

Puggles Tips

Club Operation

Start-up Ideas

As you start a new club year, be sure to review the Puggles Leader's Guide with all of your leaders. This is the ideal time to use the "First Quarter" parents' letter. Copy it from the guide on bright colored paper, sign it and add a personal note to each one. Go the extra mile and have a return address rubber stamp made that reads "Awana Puggles" with your name and address. This will draw attention to your "official" looking mail.

Snack Cups Do Double Duty

One club serves a Cheerios® snack each week in a three-ounce paper cup. When the kids finish the cereal, leaders offer them a drink of water poured from a pitcher into the same cup. (Or the kids use their own sippy cups or bottles.) What an environmentally friendly and cost-effective idea!

Puggles Snack Time Suggestions

If you serve snacks, consult page 23 of the Puggles Leader Role Book. There are several suggestions on how to include them in your evening. One idea is to pray before eating. One leader shared a poem that helps all the anxious little ones wait until every one is served: "Wait for your snack, with your hands behind your back."

Pudding Perks up Puggles!

At the beginning of club, leaders from one church help each Puggle put one tablespoon of instant pudding in a small baby food jar. They add cold milk until three-quarters full and close the lid. Within five minutes, and to the children's delight, the pudding is ready to eat!

Puggles Train

Here's a way to get Puggles from place to place. Tie several loops in a soft rope. Each Puggle holds a loop as do two leaders, one on each end. Encourage children to march or make train sounds as they walk.

Calming Anxious Children

Children this age may experience anxiety when a parent drops them off. According to the Puggles Role Book (page 20), identify leaders who are good with distraught children. A confident leader can help them relax and get involved in an activity. Encourage parents to leave with the promise that a leader will find them if the child doesn't calm down. In most cases, everything turns out fine. (It's also best to suggest Mom or Dad not pop back to check on the child.)

Puggles 'Placemats' Make Mealtime Review Easy

A Puggles director reported that some of the kids' parents were laminating the Puggles Take-Home Cards to use as placemats. They use them to review the lesson after dinner each evening.

Leader/Clubber Ratios

Leaders often wonder what the leader/child ratio should be in Puggles. The Puggles Leader's Guide advises you to consult your state regulations for daycare or preschool facilities. Be sure to follow them to protect yourself, your church and your children. When determining the number of Puggles leaders, you might also consider whether you have more 2-year-olds or 3-year-olds.

More About Leader-to-Clubber Ratios

One church with a large Puggles program has an "insurance ratio" which applies to all ministries in the church. They make a waiting list if ratios are not met.

0 to 12 months 2:1 (1 adult to every 2 children)

12 months to 2 years 3:1

2 to 3 years 4:1

3 to 4 years 5:1

Accident Insurance

Accidents happen. Whether it's of the potty training variety or the spilled-my-juice-all-over-me type, the Puggles Leader's Guide suggests that you ask parents for an extra set of clothes for each Puggle to keep at club.

Diaper Changes

One church records each change to assure everyone is attended at some point throughout the evening. You can record these on your check-in sheet or on a sheet near your changing table. Attention to these practical details assures parents of your conscientious attention to their children.

Define Leadership Roles

In one church, the Puggles director is the overall supervisor and connects with the other Awana club directors and the church staff. The nursery coordinator follows all church nursery guidelines and is also a team member. The Puggles instructor prepares the lessons and organizes the materials. The other Puggles leaders are called team members and work directly with the children.

Check-in Forms

Do you have a Puggles check-in form? One church sent has columns for parents' names, cell phone numbers and their location in the building. An open column for various notes is included for such things as allergies, other health concerns, who is allowed to pick up the child, etc. Customize to meet your own needs.

Music to Their Ears

An inviting and safe Puggles club room for is a must. Playing music as they enter creates a pleasant atmosphere. If you are not already using the Puggles Praise Music CD, be sure to try this customized tool in the near future as well as the Sing the Awana Way! music CD. It's never too early to introduce the "Awana Theme Song" to children of all ages! Awana music is now available on iTunes, too.

Potty Breaks for All!

