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COMMUNITY GROUP LEADER

EXPECTATIONS:

- Become a member of RHCC by attending, or agree to attend, the LD 101 class and signing the commitment card.
- Attend RHCC for a minimum of 1 year (exceptions are made but must be approved by the pastoral staff).
- Complete and submit a TreeHouse application for review, background and reference checks.
- Sign and agree to teach what is written in the RHCC Doctrinal Statement.
- Attend a meeting which includes an orientation to the ministry.
- Arrive at least 30 minutes prior to the start of the service for community building, any further details needed and prayer.
- Follow the guidelines and procedures found in the Leader's Notebook.
- Build community with and be supportive of other TreeHouse staff and volunteers.
- Prayerfully consider who you will invite to co-lead with you. We strongly encourage each small group to have two adult leaders in the room at the same time.

SHEPHERDING RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Minister to the children in your group.

If you have agreed to lead a group through the 2008-2009 school year, approximately 15 children will be assigned to your group for the year. We recognize that not every child will show up each week, so your group should normally be small enough for you and a co-leader to minister effectively to the kids. In each age group, there are specific ratios of children to adult leaders, as well as a maximum number of students to be in each room.

- a. Develop individual relationships with children in your class through discussion, periodic phone calls and notes. Each child should be contacted at least once a month through a note or phone call.
- b. Follow up on visitors and absentees. Every three months you will receive a roster of your children's attendance. If a child has not attended for several weeks, please connect with them for follow-up.
- c. Introduce yourself to your group's parents in person or by phone within the first quarter.
- d. Plan a social activity with your class at least once during the year. Always have at least one other adult with you on your outings. Notify your Community Builder or Pastor/Director of date, time and other needed assistance. You should never go on an outing that included just you and one child.
- e. Encourage and pray for your children. Ask them for prayer requests and seek the Lord on how you can best minister to them.

2. Lead a small group of children
 - a. Spend adequate time each week in preparation for the lesson. This would also include praying for your class time as well as for individual students. A goal this year might be that for every minute you spend with the children in class, you will pray for them for that period of time during the week.
 - b. Be prepared for your class 30 minutes before the service starts. Leaders meet with their Community Builder each week for prayer and for any further instructions or updates for the weekend.
 - c. Assist with large group activities as needed. Be mindful of children who are disrupting the Large Group activities and take appropriate action. This might include giving reminders, moving a child to another location, sitting next to the child or isolating the child somewhere in the room where they will not be a distraction. If behavior does not improve, notify your CB or Pastor/Director.
 - d. Memorize the Bible passages that your students are learning.
 - e. Make arrangements well in advance for a substitute for your class when you will be absent. Your best sub will be a child's parent from your class. They will need to submit a TreeHouse application and help in the class for one or two weeks. Your Community Builder also has a sub list you can use. Notify the Community Builder or Division Leader of arrangements as soon as possible. Provide the substitute with the lesson and pertinent group information.

TIME SCHEDULE

If you serve at the 9:00 service, arrive by 8:30.

If you serve at the 11:00 service, arrive by 10:30.

All Community Group Leaders must attend a mandatory weekly meeting with their Community Builder for prayer and announcements in designated area. Must be ready for class prior to meeting.

K-2nd Brick Room or E-pod

:00-:05 Pre-service Activities

:05-:07 Clean-up

:07-:30 Welcome & Worship

:30-:40 Teaching

:40-:45 Transition to small group

:45-:10 Small Group

:10-:15 Transition back to E-pod

:15- Post-service Activities

3rd-5th Front Room or Warehouse

:00-:02 Kid Connect (just to gather kids together and be seated for large group)

:02-:15 Welcome & Worship

:15-:25 Teaching

:25-:30 Transition to small group

:30-:10 Small group

:10-:15 Transition back to Warehouse

ELEMENTARY LESSONS

As a small group leader, you have a tremendous impact on the children in your group. Each week you have the opportunity to present the Bible to your students in a way that makes it relevant for them to learn how to think and live like Jesus.

Memory Verse: In order for the children to learn and apply God's Word, we choose one verse each month for them to memorize [if we're in a series of lessons, it may be one verse for 5 or more weeks]. Though there might not be a specific point in the lesson to look at the memory verse, we encourage you to incorporate it into your time with the kids. In your notebook, there are suggested games and activities to help keep God's Word in the minds and hearts of the kids in your group.

