

POTENTIAL ELEVATE LEADERS

12 PAGES TO HELP YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT BEING AN
ELEVATE SMALL GROUP LEADER IS ALL ABOUT



THE JR HIGH MINISTRY
OF WILLOW CREEK

HEY!

We can't even tell you how excited we are that you're reading these words!

ELEVATE is Willow Creek Community Church's ministry for Jr. High students (6th – 8th grades). And even though we're probably a tiny bit biased, we truly believe that serving as a Small Group Leader in Elevate is one of the best uses of your valuable time & energy! Over the years, we've seen countless men and women (like YOU) make eternal impacts in the lives of Jr. Highers... and have a great time doing it.

These pages will give you a look into what Elevate is, and the incredibly significant role that volunteer Small Group Leaders have within this ministry. We hope that you will see the potential that YOU have to be used by God to make a lasting investment in a Jr. High student's faith, by being a part of their journey through these pivotal years of their life.

We're thrilled that you're looking into this great opportunity – and we're sincerely praying for you. So turn the page, start reading, and invite God to show you what He can do through you in Elevate!

~SCOTT RUBIN AND THE ELEVATE TEAM

FACTOID:

39% of middle schoolers report Kit-Kats to be their favorite candy. 33% say Skittles. Only 1% say Almond Joy.

WHAT IS ELEVATE?

(Other than a collection of ridiculously good-looking, awesome people)

Our mission is to help Jr. High students follow Jesus. That mission drives everything we do. Every program, event, and activity is planned with that goal in mind.

WHAT WE DO:

Elevate's always better with **FRIENDSHIPS** so every weekend starts with some hang-out time for students to find their friends (and meet new ones)! This is also a prime time for Small Group Leaders to develop relationships with the students in their group. When we start the Elevate **EXPERIENCE**, everyone sits with their small group. The experience usually includes a combo of videos, worship, games, and a message. After that, students connect in **SMALL GROUPS** (based on grade and gender) to talk about the topic of the day.

WHEN WE DO IT:

While adults are heading to "Big Church", Jr. High students attend Elevate. Doors open at 5:15 on Saturday night, and 8:45am and 11am on Sunday. We finish up at 7ish on Saturday night, and 10:30ish and 12:45ish on Sunday.

FACTOID:

64% of students get braces during their middle school years. Orthodontists love them.

WHAT DOES A SMALL GROUP LEADER DO?

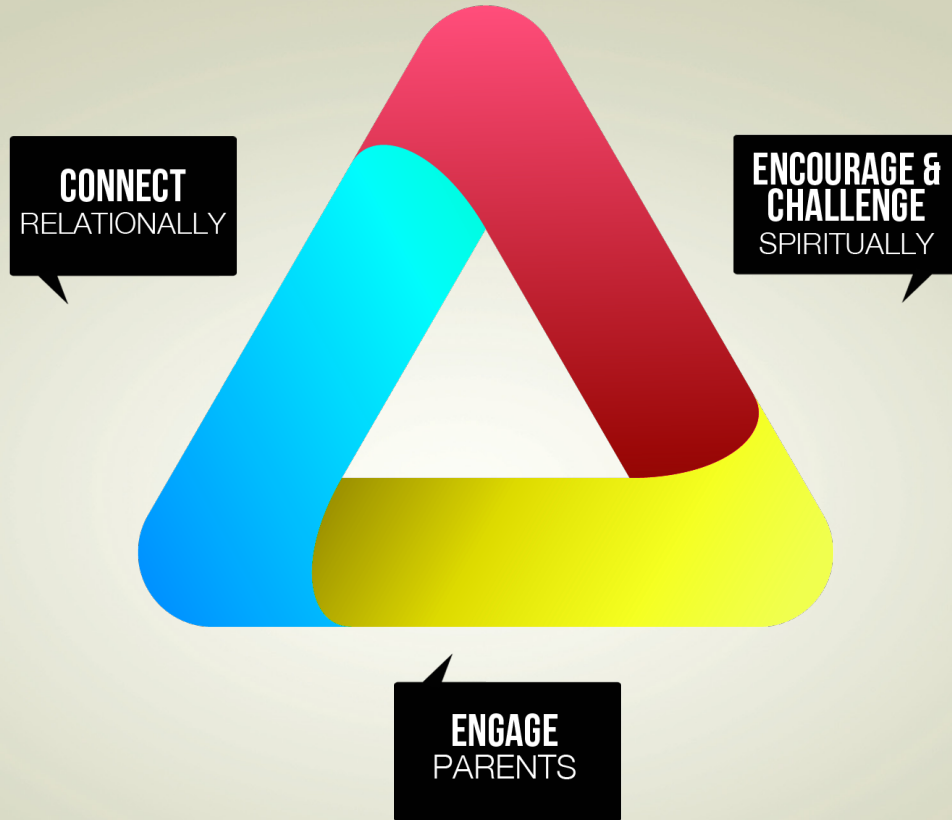
(Besides bring the Elevate staff cookies every weekend)

