

ELT- Elementary Leadership Team

Developing Young Church Leaders in
Children's Ministry

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Introduction: Small Kids - Big Influence

1 Timothy 4:12, “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith, and in purity.”

Imagine what would happen if you had a team of 4th and 5th graders who were ready to step up to the next level in their spiritual journey. Instead of just sitting in children’s ministry on Sunday mornings, they want to serve. Instead of simply being poured into, they want to begin giving back.

I’m fortunate to have the pleasure of spending time with my Elementary Leadership Team twice a month and it’s simply one of my favorite things to do. It’s true- they’re immature, they act like kids, from time to time they laugh when it may not be appropriate, and after playing games they have a distinct “5th grade boy smell”. BUT these kids are striving to be world changers in their homes, neighborhoods, and community. We have memorized 1 Timothy 4:12 and constantly have check-ups to make sure that they are living out the five areas of influence mentioned in the verse. They really believe their actions and lives can make a difference. They truly believe they can set an example not only for those who are younger, but also adults who cross their paths. Know why they believe it? Because God says they can and our adult leaders tell them they can. These are the ways my elementary leadership team sets an example for ALL believers:

Speech

I will listen and will not interrupt.
I will use encouraging words that show honor and respect.

Life

My life will reflect God’s love for me.
I will be a leader who cares about others more than myself.

Love

I will be kind.
I will reach out to others who don’t have friends.

Faith

I will share my faith with others.
I will live out my faith every day as I put actions to my words.

Purity

I will make wise choices in what I watch, see, and hear.
I will fill my mind with God’s Word.

They live it out in their lives at home, at school and in our elementary worship service. On a Sunday morning, our ELT can be seen running tech, adjusting the sound volume, assisting adult small group leaders, running our reward store, leading worship on the stage, distributing supplies, and more.

The lessons that follow are the first step in developing leadership characteristics in your 4th and 5th graders. Below are some implementation suggestions for beginning your own ELT program.

- 1 Scheduling- Our ELT (Elementary Leadership Team) is an optional group that meets twice a month outside our regularly scheduled Sunday programming. We meet on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month from 4:30-6:00. Please note that making this a mandatory program for your 4th and 5th graders will dilute its effectiveness. Not all kids are ready for this type of responsibility! Because of the nature of this group and its level of responsibility, kids who are not ready, usually weed themselves out during the first couple of months.
- 2 Programming- The lessons that follow are meant to challenge kids in their faith and teach basic leadership characteristics in fun, exciting ways. You'll play gross, crazy games that make parents cringe and get kids digging into their Bibles. In addition to the lessons, make sure you allow kids time to hang out and develop a sense of community. Our ELT meetings usually include 15 minutes of "hang out" time, 45 minutes for the lesson, and we use the rest of the time to practice music and motions for the following week's elementary worship experience. Any leftover time is spent with more team-building and fun.
- 3 Expectations- It's important to make your behavior expectations very clear from the beginning. In the third meeting, kids and parents will sign a commitment form and pledge stating what is expected of them. State your expectations of how your leadership team should behave during your Sunday experiences. Their behavior and actions should set the example for the rest of the kids in the room.



- 4 Responsibilities- My ELT kids are responsible for running the media and tech during our Sunday elementary and preschool environments, giving out points for games, running our rewards store, leading music and motions on the stage, and so much more! Decide what areas of responsibility you are comfortable entrusting into the hands of your trained ELT. Don't sell their abilities short! They are far more capable than you can imagine!
- 5 Rewards- Reward your leadership team for a job well done! A reward can be more free time to hang out, a piece of candy during the lesson, a game of kickball where you participate, allowing kids to choose their favorite songs to do for fun, etc. Simple rewards like a special name badge and t-shirt for all the kids on your leadership team go a long way and mean a lot to kids. It gives them a sense of identity and makes them feel important.
- 6 Instill Ownership- Give kids a sense of ownership in your Sunday morning experiences. When you have a successful Sunday morning, give them praise! Allow them to see that their hard work makes your environment a better place.
- 7 Send it Home- Encourage parents to continue to reinforce the concepts they're learning at your ELT meetings when they get home. In the first week, kids will be given two homework cards held together with a circle ring binder. They will be asked to complete the two cards at home before the next ELT meeting. These homework cards provide kids with the opportunity to extend what they've learned at their meetings and let parents see what the kids have been learning. Ask kids to return the completed cards the following week. Consider implementing a points system that gives kids the chance to earn rewards for completed cards.



Lesson 1- Getting in Shape to Serve

Materials: five poster boards with leadership characteristics as described below, Bibles, rope that has been tied together to make a loop, homework cards

Leaders Are...- What does it mean to be a leader? Let's play a game that will help us think about what leadership looks like. I'm going to call out five descriptions of a leader. If you think the first description I say describes a leader, you'll stand on the right side of the room. If you think the second description I say describes a leader, you'll stand on the left side. Please listen to the whole description before you move!

