

Student Worker Oversight and Training

Vision for the Student Workers of Oasis

“It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Our children have been taught this from a very young age. The reality of this promise can be tested, as they grow more responsible. Volunteering in an OASIS classroom is one of the first opportunities where 10-year-olds can serve and have an impact for Christ. And they are excited!! These students mature into awesome workers for God, as encouragement and direction are given. As they find their place and realize the vital impact they can have on younger children, they take on more responsibilities that stretch them spiritually. Their dependence on God and relational abilities flourish as OASIS-age kids watch and desire the same excitement and fulfillment for themselves.

This year approximately 180 student workers served in all areas of Oasis. Most of these students see the impact they can have on the children; they enjoy leading and nurturing a relationship with the same few children, from age 3 to 10, when they leave TNT. One 7th grader, after her first year of service, wrote, “I would like to move up with the kids I had in Panthers. I want to get to know them better with the great head-start I have. It seems I'll be able to actually help their walks with God more as they mature as well as doing my best to lay the strong foundation of fun Bible stories and activities to take root in.”

Many of these students desire more responsibility and opportunities to be used by God. More than 55 students have committed to filling an “adult” position, adding a great work force to OASIS. They will teach regularly, lead a small group and be a vital part of the team. This will greatly enhance their growth, dependence on God and their ability to branch out into other areas of service. Praise God for the awesome student servants we have in our church!!

Recruitment, Screening & Placement

Recruitment – word-of-mouth, TNT, JAM and Blow-Out

Student Leadership Coordinator (aka SLC) Responsibilities

- Receive all applications and screens the students according to the following requirements
 - Age - 6th grade through High School
 - Actively involved in a home church and cell group, Blow-Out or JAM
 - Positive reference from cell group leader
 - Serve minimum of every other week

- Work with Directors to place students

Training/Mentoring Process

Student Leadership Coordinator (SLC) Responsibilities

- Orient new Student Apprentices
- Communicate with and train CT Directors and Team Leaders
- Explain to Team Leaders the responsibilities of mentoring student workers on their teams (see below)

CT Director Responsibilities

- Work w/Team Leaders and SLC to place and support the inclusion of student workers on their teams
- Distribute student worker beads to Student Workers wearing their name tags

Team Leader Responsibilities

- It's important to be aware of and acknowledge the distinction between students and adults. (This is not always a negative, but very often a positive.)
 - Age
 - Dependant on parents to get them there
 - Not as likely to speak up or take initiative in atmosphere of adult authority; *therefore, they need more literal direction and encouragement in beginning*
 - In learning phase of life – *this is often very positive*
 - Serving because they want to be there – *definitely a positive*
 - Possible barriers to fully utilizing student workers
 - Directors / TLs not convinced of ability & responsibility of students – *read the vision above*
 - Some TLs are more experienced than others at mentoring & training – *SLC is available to give you all the help you need*
- Consider the level of commitment you're willing to make to mentor student workers with the support of the SLC – *we don't want them discouraged and lost in the shuffle in this first attempt to serve*
 - Read the following suggestions and put into practice appropriately.

How to Incorporate Student Workers

Jesus' example

Just before Jesus was taken up to heaven, He gave a command to each of us to make disciples (Matt. 28:19-20). In his Bible study notes on Matthew 4:18-22 ("I will make you fishers of men."), Dr. Richard J. Krejcir indicates that anyone who is a Christian disciple is a learner, which involves a commitment and process to learn to imitate Jesus. Think about the example Jesus set for us. He called twelve questionable characters from the Jewish community to follow Him. They didn't have great qualifications, but as they lived and worked with Him, they experienced Jesus' teaching and earned His trust in their ability to lead. They didn't always follow His instructions and their faith wasn't always strong, but He trusted them as He prepared them to lead once He was no longer with them. We must do the same thing with our teams in Oasis. We need to provide an example of how to teach and be a servant leader to our team members, and then we have to give them room to practice, succeed or fail and, if they fail, to get back up again and succeed.

This is particularly true of our student workers who are fledglings in being leaders. In spite of their lack of spiritual maturity, we need to provide a non-threatening, hands-on training ground for them so they can experience what it means to serve the Lord and be successful before they go out on their own to serve. As we are willing to build into teens' lives, we can watch them grow and flourish.

How can we develop our student workers as leaders?

The key is to mentor them by providing an example of strong, interactive Bible teaching and loving concern for our students, and to provide them with real leadership responsibilities. In his Youth Ministry Topics regarding Training Student Leaders, Burt Laine suggests the following ways of developing student workers as leaders.

- Allow them to use the knowledge and skills they have learned in your classroom
- Practice their leadership abilities by teaching young children
- Learn to work together as a team and support their peers' success
- Learn to plan and pull off a significant teaching
- Learn to express their Christian faith to others in a safe setting, strengthening their own faith in the process
- Practice skills that can be adapted for other church responsibilities

What does this look like in an Oasis classroom?

Regardless of the number of student workers assigned to your classroom, they should each have very specific duties to perform each week. They're typically eager to help and excited about taking on a volunteer commitment. To ensure they stay energized, offer a variety of leadership roles, such as:

- Teaching the Bible lesson
- Directing a game
- Facilitating the craft activity, including giving directions and demonstrating the tasks for completing the craft
- Interacting with the students so they feel significant
- Preparing for the next activity while another activity is taking place so the transition time from one activity to another is minimized
- Giving their testimony

As lead teacher, what is my responsibility to my student workers?

In the same Bible study notes cited above, Krejci provides a reminder that “discipleship is also reciprocal; that is, when one learns, he/she makes the commitment to train someone else. That is what Jesus meant by, ‘I will make you fishers of men.’ It is not just catching them and then storing them (fish were processed and sold for the battement and use of the community), it is training, and placing, so they, too, can catch, train, and place!” As you teach the student workers, they will, in turn, teach the students.

To that end, provide many opportunities for your student workers to experience each of the roles listed above so they feel comfortable doing any of them. Once they have specific duties to perform, their leadership roles become real, and they take ownership of them. In fact, after awhile many of them actually begin seeing and initiating other ways they can serve.

Do the following:

- Pray with your team at the beginning of each class, inviting the Holy Spirit to control your classroom.
- Be a servant leader; i.e., influence your team rather than taking a power position.
- Schedule your student team members to teach a lesson every 6 weeks, and contact them during the week before they teach to encourage them and provide suggestions for making their teaching relevant to the students.
- Assign tasks each week so every student worker has meaningful work to do when they get to your classroom.
- Be willing to give up teaching the lesson yourself every week in order to make an eternal impact on your student workers’ abilities to serve and be strong contributors in the ongoing work of the church.
- Encourage your student workers every week when they have carried out their responsibilities.
- When suggestions are necessary, sprinkle your constructive criticism with lots of praise for all they did correctly.
- Send out a weekly email to your team and home church (so they can pray for your class), stating highlights of the previous week, a quick glance at the next week along with prayer requests, and task assignments for all helpers (see the attached example).

It all comes down to a decision for each team leader.

- Will you make your faith real and impacting to your student workers?
- Will you teach them how to serve?
- Will you allow them to practice what you have taught them?
- Will you allowing them to succeed or fail, and lovingly encourage them when they fail and provide more opportunities for success?
- Will you let them grow in their faith by watching God use them in amazing ways?

Let’s make sure we have a strong impact on our student workers so they can, in turn, minister to the students we have the privilege to teach! They will be nurtured as “fishers of men” and will continue the eternal impact of catching, training, and placing. They will be energized and motivated to serve in a greater way, and the unity of your teaching team will be a witness to all.