

## **The 7 Segments Of Highly Effective Programming**

No matter your ministry context or the phase of kids or teenagers you serve, there are the same 7 segments in your programming. In this workshop, you'll learn the basics of these segments and how to leverage them to create great experiences for kids or teenagers.

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What's up everybody? Thanks for hanging out with us today. My name is Brett.

I've been working full-time in student ministry world for almost 15 years. I spent 11 of that working full time as a student pastor & a nextgen pastor. I was a student orange specialist for 6.5 years, which is basically the ministry coach/consultant, & recently stepped in as our vice president of staff culture & development at the start of the year...but student ministry is still my passion so i'm still involved in all things orange students/kids.

- PK
- Full-time ministry 18 years
- 11 years in Lexington/Indy - 7 orange
- Family

- Love baseball & golf

Before we dive in, I'd love to read the room a little...

- Who is full-time? Professional Christians?
- Part-time? Bi-vocational?
- Volunteers - who does it just because they love Jesus?
- Anyone here use XP3?

I promise that this breakout is not just going to be a commercial for Orange Curriculum. However, as we do talk through the 7 segments, I do what you to know that we do provide resources to help make each of these segments work.

So, for the next hour or so we're going to be talking about how to make the most out of your weekly kids & student environment...or service...or program or whatever you might call it.

Real quick, how many of you have only 1 environment or program each week for your students/kids? Who is responsible for more than 1.

In my experience, for those of us who do have 2 programs...one of them tends to be the one with a higher

attendance, probably better energy & a higher likelihood your students/kids are to invite their friends. The other program probably tends to have a little lower attendance, but they are more of your core kids...the ones you can diver a little bit deeper with.

The environment that we're going to be diving into today would be that first one: the one with the most students/kids, most energy & most visitor friendly. In case you have multiple programs, we'll refer to this one as our main program each week.

Okay, one more quick thing before we dive in...I have all my notes & slides at **[brettryantalley.com/oc23](http://brettryantalley.com/oc23)**. So, feel free to take notes, but you'll have access to every screen & pretty much every word I'll say because I manuscript when I prep.

So, if you are curious about the content, but were torn between this breakout & a nap...feel free to leave now with no judgment at all because you can go back through this later if you want.

Anyway....

Statistics - & likely your personal experience - show that students/kids are showing up for in-person programming less frequently than ever. This means there are a few things we must get better at...

- **connecting students/kids to consistent adults.**
- **helping volunteers understand their roles as shepherds, not chaperones.**
- **creating systems & strategies that help students/kids experience an 'everyday faith', not an 'at church faith'.**

Though what happens outside of our weekly programming is wildly important, that doesn't mean that our weekly programming doesn't matter. With attendance patterns being what they likely are in your context, it might even mean that our weekly programming matters even more than it used to.

While student ministry from place to place may have different needs & a different context, we think there are 7 segments that can help all of us make the most of our weekly student programs week in and week out, and how Orange students/kids curriculum can play a helpful role in creating meaningful experiences for every student.

## STACKING HANDS

As you jump into this, we recognize that each of you will be hearing this through a different lens depending on the community & context of your ministry. So, while each suggestion or idea might not fit in every context, we wanted to start off by clarifying the things that I bet we can all stack hands-on. No matter our philosophy of ministry, our current strategy, context or the structure of our programming, here are some key pieces we can all agree with:

- We want our kids/students/kids to be everything God created them to be.
- We want them to grow in their understanding of who God is & what it looks like for them to live that out in their everyday life.
- We want to be able to create meaningful & worthwhile experiences for our students/kids on a weekly basis that they enjoy & that also help them to grow in their faith.
- We want to create those experiences efficiently so that we also have enough time to focus on the other important areas of our jobs like developing leaders, building good systems, and partnering with parents among other things.

While we don't have all the answers, we think that when we view our main program each week through the lens of the 7 segments, it gives us better language & tools to identify what we are doing, what we want to be doing & the areas we might need to improve.

Whether you write your own curriculum or whether you use something like XP3, we think developing & evaluating your weekly programs through these 7 segments will help you be better organized, strategic & efficient.

## **TENSION**

As leaders, we know how much there is to do in a given week. We know how many things end up on our do list vs how many things actually get done. We know how many extra responsibilities get added to our plates by other church staff or events. We know that Sunday is coming...Wednesday is coming...the trip is coming...the event is coming.

So, the question we want to help process is 'how can we best prepare to help make our weekly gatherings as beneficial, effective & strategic as possible as we try to help our students/kids grow in their faith?'

