AN ANNUAL STRATEGY FOR YOUR YOUTH MINISTRY EVENTS

Events are a pretty big deal for most youth ministries. They're a way to have fun, connect with students and their families, get new people in the door, and create some excitement. Events matter, but we've got to keep things in perspective. That's why we're fans of keeping your event strategy really simple, because you can make a bigger impact each year if **you choose to do fewer events with more intentionality.**

Let's face it — there's so much to do in ministry. We can easily fill up our calendars with game nights, activities, camps, retreats, concerts, trips, and so much more. **But if we did every event we ever thought about doing, we'd have a few problems …**

- We'd only be adding to the chaos of teenagers and their families, who are already pretty busy.
- We'd be burning out our of volunteers and staff members who are also pretty busy.
- We'd be giving teenagers and their parents so many options we'd probably only see them at a handful of things each year, resulting in lower participation in everything we do.
- We'd be spending time, money, and resources on things that aren't always strategic.

With so many potential options, we need a strategy to help us guide which events we'll do when, which is why we suggest doing fewer events for a bigger impact. **We can't do everything, but the events we do can be done with purpose.** Our events will be strategically designed to help teenagers connect with each other, trusted adults (like you and your volunteers), and with God.

Whether you're an event-planning expert or you're still figuring things out, we hope this strategy we're about to unpack will give you a framework for your annual event strategy that you can replicate and improve year after year. With this Annual Event Strategy, **you'll learn a system for scheduling six key events each year that you can always reinvent to keep things fresh.**

If you're familiar with Grow Curriculum & Annual Strategy, some things in this post might sound familiar to you. That's because everything we do in Grow Students Curriculum is based on the strategy we're about to break down for you! **But don't worry if you've never used** Grow **in your ministry before**. You can still steal our strategy! Take the ideas you find helpful, ignore the parts that don't quite fit your context, and combine them with the unique language, vision, and strategy of your church.

Here we go!

7 YOUTH MINISTRY EVENTS TO SCHEDULE EVERY YEAR

When it comes to events, it's not just about participation, but it's also about strategy. **Even the most well-attended events can actually hinder our growth** if we're not using them to lead students (and our ministry) somewhere strategic.

So here's our recommendation for keeping your event strategy simple: do one event each quarter, plus a summer camp and mission experience during the summer.

Here's how this could look on your ministry calendar each year …

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1. A FALL EVENT

Every fall, we recommend doing **a big just-for-fun event to kick off your school year!** This event could be anything you and your students find fun at the moment, but we suggest kicking things off with an All-Nighter (or a Half-Nighter if you like your beauty sleep). This event can take on new life every year just by giving it a fun new theme like …

- Outer space!
- All things nerdy!
- Glow-in-the-dark!
- A late night talk show!
- Or whatever else you dream up!

If you're wondering why just-for-fun events need to make it onto your calendar, **think about the relationships a great event can build or strengthen!** Plus, if you're following the Grow Annual Discipleship strategy, you know fall is when we focus on the spiritual habit of Spending Time with Others. It's the time of year we focus on helping teenagers connect with each other, with their small group leaders, with their loved ones, and with anyone who helps them grow closer to Jesus!

If you're using Grow Students Curriculum, you know we give you a brand new fun fall all-nighter event every year, complete with all the instructions and resources you'll need to make it happen!

2. A WINTER EVENT

Every winter, we recommend doing **another just-for-fun event** for teenagers — maybe with a fun holiday theme! At a time of year when families are often pressed for time and finances, and maybe a little stressed, your ministry can give them the gift of a fun and relaxing day for their teenager. This might be …

- A holiday-themed game night with activities, challenges, and competitions.
- A Christmas movie night with plenty of hot chocolate, snacks, and gift exchanges.
- A Christmasy-spin on an activity like miniature golf, roller skating, or kickball.
- Or, if you've had enough of the Christmas spirit, you could try a New Years Eve Party, a pizza-themed night, a larger-than-life board game night, or whatever else you can dream up!

And if you're following the Grow Annual Discipleship strategy, you know the wintertime is when we focus on the spiritual habit of Using Your Gifts to love God and serve others. It's the time of year we focus on helping teenagers think about generosity, service, and sharing what they have. So you might even incorporate a fundraiser, food drive, or service project into your winter event.

If you're using Grow Students Curriculum, we give you a brand new winter event every year, complete with all the instructions and resources you'll need to make it happen!