Once church has a leader announce, "All who want to go to the potty, line up here." The kids march parade style to a large multi-stall restroom accompanied by at least two adults. All of them go at the same time, taking turns in the stalls and washing their hands. Then they parade back. Some of the kids think this is a fun activity. The leaders have found it is efficient to have them all go at once. Also, peer pressure is working to their advantage because, when the announcement is made, all want to participate!

Store Your Leftover Cards for Next Year

We all have leftover take-home cards because attendance naturally fluctuates. One club keeps the extras in a 32- or 40-pocket expandable file. When it's time to order supplies for next year, they check inventory first. Extras can be stored in a number of ways but using an expandable file keeps them orderly, accessible and clean.

Identify Diaper Bags

One church makes its own I.D. tags to attach to the diaper bags the parents drop off with their children. On a small card or piece of paper, add the child's name along with the Puggles logo. Laminate the tag, then punch a hole in it and attach it to the diaper bag with a key chain or electrical tie strap. The tag will last all year, which will save you loads of time each week. Be sure to keep the tags small enough (about business card size) so parents don't mind keeping them on the bags outside of Awana.

Cleanup Time Movies

At one church, the Puggles volunteer team is required to clean the room and sanitize the toys at the end of club. To do this and still get out at a decent time, this team runs a "cleanup time movie" in one corner of the room. Some kids even like to help.

The DVD plays as parents come to pick up their kids. Since they don't all come at the same time, it can be stressful for kids who have to wait longer. But with a fun movie to watch, they usually don't mind waiting. Sometimes they don't want to leave when their parents do come!

Does your church have a toy sanitation policy?

Puggles Characters Liven up Leaving Time!

At the end of club as parents pick up their kids, have a leader stationed at the door with one of the Puggles finger puppets. Have the puppet say "goodbye" to each child using his or her name: "See you next week, Amy!" We remember best what we heard last, so using each child's name will leave a pleasant impression on parents and children. Try using a different character each week: Puggle the Platypus, Alice the Kangaroo or Sydney the Koala.

Puggles on Parade

As you're planning award programs for the other clubs, why not include Puggles? One church has a stroller parade with the Puggles wearing their T-shirts and waving finger puppets as the Puggles song is playing. A Puggles leader will ask questions like: "Who made the stars or who made the flowers?" The Puggles answer, "God did!" As the Puggles

leave, make an announcement encouraging parents to bring their younger children to Puggles next year.

Teaching Tips

Encouraging Involvement

What should you do when a child does not want to participate in the group activity? The Puggles Leader's Guide suggests that a leader personally encourage the child to get involved by sitting or standing with him and gently guiding him to join the group. If he still refuses, begin the activity and talk about the fun everyone is having. "Look! Sarah glued her cotton onto the sky. Great job, Sarah!" This will often get the unwilling child's attention.

Puppet Scripts Capture Puggles' Attention

Check out the new Puggles Finger Puppet Scripts CD! Finger puppets help focus the attention of Puggles-age children. A fun script corresponds to each of the 32 Puggles Teaching Cards.

Includes suggestions for simple props, plus you can print out the scripts as needed. Order online.

Parents

On-Site Parents Help During Puggles

One Puggles club requires a parent to stay with each Puggle for the entire club meeting. They find this is a great tool to help parents connect with each other. (And parents of preschoolers and toddlers often crave more adult interaction in their day.) Asking a parent to stay during Puggles (or stay somewhere on the church campus) also allows the parents to help their children with any potty needs.

Letters Help You Connect With Parents

Be sure to use the parent letters in the Puggles Leader's Guide. There's ample space at the bottom to write a personal note of thanks and encouragement to each parent. Copy the letters on yellow paper, or some other spring color, so they will be attractive. Hand them to each parent as they pick up their Puggle or put them in the child's bag of stuff.

Parent Newsletter

Be sure to make use of the made-for-Puggles-parents' newsletter, Parent Pause. Each issue has a dedicated Puggles page. Print them out and give to parents as they pick up their Puggle. Or put them in the kids' bags. Don't forget to mail them to any absentees. Address them: To the parents of _____. Or you can e-mail them to those who prefer to receive electronic communications. They are posted on the ART Web site by the 15th of the previous month.

Give Parents a Quiet Place to Go

To reach parents, create a "quiet zone" while club meets. They can drink coffee, read, talk and relax while child-care workers watch their pre-Awana-age kids in another room. Or offer parenting workshops.