setting to get kids involved initially. You can also begin building a relationship with the young person and then introduce him or her to the other three connecting strategies.

- Target kids who are not already involved in lots of other community and school activities; they will have difficulty maintaining consistent attendance and receiving the highest potential impact of the ministry.
- Develop a strong relationship with the family before the young person begins with JustLead. A strong commitment from the parent or guardian will greatly enhance the child's chance for success in JustLead.
- In addition to seeking out new students, visit the homes of past students as well.
- Recruit students considered at-risk based on the following types of factors:
 - Failure to pass one or more parts of the last test period
 - Retention in one or more grade levels
 - Recurrent patterns of absence in school
 - Referrals from the counselor, special programs, or classroom teachers
 - Much time alone after school without parental supervision or support

In your recruitment efforts, always honor the JustLead non-discrimination policy which states, "In accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, facilities, programs and services sponsored by Emerald Youth Foundation (EYF), JustLead, or JustLead Sports are available to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, sex, religion, disability, or national origin."

How to Recruit Youth

The recruitment principles can be divided into the following steps:

Go where kids are...

1. **Find kids and key contacts.** These include pastors, teachers, coaches, Project GRAD staff, and principals as well as the places kids hang out in the neighborhood.
2. **Use promotional materials:** posters, flyers, brochures, and more.

Get involved in their lives...

3. **Talk to kids and get to know them "on their turf."** This is the fun part, as you play basketball with the kids, see them at school, etc.
4. **Document kid information.** (see "Forms" section)
5. **Follow up and stay in contact.** If you tell a youth you will see them at some point, keep your word. Trust is key in relationship building.

YOUTH CONTACTS

Youth contacts are a crucial relationship building aspect of JustLead. Youth contacts may occur in a one-on-one or group setting. Every JustLead student should get quality youth contacts; leaders should be inclusive and avoid giving excessive amounts of time to any one child.

Youth contacts means...

- committing to be more than just another guide,
- engaging in a genuine relationship with young people,
- building foundations of trust between adults and youth, and
- making opportunities to model healthy relationships within a spiritual family.

Youth contacts are not...

- an attempt to replace the young person's parents,
- an assumption of responsibility for the young person and their family,
- an obligation to financially assist the child or family, or
- a way for the adult to meet their own needs.

Youth contacts should be primarily used for fun activities geared toward the children and youth. You can go out to dinner, a local festival, a museum, or attend a sports event. A more comprehensive list of ideas is included at the end. Activities should always be planned and intentional in order to facilitate connection with the child. Advance approval of youth contact activities is required from a supervisor at least one week in advance, but is usually planned further in advance using the Crew Planning Form.

Free or very low-cost activities are recommended (see Appendix). If students request or suggest more expensive activities, they (or their parents) should cover their own costs.

Communication with Parents

Always get verbal permission from the parent before taking their child on a youth contact. A permission form for participation in JustLead is on file, so additional written permission is not required as long as the activity is in town, low-risk, and includes fewer than four youth. A new form will be required for any activities beyond those covered in the general form.