

How to Engage with your School using Higher Sessions

[To be used in conjunction with the Higher Sessions and Higher Leaders Guide]

Where possible we want to be running follow-up in school *alongside* the follow-up sessions being run in the local church/youth group. We believe that bridging that gap between a young person seeing a band in school and then linking into a local church is key. If follow-up can be run concurrently in both settings then this can help them to transition.

Assemblies

One way to provide an opportunity for follow-up in schools to be run is by engaging the students through assemblies during the tour.

Before: Seven days before the Higher schools day – assembly led by youth leader: 5-10 mins

- Introduction
- Explanation about Higher and the upcoming school's day
- Promotional video
- Explanation about Higher follow-up sessions after the Higher school's day

During: Higher schools day – Youth leader introduces each lesson and included in the sessions as appropriate

After: Seven days after the Higher schools day – assembly led by the youth leader: 5-10 mins

- Introduction + reflection on Higher visit
- Video
- Give out flyers for Higher follow-up sessions.

Hints and Tips

When preparing to run Higher sessions specifically in a school, it is important to think about the following things.

- When is the best time to run Higher Sessions in school?

The timing of the Higher sessions is important to make sure that it fits with the school timetable as well as being a convenient time for students to attend. The most effective time to run Higher Sessions is normally during the school lunchbreak. Although there may be other competing activities at lunchtime, and the available time is short, our experience shows that more students engage in activities within the boundaries of the school day. Where it's not possible to arrange a lunchtime session, Higher sessions can be run after school. The advantage of this slot is that those who attend are demonstrating a greater level of interest by coming along and you may get a deeper level of discussion as a result.

- How do I go about running it in a school?

Make sure that you are checking with the relevant teacher about lunch passes and seeing if the students can eat in the classroom where the session is being run. If they aren't allowed, then this may have a steer on if they attend the session and the time you will have with them.

Find out if a Christian Union is already running in the school and contact the member of staff or youth leader responsible, so that you are working in a joined-up way.

- How do I promote the Higher Sessions?

It is important to make sure that wherever and whenever you are running sessions that the students know about it. Advertising in schools can be difficult as can getting young people to commit to attending extra-curricular activities. As part of the Higher Tour, ask to lead an assembly in each of the weeks before and after the school visit, signposting to the Higher Sessions. We will provide you with generic Higher Sessions flyers which you can personalise with the time, date and location of your sessions.

- Where in the school should I run Higher Sessions?

We recommend trying to get the highest capacity room available. E.g. a double classroom or designated religious studies space. Make sure you think about the implications of the rooms location

– is it well known and easy to find. Can people arriving late see inside the room to ensure that they have come to the right place? Will you need a notice on the door? Can you get access to the room before lunchbreak starts to set up?

- How do I set up the classroom?

Try to make the room look less like a classroom so that the students don't just feel like they're attending another lesson. One option could be moving the desks and having the chairs in a circle, or amphitheatre style. It is also worth noting what technical items you will need for the sessions. For example, can you use the school computer or do you need to bring a laptop, VGA adaptor, memory stick etc.

It's important to think about the atmosphere you are setting in the room so think about things like putting on background music as they are coming in as well as during the session. It is also good to have slides to support what you are saying, so find out in advance if you can use a smart board or data projector. If you are using the classroom computer you will normally need a member of staff to log in first.

- Can I work with others?

There will normally be more than one church in the catchment area of the school. Can you collaborate with other churches and youth leaders to deliver the sessions? It can be helpful to have different voices at the front, so where possible aim to have more than one leader involved. Having a team involved will enable the sessions to run even when one of the key leaders is ill or unable to attend. As far as it depends on you, try not to change the time or location of the sessions, or cancel them, as that will affect momentum.

Talk through which youth groups or activities young people might connect with during or after the higher sessions. Be kingdom-minded – be prepared to help young people join other churches if that is best for them! For this reason, start your planning as soon as possible and get others involved. Remember that God

promises to bless our unity and that eternal life is the result!
(Psalm 133)

- What does success look like?

Following up from a major mission is not easy. People drop out. Not all our plans run smoothly. Keep going. If you end up with one young person added to the Kingdom of God as a result of higher, would it be worth it? Absolutely. But we are hoping for much more.

Try to make it as easy as possible for young people to join in – there will be times in the future when being a Christian will require them to face challenges and overcome obstacles. But we don't want to be the obstacle! Keep promoting and encouraging. Remind young people who are already following Jesus to keep inviting friends.

But remember that mission is God's business. He loves young people with more love than we can comprehend. So stay dependent on him in prayer. Don't take the pressure on yourself and don't get frustrated with others when they don't seem to get it. Ask your church community to keep praying throughout the season of Higher Sessions. And keep in touch with the Higher team if you need help, or just to let us know how it's going.
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