

Children's Ministry
Breakout Session
UNLEASH 2008
Cherie Duffey
Children's Director

NewSpring Children's Ministry

Where are we right now? Making steps to become multi-site!

Staff Structure: 7 full-time & 7 part-time staff

- A. Operations Team: Campus Leader & 7 Ministry Coordinators
(responsible for executing Sunday services)
 - 1. First Impressions
 - 2. Nursery
 - 3. Preschool
 - 4. Kindergarten
 - 5. Theater 1 (1st & 2nd Grade)
 - 6. Theater 2 (3rd – 5th Grade)
 - 7. Special Needs
- B. Programming/Curriculum Team (write and produce Sunday material)

What do Sundays look like?

- 1. Volunteer meetings 45 min. before each service (VIP)
 - A. Vision
 - B. Important Info
 - C. Prayer

(Volunteer kids go to "holding tank" supervised by staff member)
- 2. First Impressions
 - A. First time family escorted to check-in & escorted to classroom
 - B. Mascot walks through hallways to greet children
 - C. Children's Advocates ensure 4th grade and under are not entering auditorium but checked into children's area for age-appropriate worship
- 3. Entering Classrooms - Activity Stations
 - A. Age-appropriate: Playstation, make jewelry, pillows to talk, toys, legos, crafts
 - B. Purpose: fun & to build relationships
- 4. Clean-up Song & Slide Change
- 5. Large Group
 - A. One team covers 2 areas – live acting & worship (2 early childhood performances, 2 late childhood performances)
 - B. Kids sit on floor
 - C. Volunteers PARTICIPATE

- D. Early Childhood – Welcome song; Bible story tied into acting (interactive); worship song in middle; review game at end
 - E. Late Childhood – Worship at beginning; skit; in middle of acting we “Freeze Frame” for a teaching time; continue acting; end with song
6. Small Group
 - A. Kids in same group w/ same leader each week
 - B. Kid Connection – talking/sharing time; each child shares name & answers some get to know you question; younger children pass object relating to topic
 - D. Lesson & application
 - E. Games/activity (extras in case service runs long)
 - F. Try to end in small group
 - G. Separate boy & girl lessons for 3rd – 5th graders
 7. Nursery Best Practices
 - A. Bubble blowers mounted to wall
 - B. Small groups in nursery – volunteers divide up the babies to pray for them & their families
 - C. “Changed with Love” stickers
 - D. Volunteers wear booties (and smocks in 0-6 month rooms)
 - E. Volunteers steam-clean toys throughout the week
 8. Special Needs
 - A. 43 Special needs kids
 - B. Most are mainstreamed & have a shadow
 9. Clubhouse
 - A. For volunteer or staff kids here more than one service
 - B. Hang out time to build relationships (no lesson)
 - C. Age-appropriate activities: video games, crafts, activities
 - D. Extra snack (pretzels, chips, pizza, Capri suns, etc.)
 - E. Excellent tool for recruiting parents as volunteers

Evaluating Sunday

1. Monday morning team evaluation
 - a. Did they have fun? What did they learn?
 - b. What was good/bad?
 - c. Get re-focused for the next week
2. Follow-up for First Timers
 - a. Phone call
 - i. How was their experience?
 - ii. Answer questions
 - b. Post card
 - i. Send by room coordinator or small group leader
 - c. Must be done Mondays

Questions

1. *How are small groups assigned?*

All attendees are assigned a group through Fellowship One. Each week, the group name is printed on their nametag at check-in. Each week they're in the same small group.

2. *Do you do the same thing in all 4 services on Sundays? What about children attending more than one service?*

The format is the same for all 4 services. Children attending more than one service go to Clubhouse during the additional services. Clubhouse is a "hang-out" time with video games, crafts, activities, and an extra snack. Clubhouse is beneficial in recruiting parents as volunteers.

3. *How early can children check in?*

Volunteer children check in 45 minutes before the service begins – there is a "Holding Tank" for 15 minutes for these children. Other children can check in 30 minutes before the start.

