

MAKING THE MOST OF PICK-UP DAY

As camp leaders, we spend 40 weeks a year planning every minute of a camper's week. But what about programming for parents, even if we see them for less than a few hours, if that?

Campers may be our primary audience, but parents are the 'buyers' of the experience and, more importantly, they are the ones who care for, support, and disciple their children the rest of the year.

Intentionally structuring the brief time with parents on arrival day and pick up day can help set the stage for the impact of camp to extend beyond the camper to the family unit.



Here's a few tips for making the most of pick day.

EXTEND THE EXPERIENCE

Invite parents to come to camp to experience all that camp has to offer alongside their camper on the final day. Reunite parents and campers in the morning, open activities for them to enjoy together, and close out the time with a classic camp meal!

CONNECT PARENTS WITH COUNSELORS

Invite parents to sign up for a 1:1 conversation with their child's counselor so that the counselor can update parents on how the week went. To prepare counselors for the conversation, you can ask them to record significant cabin moments, stories where campers stepped out of their comfort zone, and examples of where each camper's God given skills shined.

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This may be a growth experience for counselors as well, as they learn to speak professionally and confidently with adults.

FACILITATE REFLECTION

Provide space for parents to talk with their kids about what they experienced. At a closing ceremony, consider adding 2-3 questions for families to talk through before you sing a final song, or hand out suggested topics for the car ride home.

EQUIP AND TRAIN PARENTS

Our research has shown that involving parents in closing ceremonies or parent meetings increases parents trust in the camp, expands parents understanding of what their child experienced at camp, and positively influences their likelihood of returning to camp next year. To make the most of your time with parents, host a general parent meeting where you unpack your camp's philosophy and approach to ministry and explain how you saw God work that week. At the end of your time, provide resources that give parents ideas for how to help their child process the experience in the coming weeks. Remind parents that their child has likely grown over their camp experience, and encourage them to support their child as they lean into new skills.

Investing in even one to two hours of intentional parent programming on pick-up day can transform a brief visit into a meaningful partnership. By extending the camp experience into pick-up days for camper parents, campers carry their spiritual growth home. This intentional effort extends your ministry beyond the summer, strengthening the entire family unit.



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