To be clear, there are things that we think you have to have in order to do that well. Things like having a scope & cycle, a full parenting strategy, systems for how you assimilate new students/kids, etc. But that's not what this breakout is about.

So, we're going to assume all of those strategies already exist for your ministry (if they don't, email me at [\*\*brett@thinkorange.com\*\*](mailto:brett@thinkorange.com)). Today, we're merely talking about the core elements in a weekly gathering that help fulfill those strategies.

Some of these will be obvious & you'll recognize how you're probably already doing some of these in your programs. Maybe there will be some that you haven't implemented yet or you want to think about adjusting a little bit. Ultimately, these are the 7 segments that we think need to exist to get the most out of your weekly program.

## PRELUDE

The first one is **PRELUDE**. Our joke is that 'prelude' sort of sounds like Sister Margaret pounding away at the organ before church starts, but what we mean by prelude is simply this: **everything that happens before anything**

**happens. It's all about setting the tone for the upcoming experience.**

If you've ever been to a Disney park before, you're probably wondering how it could cost so much. If you've been, you also know that the experience starts as soon as you walk in. The way it sounds, the way it looks, the way it even smells. Did you know they pipe smells into main street?! It's crazy.

Your ministry probably doesn't have Disney's budget, BUT you can think about how you set the tone for the experience.

What do the hallways look like? What does the room sound like before the program starts? Is there music playing? What kind of music is playing? Is it inviting for a new kid who shows up? What does it smell like? Is it clean?

The youth center of my last church had a handful of design flaws. One was that they built a bunch of cubbies & a coat rack right next to the main entrance. In theory, it makes sense: let's give students/kids a place to hang their coats & nicely store their personal items in an organized manner in these cubbies while they're here. Then they can



responsibly grab them on their way out & take it home with them. It's foolproof!

As you can imagine, students/kids were showing up with the most random items, throwing them in or near the cubbies & then for some reason, NEVER TAKING THEM HOME. It regularly looked like the lost & found had vomited in our entrance.

What I'm getting at is that maybe our regular students/kids didn't care, but that mess communicated something to students/kids & families who were visiting. When the ping pong table is half broken & all of the couches are items that local thrift stores turned down...we are communicating something to students/kids.

What happens before your program actually starts is so important because kids & teenagers, whether they're even aware of it or not, walks into the church asking themselves a couple of questions...

**...is this for me & do I matter?**

The relationships in your program speak to how much a child feels LOVED.

How you create your program (how it looks, how it feels) speaks to how much a child feels LIKED.

BOTH are important to help a child feel welcomed into your ministry...to help them feel wanted & like they belong.

Teenagers are uniquely wired to notice when a space is meant for kids, for adults or for them. And, there are a few things we can do each week to make sure every teenager walking through our doors knows we were expecting them and this place is FOR them.

Here's what I mean...

If a teenager walks into the church and sees a sign pointing to Men's bible study, Seniors choir practice, no food in the auditorium & no direction for them...it doesn't exactly give the impression we were expecting them.

If a 7-year-old walks into their classroom & the chairs are 40 year old, rusted metal folding chairs...the walls are all beige or lined with pictures of former members of the church's congregation who had...um...passed, then it

doesn't exactly give the impression that we're expecting them.

(for real, that room existed in a church I was at).

So, what happens before anything happens? This time looks different in kids & student ministry but I'm guessing all of us have kids or students/kids in our space at least 10-15 minutes before anything starts.

What does it look like to design that experience through the perspective of a family who has never been? What might we need to change about signage, music, space, atmosphere, seating, smell, lighting, etc to help them know that this is for them & that they matter?

If you're familiar with any Orange curriculum, you know that we'll give you some set ideas, music playlists, motion graphics & more to help with the Prelude.

Here are a few more random prelude thoughts that aren't resource related, but are important to think through.

**THEIR ENTRANCE:** what happens when kids & students/kids first enter your room, building or whatever? How are they welcomed? Does it look like you were ready

for them? This is important for everyone, but especially for guests & first-timers.

**LIGHTING:** if there's any way to keep your space from feeling like they've just walked into a walmart because of all of the fluorescent, overhead lighting...then do it. Lamps, hanging lights, warm lights, etc can go a long way.

**SEATING:** if all you have is metal folding chairs, it often communicates something. I already made this joke, but if we only have couches that people stopped wanting to own in the 80's, it often communicates something. Again, some kids/students/kids - the ones that show up every week regardless - might not really care, but it really communicates something to the new families, kids & students/kids that might be showing up that week.

