

GETTING STARTED WITH EDGE

Beginning a new ministry at your parish can be a very exciting time, especially when that ministry involves leading young people to Christ. While it can be tempting to put your head down and get to it, you need to get your bearings first. It is essential to put together a plan to setup the ministry for success.

When it comes to starting your Edge ministry, there are definite steps to take, but there is no magic formula. Every parish is different, and, therefore, every Edge ministry will look different. It is up to the youth minister to navigate the individual situations of your parish. Here are some basic steps to consider.

PRAY - Prayer is the first step to building an Edge ministry at your parish. It may sound cliché, but it is the truth. Without prayer, the Edge ministry will be more about you than about Christ.

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS - You are not in this alone, even if you are the only one working in youth ministry on your parish staff. Meet with your Pastor, DRE, parish secretary, ministry heads, and anyone who will take the time. Get to know the young people and parents you will serve, and keep an eye out for potential Core Members. Share your passion and enthusiasm for this new ministry with anyone who will listen. You never know the impact your excitement can have on those you meet.

PROMOTE YOUR MINISTRY - As you meet people and build up excitement, you'll want to develop a specific plan to promote your ministry. If your budget allows, find some promotional items incorporating the Edge logo (e.g. pens, magnets). Hand them out to parents and middle school youth when you meet them. If possible, you may also want to hang some Edge banners around your parish campus. Also, consider working with your Pastor on a plan to promote the Edge at all weekend masses where you have a large captive audience. Be creative with your promotion, and have fun with it.

RECRUIT CORE TEAM MEMBERS - As you begin promoting Edge to the youth and their parents, this is also a key time build up a Core Team. While this can be a tough job, it is vital. You can't rely on potential Core Team Members to fall out of the sky. You must be proactive. Talk with your Pastor, DRE, parents, and pastoral ministers about names of potential Core Members. Be willing to walk up to people before and after Mass to ask them to consider being on the Core Team. Meet with any potential Core Member individually, no matter how highly recommended a person is. Chat about the vision of youth ministry, how that person can be involved, and what it means to be a Core Member in this meeting. Ask each person to pray about the call to this ministry and follow-up a few days later. This allows you to pray about your time with that person as well, the feel you got from them, and how they might best fit in with youth ministry. Recruit high school teens. High school students can be a huge part of an Edge Core Team. Just make sure they are the right teens. Each high school teen who serves as a Core Member for Edge should be well prepared, well trained, and regularly receiving faith formation on their level.

GET TO KNOW PARENTS - Most middle school youth are still very influenced by their parents, especially their schedules, and parents want to know they can trust you. Get to know them in a variety of ways. Try going to Moms' groups, Knights of Columbus meetings, parent meetings at school, and any other type of meeting where parents of middle school youth might be gathered. Presenting this exciting new ministry for their children at these meetings can provide a great start to getting them involved.

INVITE PARENTS TO GET INVOLVED - Parents need to know that you are on their team. One of your key roles as youth minister is to empower them to be the primary catechists for their children. Encourage them to get involved in the ministry in some way. Parents can be Core Members, logistical helpers, event planners, fundraisers, prayer team members, and so much more. Once the ministry kicks off, be sure to communicate with parents about what you are doing at Edge meetings and empower them to chat with their children about it. Some parishes email this information to parents during the Edge Night so they can discuss it with their child on the way home. Check out the “To the Parents” section of your Edge Night Planning Guide for a quick and easy outline of what to send to the parents.

GET TO KNOW THE MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH - In case, we haven’t been clear, relationships are vital to this ministry. You need to get to know the middle school youth. Attend their sports games, plays, concerts, or recitals. Show them that you care about them outside the walls of the church. This type of outreach is better known as relational ministry. Outside of prayer, spend more time on relational ministry than anything else. This will set a great foundation for you and your program.

PLAN YOUR FIRST SEMESTER - In order to invite students to your parish’s new Edge ministry, you need to actually have something for them to come to. This begins with having a good semester plan. Check out the “Planning an Edge Semester” article in this Startup Kit or our videos on annual and semester planning. Each Semester Planning Guide also contains a sample semester outline, and as always, you can contact your Parish Coach to help get you started.

PLAN YOUR KICKOFF NIGHT - Your first Edge night should be full of energy and joy. This is game time, and you only get one chance to make a first impression. Don’t rush into this! Plan out your kickoff night a few months in advance. Work with your new Core Team to be as creative as you can with this night. A big focus for this kickoff needs to be relational ministry. Get to know the youth, learn names, have a lot of fun, and build excitement. Be prepared before the youth walk in and keep your focus on them.

REGISTRATION - If Edge is the faith formation for your parish, then you definitely want a registration process. Even if Edge is not the religious education for the parish, having a registration form is a good idea since it gives you important information in case of emergency. For those youth who join the ministry part way through the year, give them a form at their first meeting, and ask them to bring it back the next time they come.

LEAD THEM TO CHRIST - Above all else, keep things simple. It’s easy to worry about covering all the bases, but you can’t plan for everything. Be enthusiastic, joyful, and energetic, but at the same time, be willing to challenge the young people to go deeper in their faith. Remember, your most important role is to bring the youth to Jesus Christ.

Thank you for your willingness, energy, and commitment to this great ministry. Continue to say yes to Christ, trust in His call, and love those middle school youth. Be assured of the prayers of all of the Life Teen staff. You can do this, and we are here to support you.

