A 1-YEAR PLAN FOR PARENT COMMUNICATION
FROM OUR ANNUAL PARENT STRATEGY

BY KENNY & ELLE CAMPBELL

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Sometimes when we think about engaging parents, we think about in-person meetings or big events. But if we really want to engage parents, we have to learn how to resource and engage them on a more regular and ongoing basis. That’s where communication comes in. Whether you prefer to communicate with your parents through email, text messages, social media posts, or phone calls, the point is that you stay in touch with them regularly.

**HOW SHOULD I COMMUNICATE WITH PARENTS?**

**EVERY YEAR**

At the beginning of each year, do a quick survey of your parents (like the Annual Parent Survey that you can find in the Parent Tools section of Grow) so you can ask about their favorite ways to be appreciated. Do they want emails? Text messages? A private Facebook group? Good ol’ snail mail? When you understand how parents prefer to communicate, you can create a more effective communication strategy.

In that Annual Parent Survey, you can also ask what they, as parents, need most from your ministry and how you can best serve them.

Regardless of how you decide to communicate with parents, we recommend making monthly parent emails the core of your communication plan, and then using other methods (like a private Facebook group or other social media channels) to repurpose that content. And hey, here’s a tip: when deciding which methods of communication to use to connect with parents, be sure you are relying on methods that parents prefer, rather than methods that you prefer.

**EVERY MONTH**

Each month, here are a few ways to consider communicating with parents . . .

- Share upcoming news and announcements.
- Give parents a look at what you’ll be teaching and discussing.
- Share at least one helpful video, article, or resource recommendation.
- Ask a survey or feedback question.

Maybe communicating with parents every month feels overwhelming, but you really can do it! By establishing some basic systems, sticking to them, and taking advantage of the year’s worth of email content available to you in Grow, it can actually be pretty simple.

Here’s a simple step-by-step approach to thinking about your monthly communication strategy . . .

**STEP 1: WRITE AN EMAIL**

Even in the age of social media, sending a weekly email is still your most reliable way to communicate with parents. Services like MailChimp even allow you to customize their newsletter design templates,
see which parents open the emails you send, and view your emails in a web browser — which means you can get some extra use out of each email by sharing the link to that email with parents through social media or text.

To make your process as easy as possible, we created 13 ready-to-edit parent emails that correspond to every teaching series throughout the entire year. You can find those emails in the Teaching section of Grow. Hooray!

**STEP 2: BROADCAST ON SOCIAL MEDIA**
Once you have your monthly email written, you can repurpose the content in that email on your social media platforms. Using a social media scheduler like Buffer is a simple way to copy and paste what you've already written in your email newsletter. With this system, you can schedule your posts for the entire month in just a few minutes. And if you’re using one of our series, guess what! We've already written a few social media posts for every single series. Yessssss.

**STEP 3: START CONVERSATIONS**
But don’t just think about social media as a way to broadcast information. That’s important, but it’s not the only way you need to think about communication. (After all, doesn’t “communication” require both talking and listening?) Social media is most useful when it’s used to cultivate a conversation. For that, we recommend two things:

- **Start a private Facebook group just for the parents of your students.** If enough of your students' parents are active on Facebook, a group is a great way to communicate with them. Each week, feel free to post important information (like the link to your weekly newsletter), but the best part of Facebook groups is that they’re designed for conversations. So don’t just talk at parents. Talk with them! Ask questions. Get feedback. Share stories. Tell them they’re awesome.
- **Start a GroupMe conversation.** If you have more than ten parents connected to your ministry, you’ve already maxed out your ability to use the group text function on your phone. In that situation, GroupMe is a great solution for parents who want more consistent updates. It’s a free app that lets you group text with up to 200 people!

**WHAT WE’VE PROVIDED**

**EMAILS AND POSTS**
In the Teaching section of Grow, we’ve provided…
- 13 pre-written MailChimp emails (HTML).
- 13 sets of pre-written social media posts in the Parent Communication Guide of each series.

**VIDEOS**
If you’re subscribed to Grow Your Ministry, in the Parent Tools section of Grow, we’ve provided…
- 12 parent tip videos and scripts.
Kenny and Elle were youth pastors in Buffalo, NY (home of the chicken finger sub) for almost ten years. Kenny was the Middle School Pastor and Elle was the Small Groups and Volunteer Coordinator for Middle School Ministry. While they were there, they founded Stuff You Can Use, a youth ministry resource company, as a way to share the resources they were already creating for their ministry with others.

Today, Kenny and Elle live in Atlanta, GA, where they lead the Stuff You Can Use team full-time, host the podcast Youth Ministry Answers, coach and train youth workers around the country, and serve students and small group leaders every Sunday as youth ministry volunteers. They are also the co-authors of the book Youth Ministry Fails and are the creators of Eventfeed LIVE and PHARISEES: The Party Game.

When Kenny and Elle aren't creating youth ministry resources, they're usually playing games, listening to podcasts, exploring new cities, and looking for things that make them laugh.

If Kenny could ride any animal into battle, he would choose a sand seal (the rentable variety, not the wild ones) because it worked pretty well for Link when he was fighting Divine Beast Vah Naboris.

If Elle could hang out with any celebrity, she would meet Emma Watson at a used book store because Hermione Granger and the Hogwarts library are sadly not actually real.

And if you want to chat with Kenny or Elle about youth ministry, board games, pizza, or which podcasts you're currently listening to, reach out on social media! They like making new friends.