

Should Sixth Grade Be In Youth?

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What Do I Say?

I serve as the Children's Minister in Texas. I visit your "classroom" every other week or so for ideas, and greatly appreciate your "classroom". I need your assistance.

Yesterday, during a break in staff meeting our pastor "just threw it out for conversation's sake" asked our youth minister and me for our thoughts on 6th grade going into youth. Before the conversation went too far the staff meeting resumed. I said a little but didn't get too involved in it. I did not want to just bristle up and /or be over-reactionary.

I do not like it. I do not think it is best for 6th graders. But I do not have a plethora of material to quantify why statistically, psychologically, & developmentally. The previous pastor we had did not want to move the 6th graders up. So I have not recently researched and polled people that have _promoted_ the 6th graders.

I do think we will make the switch but not until the new youth building is finished. But that is at best 3 or 4 years away. I need information to help sway the pastor against it or to help me know that the kids will be okay if it does come to fruition.

HELP!

—He just threw that out for discussion. Wow! Here's my story...

Our church has 6-8 grade in a middle school ministry with their own youth minister totally dedicated to their spiritual development. With that said, moving 6th graders into youth ministry is a mistake. I have noticed these ministries will either have mostly middle school kids because high school students don't want to babysit or high school students because the youngest are intimidated and wide eyed about the conversations and actions of high school students. The span in age is long considering the physical changes, responsibilities and independence of the older group. Sixth grade is definitely a transition time.

The best case is to create a transition place for 6th grade and even 7th grade in your ministry. The kids might feel too old for children's ministry but they need a transition step before youth or student ministry. I did this successfully in a previous church and ran 40-45 each Wednesday night. We opened the door to youth-topic content and Bible application but didn't dive too deep. Just enough to explain what things are about and the Bible had answers. They had their own events, camp, classes and choir. I customized everything and it really paid off.

Results were great. Parents thanked me and attendance was terrific. We were purposeful and repeated the same thing every two years since we had new kids every time. Kids told us they didn't want to promote up into the youth but we said, "Too bad! You're too old now."

It blessed the children's ministry because the younger kids were so excited about getting to the "Preteen Ministry" where good times were being had. We had theme nights, fun events and parents leading in groups during the teaching times. Our theme was 2 Timothy 4:12 and I reminded them of that truth often.

Here is an article I found on Mr. Mark's Classroom.

<http://mrmarksclassroom.com/2012/02/22/negative-effects-of-grouping-sixth-graders-with-older-students-negative-effects-of-grouping-sixth-graders-with-older-students/>

I wonder if anyone in our ministry community has dealt with this? What would you recommend? Why?

