

Transitions

Helping Students Prepare for the Next Activity

When it comes to kids and youth ministry, we often prioritize providing fun and engaging activities. However, it is often the time in between activities that is most important. This is because many students have a hard time shifting their focus to something new, and this can lead to challenging behaviors. Learning a few simple transition techniques can help!

Good for Everyone - Crucial for Some

All students will benefit from having a warning that an activity is about to switch. However, for many children who have developmental disabilities, feeling prepared is key to success. This is because some children, especially those on the Autism spectrum, struggle with flexibility and picking up on non-verbal cues. The techniques below can help students feel more prepared.

1. Show and Tell - Help prepare students by using multi-sensory prompts.

- Give a verbal warning that an activity is about to end and that the next is going to begin. Then show this visually by pointing or using visual aids.
- Use “First/Then” language. “First, we play. Then, we go to circle time.”
- Use visual aids, such as Visual Schedule and First/Then Board or Ring,

2. Visual Timers - Allowing students to see and hear the countdown helps.

- Visual timers show how much time remains before a switch.
- Manual visual timers can be seen by the entire class. They can be purchased in stores or online.
- Free visual timer apps can be downloaded on your phone. This is ideal for students who have a buddy. We like “Visual Countdown Timer” on the App Store.

3. If a Child is Still Not Ready

- Try giving a controlled choice. *“Would you like another minute to finish your coloring before going to large group or would you like to finish it after large group?”*
- Every situation is different. Sometimes it may be best to be firm (and kind) and sometimes its best to give more grace. Use your best judgement.
- Switching activities is harder than you can imagine for some children. So, If they are struggling, remember: **“It’s not that they are giving you a hard time, It’s that they are having a hard time.”** Always approach with empathy.