**EQUIPMENT:** this goes along with the last one: if all of your ping pong balls are dented, if your video game system is connected to a big tube tv, if your pop-a-shot basketball game has a broken rim & no longer keeps score...its very easy for kids/students/kids to draw conclusions that the ministry & the church don't value them enough to invest in nice things. Yes, there's a balance here if your students/kids keep breaking the nice

things that they might get, but it's worth us being intentional about.

Finally, the last piece of the prelude is your **LEADER ENGAGEMENT**. One thread you'll see through each of the 7 segments is how your volunteer leaders are engaging along with your students/kids in each of them. The prelude is no different. During the 15-30ish minutes students/kids are hanging out before things start, what are your leaders doing? Are they with the students/kids? Are they sitting among them, are they playing ping pong, are they out playing basketball or are they in the back catching up?

We have to help our leaders understand how important their engagement during that time is to help students/kids know that this is for them & that they belong. And it's not something you'll have to do once, but you'll have to beat that drum so often that your leaders roll their eyes when you talk about it.

So, the first segment is PRELUDE, what happens before anything even happens...**how are we setting the tone for the experience we want them to have?**

We actually have a little evaluation that we'll do after each segment to give yourself an idea of where you're doing well & where you might need to focus.

## | EVALUATION |

### SOCIAL

That leads us to the 2nd segment, **SOCIAL**: providing time for fun & interaction.

We think fun is a spiritual thing. **Fun over time creates a deeper connection.** When you & I have “do you remember the time when” kind of shared experiences, it's far more likely & far easier for us to dive into the kinds of conversations we want our students/kids to be having.

One way we say that at Orange is...

A kid/student may never **believe in a God** who loves them if they don't see adults who love them.

And they may **not believe you love** them if you don't like them.

And they may not **know you like them** if you don't have fun with them.

Again, a big piece of this comes in how we **equip & develop** our volunteer leaders. We have to help them understand that they're **not chaperones, they're pastors**. Their role isn't to stand against the walls to make sure no one leaves early or gets in a fight...but to invest in those kids and build connections with them.

There's something that happens to a relationship when we have shared, fun experiences. It also creates much clearer pathways for us to teach & model what following Jesus is all about.

So yes, **fun is a strategy**, but it **doesn't have to be a trick**. I'm not a fan of bait & switch fun. Don't use fun as a way to trick people into showing up for something. Don't undersell it like that. Don't miss out on the ways that fun plays a role in your broader strategy by just using it as a means to an end to get people in the room.

This segment is a little fluid. It's clearly important to lean into the social/relational aspect when it comes to what is happening during the prelude, but we think there should be some structured group time for this too.

So, in a practical way, during your programming, we think there should be something that helps your leaders & your students/kids laugh together & play together. The obvious low-hanging fruit here is doing a game.

Maybe it's an upfront game that a handful of folks participate in while everyone watches. Maybe it's an all-skate that everyone plays together.

Regardless of what the game is or where you get it, create some time toward the beginning of your time together for fun & interaction. Again, back to your leaders...be sure that they know they should be a part of it! If it's an all-skate, be sure they're playing along with their group. If it's an upfront game, maybe call some leaders up there every now & then too.

So, the 2nd segment is Social...how are we facilitating & creating experiences that are fun & build connections over time?

| EVALUATION |



## WORSHIP

okay, on to the next segment...**worship:** inviting students/kids to respond to God.

We all know that music is not the only way to worship, but when we think of worship corporately as a group, music is often one of the main ways this happens.

In fact, did you know that there's brain science that tells us that we understand God as a deeply compassionate & personal God when we have a highly developed Anterior Cingulate? And did you know that the main ways for us to grow the Anterior Cingulate is by prayer, meditation & faith-based singing?

My friend Marko introduced me to this idea & the book 'How God Changes Your Brain'. You should totally check it out, but something happens to the brain of our students/kids & how they understand God when we spend time in prayer, meditation & faith-based singing.

So, absolutely there are a thousand ways that we can help students/kids understand what worship is in their lives. But when we're gathering together...it seems like it's important

to spend some time helping them understand how & giving them an opportunity to pray, meditate (contemplate) & sing together.

If you can't do a band, that's totally fine. If you can't even do musical worship of any kind, that's fine too...but what does it look like for us to help students/kids understand what it looks like for them to respond to God on a regular basis.

One of my favorite ways to do this is through some responsive prayer. You could do this in place of musical worship or even before musical worship to help them transition into a different mind frame from the game.

