

# **LEADER HANDBOOK**

## New Tribe Students Lead Team

### **VISION STATEMENT**

Our vision statement at New Tribe Students is *leading every student to Encounter God, Build Community, and Be Equipped.*

The following policies and tips are designed to serve this vision. Whether it's worship, teaching, small group conversations, games, or an event, everything we do is filtered through the question, "Does it serve the vision? Does it lead students to Encounter God, Build Community, and Be Equipped?"

Many of the following points are to ensure the safety of students, while others are to maintain an atmosphere where encounter, relationship building, and equipping can take place. The correct manner to enforce policies or escalate a situation to the Student Pastor will be listed with each example, and there will also be expectations for you as a leader.

It is a privilege and a responsibility to minister to the next generation! Thank you for saying "yes" to Jesus with this opportunity!

### **PERSONAL EXPECTATIONS**

As a leader at New Tribe Students, there is a level of spiritual maturity and discipline expected. Keep a habit of reading Scripture consistently, and pray often - including for your students! If you do not cultivate these habits in private, you cannot model them effectively in front of students.

Your lifestyle matters! The following sinful practices are cause to be removed from the Lead Team, whether temporarily or permanently: drunkenness, drug use, sexual immorality, and foul language. You are not expected to be perfect, but you are expected to be an example! (see 1 Cor 11:1).

Your social media account also matters! Please be mindful of the content you post and like on social media, as students can see that and will take cues from you on what is right or acceptable.

Please maintain a modest dress code when serving on Wednesday nights. If your top or bottom raises a question mark, it's worth picking a different outfit. We do not want a leader to create a distraction from the atmosphere we are setting at New Tribe Students (see 1 Cor 8:9). Because a simple outfit choice could be a stumbling block for a student, the Student Pastor or another staff member may pull you aside to discuss your outfit at their discretion.

### **ONBOARDING PROCESS**

Everyone is required to complete Next Steps (in person or online) and fill out a Serve Team Application prior to serving on the Lead Team at New Tribe Students.

After a brief trial period, you will receive a Planning Center invitation and be scheduled according to your small group assignment. Please accept the requests that come through in advance to assist the Student Pastor in managing the team. If you know that you will not be present for a Wednesday, you can submit a blockout for that week (if not already scheduled) or you can decline the request (if already scheduled).

## **ATTENDANCE EXPECTATIONS**

When serving on a Wednesday night, please arrive between 6:15pm and 6:30pm. Leaders are scheduled for every Wednesday, but there is plenty of grace for the weeks you have to miss due to family, illness, work, etc. However, do not take this grace as license to skip New Tribe Students often because you feel like it. Building community is part of our vision, and the relational equity from interacting week after week is critical to supporting students in their phase of life.

You are permitted to leave on a Wednesday night once the students have mostly left and/or if cleared by a staff member or the Student Pastor (usually around 8:30pm). If you have to leave early or suddenly, please communicate with the Student Pastor or the other leaders in your small group to the best of your ability.

You are also expected to attend New Tribe Church on Sundays regularly. If you are serving on a team on Sundays, please make it a priority to serve one and attend one. This policy exists for your spiritual health as well as the potential for further relationship building with students.

When New Tribe Students hosts non-Wednesday events, please make it when you can! Some events will be announced in advance as an all-hands-on-deck event, in which case we would ask you to block it out on your calendar in advance. Other events may only require a few team members; please try to make it to at least some of these throughout the year. There will also be a few team meetings throughout the year, which you are strongly encouraged to attend.

You are also encouraged to show up for students outside of church! Students are often excited to share their game schedules, competition days, performance dates, etc., and it's a formative moment when you take time out of your routine to show up for them. You can make it fun, too - make signs, bring flowers, go with another leader, snap a picture - whatever would be meaningful to that student.

## **LEAD TEAM AGE REQUIREMENT**

To serve on the Lead Team at New Tribe Students, you must be at least 20 years old. Younger people are permitted to serve in roles such as worship/tech team, social media, and setup/tear-down, but they will not serve as "leaders" and will not participate in small group conversations. Those serving in these non-leader roles do not have authority over the students. Please inform the Student Pastor if a non-leader who is serving is behaving improperly for their role.

## LEADER-STUDENT BOUNDARIES

Leaders are to be very careful that their interactions with students always remain above reproach. A male leader should never have a one-on-one conversation with a female student in private, and a female leader should never have a one-on-one conversation with a male student in private. If you are going to meet with a student one-on-one outside of church, do so in public (not at your house) and with the parent's permission.

