

## THE SPACE IN BETWEEN

*(TRANSITIONING FROM HIGH SCHOOL TO HYPHEN)*

**Caleb DeHart**



LOCAL  
CHURCH  
LEADERS

There is always that awkward time when a student is transitioning into the youth group. They are trying to be cool, which often comes across as annoying to the other youth; they are learning to sit in a service and not have “action songs to entertain them”; and they are adjusting to many other different and new things. This is also true for high school students transitioning into Hyphen. The key is to provide them an environment to transition smoothly into what I call “The Space In Between.”

High school students, like upcoming middle school students, are in a transition phase. They have younger friends they hang out with and older friends they’d like to hang out with. Their worldview is starting to change, and they are getting a taste of responsibility but have not experienced the full weight of that responsibility because they still live at home and in most cases their parents still take care of them. With this being said, your task is to slowly start to transition them into the Hyphen group. Now there is no perfect formula on how to help high school students transition from high school to college, but here are a couple tips that we use to help them.

The first thing we do is host an annual weekend event with junior-, senior-, and college-age students called LAUNCH. This weekend is designed to create awareness about finances, college, entrepreneurship, and spiritual responsibility. We bring in food and guest speakers from the church who have expertise in these areas, and try to encourage the students to start taking their personal finances, spiritual walk, and their education (whether it be college or trade school) more seriously. This excellent, helpful, and informative weekend not only educates junior, seniors, and college students but it helps the juniors and seniors begin to disconnect from their younger friends and connect with Hyphens.

One of the more important things we do is to allow juniors and seniors to start coming to Hyphen events. Now they are not allowed to use this as an excuse to leave the youth group; it is in addition to the youth group. The last church at which Mandy and I were on staff, we oversaw the Hyphen ministry, and we implemented this dual attendance. Since we have relocated, we are now working slowly to give Hyphen more of its own role within the student ministry. So now when we have Hyphen events, we invite the juniors and seniors to attend. From what I can tell it does help the juniors and seniors want to act more mature, and when they take up permanent residence within Hyphen they already have a foundation set for them.

The last idea I would pitch is to make sure your Hyphen students are intentional about welcoming and including high school students. It is easy to have cliques within a youth group. Often the high schoolers feel left out when transitioning, and they don’t realize that they did the same thing to the middle schoolers. I would strongly encourage your student leaders in Hyphen to latch on to a senior or junior and spend time with them at events. Those little interactions go a long way with someone who is trying to find their place.

I think these few ideas will make an easier, smoother transition for your high school students moving into Hyphen. A transition is just that: a transition. It isn’t something that should be done overnight, but it is accomplished over a period of time.