

Building a Student Leadership Team

A practical roadmap for developing students who love Jesus, influence others, and faithfully serve the local church.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

01

Read together

Let your leaders read the guide before the conversation.

02

Talk honestly

Use the prompts to name where the ministry is today.

03

Choose one move

Leave with a next step your team can actually take.

START THE CONVERSATION

Which student could take a meaningful next step toward leadership right now?

SECTION 01

Executive summary: build disciples, not volunteers

A healthy student leadership team develops students who love Jesus, influence others, and faithfully serve the local church. It is more than a group that runs games, passes out food, or sets up chairs. Start with the students God has already entrusted to you, invest deeply, lead patiently, and build intentionally.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

- + Healthy student leadership is built through intentional discipleship.
- + The goal is a leadership culture that lasts, whether you begin with one student or twenty.
- + Keep the whole process centered on Jesus and the local church.

SECTION 02

Understand why leadership matters

Student leadership is not about filling volunteer positions. Students grow spiritually when they are trusted with responsibility, challenged to lead, and encouraged to influence others.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

- + Keep discipleship at the center of every role.
- + Give students meaningful responsibility, not just busywork.
- + Celebrate growth in character as much as visible talent.

SECTION 03

Start before you are ready

You do not need a large ministry to begin. Start with the students God has already entrusted to you. Healthy ministries do not wait until they are big to develop leaders. They grow because they develop leaders.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

- + Name one student who is ready for a next step.
- + Begin with a conversation, not a complicated program.
- + Let faithfulness grow through small, real opportunities to lead.

SECTION 04

Build the foundation before you recruit

Before inviting students onto a team, define the purpose, mission, values, expectations, leadership structure, adult oversight, and meeting rhythm that will hold the culture together.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

- + Write a purpose students and leaders can repeat.
- + Name the behaviors that protect humility, honor, and faithfulness.
- + Set clear boundaries and adult support before responsibility grows.

SECTION 05

Recruit and invite intentionally

Do not simply ask for volunteers. Look for students who are faithful, humble, teachable, dependable, and growing spiritually. Character should outweigh talent.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

- + Look for consistency before charisma.
- + Use questions that reveal character, not just skill.
- + Invite parents and adult leaders into the process where appropriate.

SECTION 06

Use an application process

An application is not an unnecessary barrier. It creates intentionality by helping students pray before committing, reflect on their faith, count the cost, communicate clearly, and accept responsibility.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

- + Give students space to describe why they want to lead.
- + Ask about faith, character, availability, and teachability.
- + Use the process to begin healthy accountability, not to create status.

SECTION 07

Train before you delegate

Students deserve coaching, not just assignments. Invest in Scripture, prayer, character, communication, teamwork, and servant leadership before handing over meaningful responsibility.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

- + Model the role before asking students to lead it.
- + Practice communication and problem-solving together.
- + Give feedback that is specific, kind, and actionable.

SECTION 08

Release responsibility

As students grow, move beyond simple tasks and entrust them with meaningful ministry ownership. Help them lead first impressions, worship, prayer, tech, small groups, outreach, hospitality, events, or student care with coaching close by.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

- + Give students ownership of real ministry spaces with support.
- + Increase responsibility as character and consistency grow.
- + Let ownership create maturity rather than simply adding activity.

SECTION 09

Protect the culture

Leadership teams do not become healthy automatically. Celebrate humility, honor, faithfulness, excellence, integrity, and servanthood. Correct quickly, encourage often, and model everything.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

- + Make the desired culture visible and repeatable.
- + Address drift before it becomes the team's normal.
- + Let leaders see the character you want them to reproduce.

SECTION 10

Multiply leaders

The goal is not to build one great leadership team. The goal is to build leaders who build leaders. Older students can coach younger leaders, and graduating seniors can carry faithful leadership wherever God calls them next.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

- + Ask every leader who they are investing in next.
- + Give older students a clear role in developing younger students.
- + Celebrate multiplication as a sign of healthy discipleship.

MAKE THE NEXT STEP CLEAR

Leadership becomes culture when one student is invited, coached, trusted, and encouraged to help someone else grow.

BUILD YOUR FIRST LEADERSHIP TEAM

WHO WILL YOU INVITE?

WHAT WILL THEY OWN FIRST?

WHO WILL COACH THEM?