

PLANNING AN EDGE SEMESTER

I remember when I started in youth ministry, I had no idea how or where to get started. Having a computer in my office meant I was one of the most technologically advanced youth ministers around – but of course, we had dial up. I had inherited all sorts of random resources from my predecessor, but she left me no information about teens or adults who were previously involved. I walked in my office, set-up my answering machine (yes, answering machine – not voicemail), and wondered what to do next.

I actually looked forward to our parish staff meetings – it was the only thing that was firmly on my calendar every week. At those meetings, the more, ahem, experienced staff members helped me understand the importance of putting a ministry plan to paper. (I was a stubborn, slow learner.) If nothing else, it gives a starting point to advertise along with helping to form the focus of the ministry.

Edge nights, lock-ins, retreats, social events, parent meetings, core meetings... the list could go on and on. There are so many components that could be included in a semester plan for Edge that it's easy to get overwhelmed.

Let's start with the basics of the Edge Semester plan – Edge Nights. This weekly gathering of the middle school youth is the heartbeat of the Edge ministry, and so putting a good plan together for a semester is important, otherwise, you're just throwing spaghetti at the wall to see what sticks. If you prayerfully approach your plan, you can have realistic and hopeful goals for the semester.

A few reminders up front:

- You probably want to kick off the semester with a social. You want to build some good momentum, have some relational ministry time, and have this fun starting point to focus some marketing efforts on.
- Possibly, you could invite parents to an Edge night towards the beginning of the semester. Getting parents on board, inviting them into the mission, and helping them to see the goals and plans of the ministry bears many fruits.
- Likely, you'll want to pick one catechetical topic to focus on for the semester – but this is the choice of your parish.
- Keep in mind the suggested monthly plan of two catechetical nights, one issue night, and one social night.

Ok, that's probably enough theory about the planning – let's work through a semester plan so you can see it all come together. We'll use the **Sacraments Edge Semester Planning Guide** that came out in the November 2015 Edge Support Shipment, along with the accompanying **Amplify** – and we'll mix and match some issue and social nights available on CatholicYouthMinistry.com to flesh it out.

Being a youth minister for a long time in the northeastern part of the country, I am used to school starting shortly after Labor Day. Normally, our semester kick-offs were 2 weeks later. So we'll run Edge on Wednesdays, and start with September 13, 2014 and we'll end shortly before Christmas.

- September 14 – Kick-off night – *Do-Si-Do* – from **Amplify**, Volume 10
- September 21 – Parent Night – *Inspire[d]* – from **Amplify**, Volume 6 (During the small group break, the YM stays with the parents to discuss Edge goals and plans, and to answer questions)
- September 28 – Catechetical #1 – *A New Creation* – from **Sacraments Edge Semester Planning Guide**

- October 5 – Catechetical #2 – *Gifts and Fruits* – from **Sacraments Edge Semester Planning Guide**
- October 12 – Issue Night – *Wild Things* – from **Amplify**, Volume 11
- October 19 – Catechetical #3 – *Lead Me* – from **Sacraments Edge Semester Planning Guide**
- October 26 – Social Night – *All Hallows Eve* – from **Amplify**, Volume 9
- November 2 – Catechetical #4 – *Washed Clean* – from **Sacraments Edge Semester Planning Guide**
- November 9 – Catechetical #5 – *Marry Me* – from **Sacraments Edge Semester Planning Guide**
- November 16 – Catechetical #6 – *Following Our Leaders* – from **Sacraments Edge Semester Planning Guide**
- November 30 – Issue Night – *It’s a Boy* – from **Amplify**, Volume 8
- December 7 – Catechetical #7 – *Pick Up Your Mat* – from **Sacraments Edge Semester Planning Guide**
- December 14 – Catechetical #8 – *Represent* – from **Sacraments Edge Semester Planning Guide**
- December 21 – Christmas Social Night – *“You’ll Shoot Your Eye Out, Kid!”* – from **Edge Social Nights** on www.CatholicYouthMinistry.com

This is simply an example of how one semester can come together. In using the many resources available online, you can mix and match different issue and social nights – and you can also create your own social nights using the opportunities of your parish and the gifts of parishioners that may want help out in building community among the middle school students.

It is vital to good ministry to plan out a semester – it helps you visualize what will happen, it keeps you honest in terms of mixing up the various types of nights, and it allows you to have longer term plans.

Since it is our call and our goal to lead our youth closer to Christ, we need to be willing to cover all the different topics that are offered – even ones that may be more uncomfortable or “boring” – but that just demands that we pour even more of ourselves into the planning of both the Edge semester and each individual Edge night.

If you’re still struggling with how to plan a semester, or how it can all come together, give our staff a call. Our Parish Support Team is here specifically to help you in ministry this way – and it is honestly the best part of our role here.

Thank you for your desire and willing to lead our youth closer to Christ – it is an honor to work with such inspiring people all over the world on this enormous and incredibly blessed mission. Let Christ be the leader of the ministry – and keep the goals of leading youth closer to Him in your heart and mind constantly. Know that we are praying for you!