Bible Story: Each week we'll look at a new Bible story and passage of scripture.

Bottom Line: If there is one thing we want the students to leave with at the end of our time together, it can be found in this statement.

Rewind: These are questions that can be used in huddle time prior to the Large Group. It is a time to personally connect with the children in your group, find out how their week went, review the things we have been investigating from the Bible and how they have been applying what they have been learning.

Replay: We have been discovering that our children are more and more biblically illiterate. Even if they have been involved in the church, their knowledge and understanding of the Bible is minimal, if non-existent. After hearing the Bible story in the large group, this portion of your lesson will give you various creative means to engage your students in retelling the story. We believe this will give greater understanding and retention. It will engage the kids and many times allow them to be part of the story.

Reflect: These questions allow you to discuss the Bible story and grab the truths found in it. You will find questions that have the group recollecting facts about what they have heard as well as open ended questions that have them thinking and feeling about what they have learned.

Response: How will the children personally connect to the truths of what they have learned? The Bible was not written for us just to have more head knowledge. God gave us His Word so we might know Him better and discover how we might live more for Him each day. God's Word changes HOW WE THINK which changes HOW WE LIVE – with the goal of thinking and living more and more like Jesus. The Bible was written for application. The mystery of the Christian faith is that God's Word is written for everyone but the Holy Spirit reveals to each person's heart how it needs to be applied. Elementary lessons are written in such a way that each child can respond as the Holy Spirit leads them. How the Spirit prompts one child might be very different from how He works in another child. Be open to how the Holy Spirit leads the children in your group and follow-up accordingly the next week when you have your Rewind Time.

Each child has a folder to use as a journal to write/draw in each week as they reflect and respond. **PLEASE KEEP THESE FOLDERS IN YOUR BINS** so that remembering to bring them each week does not become an issue for the children.

At the end of each lesson, there is a paragraph letting you know that if time is available you might come up with a word or picture as a reminder of the lesson learned. It allows for quick reviews and applications to be followed up on.

Gizmo Box: This contains various objects to help you reach the different learning styles of the children in your group. We all learn in different ways and often times we teach according to our preferred learning style. You might be a visual learner where it is better to see something, an auditory learner where hearing something is better or a kinesthetic learner where action and movement helps you learn best. It can be difficult to incorporate all of these styles so all the kids in your small group can be reached. Periodically, your lesson may refer to an object in the Gizmo Box. If you discover that your kids enjoy certain objects, go ahead and use them! That's what they're there for!

ACTIVITY STATIONS

The activity stations are designed to help kids feel welcomed and fit right in when they walk through the door. This is an excellent opportunity for the kids to be with one another but also for you as a leader to connect with the children. Children will more likely feel welcomed if greeted by their leader and friends. During this time, you might consider the following as kids are mingling and playing:

1. Greet children. If a child in your group has brought a friend, welcome that visitor into your group.
2. There will be various activities for the children to play with when they enter. Use this time to visit with the kids and their parents. Resist the temptation to visit with other leaders!
3. Visitors or elementary kids who are not registered in a Community Group for that service will be assigned to the Star Team. As the leader, introduce first time visitors to your group. Consider assigning a “buddy” for the day who could introduce the visitor to the rest of the group.

KNOW YOUR KIDS

Here are some questions you could use to help you get to know the children in your group better.

- 1 - What things are you really good at? What things do you like doing the best/most?
- 2 - If you had a thousand dollars what would you do with it?
- 3 - What kind of things make you mad?
- 4 - What makes you happy? What do you get really excited about?
- 5 - If you could ask God anything, what would it be?
- 6 - What do you sometimes worry about?
- 7 - What kind of fun things do you do with your family?
- 8 - What do you want to be when you grow up?

INVOLVING PARENTS

Here are some ways in which you can encourage parents to be involved with their children and your class. We need to remember that the Scriptures [Deuteronomy 6:6-7] tell the parents to train up their children; we are there as a support to them!

