

## **3 Ways to Develop Community in Your School**

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To cultivate a strong sense of community, we encourage you to provide meaningful opportunities for your students to build relationships throughout the year! Below are a few ways you can invite students to invest in community. As you read the ideas below, invite the Holy Spirit to show you creative, fun ways for your students to experience rich connection in your school environment.

#### 1. Retreat

One of the greatest ways you can help jump start connection within your school is taking a school retreat. Whether it is a week, weekend, or a day retreat, we have discovered that this is one of the most powerful ways to “break the ice” and foster community at the beginning of the year. In fact, retreats often set a positive tone for connection in a school environment.

As you plan retreat, don't forget that a key to building connection is having fun! Fun and play uniquely connect people to their hearts, activate childlikeness, and ignite their dreams and passions. While it could seem a waste of time to schedule in fun activities, it is a key ingredient to developing an engaging school environment. We encourage you to discover ways your leadership team and students can have fun!

#### 2. Connection Groups

Another way you can support the sense of community in your school is facilitating weekly or monthly connection groups. They are a place for students to feel known, valued, and supported in the context of community. These groups create opportunities for students to develop meaningful relationships and experience personal transformation through the application of classroom topics and activation of spiritual gifts. Depending upon their size, these groups can provide intimate or corporate levels of connection for students.

At BSSM, connection groups (e.g. Revival Groups, Small Groups, Home Groups) are a vital part of our students' school experience. With the support of pastoral leaders, these groups facilitate some of the greatest transformation in our students' lives. For example, our students experience connection group meetings on a weekly basis where they minister to one another, share personal testimonies, and discover how to live from kingdom core values. These meetings also provide time and space for our pastors to facilitate powerful activations!

Below are some of the types of connection groups we offer at BSSM to encourage our students' relational and spiritual growth. We encourage you to learn from our structure and create the best forms of connection for your school.

- *Revival Groups*: In our First and Second Year programs, our student body is divided into Revival Groups. A school pastoral leader facilitates a Revival Group meeting every week with the help of selected Third Year students and volunteers. These groups provide a more corporate setting that

focuses upon building student connection, activation, and more. Revival Groups range between 60-70 students.

- *Small Groups:* In our First Year program, each Revival Group is divided into Small Groups. After a period of getting to know students in the group, a school pastoral leader selects a student to lead the group. The Small Group leader facilitates his/her Small Group under the direction of the school pastoral leader every week. Small Group leaders receive weekly training from the pastoral leader. These groups provide a more intimate setting that focuses upon building student connection, reviewing classroom topics, incorporating school core values, and more. Small Groups range between 5-7 students consisting of all men or all women in the group.
- *Home Groups:* In our Second Year program, each Revival Group is divided into Home Groups. For the first half of the school year, selected Third Year students lead a Home Group every week under the direction of a pastoral leader. During the second half of the school year, the pastoral leader and Third Year students select 2-3 students to lead the Home Group every week. These groups provide a more intimate setting that focuses upon building student connection, activation, leadership, and more. Home Groups can range between 15-25 students.

### **3. Ministry Opportunities**

Your students can develop valuable friendships and create lasting memories as they minister together! Whether it is through outreach or ministry or mission trips, we encourage you to create opportunities for your students to serve in groups. By providing outlets for them to apply what they are learning in school together, they will grow in courage and boldness to take risks and develop strong spiritual muscles.

At BSSM, we create opportunities for our students to be activated in groups through an outreach program we call City Service. This program facilitates weekly outreaches that are geared towards loving and serving our city. We also facilitate ministry and missions trips. These trips provide a place for our students to be more activated in ministry and leadership and to draw from our leaders' gifts and experience. They are also a great way for our students to grow as a family!