

Student Selection

The re:Connect conference is designed to engage students, but selecting the right students to attend the conference is essential and determines the level of benefit your school will receive. Schools who bring their entire student bodies rather than selecting only those who are excited to learn should not expect their students to return with the same level of passion and excitement.

Sophomores and juniors are prime candidates for the leadership conference. These students will have 1½ to 2½ years to help foster positive changes in your school and community.

Seniors are also encouraged to attend, as they hold important leadership roles and have a great deal of influence over underclassmen. Seniors lay the foundation for upcoming classes.

Freshmen are welcome to attend the conference; however, schools should carefully consider their participation in the conference due to the nature of the event (deep abstract themes) and the maturity required (long learning sessions) for full benefit. Typically only 10% of the attendees are freshmen.

Possible methods of inviting students to participate include:

- Choose those already functioning as leaders in an official capacity at your school, including class officers, athletic team captains, chapel coordinators, club leaders, project organizers, etc.
- Give the student body or school faculty and administrators opportunity to nominate students they envision as leaders in their school.
- Encourage students to complete an application and/or interviews.**
- Require the reading of *Storied Leadership: Living and Leading from the Christian Narrative* by Brian Jensen & Keith Martel along with a reader response report.
- Any combination of suggestions above.

**Once a school has attended the conference, a pro-conference culture will develop among the student body enabling you to gradually require more of your conference attendees. They will be begging to earn the privilege to attend! If this is your first year, it will be most effective to select students without requiring extensive qualifications or student investment. You will need to clearly and frequently communicate a high level of expectation for behavior at the conference during promotion and preparation in order to avoid bringing students who are a distraction during the sessions and discussion times for the rest of your group.

Advisor Selection

Since relationships are often the context for lasting change, select advisors who will have an ongoing relationship with at least a few of the students. Ideas include teachers, school administrators, guidance counselors, local youth pastors, and parents. The ideal advisor has an easy rapport with the students while maintaining the respect needed to mentor and correct when necessary. Advisors should be excited and committed to learn and engage in the conference content along with the students – they will set the standard by their behavior. Three group meeting times are scheduled during the conference where advisors are expected to lead the students in reflection, discussion, and application of what they have heard in order to internalize the learning experience, so advisors should be trained to effectively lead discussions.

Student Preparation

Plan to meet with the students at least twice prior to the conference. Reading material will be provided for discussion at each of these meetings in order to start to prepare the minds of the students for what they will learn.

Encourage the students to be praying for God to change them through the conference experience in order to prepare their hearts for what they will hear at the conference.