Please also be mindful of texting boundaries. Unless it pertains to a serving role under your leadership, a leader should not have an individual text thread with a student of the other gender. If a student reaches out to you, you are welcome to answer a generic question; however, if the conversation becomes vulnerable or emotional at all, immediately rope in another leader or a parent. A helpful explanation for responding with a group text instead of the individual thread would be, "I'm looping in [NAME] because I think her input would be valuable" or "I'm including [PARENT] because I want him/her to be in the loop."

Never complain to a student about another student or a leader. If you have a genuine concern, go to that person for resolution or involve the Student Pastor.

If a student shares about their life with you in a confidential setting (one-on-one or small group), do not share that information with other students. If the information is necessary for the other leaders in your group to know, you may inform them privately.

See **Leader Expectations: Small Groups** for more information about how to navigate confidentiality and when to escalate a student's situation to the Student Pastor.

## STUDENT-STUDENT BOUNDARIES

Please keep an eye out for inappropriate behavior between students. Students should not be touching each other excessively, and no student or group of students should be alone or unsupervised for any reason.

Public displays of affection are strongly discouraged at New Tribe Students. There is no need for students to hold hands, cuddle, or otherwise display affection in a way that is distracting for them and others. When you correct students on this behavior, be clear about what not to do and redirect their focus to what's going on at the time. See **Disruptive Student Protocol** for more details.

The excessive touching rule applies to anyone, whether the behavior is romantic or not. Regardless of gender/sexuality, the expectation for students is the same: keep hands to oneself and do not be a disruption.

## SAFETY

Weapons and illegal substances are prohibited at New Tribe Students. If you suspect that a student has brought something of this sort on a Wednesday night, involve the Student Pastor or a staff member and the Response Team member immediately.

Heelys are not permitted on Wednesday nights. Reckless behavior that endangers the safety of others is not allowed, and causing damage to the church building is also not allowed.

If any of these issues present themselves, it is YOUR role as a leader to take action. It is always better to be safe than sorry, and utilize discretion as to when to be discreet versus forward.

## **STUDENT EXPECTATIONS**

All students are expected to behave respectfully and cooperatively at New Tribe Students. Students are expected to refrain from bullying or using foul/inappropriate language. If you are facilitating a game, deescalate trash talk and be proactive to intervene if a comment goes too far.

If a student is not serving on a team that requires them to go into a reserved area, they are not permitted to go onstage, into the booth, or into the backstage hallway.

Students are expected to keep a modest dress code. If you are unsure if a student's outfit is appropriate, bring your question to the Student Pastor or a staff member. If the outfit is obviously inappropriate, you may discreetly advise the student to choose differently the next time. When making this correction, always take the extra minute to cast vision. Instead of, "That shirt's a little low, don't you think?", always opt for "It's a simple choice, but it helps us be cautious to not distract from the atmosphere of worship and community building."

If any instance of correction escalates with a student, involve another leader and/or the Student Pastor before the end of the night.

## **LEADER EXPECTATIONS: GENERAL**

As a general rule, we need an adult presence wherever the students are. If you notice that there are eight leaders in the foyer, it's probably time to move to the Worship Center and help cover those areas! Students are not permitted to hang out or participate in any activities unsupervised.

Students are permitted to go to the bathroom, but please be aware if a student you know has been gone a long time. If you're the one who noticed, be proactive to address it or bring it to the attention of another leader or staff member.

Please make every effort to not be on your phone during New Tribe Students unless you are serving on social media. Any "down time" will become "scroll time" for students if that's the precedent you set. Instead, utilize these moments for building relationships (see **Tips for Starting Conversations** for some helpful tools).

## **LEADER EXPECTATIONS: FREE PLAY**

When students are playing games and hanging out, leaders are expected to engage with students and participate in games. Do not congregate with other leaders in the foyer - you can catch up with the adults at the end of the night. The interactions when you connect with students during Free Play pave the way for productive small group conversations.

See **Safety** for additional guidelines, and see **Tips for Starting Conversations** for some helpful tools.

## **LEADER EXPECTATIONS: WORSHIP**

New Tribe Worship has adopted the phrase, "Lead with your eyes open," which means that the worship leader is engaging in worship while also being aware of what the room needs. If the worship leader is having a moment with God but the room is completely disengaged, the worship leader has not done his or her job.

