

Date Used: _____

Group: _____

UPGRADED

Topic: Transition to Middle/Junior High School

Purpose of this Session:

Excitement! Panic! Curiosity! Anxiety! All these words are descriptive of the transition to the next level of schooling kids face. No matter how the transition is managed in your community (fifth or sixth graders moving to middle school; sixth graders moving to junior high), the move to the next level worries and frightens kids. Kids fear everything from trouble with their lockers to their Christian faith being ridiculed. You can create a climate of acceptance and help kids cope with their transition fears by talking through this TalkSheet with them.

To Introduce the Topic:

Begin by revealing some of your own growing-up fears. This sets the tone for young people to also share their fears. Allow the group to swap concerns for a few minutes. Then announce that you want the young people to write letters to an eighth grader describing some of the fears they have of their upcoming move to middle/junior high school. If you wish, you can give them to eighth graders who have agreed beforehand to answer them. Or, you can announce that they will not actually be distributed to any older students. Whatever you decide, guarantee privacy. The young people do not have to write their names on the papers. You may ask permission to collect and read them, but you must guarantee privacy. If you choose to ask some trustworthy eighth graders to answer these private letters, set aside group time to talk about the answers when your kids have received their responses. (You can number the letters and ask the kids to remember their numbers, or they can use their birth dates or street address numbers.)

The Discussion:

Item #1: Start this discussion on an exciting note by asking group members to share their thoughts. Record these for all the group to see. You can refer to these later in the discussion when the group becomes preoccupied with the negative.

Item #2: Ask the kids to list additional concerns in the blank spaces. Have the group members compile a top five list of their biggest worries. Examine all of the concerns the group members identified with a special focus on the top five.

Item #3: Ask the young people how their relationship with Christ and the church may change through middle/junior high school. Take time to dialogue both the ups and the downs of the reported changes. Don't just focus on statements reporting a move away from God.

Item #4: You can have a panel of eighth graders available to answer questions, or you can record all questions to be answered by a panel the following week.

Item #5: These passages focus on transition and spiritual growth. Talk with the students about their transition to the next level of education as an opportunity to grow in their relationship with Christ.

To Close the Session:

After reviewing what has been discussed, describe for the kids what the church (or club) has available for them when they graduate into middle/junior high school. You can ask the middle/junior high school leader of your youth group as well as some members of the youth group to describe on videotape or in person what the next level has in store for them. The group members can also write questions on 3 x 5 cards listing any concerns they may have that can be answered later by their new leadership.