- Make a phone call or drop them a note to let them know the positive things you see in their children while in your class. This also gives you an opportunity to inform them of what we are studying.
- Invite the parents to visit your class.
- Connect with the parents of your kids to plan and lead one group activity this year. See “Community Group Outside Activity” form on page 9.
- Ask parents to become a prayer partner to pray for specific needs and for the children in the group. If you don’t already have a co-leader, you might ask a parent to team-teach with you.
- Parents who want to get more involved in the TreeHouse and its

WEEKLY GAME PLAN

- What lessons do I need to review or follow up on from previous weeks?

- What is the most important thing I want my kids to leave our Community Group time with?

- What would I like to accomplish this week in regards to:
 - ~ Bringing my kids into a closer relationship with the Lord?

 - ~ Getting to know my kids better; showing them I care?

 - ~ Things to pray about?

- What should we practice in our Community Groups so the kids are prepared to live out their Christianity in real life?

- Which of my kids do I need to follow up with regarding a prayer request, a question I could not answer, or a concern they raised in the group?

COMMUNITY GROUP OUTSIDE ACTIVITY

Small Group Leader: _____

Date of activity: _____

Time we'll leave: _____

We'll leave from: _____

Time we'll return: _____

Place we'll return to: _____

Activity: _____

COST: student: _____ teacher: _____

Adult Helpers: _____

CHILDREN ATTENDING: (Parents must give permission for child to participate.)

TreeHouse Permission/Medical Release

Please print CHILD'S NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____ CELL _____

HEALTH INSURANCE CO.: _____

POLICY # _____ PAYOR/GROUP # _____

Event _____	
Date _____	Time _____
Location _____	

I, parent or guardian, hereby grant permission for the child named above to attend the Rolling Hills Community Church TreeHouse Children's Ministries event described above. Although I understand that every effort will be made to contact me immediately in case of accident, sickness or injury, I grant permission to any member of the RHCC staff to see that any necessary medical assistance is rendered to my child as needed.

Print Parent Name

Parent or Guardian Signature

Date

AGE GROUP CHARACTERISTICS for KINDERGARTNERS

PHYSICALLY

Because the kindergartner is like this:

Very active, restless, on the go but still tires easily. Large muscles and corresponding motor skills are developing rapidly. Runs and jumps moving quickly. Small muscles and corresponding motor skills are developing at a slower pace. Cutting, coloring and printing skills are developing yet still experiences difficulty in this area. Proud of their growth and may view themselves as a “big” boy or girl but keep in mind they are still little.

Teach them like this:

Provide lots of space to move about and large sturdy equipment and materials. Change activities frequently interspersing opportunities for rest and slower paced activities. Encourage the child to participate in things they are big enough to do but provide help as needed. Encourage experimentation with materials but avoid criticism of the child’s efforts or undue requirements for the “finished product.”

MENTALLY

Because the kindergartner is like this:

Curious. Asks many questions. Has an increasing vocabulary and is able to put thoughts and ideas into words. Attention span still relatively short, 5-6 minutes. Cannot distinguish between fact and fantasy. Does not understand symbolism and has limited concepts of time, numbers and space. Learns best through imitation, play and using their senses. Forgets easily.

Teach them like this:

The child can memorize but does not easily understand the meaning so use verses and stories that are literal rather than symbolic. Take time to help the child understand the meaning of the verse or story. Be patient with all the “why” questions the kindergartner asks. This is an important way they learn. Provide a variety of sensory learning experiences; touch, taste, see, hear and do.

SOCIALLY

Because the kindergartner is like this:

Imitate adults. Can play in small groups and learn to share. Still self-centered, aware more of their own needs rather than needs of others. Tends to conform. Wants the approval of adults but may “test the waters” to see how far they can get with their behavior. Needs boundaries to feel secure.

Teach them like this:

Be a good role model. Couple Bible stories with contemporary stories to help child begin to understand the needs and feelings of others. Provide group activities where all children can get involved. Encourage the child by praising their efforts. Be firm with the child when needed, but be fair and consistent in your discipline.

EMOTIONALLY

Because the kindergartner is like this:

Appears more confident but emotions may be intense and near the surface. Expresses anger, love, laughter and tears easily. Adult approval is very important. Need affection and security as fear is a main emotion. Picks up easily on the emotions of others around them.

Teach them like this:

The child needs a calm, secure, unhurried environment to help keep their emotions in check. Don’t rush the child through an activity. Show attention equally to all the children. Do not show favoritism. Encourage all the children, especially the shy ones, but don’t focus attention on them. Do not show your own emotions to an extreme as the child quickly imitates the same emotion.