Approach our time of worship in the same way. You are welcome to connect with God, worship at the front, and press in for encounter - but not at the expense of the students' experience. If there is a disruption happening, step in and redirect focus. Even if a student is not interested in worship, it is not time for conversations or being on their phone. Be proactive and firm about keeping distractions to a minimum in your area (or anywhere else you see an issue). See **Disruptive Student Protocol** for more details.

## **LEADER EXPECTATIONS: PRAYER**

If there is a ministry moment during worship or a response time when students are encouraged to seek prayer, please be available to talk with a student. "At least three" is the rule in these settings - if a student approaches you for prayer OR if you receive a prophetic word to give a student, bring another leader in on the conversation for the sake of accountability and honor.

Physical contact (such as a hand on the shoulder or a spot that needs healing) is to take place only with another leader present and with the student's prior consent.

## **LEADER EXPECTATIONS: MESSAGE**

During the message, your biggest role is crowd control. Always be aware of the room, and move to a different seat if there is a disruption happening in that area. Be assertive when correcting students, and continually redirect their focus to the front. See **Disruptive Student Protocol** for more details.

You must also be an example. If you are disengaged or on your phone during the message, that gives students permission to do the same.

## LEADER EXPECTATIONS: SMALL GROUPS

Most small group discussions are based on a message and a discussion guide. Utilize the content and the provided questions to guide a discussion where students can internalize the content, brainstorm life applications, and be vulnerable about their own situations. Leaders can all contribute by reading the discussion questions, asking follow-up questions, sharing personal anecdotes that illustrate a point, and offering additional insight.

If a student makes a theologically incorrect statement, take a moment to correct it. A sample template: "I'm glad you shared that! I agree that..., but we have to be careful. [teach the correct theology]. Maybe you were thinking of... [suggest a similar concept or story relating to the student's misunderstanding]. But I'm glad you brought that up. Back to our question..."

If a student is disrupting the conversation, you may redirect that student to focusing on the conversation. If it becomes a continual issue, pull the student aside discreetly outside of the small group context to talk about small group expectations. See **Disruptive Student Protocol** for more details.

If a student is monopolizing the conversation or introduces an off-topic but important issue, it may be best to push that conversation to after small groups. A sample template: "Thank you for sharing that. I'd love to have a longer conversation with you about that after groups tonight - but let's hear from someone else. Who else has a thought on this question?" It's not bad to take a different route than you planned if the conversation naturally goes there, but if a side conversation is unproductive or not worth diverting the focus of small groups, this method has proven effective.

If a student brings up a major topic such as suicidal ideation, drug use, violence, etc., bring it to the Student Pastor's attention that same night. If the student could be in danger, bring the student with you to have that conversation. Other leaders or pastors may be brought into that conversation to make the best plan for that student's recovery.

Never shame a student for bringing up a big topic, and always take the extra few seconds to remind the group that this is a safe space to bring up topics like this. You can discern in the moment whether it is worth having this conversation as a group and praying together or postponing the conversation until afterwards, as illustrated above.

## SMALL GROUP DIVISIONS POLICY

Students are assigned to a small group based on their gender and grade. If a student is completing work for two grades simultaneously or wishes to skip a grade for whatever reason, the parent must contact the Student Pastor to make that request. Otherwise, the most standard option is the best option. For instance, if a student is technically in ninth grade but is completing eleventh grade coursework, the student is a ninth grader at New Tribe Students. If a student is completing eighth and ninth grade coursework the year after completing seventh grade, that student is an eighth

grader at New Tribe Students. Students may not attend a different small group to be with their friends or siblings.

If a student is struggling with gender dysphoria and/or identifies as transgender, that student will be sent to a small group that matches their gender at birth. The vision behind this is that we are always pursuing God's design at New Tribe Students, and that looks like submitting to how He made us, not how we choose to express or identify ourselves. If a conversation like this takes place (or you would like assistance), please involve or inform the Student Pastor.

## **HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE POLICY**

If a student graduates high school, he or she is no longer eligible to attend New Tribe Students, even if the student "graduates early." Our student ministry structure hinges on grade, so a student who is past twelfth grade has graduated from student ministry. Students who graduate at the end of a spring semester are welcome to attend through the end of July that year.

## **INJURY/INCIDENT PROTOCOL**

In the event of an injury at New Tribe Students, there is a first aid kit available for basic treatment. Please inform the Student Pastor of all injuries in the event that a parent asks for details afterwards.

If an injury warrants a parent phone call for pickup or to initiate more intense treatment, immediately involve the Student Pastor or a staff member to make the phone call.