We realize different ministries “do” small groups differently. We’ve structured the strategy and expectations of our small groups unique to Elevate in a way that we think help us achieve our mission. Everything about our small groups is designed to help you accomplish our three-part strategy. Everything you do as a Small Group Leader should fall into one of these three areas. We’ve included a graphic to give an overview of our strategy. On the next three pages we unpack these elements at more depth, and show you how to implement this strategy. As you read these pages, ask yourself questions like “Would I enjoy doing this?” and “Is this something I can see myself being good at?”

FACTOID:

In 2010, Taco Bell was more popular than McDonalds in the middle school segment of the U.S. Population.

SMALL GROUP STRATEGY:



FACTOID:

The parent of a middle schooler has to call their kid's name an average of 3.7 times before they respond.

CONNECT RELATIONALLY

The first part of our strategy is to connect relationally with students. Students learn through relationships and are more likely to open up and ask questions to an adult they trust. Learning in community, being loved and valued, and having a great time all happen when small group leaders connect relationally with the students in their group.

Below we have listed our minimum requirements for Small Group Leaders to connect relationally with their students.

WEEKEND:

1. Hang with students before service starts.
2. Sit together in service.
3. Connect personally during small group . For example:
 - Talk about how their week went.
 - Ask how things are going with their family.
 - Listen to students talk about their extracurricular activities.

WEEK:

1. Call each student at least 1x per month.
2. Make at least one other "contact" with each student 1x per month. For example:
 - Send a postcard OR Send a text message OR Attend an extracurricular activity.
3. At least 1x during the school year, organize your group for a fun activity outside of Elevate. For example:
 - Go bowling OR Play laser tag OR Plan a Christmas party.

FACTOID:

Because of the increase in texting, the percentage of teenage girls hospitalized with thumb injuries has risen 127% since 2001.

ENCOURAGE AND CHALLENGE SPIRITUALLY

We teach students who God is and what He says about them. Along the way, we encourage them to own their individual spiritual growth. We are glad to be a part of a church like Willow that values the Biblical role of parents as the primary disciplers of their sons and daughters. We believe that we can serve families well by encouraging and challenging students spiritually to take steps closer to God. We want to help students know that Jesus loves them and through spiritual disciplines they can grow in their relationship with God.

Below we have listed our minimum requirements for Small Group Leaders to encourage and challenge their students spiritually.

WEEKEND:

1. Worship together.
2. Listen to the message.
3. Facilitate a discussion during your small group time that will help students learn and apply the message.
4. Pray together.
5. Look for individual opportunities to encourage and challenge a student personally.

WEEK:

1. Pray for your students. (Seriously, we really want you to pray for them!)
2. Prepare to lead your group for the upcoming weekend by being in Scripture and reading the small group discussion guide ahead of time.
3. Plan a service project for your small group at least 1x during the year. You could serve at the soup kitchen, care center, or other projects Elevate can help you connect with.

FACTOID:

88% of Jr. High students listen to Justin Bieber, though only 37% will admit to it publicly.

ENGAGE PARENTS

We believe that God desires for parents to be the primary spiritual influence for their sons and daughters. Because of that conviction, we want to do everything in partnership with parents. Your role as a Small Group Leader includes engaging parents of your students with what is happening in Elevate.

Below we have listed our minimum requirements for Small Group Leaders to engage parents of their students.

WEEKEND:

1. Introduce yourself to parents before and/or after the service within the first month a student joins your group.
2. Encourage students to continue conversations with their parents about stuff we talk about at Elevate.

WEEK:

1. Talk to each students' parents at least once or twice a year to check in with them about how their kid is doing.
2. Ask a parent of your same gender to "sub" for your group when you're going to miss a weekend.
3. Keep your parents informed of what's happening in Elevate. For example:
 - Send a letter home ahead of a service project you're planning.
 - Send your students' parents an e-mail letting them know about an upcoming series you think would be great for them to discuss further at home.
 - Relay announcements regarding camps and other big events.

FACTOID:

Fact: Bill Hybels was once in middle school. He probably had a small group leader.

LOOK HOW COOL ELEVATE LEADERS ARE!



