



RECRUITING STUDENTS

*Student involvement is a necessary component to planning a youth mission trip.
This resource will give you a few practical considerations when inviting teenagers to
sign up and stay engaged in a mission trip experience.*

BIG PICTURE

Start early. If you don't, summer sports programs, camps and a thousand other events still will. Get the mission trip on students' calendars as soon as you can.

Persuade parents. Youth aren't your only audience – parents are a huge influencer in their lives. Consider how all the "Planting Seeds" ideas could help you get buy-in from parents. Communicate, promote and cast vision with parents just as you do with youth.

Solidify commitments. Once students say they want to be part of the trip, help them commit. A great way to do this is by having them sign a covenant. You may also want to have them pay their first deposit to reserve their spot on the trip.

Keep youth engaged. Once they've committed, don't lose their attention. Check out "Maintaining Engagement" on the next page for a few ways you can help students stay engaged in the mission trip well before they pack their bags.

Pray. Take time to talk to God about your hopes, fears and plans as you seek to involve students in an experience that could change their lives. And pray for your students – that they would respond well to the opportunities God puts in their path.

DEADLINES AND PAYMENT

Create a deadline. Without a deadline, students will lack incentive to sign up in a timely manner. Create a deadline you can be a little flexible with, so even a week or two after, you are able to have grace for latecomers.

Stagger payments. By creating different payment deadlines for students, they and their parents will be able to see how it will be feasible to pay for the trip.

Share the plan. Don't keep the fundraising plan to yourself. Schedule fundraising opportunities early so you can show students all the opportunities they have to raise funds.

Flex. Work with students and parents who are concerned about the financial commitment. If you haven't already, consider setting up a church fund for families with financial constraints.

PLANTING SEEDS

Incorporate. Don't save the idea or practice of service for the mission trip. Include it in what you are teaching students. Give them the "why" behind service and make the mission trip one tangible outpouring of your lesson material.

Remember. Share stories of what's happened because of past similar experiences. Better yet, have students who have been on trips share the impact of their previous experience. Present your best evidence of why mission trips are meaningful.

Cast vision. Don't just look back. Look ahead to what serving together can look like on your trip and what God could do in and through your group. Convey the purpose and significance of what you're inviting students into. Paint a picture worth following.

Promote. Do a good job of advertising the trip from upfront. Use visuals with your announcements, like pictures from last year or some of YouthWorks' great promotional material for students available online, including posters, social media downloads, flyers and videos.

Invite individuals. There's no better invitation than through face-to-face conversation. Let each student know in-person that you would love for them to come.

Pray. Make the mission trip and the people you'll serve a frequent prayer focus. Ask students to lead these prayers.

MAINTAINING ENGAGEMENT

Communicate. Don't keep the details to yourself. Invite students to be excited about the next step in preparation along with you. Tell them when plans change and where you are in preparation. But don't just communicate...

Involve. Bring students into the planning process. Look for places where youth can take the reins and lead. This is the best way you can give students ownership of any plan. The following are a few tangible ideas of including teenagers in this way:

- Have students help pick a destination for your mission trip.
- Invite students to share in front of the group and help recruit others. They are your best assets for building your numbers.
- Include students in logistical planning, like where you'll stop during the road trip and what snacks you'll buy.
- Give students leadership in fundraising. When the money for the trip comes out of the work of students, they will feel more ownership for the trip.

Hype. Continue to build excitement around your mission trip. We have a library of social media downloads that you can share throughout the year to keep students excited about their trip.

Meet. Being together before the trip is crucial to your mission team's success. Meeting will build relationships, keep students engaged and create good expectations for the trip. We recommend you have 3-6 meetings with students before the mission trip.

Encourage. Your excitement matters. Through email, via personal interaction and from the front, let students know you are excited. Encourage them as they prepare for an awesome experience.

A FEW THINGS TO AVOID

Don't guilt trip. Be positive in your encouragement for students to go. Do your best to help students know that they'll be missed if they don't come, but don't let the message be, "You're letting the group down by not going." As always, focus on building students up. Guilt trips will only serve to damage your ongoing relationships with students.

Don't give up. A quick "no" from a student might not be the final word. Check back with them. Maybe God is working on their heart. If a student "can't go," double-check with their parent. Sometimes it's just a matter of getting parent buy-in.

Don't badger. There's a fine line between being persistent and being annoying. Be persistent! But also be conscientious of how your attempts to encourage students to join the trip are being perceived. Recognize when a "no" really is a "no."

Don't overlook. While it might be easy to target your extroverted students who will sway the rest of the group (and leveraging their influence is a good idea), don't ever overlook your outsider students – the quiet ones, the hesitant ones, the frustrating ones. Trust that God can work in and through them too. Think of which students these might be in your group and commit to pursuing their participation with the same energy you pursue the in-crowd.

Don't Get Discouraged. If, despite your best efforts, you don't get the numbers you were hoping for, trust that God can work in a smaller group too. Be excited that you can focus more of your valuable attention on a few teenagers, and plan for the unique opportunities only a smaller group can provide.