Maybe set up that time by saying something like this to your students/kids:

“Before we move on into our message for today or a time of worship, I just wanted to give us a chance to take a deep breath & respond to God. Whether we feel it or not, God is actually with us here & I don't want us to miss out on what he would have for us. So, before we move on, I wanted to pray for you and then ask you to spend a few minutes in conversation with God. I'll say a short prayer

first & then I'll prompt you on a few things I'd love you to quietly talk to God about.”

Then I'd say a short prayer, have some reflective music on in the background, adjust the lights accordingly and then prompt them with things like...

- Pray for your parents
- Thank God for one thing in your life
- Ask God one question you've always wanted to know about Him
- Tell God about your favorite thing in creation
- Think of one teacher & pray for them

Give them however long feels right for each one & then wrap up in prayer.

The brain science behind what happens through prayer & song is wild, but a lot of us can probably even think of other ways to do this: writing prayers out, helping students/kids use other artistic skills to worship, etc.

If you DO musical worship, there are a lot of resources that we give you in each Orange Curriculum to help it be engaging, phase-specific & meaningful.

Finally, back to our adult leaders. At Orange, we often talk about the idea that a student may never know to love God if they don't see someone show them how to love God. This segment is such a great opportunity to do this.

Worship (no matter how you choose to do it in your group) lets kids see other adults respond to God. One of the things Kara Powell talks about when it comes to sticky faith is that students/kids need to see adults responding to God. **students/kids need to see their leaders worship so they know what God means to them.**

What does it look like to make sure that our leaders are sitting among our students/kids & participating if we're doing musical worship, prayer stations, etc?

So, what are we doing on a weekly basis to give your students/kids an opportunity to respond to God while also being able to see their leaders doing the same?

## | EVALUATION |

### TRANSITION

The fourth segment is **Transitions**, “moving smoothly from one thing to another.” This segment is a bit of a strange

one in that it really doesn't happen just one time during your programming. Most of the segments happen at a specific time, but transitions happen as we start our program, as we move on to a new segment & even happen within the segments themselves.

Of all of the segments we have & will talk about, this might be the one that is getting the least amount of thought for you in your weekly program, but I hope that changes.

Transitions are one of those things where you don't really even notice when they're done well, but you sure notice them when they're not done well. We've all felt a bad transition. Maybe we were responsible for it or in the audience, but we've felt it. It's not fun.

When you are in the crowd for a bad transition, how do you feel? Normally, we just feel so uncomfortable that we want to be anywhere but there. But since we can't teleport, we often do one of two things when we're caught in the middle of a bad transition: we talk to the person next to us to break the tension or we pull out our phones.

When we see our students/kids talking to their friends & pulling out their phones in church, what do we usually blame it on? Their attention spans? The disrespect?

Those might have something to do with it sometimes, but we also have to start owning some responsibility when we lose them & I think we often lose them in transitional moments.

The variety we can create in our programs can be a helpful way that we keep students/kids engaged in what they're learning and experiencing. However, variety can be **distracting if we haven't spent the time to make sure we transition well**, help them connect the dots and take them on a journey.

To do transitions well means that you are **helping your kids connect the dots**. It means you are making it easier for them to pay attention and stay focused.

As I said, transitions happen all throughout your program. Here are a few I think you should be paying attention to...

The transition from **prelude to social**: cueing your students/kids & volunteers about the start.

For too long in my ministry, if we were supposed to start a program at 6, we'd probably try to start at 6:05 and by the time we did start it would probably be 6:10. My first few minutes would be spent doing something like this...

“hey, all! We’re going to get started, so come on forward & have a seat. boys, hey boys...put the ping pong paddles down. We’re getting started. Girls, come on up from the couches. Guys, turn off guitar hero. No, you can’t finish the song. Boys, I said put down those ping pong paddles.”

It was miserable and it totally affected the energy in the room at the start of every program. Plus, since we started late, it sort of trained our leaders & our students/kids to not really trust the timing of when they should be there.

So, my recommendation is to always start on time & have a hard start trigger to make sure it happens. Some folks use countdowns for this, which is great (and Orange has series-branded countdowns in the media package).

Another big transition is how you **begin your programming** now that you have them in front of you. For too long, mine usually started with giving announcements for about 5-7 minutes. Sometimes we’d do fun video announcements which made it a little better, but there was still something about the energy in the room when we would spend the first important minutes of our time together with me telling everyone what I want them to do.

“don't forget to sign up for this”

“Make sure your parents know this...”