FACTOID:

3% of Jr. High students can dunk a basketball in a regulation 10-foot hoop.

SO WHO CAN LEAD? YOU!

Maybe as you read through the strategy for Small Group Leaders at Elevate your blood started flowing, you got all pumped up and you thought “Sign me up!” Others of you might have felt a little differently, have some more questions or wonder if you really could do this. Well this page is just to say,

“WE THINK YOU CAN.”

Here's why: there is not just one type of Small Group Leader. For some reason people often think we are only looking for that cool, young, trendsetting, hip leader. Yet really we want **adults who love God and like Jr. High Students**. Think about it; that could be anyone!

Grandparents, Single Dads, Football Players, Stay at Home Moms, Teachers, Computer Analysts, Cubs Fans, White Sox Fans, Circus Performers, Empty Nesters, Parents of Teens, Lawyers, Baristas, Sales Reps, Bikers, Gardeners, College Students, Readers, Golfers...we think you get the point.

If you love God and like Jr. High Students, you are on your way to being a great small group leader in Elevate, because . . . **YOU ARE NOT IN THIS ALONE**. It's true we are asking for a big commitment, but we believe Jr. High students deserve our best. Don't you agree? And because we want the best for our students, we want the best for our leaders. The next couple pages will briefly explain how we help.

FACTOID:

A student grows an average of 13.1 inches between 5th and 8th grades.

HOW AM I EQUIPPED TO LEAD?

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE:

This is a tool we provide each week to help you lead your small group. By reading it in advance you will be prepared for your small group time.

WEEKLY TRAININGS:

Trainings focus on growing your leadership abilities and relationships. Trainings begin 45 minutes before Elevate starts and last 30 minutes. Trainings cover topics like “how to challenge students in their faith by asking good questions” or “how to lead a student through a crisis situation.” You’ll also have a chance to build relationships as well as share ideas with other Small Group Leaders. Trainings are crucial to the success of our small groups.

COACHES:

Coaches are volunteers whose role is to do whatever it takes to help make you successful. Coaches will sit in on your small group from time to time to offer “on the job training” and encouragement. They will connect with you outside of Elevate to invest in your growth as a leader. Coaches are your first resource when it comes to tricky situations as well as sharing awesome God moments. Our best coaches will even come to your house and shovel your driveway this winter. :)

FACTOID:

1 out of 13 middle school boys can grow a legitimate mustache by the time they graduate 8th grade.

WHAT ELSE SHOULD I KNOW?

(besides how much fun you are going to have)

GATHERINGS:

We ask our Small Group Leaders to participate in our yearly events including; Breakaway (Fall weekend retreat), Pineapple Mayhem (Spring outreach event), and Collide (Summer weekend camp). We use our events to build community in small groups and God does amazing things in the lives of our Jr. High students when they are away from their routines. We want our Small Group Leaders to be there with their students in those moments!

COMPASSION:

Serving is a huge opportunity for relational connection and spiritual challenge within small groups. We believe that Jr. High students can make the world better in big and small ways.

CAUTION:

Please note that if you quote any of the factoids included throughout this booklet, you may be in danger of lying. We made them up ourselves. That doesn't necessarily mean that they are all completely false. We do know that Bill Hybels was once in middle school. And we also know that Jr. Highers all seem to like candy due to how much of it we see packed in their suitcases at Breakaway. Please be assured that we will never lie to you again . . . unless we tell you that we are doing so.

FACTOID:

The words "Elevate" and "Awesome" are derived from the same Latin root word.

NOW WHAT?

Thanks for really reading through this booklet. Hopefully it was helpful in painting a great picture of Elevate and the importance of the Small Group Leader. So here is what you need to do now:

1. **Take a Deep Breath** and actually believe that God could use you to make a difference in a Jr. High student's life. Seriously, take a deep breath.
2. **Visit an Elevate Service.** Contact an Elevate Group Life Pastor and let them know how soon you can visit.
3. **Fill out an Application.** You'll get this when you visit.
4. **Schedule an Interview.** It will only take about an hour and it just might be the best hour of your week.

Thanks again for your interest in Elevate. We can't wait to see what God does in and through you and our Jr. High Students this year. Please contact us with any questions you might have.

We look forward to connecting with you soon!

ELEVATE GROUP LIFE PASTORS

Matt Vairetta

mvairetta@willowcreek.org

224.512.1208

Gretchen Olson

golson@willowcreek.org

224.512.1734

DRAW A PICTURE HERE IF YOU WANT:

This is the last page, that means you should know everything there is to know about elevate!

FOR MORE INFO VISIT:

WWW.IAMELEVATE.COM