SPIRITUALLY

Because the kindergartner is like this:

Developing concepts of right and wrong but may blame others for wrongdoing. May confuse God and Jesus. Thinks of God in a personal way and Jesus as a friend. Influenced by external rewards and punishments. Can pray. Spiritual maturity directly related to the child’s emotional maturity.

Teach them like this:

Let the child know that doing what is right pleases Jesus. Use stories that emphasize the difference between right and wrong. Help the child understand Jesus as a personal friend they can talk with. Encourage prayer as a time of talking to God as they would a friend. Let the children know you can forgive them when they do wrong because God forgives us.

AGE GROUP CHARACTERISTICS FOR 1ST AND 2ND GRADERS

PHYSICALLY

Because 2nd graders are like this:

Full of energy and active but growing at a slower rate. Small motor skills are developing. Girls are ahead of boys in small motor development. Willing to try most anything often overestimating their own physical abilities. Easily distracted. Easily catch childhood illnesses.

Teach them like this:

Put lots of activity in your teaching. Allow for plenty of movement involving a variety of motor skills. Provide opportunities for slower paced activities and rest as the child still tires easily.

MENTALLY

Because 2nd graders are like this:

Eager to learn therefore likes to read and write. Enjoys games involving words and numbers. Thinks in concrete terms, beginning to develop reasoning skills. Likes both fact and fantasy. Has good imagination. Has ability to memorize. Attention span 10-15 minutes.

Teach them like this:

Provide opportunities to read and write but do not force the child to read as reading skills are just developing. Provide Bible games involving words and numbers. Avoid symbolism. Distinguish between fact and fantasy. Teach memory verses. Change pace several times during the hour using a variety of activities.

SOCIALLY

Because 2nd graders are like this:

Desires to please the teacher. Acceptance by peer group is important. Wants to make friends. Dislikes criticism. Winning and being first are important. Self-centered, taking turns is difficult. May try to dominate social situations. Likes to talk.

Teach them like this:

Provide non-competitive activities where child can interact with others with minimal amount of criticism. Provide opportunities to take turns. Show equal amounts of attention and praise to each child. Praise the group as they work well together.

EMOTIONALLY

Because 2nd graders are like this:

Easily excited. Experiencing new and intense feelings. Moves between emotional extremes. May have difficulty controlling behavior. May resist personal demands. Shyness and fear can be overcome with familiar surroundings and routine.

Teach them like this:

Maintain a calm atmosphere in the class and be calm yourself. Establish boundaries and guidelines for the class and review weekly with the class. Don't allow an activity to get out of control. Teach cooperation and obedience.

SPIRITUALLY

Because 2nd graders are like this:

Beginning to understand concepts about God's love, creator, his greatness but has difficulty with not seeing a physical presence. Has faith in prayer. Understands Jesus as their friend and may be ready to accept Jesus as their personal Savior. Has questions about death and heaven.

Teach them like this:

Help the child see God in nature, in answered prayer and by modeling faith in God in your own actions. Provide opportunities for prayer and acknowledge answered prayer. Be sensitive to the developing spirituality in a child but do not "play on emotions" to lead a child to Christ. Answer questions openly and honestly as they arise, keeping in mind the child's limitations in grasping concepts that are not concrete.

AGE GROUP CHARACTERISTICS FOR 3RD AND 4TH GRADERS

PHYSICALLY

Because 3rd and 4th graders are like this:

Greater stamina, tires less easily. Highly active. Enjoys physical games and may play rough. Small and large motor skills are more developed, refined and improving in speed. Steady physical development with girls ahead of boys.

Teach them like this:

Without getting out of control, provide a more active classroom. Games and activities can be more physically involved and can go for greater length of time. Plan hands on activities. Because the child may overestimate their abilities, keep games and activities safe in nature.

MENTALLY

Because 3rd and 4th graders are like this:

Has a higher level of creativity but may be self-conscious. Increasing independence. Expresses curiosity. Attention span is 10-15 minutes. Likes fiction, adventure, and fantasy. Has difficulty understanding symbolism. Learning to reason things out usually with a trial and error approach.