It's painful to start thinking about those students/kids through the years who showed up for the first time & their first 5 minutes of church - maybe ever - was the church asking things of them.

I'm not saying that there aren't things worth talking about at the top or that there aren't engaging ways to do it...I'm just saying we need to think through the transition from them having a seat to what the first few minutes look like & feel like.

Who is on stage? What is their energy like? What does the room feel like? Is it too loud? Too quiet? What's the lighting situation? Too bright? Too dark? What are they talking about? How does it engage a first-timer? Your normal students/kids?

Of course, then there's a **transition from the welcome to the game**. A couple of things to be thinking about here are lighting, sound & timing. If you are doing a game for the first time, you have to figure out a way to try it out. Few



things kill momentum faster than a game you thought would last 3 minutes & it's going on 7.

Also, do some experimenting with some music in the background during games & instructions. Maybe even during your welcome. You'll want to mess around though & try to find the right kind of music and the right balance of not too quiet, but not too loud. What works for you will depend on a lot of factors like space, crowd size, etc.

Then, if you do musical worship, you've got the **transition from game to worship** time. This is when I loved to do a little bit of contemplative prayer time to shift the focus I mentioned in the worship segment, but it is absolutely a transition piece too.

I saw someone do this one time & use the phrase "helping our souls catch up with our bodies" to describe taking a moment in the midst of a group gathering to pause. It just resonated with me. It's so easy to jump right into worship from a game, and while energy might be high, engagement often was low. So, I loved using that transition to help everyone take a deep breath, then with the right worship leaders & song choices, it wasn't difficult to get that energy back up quickly & with more focused engagement.

Another transition that we can help you handle is the **transition from whatever you have before the message to the message**. Whether it's going from game to teaching or from worship to teaching or something else, I can't recommend enough using something like the bumper videos we create in XP3. It's something a lot of folks are using these days & it's not unique to us, but I feel like our team does an awesome job at creating great bumper videos, which are like 60-second movie trailers, that lead into the teaching time.

It's a physical & mental transition for students/kids as they shift their attention & are led to begin thinking about the theme. It's also a practical transition to clean up the game, allow the band to transition off the stage & for whoever is speaking to get set up without the attention being on them.

So, what are we doing on a weekly basis to help your students/kids to connect the dots from one thing to another in an effort to get them to better engage?

Whether they're transitional statements, bumper videos, worship guides or countdowns...there are a lot of

elements in Orange curriculum where we try to help you with this too.

## | EVALUATION |

### STORY

**Next up is Story.** When we say story, we mean the story of God. Maybe you call it teaching time or preaching or the main event, but you get the idea. This is when we present the life-changing story of God to teenagers. Everything we have done so far sets us up so this has the highest likelihood of really being heard by our students/kids.

We call this story because we don't think it's just a transfer of information. There's something about the idea of story that is deeper than that.

### **Stories help us see.**

God wired our brains to connect with story. There's something about a story that draws us in... We lean into stories. We engage differently in stories. They help us see things we'd never see.

## **Stories make us care.**

They make us care about things we might not otherwise care about. Our species is the only one that can imagine ourselves in someone else's shoes. Stories facilitate that. They have the potential to move us.

## **Stories give us hope.**

We always find ourselves rooting for someone in stories. Hoping for something. And we have the most hopeful story on the planet. but somehow, in so many churches, kids & students/kids leave their groups, their classes, their services without feeling much hope.

I hope I don't get in trouble for saying this, but I think what happens in too many kids & student ministries each week is that what gets talked about & how it gets talked about...has more to do with how the leader feels when they walk out of the room than what is most helpful for the faith development of their students/kids.

I've been there. I've had weeks where I walk out feeling like I preached the word, I did what I was supposed to do & now it's the Spirit's job to do the rest. And while I agree

that the Holy Spirit can work through just about anything, I don't think I gave the Holy Spirit much to work with those weeks.

One of the worst things you could do as a leader is to make the Bible boring and irrelevant.

Make it fun. Communicate hope and do it in engaging ways. Ask yourself these questions about your weekly story...

What did it help a teenager see?

How did it help a teenager care?

Did it give a teenager hope?

This time isn't just a transfer of information. **How are you connecting the story so it's applicable?** How are we helping our kids understand that what we're talking about isn't just something that happened a long time ago, but that it's something that can affect their lives today?

Here are a few other filters that our team is thinking about when developing content for this segment that might be helpful if you create your own content.