A leader is...	in front	behind
A leader...	helps	gives directions
A leader...	sets the example	follows others
A leader...	puts others first	takes the lead
A leader...	speaks	listens

Did you have a hard time choosing from these two options? Lots of people think that leaders are out in front, telling people what to do and leading the way. We're going to learn that God wants you to be a servant leader. That means that you lead others by serving- not by being served. Let's look at those descriptions again and talk about them.

A leader is often out in front showing others the way, but sometimes must walk behind and give others the freedom to experience leadership.

A leader often needs to give directions and guide people, but also needs to be willing to help others.

A leader should set the example for others to follow, but also be willing to follow the ideas and suggestions of others.

A leader should take the lead when necessary, but be willing to put others needs first at all times.

A leader should speak up when needed, but know that it's just as important to listen to others.

Look It Up- 1 Timothy 4:12 tells us what it means to be a Christian leader. Look up 1 Timothy 4:12 in the Bible and see if you can identify the five areas that Timothy calls us to be leaders. (Life, Love, Speech, Faith, Purity)

I have five posters hung up around the room. They have the five areas of leadership written on them along with a definition of each one. I'm going to give each pair of you five post-it notes and I want you to work with a partner to write one thing on each post-it note that a leader would do to demonstrate leadership in each of these categories. Here is an example: If I write on my post-it note, "speak encouraging words" which poster should it go on? What about if I write, "only watch G and PG movies?"

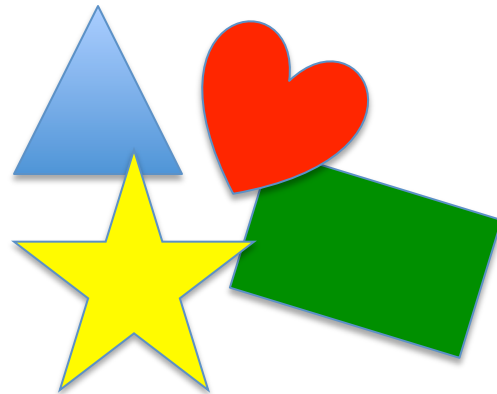
Definitions-

- Speech- Allow your words to speak life to others.
- Life- Live a life that reflects God.
- Love- Love God and Love Others.
- Faith- Grow and Learn.
- Purity- Allow only Godly influences in your life.

Make a Shape- We're going to see if you can put to use what you've learned today about being a leader. We're going to play, "Make a Shape." I'm going to give you a piece of string that has been tied together to create a loop. Everyone needs to spread out along the edge of the circle and grab the string. I'll call out a shape and you will need to work together to make the shape that I call out. Because we have lots of leaders in this group, you'll have to know when to speak and when to listen. You'll need to use your words to encourage others and demonstrate a loving attitude to others.

Shapes to call out:

- Triangle
- Rectangle
- Flower
- Tree
- Star
- Heart



Talk It Over- Why is it important for Christian leaders to be an example for others? How can you be a servant and a leader at the same time?

Each week you're going to be given two take-home cards that we'll store on a circle ring binder. You'll need to complete the assignments and bring them back the next time we meet. Each week we'll add the next week's homework cards to the ring binder. At the end of our leadership series, you'll have a collection of cards that demonstrate what Christian leadership is all about.

***ELT Pledge Signing
Event!
Date, Time***



Dear Parents,

We have been learning basic leadership principles outlined in 1 Timothy 4:12. This year in ELT, your kids will be held accountable for their choices and behavior as they strive to be the leaders God is calling them to be. On (date), we'll have a special Pledge signing ceremony at (place). Kids will sign a pledge committing to be held accountable in five areas: speech, life, love, faith, and purity. In order to make this a special and meaningful event, we've asked that kids get a little dressed up. After the ceremony we'll celebrate with a reception. Thanks for helping your child grow in faith and character this year by being a part of ELT!

Sincerely,

Lesson 3- ELT Pledge Signing Ceremony

Setting the Stage- This ceremony needs to be special- something different than what kids expect in children's ministry. Hold the ceremony in "big church" if possible and ask your pastor to speak to the kids about what it means to be a leader in your church. Have kids sit together on the front row and allow parents to sit behind them. You will need printed copies of the ELT pledge for each child to sign. Below is a sample service outline but feel free to add anything that would make the ceremony more meaningful for your kids.

Welcome- ELT Leader

Message on Church Leadership- Pastor

Reading of the Pledge- ELT leader and kids read together

Signing of Pledge Cards- ELT leader calls kids up one at a time with their parents to sign the card. There is a space for both parents and kids to sign.

Closing Prayer and Blessing- Pastor

Feel free to follow your ceremony with a celebration! This is a great time for families to build relationships with each other and get to know the other kids who have taken on leadership roles alongside their kids. The reception can be as elaborate as a potluck meal or simply juice and cookies- whatever works best in your situation.

Display the pledges in your elementary worship environment as a reminder to your kids of the commitment that they've made.



ELT Pledge

Speech

I will not talk when the leader is speaking.
I will use encouraging words.

Life

I will include others.
I will act like a leader.

Love

I will be kind.
I will reach out to others who don't have friends.

Faith

I will share my faith with others
I will live out my faith every day.

Purity

I will make wise choices in what I watch, see, and hear.
I will fill my mind with God's Word.