3. A SPRING EVENT

Every spring, we recommend doing **a weekend retreat that helps teenagers connect with God in a meaningful way.** While just-for-fun events are really important throughout the year, the springtime (which is Easter time!) is a key opportunity to help teenagers focus on Jesus in a more meaningful way.

Plus, if you're following the Grow Annual Discipleship strategy, you know spring is when we focus on the spiritual habit of Spending Time with God. It's the time of year we focus on helping teenagers connect with God personally through prayer, worship, memorizing Scripture, and spending time reading the Bible.

Great weekend retreats always do a few things …

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- Teach the Bible in a practical and compelling way.
- Give teenagers a chance to build relationships and have fun together.
- Connect teenagers with trusted adults.
- Create in-depth times of worship, prayer, and conversation that aren't possible during the typical weekly program.

If you're using Grow Students Curriculum, you know we give you a brand new spring retreat every year, complete with all the instructions and resources you'll need to make it happen!

4. A SUMMER EVENT

Every summer, we recommend **wrapping up the year with another big just-for-fun event!** This event could be anything you and your team find fun at the moment! You could …

- Host a big game night with a fun summery theme (like water games, the Summer Olympics, your favorite summertime snacks, or whatever else you can dream up).
- Do an end-of-the-year field day with activities, games, and food.
- Plan an outdoor movie night, group graduation party, pool party, cookout, or block party.

If you're following the Grow Annual Discipleship strategy, you know summer is when we focus on the spiritual habit of Sharing Your Story of faith. So this end-of-the-year event is a great time to consider sharing stories from the previous year about what students learned, what memories they made, and what God did in their lives.

And yes, you guessed it! If you're using Grow Students Curriculum, you know we give you a brand new summer event every year, complete with all the instructions and resources you'll need to make it happen!

5. A SUMMER CAMP EVENT

We're almost done! Just two more events to go. Next up, we recommend wrapping up your year of ministry with a week of summer camp! Whether you attend a summer camp in your area of create your own, great summer camps always …

- Teach the Bible in a practical and compelling way.
- Provide big, over-the-top outdoor games and competitions.
- Get students outside (and maybe out of their comfort zones).
- Give teenagers a chance to build relationships and have fun together.
- Connect teenagers with trusted adults.
- Create in-depth times of worship, prayer, and conversation that aren't possible during your typical weekly program.

And yep! If you're using Grow Students Curriculum, you know we give you a brand new summer camp every year, complete with all the instructions and resources you'll need to make it happen!

6. A MISSION EXPERIENCE

And finally, we always recommend planning one mission experience with your students each year — either locally or internationally. Whether you partner with an existing mission organization to facilitate these experiences, or you create your own from scratch, a great mission experience always …

- Gives teenagers opportunities to share their stories of faith and serve others in tangible ways.
- Encourages students to think differently about God, others, and themselves.
- Inspires students to learn something new about the people they're interacting with.

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- Gives teenagers a chance to build relationships and have fun together.
- Connects teenagers with trusted adults.
- Creates in-depth times of worship, prayer, and conversation that aren't possible during your typical weekly program.

And yep! If you're using Grow Students Curriculum, you know we give you two mission experience guides every year (one for international experiences and one for local experiences), complete with all the instructions and resources you'll need to make it happen!

AN ANNUAL EVENTS STRATEGY

With this there is a way to structure your events calendar so that you do **the least amount of work** for **the biggest impact.** That's what the Grow strategy is all about. In case you missed it, check out this article about planning an entire year of ministry. It'll show you how this event strategy might look on your annual calendar, alongside an annual strategy for your:

- Teaching
- Discipleship
- Weekly Environments
- Volunteers
- Families

We've said this before, but we've got to say it again! These ideas we've talked about are nice … but **these *ideas* only become a *strategy* when you put them on your calendar and turn them into actions.**

When you have an annual plan to turn your ideas and goals into a strategy, you'll make a much bigger impact.

So whether you use Grow Curriculum or not, we hope you'll steal our strategy! We developed it over lots of years of ministry, with input from lots of church leaders and lots of trial and error. Take it, tweak it, and make it your own. We really hope it helps you be just a little more awesome at what you do this year!



For even more resources like this one, try a free trial of Grow Curriculum and Annual Strategy for your children's or youth ministry. It's everything you need for a more strategic year of discipleship, teaching, environments, events, volunteers, and families!

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