**Theologically accurate.** This one is a little tricky because. Although most of us in the room can agree on the essentials, the conclusions we draw theologically to a lot of scriptures & characteristics of God & faith might be different. I think we'd all agree that we're all doing our best to be theologically accurate, but different experiences, traditions & denominational backgrounds might lead in slightly different directions.

Just like all of you, we believe that the life-changing truth must be anchored to the Gospel of Jesus. But we must also it must be practical enough for kids & teenagers to actually DO something with what they hear. Our hope isn't just that students/kids will have a faith that someday will make sense when they're adults. We want our teaching to transform how they live right now.

What we teach & how we teach it has to be more about what connects with our audience than what connects with us.

Let's talk about depth for a minute. We think there are multiple kinds of depth. 2 of them are theological depth & applicable depth. Do we want our students/kids to have an understanding of who God is? Of what the Bible is? Of course, we do. Do we want them to develop a healthy

view of God and theology? I think we'd all agree that we would.

But, we have to help students/kids understand that faith is not just an intellectual pursuit. A healthy forming faith is not just being biblically literate. Is biblical literacy a part of healthy faith formation? I think so. But I bet you know someone who is very biblically literate, but doesn't have much of a healthy or vibrant faith.

So, when it comes to things like depth & theological accuracy, we need to be careful to remember where students/kids are in their journey. The goal can't be to teach them everything about faith before they graduate. It won't happen. So, then how do we get strategic about teaching them the most important things about their faith before they graduate & helping them understand how to live that out in their current reality?

That's why my number 1 filter when preparing to speak to kids or teenagers is **“is this helpful to the faith development of my audience?”**

So, is theology & depth important? Of course. But even more important than “is this true” is the filter of “is this helpful.” As we prepare to teach our students/kids week in

& week out, it's important that everything we want to talk about & every idea we have goes through the filter: "what is most helpful for the age group that I'm talking to in order for them to develop a healthy, resilient faith of their own?"

A lot of that has to do with WHO you're teaching which leads us to the next piece...**Developmentally appropriate.**

I've been coaching my **9-year-old son's baseball team** since they were about 4 years old. I'm sure you can imagine how different practices look right now than they did 4 years ago. If I would have been trying to teach them how to correctly line up as the cut-off man, or nuances of how you drop back to chase down a pop fly over your head...I bet most of those boys would be done with baseball.

Would I have been teaching them things that are true? Would I have been teaching them important aspects of the game? Yea, I would have. But I wouldn't have been teaching them what is most helpful as 4 & 5-year-olds. And what I'll teach them at 14 is gonna look different than what I'm teaching them as 9-year-olds.



Kids & teenagers at every phase have been made in the image of God with the ability to know God. But at every phase, they are changing physically, relationally, socially, spiritually and a lot of other things that end in -ally. If that's true, we have to understand that the way a kid relates to & understands God changes at every phase too.

If we aren't careful we may present the most important message of all in a format they can't process yet. Just because it makes sense to you, doesn't mean it will to them. That's why our team has worked with educators, pediatricians, psychologists, therapists, and a number of other experts to develop a curriculum that reaches teenagers exactly where they are.

This is also one reason why we create a preschool, elementary, preteen, Middle School & High School specific curriculum. We just have to become students of understanding how to best connect with our students/kids in the phases that they are in so that we can communicate in the most effective ways possible.

Next is **Strategically timed**. Have you ever heard something and thought, "man, that's what I needed". Those moments can be powerful. And while they can happen anytime throughout the year & while the Spirit of

God clearly plays a role in this, there are a few times a year we can plan for them.

Based on research, we know that in the fall students/kids experience issues with friendships and the disappointment of being cut from a team for the first time. Complications with family and questions about faith show up around the holidays. Everyone's favorite subject to talk about to teenagers - sex and dating - normally shows up in the spring sometime between valentines day and prom.

So if we know those things happen every year, why not leverage them by strategically planning your teaching calendar to engage students/kids on topics they're already thinking about?

The last one here is **Diversely presented**. I know the topics of race and gender are really complicated topics in our culture right now, but here's what I KNOW for sure. **If a teenager doesn't see someone like them presenting the Gospel**, they may think the Gospel isn't for them. **And if they never see anyone on stage presenting the Gospel who looks different** than them, they're missing out on the full scope of the kingdom.

So we want to challenge all groups to try & figure out ways to have every color & every gender represented on stage in some way throughout the year. We know that's it's more challenging in some communities than others. I grew up in a church where pretty much everyone looked like me. In those situations, you can be strategic about bringing in outside speakers.