4. *What are the regular service times at NewSpring?*

9:15, 11:15, 5:00, 6:45

5. *What's the general format for children on Sundays?*

Each room is a bit different based on age-appropriate activities & attention span, but here's a general idea:

1. Activity Stations (30 minutes before service begins until 15 minutes after service begins: 45 minutes total)
2. Clean Up (5 minutes)
3. Large Group Worship (20 minutes)
4. Small Group (35 minutes – some rooms split this time before & after large group)

6. *Do all kids check out from the first service before the second service kids come in?*

Usually, since we have 45 minutes between each service.

7. *How do you get your volunteers here 45 minutes early?*

- A. CAST VISION!!!
- B. Make meetings intentional – don't waste their time
- C. Care for your volunteers
- D. Snack cart for volunteers

8. *How do you recruit & encourage volunteers?*

- A. Get other volunteers to recruit for you

- B. Have lead volunteers (service leaders) call & check up on others
- C. Pump up the excitement so volunteers WANT to tell others
- D. Write encouragement/thank you notes to volunteers
- E. Volunteer Appreciation Banquets
- F. IMPACT – last Tuesday every month – church-wide event to get people plugged in as volunteers

9. *How long of a time commitment do you require of your volunteers?*

We don't currently have a time commitment. We ask volunteers to commit to every week or every other week. We do encourage volunteers to take a break if we see (or they tell us) they're being drained.

10. *What kind of training do you do for your volunteers?*

After their completed application, interview, and background check, they are paired up with someone to observe. When ready, they will step in to assist and eventually lead in an area. We also do a large training twice a year.

11. *How often do you rehearse for the skits?*

Volunteers come the Thursday before the series begins to have rehearsals/training (about 2 hours). They show up early every Sunday to do run-throughs.

12. *Do you do outings with the kids?*

No. We are passionate about Sundays & doing Sundays WELL! We've found that other week-day events take away from the excellence we promise on Sundays.

13. *How do you deal with behavior issues?*

- A. Volunteers are empowered to step in
- B. Talk to the child about the real issue
- C. Remove from small group if necessary
- E. Special needs shadows for children with behavioral disorders
- F. Responsibility moves up the ladder: small group leader – room coordinator – staff member – page out parent
- G. Don't let a disruptive child feel unloved!

14. *How do you handle criers?*

- A. Schedule enough volunteers to count on a few children being held throughout the service
- B. Bye-bye buggy – with music
- C. 3 person rule: try passing the child to 3 different people before paging parent
- D. If needed, contact production room to page out a parent

15. *Do you run a background check on everyone?*
Yes. Everyone 18 and older have a check if they work anywhere in the children's area. Volunteers under 18 are called Helping Hands.
16. *How many volunteers do you average on a Sunday?*
365
17. *What is your average children's attendance on a Sunday?*
1250
18. *What is the check-in procedure?*
- A. All children check in at one area (separate area for first timers)
 - B. Use Fellowship One
 - C. Look up child by phone number or name
 - D. Assign child to appropriate room
 - E. Child name tag & parent tag prints (codes on each match)
 - F. Take off child tag & match it with parent tag at check-out
19. *What stuff do you normally have in the rooms?*
- A. Kindergarten through 5th grade rooms have partitions for small groups; tables with activities
 - B. 1st – 5th grade: games, crafts, books, video games, bean bags
 - C. 3rd – 5th grade: couches
20. *What ratios do you have of adults to kids?*
We have a strong policy that no adult is to be alone with children. There are always at least 2 adults in every room.
For nursery, we stay under a 1:3 ratio.
Preschool 1:4
Kindergarten 1:6
1st – 5th grade 1:10
In clubhouse we have 2 volunteers & normally have about 20 kids
21. *Do you send home a craft with the kids?*
They may take home something they created in an Activity Station, but nothing is created specifically for a "take home craft" in the elementary area.
22. *How long does it take to build/create a new set?*
A volunteer designs our sets several weeks (or months) in advance. It takes us 1 day to put up framing, 1 day to put up the plotter board, and 1 day to decorate & add props. Another volunteer helps with decorating & finalizing the stages.
23. *Do you reuse any of the stage?*

We have created a permanent background on the Playhouse stages (early childhood) to look like a playhouse & simply change out props/toys/decorations to match the current series theme. We are still working on making the late childhood stages more permanent. Our new building will have built-in permanent stages.