Teach them like this:

Provide opportunities for dramas. Have students act out the story especially those with adventure. Plan a variety of activities. Give beginning opportunities to investigate situations and reach a conclusion. Avoid abstract concepts. Continue to distinguish between fact and fantasy.

SOCIALLY

Because 3rd and 4th graders are like this:

Participation in and approval by peer group is very important. Still desires adult approval. Can work together in a group. Enjoys competition. Looks up to "models" or "heroes". May not like members of the opposite sex.

Teach them like this:

Plan activities where they can participate in a group giving their input to the group. Affirm the child. Make sure competitions are equal and fair. Give examples from your own life. Be a worthy model to your students and direct them in who they look at as "heroes".

EMOTIONALLY

Because 3rd and 4th graders are like this:

Can empathize with others. Enjoys challenges. Sensitive to criticism, nicknames and teasing. Emotions vary widely from shyness to exuberance. Feelings easily hurt. Vents anger verbally and physically.

Teach them like this:

Provide opportunities to help others. Do not allow students to criticize or tease other kids. Affirm the child and affirm positive behavior. Help child discover healthy ways to deal with anger.

SPIRITUALLY

Because 3rd and 4th graders are like this:

Can recognize need for forgiveness of their sin and a relationship with Jesus Christ. Developing consciousness of right and wrong and able to make deliberate choices. Has an interest in God, Jesus and the Bible.

Teach them like this:

Talk with your students about forgiveness for sin and a relationship with Jesus, allowing them opportunity to ask questions and to make a personal decision without pressure from you or peers. Provide opportunities for prayer and resources for Bible study.

AGE GROUP CHARACTERISTICS FOR 5TH GRADERS

PHYSICALLY

Because 5th graders are like this:

Slow steady growth, but may experience growth spurt at 11 1/2 to 12 years old. Girls are growing faster than boys. Some are entering puberty. Good motor coordination. Strong and healthy. Noisy, likes lots of activity especially out of doors. Enjoys competition.

Teach them like this:

Use creative techniques that challenge the 5th and 6th grader. Avoid childish techniques. Use active learning whenever possible. Provide times where students can be noisy, perhaps during music time. Capture the student's attention from the very beginning.

MENTALLY

Because 5th graders are like this:

Transitioning from concrete to abstract thinking. Can think and reason but has difficulty with symbolism. Attention span is 15-20 minutes. Likes talking, memorizing, collecting things, decision making, reading and writing. Has good vocabulary.

Teach them like this:

Provide opportunities for discussion and questioning that requires the student to think. Use thought provoking techniques. Challenge them to memorize, write and collect through classroom projects. Provide choices.

SOCIALLY

Because 5th graders are like this:

Can accept responsibility. Peer relationships are very important. Pulling away from parents and adults in desire for independence. Loyalty to peers increasing while loyalty to adults is decreasing. Wants to belong to a club or group. Prefers same sex groups. Hero worshiper.

Teach them like this:

Give students specific duties to help them feel ownership of the class. Build on group identity with class leaders, class projects, class name, activities, etc. Don't play the heavy authority figure but guide your students with lots of love and concern for them. Don't force opposite sex groups. Provide lots of positive role models of adults and teens.

EMOTIONALLY

Because 5th graders are like this:

Sixth graders may experience more moodiness as they enter puberty. Typically are happy, easygoing, friendly, well balanced emotionally. Dislike outward displays of affection. May be quick tempered. Can be very cruel to others at times, but also developing social consciousness for others.

Teach them like this:

Use humor when appropriate in your lesson. Emphasize we don't have humor at the expense of another person. Avoid displays of affection. Build value and esteem by listening attentively, focusing on the student, remembering their birthdays, etc. Avoid flare ups by having a well organized lesson plan.

SPIRITUALLY

Because 5th graders are like this:

Understands concept of sin. Asks many questions about spirituality. Faith becomes more personal, ready to accept Christ as their personal Savior. Can develop spiritual disciplines of Bible study, worship and prayer. Capable of sharing Christ's love with others. May set high standards for themselves.

Teach them like this:

Answer questions openly and honestly. Use scriptures to help answer their question, developing the understanding of Biblical authority. Provide opportunities for students to pray to receive Christ and equip them to grow in their faith through instruction in Bible study, worship and prayer. Provide opportunities to learn how to share their faith and service projects to help others in need.