I think this is one of the best reasons to utilize the teaching videos Orange creates every now & then even if you have enough people to teach live each week. Because even if you don't have the benefit of a diverse community, your students/kids can still experience the diverse teaching that is important.

To be honest, I could talk more about these kinds of strategies than I have time for, so let me end by saying that we think that it's really important that this segment leads into the next. We believe what happens during the story time is wildly important. BUT, if it's in the story time you want them to remember, how they remember that best is by what happens in groups.

That's why every message we write in Orange curriculum is designed to lead straight into small groups.

But, for this segment, what are we doing on a weekly basis to make sure our teaching time is helping the students/kids we're teaching develop a healthy, resilient faith of their own?

## | EVALUATION |

### GROUP

And that is the segway into the next segment...**Group:** creating a safe place to connect.

A kid/student's life can be forever changed when they have a loving, caring adult outside of their parents investing in it. Group is where this gets lived out. **Group is where we help students/kids know they belong.** Group is also where application and discipleship really happen. Group is what drives everything home.

You can use a video host.

You can have a video story-teller.

You can't have a video small group leader.

If you're not too familiar with Orange, one of my all-time favorite ministry books dating back to when it first came

out & I was on staff at my last church is **Lead Small**. It's essentially the manifesto for a small group leader...the ultimate job description for them.

If you want to see how much we value & how seriously we take this idea of consistent leaders pouring into the lives of students/kids, that would be a great book to check out.

This segment is why we do what we create curriculum & other resources! At Orange, we want to give church leaders every resource possible to free them up to focus on only what they can do: building relationships & developing leaders to build relationships.

Our team cannot recruit, develop, build, grow & equip your small group leaders. We can't develop the culture of your ministry to be a personal one. However, we can create series & components & resources to help give you some strategy & free up hours & hours of creating from scratch so that you only have to contextualize for your community. The hope is that frees you up to do those things we can't do for you.

I'm obviously biased: the curriculum is great, but it isn't the most important thing. It's a tool that supports & enables relationships.

So, in our opinion, one of the most important things we can do in ministry is to have the time to develop really good small group leaders, equip them to lead the kinds of conversations we want them to have during group time & inspire them to shepherd their few in & outside of your weekly program.

Do you all mind if I rant for a minute? Here's a bunch of things that group time is NOT.

Group time *isn't* a chance for your small group leader to re-teach the story.

Group time *isn't* about getting through every question so you can check them off.

Group time *isn't* the opportunity for small group leaders to correct every questionable thing a student says.

Group time *isn't* the chance for group leaders to share what they think are the answers. Sometimes that's appropriate & helpful, but we have to be very intentional about how we're equipping our leaders, not to just be passionate about seeing our students/kids grow in their faith, but how to facilitate group talk in a way that does that best.

## **So, what are you doing to connect the bottom line with their life in a way that makes it stick?**

This is often about dialogue, so you need focused questions to help groups talk through what they heard, process what they're thinking & how it applies to their circumstance. This isn't just about information retention & story recall, but helping students/kids contextualize the bottom line of each week to understand what it looks like lived out in their daily life.

This is also where the phase development stuff comes back into play. If you're prompting your small group leaders to ask the same questions to an age span bigger and 3-5 years, it's time to start making some adjustments. Again, it's not just a maturity thing. It's not that you can ask deep questions to older kids, but need to water them down for younger. They often need to be different kinds of questions for them to really engage.

So, not only do we need to give our small group leaders questions that are best for that phase, we need to give them *MORE* than just questions. Your leaders will likely need some context & a goal.

So, each week, whatever it is you're talking about, take some time to help your small group leaders best understand how the few in their group is likely

developmentally processing the idea & be sure they understand what the goal of small group is. I often had leaders who had a hard time deciding what questions to ask & whether or not they were accomplishing what they should be in group time.

Some were great at relationships & the conversations in their groups were always great, but they didn't really end up talking about the things we really wanted them to talk about. Some were great at staying focused on the questions & asked every question every week, but the conversations were often stifled by the rigidity of the questions being asked.

The goal of small group was always a helpful piece of that resolution. It shifts their focus to doing whatever they think would be the most helpful to fulfill that goal during their small group time.

For some of you, your programming might not consist of small groups. You might be tracking with most of these segments & they might look pretty close to your program, but maybe after the welcome, game, worship & teaching - your crew is dismissed. Or maybe there are a couple of response songs and then they're dismissed.