24. *How do you handle emergencies?*

All children's staff wear walkie-talkies and are tuned into the same channel. We can easily flip to another channel to connect with security. We have phones in every room with a speed dial to security. We also have police officers (in uniform) stationed in the children's area. All our volunteers wear picture-id lanyards, which are different than any other name tags used by other volunteers in other areas.

25. *Do you have a room for children that just can't handle being in the regular room?*

We try to meet whatever need a child has. Most of our special needs children are mainstreamed and do well with a shadow in their regular room. We do have a special needs room for those that cannot handle being in the typical classroom.

26. *How was the special needs ministry developed?*

One of our members starting volunteering to meet the needs of a special needs child. She has a passion for special needs children and her background/training is in this area. She recruited other volunteers and now has enough for these volunteers to serve every-other week. Our special needs ministry is greatly supported by NewSpring. It is very visual and talked about throughout the church.

27. *How do special needs children check in?*

They check in at the regular check-in spot. We have signs up informing parents to let us know if their child is special needs. Regular attendees are already scheduled to be paired up with a volunteer who waits for them in their classroom. If someone checks in and their parents don't tell us they're a special needs child, we contact our special needs coordinator to assess the child and set them up with a shadow.

28. *When does the staff get to sit in a service?*

We all go to one service each week. Our volunteers are in place to where everything runs smoothly when we're not there. We also make sure our volunteers are attending service – we don't want them to serve if they're not attending a service.

29. *How do you suggest sitting in a service if we only have one service?*

It's very important to your spiritual health to attend a service. We suggest a week on/week off rotation or a one series on/one series off rotation.

30. *Where did "The Majestic" come from?*

We have a very media-driven culture; movies & television intrigue kids. We wanted to have a "majestic" feel.

Psalm 8:1-2 "O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger."

31. *How do you decide what to write for curriculum?*

Many of our series themes are driven by movies that will be released. For example, a movie, "Nim's Island," will be releasing soon, so we are currently doing "Lost" and "Treasure Island" series. We create an outline about 8 weeks long and create lessons based on the outline. We seek to meet the needs of children and what they should be taught at appropriate ages. Currently, we are exploring tough questions kids have, such as "Where is God? Is there only one God? How do I know God is real?"

32. *Does your curriculum mirror the main service topics?*

Usually it does not. Occasionally we will tie into what's being taught in the main service. Recently we did a "Game Time" series on giving that paralleled the main service.

33. *How many people are on the creative team to write?*

One person writes early childhood scripts. Another writes late childhood scripts. A third person writes all the lessons with the help of an assistant.

34. *How far ahead do you write curriculum?*

Scripts are finished about 6 weeks before the start of the series. Lessons are finished only a few weeks ahead of time since we write 5 different lessons: toddlers, kindergarten, 1st-2nd grade, 3rd-5th grade girls, 3rd-5th grade boys. Of course, we would always like to be further ahead!

35. *Where do you pull resources from?*

Several websites! Do a Google search for kid movies. Look up Pixar and DreamWorks. Stumble upon people's blogs that have information about what movies are being released and what kids are interested in. We subscribe to "Nick Magazine" and "Disney Magazine".

36. *How do you come up with games/activities for small group?*

Games & activities are written into each lesson. Research and brainstorming are key to finding age-appropriate ideas.

37. *Do you have any advice for keeping K-5th grade together in one location?*

Separate them as much as possible. Then, target the 4th-5th grade boys for large group. If it's relative & creative enough for them, all other children will follow.

38. *Do you allow children to sit in the service?*

We have a very strong vision of age-appropriate worship, so we only allow children 5th grade and up to sit in the main auditorium.

39. *What other media do you use?*

Hillsong Kids; Elevate; iStockPhoto.com

40. *Do you allow parents to stay in the room with kids that have separation anxiety?*

We do everything possible to allow the parents to attend the service, but in severe cases, we will give them an observer tag to stay in the room.