



partner with parents

Teaching Script

When it comes to your place in a kid or student's life, being present for them and creating a safe place will go a long way to earning influence. But it won't ever mean that you are the primary influence. No matter how much time a kid spends with you in small group, it can't be matched by how much time they spend at home with their family.

Sometimes, if you're really honest, you might catch yourself thinking you would be a better parent to one of your few than the parent they currently have.

Maybe you're right. And maybe you don't know the whole story.

Regardless of their issues, baggage and brokenness, every parent wants to be a better parent. This is why it's so necessary to talk about parents and the importance of partnering with them.

The fourth principle of leading small is PARTNER WITH PARENTS.

Families come in all shapes and sizes. They're built in so many different ways. But the numbers are consistent. In a given year, you as the small group leader will only have an average of about 40 hours with your group. That number could double if you also work

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summer camp or VBS with your few. In comparison, the family will have about 3000 hours.

Note: It would be great to have a physical representation for your small group leaders of the difference in hours. We suggest 40 jelly beans in a jar and then 3,000 in several jars next to it.

As you can see, the numbers don't match. They don't compare—not by a long shot. You can't ignore the family. And you can't ignore the influence that the family has whether good or bad. And the truth is that if you want to maximize your influence with the kids and students in your group, you need to partner with the family. You need to partner with the parents.

Small group leaders, you are in the prime position to be able to do this. So I invite you to consider the kids and students in your group/who will be in your group and ask yourself this question: "How can I partner with their families and with their parents?"

One of the greatest ways isn't by adding programs, but having the SGL be the connector between the few and the family. They ask the questions: "How can I partner with the family? How can I partner with the parent?" We can't give you the perfect answers to those questions because every parent and family unit is different. But we can give you three strategies to help direct you as you do your best to navigate this.

First, cue the parent.

It's easy to make assumptions and judgments about the parents and families of our few. But if we start with assuming that they want the best for their kids and teenagers, it's a safe place to start. And if we assume that they care about their kids and want to know what's going on in their lives, then let's begin by introducing ourselves.

Cue them about what you're talking about in group.

Leverage social media and let parents know when VBS or summer camps are on the way. Give them a heads up when the group will be talking about interesting or even sensitive subjects.

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Cue the parent so that they aren't the last to know important things.

Second, honor the parent.

Whether the parents of your few attend your church (or any church for that matter) or not, they may not have a complete picture of what role you intend to play in their kids' lives. You aren't a substitute parent. You aren't an alternative voice for kids and teenagers to listen to so that they don't have to listen to their parents. You aren't the enemy. Don't make the mistake of leveraging yourself as the hero. If you want to maximize the influence you have with your few, you have to be on the parents' side. So honor the parent. If you're not on the parent's side, you're not on the kid's side.

Lastly, reinforce the family.

It's easy to get caught up in your small group, but when we remember the comparison between a group's collective hours versus the family's collective hours, we remember that the family is the primary unit. So part of the role of a small group leader is to reinforce that primary unit. Don't plan your Christmas party on Christmas Eve when parents might want to spend that time with their kids. Don't insist on having important conversations with teenagers that parents prefer to have themselves. Don't forget to invite the parents who don't attend church to special occasions like baptisms.

The truth is that the family unit and the influence it has in your kids' lives isn't always positive or healthy, but even a bad influence is still an influence. Sometimes parents make mistakes. Sometimes they don't show up. Sometimes they let their kids and teenagers down. But that doesn't mean we stop cueing them or honoring them or reinforcing them. We do those things for the sake of the kids. And we do those things for the sake of the parents.

By virtue of what you do, small group leaders, you are entering into relationship with parents too. When you commit your time and attention to kids and teenagers, their parents are a part of the package deal.

Although parents potentially have 3,000 hours a year of possible time with their child, it's not always the same quality as the hours you have with your few.

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Your 40 hours are potentially filled with. . .
meaningful conversations,
teachable moments,
and bonding experiences that parents and guardians may not know how to have.

So leverage your influence, and partner with parents so that you all can collectively nurture
an everyday kind of faith in your few.