God didn't call us to lead your ministry, God called you to do that. So by no means are we trying to tell everyone



what they should do. We know it doesn't work that way. But, in our experience, there is something that can happen when we're able to do our group teaching in a way that sets up an immediate opportunity to process what they've heard & what it looks like to live it out in their life with a group of their peers they've walked through years of life with & a couple of safe, trusted adult leaders who have been showing up weekly in their lives over the past few years too.

So, what are we doing on a weekly basis to give your students/kids trusted, consistent & safe people to process & apply what we are teaching?

## | EVALUATION |

### HOME

There might be some occasions to bring everyone back together after group time, but many groups will dismiss when group time is over. So, that leads us to our last segment, which actually doesn't take place during the programming time at all - **Home: prompting action beyond the experience.**

We'd all agree that we want a kid & teenager's faith to be more than just what happens at church. So, we have to

have a strategy as to what we're going to be doing during the week in order to help them make that possible.

Of course we can't force anyone to have a daily relationship with God that extends past our normal programming, but there are things we can do to help keep them connected to their faith. Here are a few ways we'd encourage you to be thinking about that...

## **Parents**

This is a big one for us. Leading Small through small groups & partnering with parents are 2 things that we think have the biggest opportunity for life change in your teenagers. On average, you'll likely have less than **40 hours** a year with your committed students/kids. That's not enough time to teach them all you want to teach them & accomplish everything you want to accomplish.

But parents have roughly **3,000 hours** with them. So, what does it look like for us to better partner with parents, to equip them with the tools & the resources to continue the conversations at home that we're starting with them in our programs?

One of the easiest ways to do that is through something we call the **Parent Cue**. It's a doc that we build out to give to parents at the start of every series that gives them a

heads up on what we'll be talking about & gives them some ideas on how to continue the conversation within the 4 most opportune times they'll have with their kids on a regular basis: bed time, drive time, meal time & their time.

I've also seen groups that do short 2-3 minute videos each week that share that weeks bottom line & some encouraging ways for them to continue that conversation at home.

Another huge piece of this, especially over the course of a year is thinking through how you are connecting your parents to their kids small group leaders. We're getting into more of a year long parent strategy with that, but it's difficult to understate how important it is to build a bridge between parents & their kid's small group leaders.

So, how are we equipping & engaging parents on a week-to-week basis? We think that's something that you should be thinking about & we do our best to resource you to do that well.

The next piece of the home segment would be **personal discipleship**. As we said, we don't want our students/kids to leave their faith at church, waiting for them until the next program. We want them to take it home & develop an

everyday faith. So, what are we doing & how are we resourcing students/kids to do that?

One way we try to do that is by developing daily devo's for students/kids. In every XP3 series we do, we have a full devo reading plan on the Youversion Bible app that groups can even do together. We've been hearing some awesome stories about what this has been doing for groups.

These aren't 20-minute bible studies. They have a short devo, a bible verse & if you're doing the plan within a group, an awesome feature that asks them a question about the day's devo & prompts them to share their thoughts with the group.

The kids curriculum also has devo's that goes along with every week. The whole point here is that we can't rely on an hour a week to help our kids/students develop a healthy, resilient faith of their own. So, what are we doing the week (or more likely 'weeks') between their time with us to help them do that?

The next piece of this is **Social Media**.

We could spend all day arguing the good & the bad of social media. And obviously this looks very different from preschool through high school, so I'm not going to dive too

deeply into what this should look like for you all...just to challenge you ask **what is your social media strategy during the week to engage our students/parents/kids & their faith.**

The final piece of this segment is going back to a thread that runs through all of these...our leaders. How are we equipping & challenging our leaders to show up in the lives of their few outside of the normal program. How are they **making faith personal by showing up on their turf.**

This obviously isn't a component or a resource, but it's in the ways that we build up & design our ministries so that our leaders understand that their role is not in pulling off a program once a week or a chaperone, but a shepherd leading their few. Some of the best ways to do that is by showing up to their games, recitals and more.

Again, this looks very different throughout the phases & we can dive deeper into some of that if you want, but the big idea here is what can we do to help train, equip & support them in a way where they realize how influential these moments outside of programming can be in the life & faith of our students/kids.

| EVALUATION |

**LANDING**

And there you have it. Those are the 7 segments that we build our curriculum around because we think developing & evaluating your weekly programs through these 7 segments will help you be better organized, strategic & efficient.

As you think about this within your context...if you want to see more about how we do it & what it looks like, we'll literally give you a free month or series at **[tryorangefree.com](http://tryorangefree.com)**

And if you want to chat more about 7 segments or what we do at Orange students/kids, please come chat with any of us at our booth!