In the event of a building safety concern, students will be evacuated or sheltered in place at the discretion of the Student Pastor. If students are held in place, no one may leave without the approval of the Student Pastor or a staff member. Parents will be notified of the details of the incident after students are safely dismissed.

## **STUDENT ACCOMMODATIONS**

If a student needs disability accommodations, a parent meeting with the Student Pastor will determine the procedures for making the student feel comfortable, supported, and welcome.

Due to the risk of allergens, liability, and safety, pets/service animals are not welcome in the New Tribe building. However, we will work as a team to accommodate a student's medical risk, special need, or disability the best we can until an official plan is in place.

## **DISRUPTIVE STUDENT PROTOCOL**

### *Tier One*

The student is creating disruptions or exhibiting inappropriate behavior.

Action Step: A leader corrects the student and monitors behavior for the remainder of the night, intervening as necessary.

### *Tier Two*

The student is creating continual disruptions consistently or exhibiting consistently inappropriate behavior.

Action Step: Inform the Student Pastor of the student's behavior, and continue to monitor the student.

### *Tier Three*

The student is creating drastic disruptions or exhibiting severely inappropriate behavior.

Action Step: The Student Pastor will meet with the student and communicate expectations to a parent/guardian.

### *Exceptions*

Some extreme disruptions, such as threatening other students, making sexual remarks, bringing a weapon, or anything that poses a present threat to the cultural stability of New Tribe Students, may give cause for the Student Pastor to immediately involve a parent/guardian.

## **TIPS FOR STARTING CONVERSATIONS**

When starting a conversation with a student, you may naturally click and you may not! If you want a process to fall back on, think of the following volleyball hits as an analogy:

### *Serves*

When first starting the conversation, never ask someone, "Are you new?" or "Is it your first time?" Instead, ask, "How long have you been coming to New Tribe Students?"

When serving (or getting a conversation started), start with givens. There are a number of questions that any person could answer. For instance, "How are you doing this week?" is a great question because there's an easy follow-up for you. If the student says "great" or "tired" or "fine," you can ask why! Other examples of givens would be, "What did you do today?" "What do you do for school?" (a better alternative than "What school do you go to?", and an easy topic for diving deeper). Coming off of a holiday or school break, you could always ask something like, "What was the best thing to happen to you this summer?" or "What did you do for Thanksgiving?" Many times, you'll hear about friends or family members, and you can keep the conversation going by asking more questions.

It's okay to be curious! As a leader at a student ministry, students are more likely to expect that from you than you would think.

### *Sets*

One goal to keep in mind when having conversations with students is to tee them up for their sweet spot. Just like a set in volleyball is a pass that sets up someone else for success, you want to poke around in conversation for a topic that the student could talk about forever. Everyone has



something! If you find it, be a good listener and ask lots of questions - especially if you feel clueless on the topic. Students love to feel like an expert on their passions.

### *Digs*

In volleyball, a dig is a hit that saves a spiked ball from hitting the ground. If a conversation is not going anywhere or the student is not engaging, you can try to revive the conversation by telling a personal story. Take something they already said (or a given, from above) and share an anecdote that will allow them to be more comfortable talking to you. You can then use that story to launch into another question. If the story interests the student in any way, the conversation has been revived!

If the conversation is beyond help, that's okay too! You can still leave the situation well. Pick a phrase or two to have in your back pocket to help you leave a conversation - maybe you are going to play four-square and you invite them to come, maybe you say that you're glad they're here, maybe you say it was good getting to know them a little better - whatever you would be comfortable saying. For introverts especially, how smoothly you leave the conversation usually sticks with them as their main impression of the conversation.

## **FINAL THOUGHTS**

For those who are not called to serve in this ministry, the students would be exhausting and frustrating. For those who *are* called to serve in this ministry, the students will *still* be exhausting and frustrating - but the experience will also be fulfilling and rewarding.

God will use this opportunity mightily to grow and challenge you. Lean into the ways that it pushes you out of your comfort zone, and always rely on the Holy Spirit for guidance in the moment. Not every Wednesday has to be a salvation or breakthrough moment for it to still be a win.

Take a moment to acknowledge that student ministry is a challenge. Receive grace each and every week for that Wednesday. God is faithful to provide what we need - whether that is a timely word, wisdom or discernment, or a community to support you as you serve. He's the one building the Kingdom; we're just one part of His plan at one point in history. But what a privilege to step into what He is doing here and now!

May you build relationships, grow deeper with God, and thrive personally as a leader at New Tribe Students. And have fun!

- Pastor Josh

*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.  
(2 Corinthians 13:14)*