

PRIORITY PARENT



GUIDE



PRIORITY PARENT GUIDE

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WHAT IS FIRST PRIORITY?

During the 2023-2024 school year, over **10,000 Decisions for Christ** were made through First Priority, a strategy designed to connect the **Church** with students to reach **Campuses for Christ**. This initiative aims to transform the spiritual climate of schools and, ultimately, the world through the efforts of students.

With a successful **27-year track record**, First Priority of America provides a distinctive strategy for the local church, connecting them with middle and high school students who will establish Christian clubs in their public schools and share the Gospel with their peers.

With research confirming the importance of reaching youth early, ***FPoA's proven strategy equips, encourages, and empowers Christian youth as missionaries to their schools, reaching their peers with the evangelistic focus of sharing Christ.***

WHAT DOES FIRST PRIORITY LOOK LIKE FOR STUDENTS?

The First Priority Club meets weekly at school during non-curricular time. The club engages students on these four levels:

1. Students are **equipped** to share the Gospel.
2. Students are **prepared** to share their story of faith in Jesus.
3. Students **invite** their non-believing friends to hear about the Hope of Christ.
4. Students talk about the importance of being **connected** to Jesus, the club and a local church.

FOLLOW-UP PROCESS:

Students can express a desire for a peer to follow up with them, which often results in their attending a local youth ministry for the first time and becoming connected to a local church for discipleship.

MISSION & VISION & CORE VALUES

To take the **Hope of Christ** to every student by uniting the church to equip students so that every teen on every middle and high school campus in the United States can **hear the Gospel from a friend.**

- **GOSPEL-FOCUSED**
- **STUDENT-LED**
- **STRATEGY-BASED**
- **LOCAL CHURCH-ENGAGED**

THE GAME ANALOGY

UNDERSTANDING THE ESSENTIAL NETWORKS

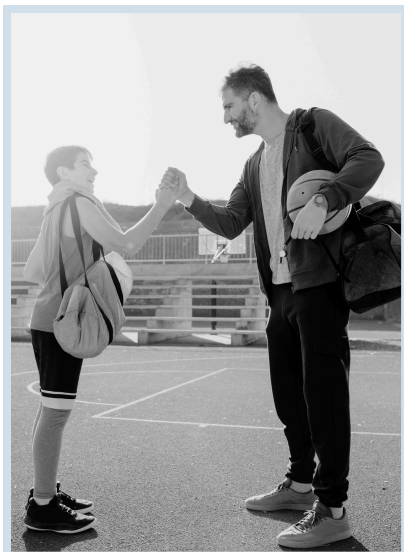
First Priority succeeds when the local community actively organizes each component of its strategy. To illustrate this, let's imagine being a part of the First Priority world. Picture a football player who is asked by the coach to study the team's playbook twice a week but is only scheduled to play in one half of a game for the entire season—maybe. That is, unless something else comes up on game day. Would the player ever show up to practice? This is similar to what many local churches expect from students in their youth ministry: to come twice a week to learn how to live for Christ and once a year to share their faith on a mission trip... unless something else gets in the way. First Priority provides a game plan for students in your community to live out their faith every day at school.



THE STUDENTS

PLAYERS ON THE FIELD

Students are on the most significant mission field in America: their schools. Actively participating in this environment, they are the key players we aim to train, pray for, and support, just as we do for foreign missionaries. The EPIC Guide provides these student missionaries with actionable steps and guidance to reach out to their peers. Each month, it helps them focus on specific groups and share the message of Jesus Christ with students who have yet to believe.



CHURCH LEADERS

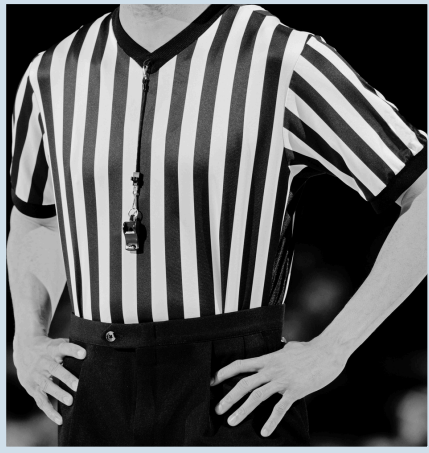
COACHES ON THE SIDELINES

These are the youth pastors who are training and equipping the students involved in the First Priority club.

- They help organize “games,” which are the First Priority Club meetings. This involves building relationships with school administration, finding a teacher sponsor, setting the club's time and location, submitting the club charter/constitution, and more.
- They conduct “practices,” or leadership meetings, to prepare students for the upcoming month. These meetings are held monthly.

THE GAME ANALOGY

UNDERSTANDING THE ESSENTIAL NETWORKS



EDUCATORS

REFEREES IN THE GAME

These are the dedicated faculty volunteers who generously open up their classrooms and the school's doors for the club meetings. They help ensure that everything runs smoothly and that we follow local district and state rules. At the monthly leadership meetings, they share their wisdom and provide guidance, offering valuable insights from their unique perspective as insiders. While they may not be in the spotlight, they're right there in the midst of it all, helping to make everything possible.



PARENTS

FANS IN THE STANDS

These parents are actively cheering on the students, both visibly and behind the scenes. Up front, they are committed to praying for and supporting the students as they work to minister to their school. Behind the scenes, they're waking their kids up early and driving to club, adjusting schedules, offering encouragement when things don't go well, and managing the "booster club." Getting more fans in the stands becomes easy when students are passionate about being part of the game.



BUSINESS LEADERS

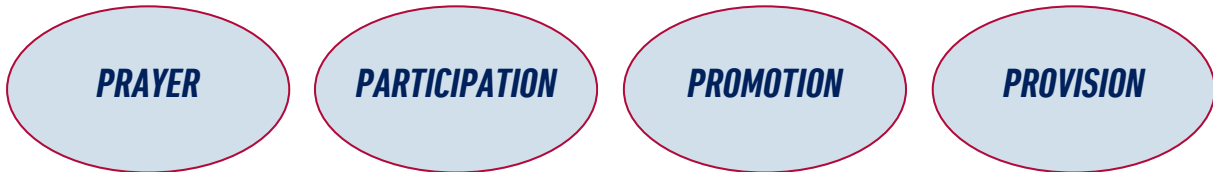
THE OWNERS

The business community plays a crucial role in the First Priority strategy. Just like in a professional sports team, where coaches and players may change over time, the core of the team remains. Similarly, the continued involvement of business leaders is essential for the long-term success of our ministry, especially as students graduate and staff in local churches transition. These business leaders have a vested interest in their communities and provide consistent support that spans generations. In cities where First Priority thrives, you'll find a dedicated board of business leaders who are committed to the program's success.



BUILDING A PRIORITY PARENT NETWORK AROUND THE SCHOOL

A Priority Parent Network is a group of parents that surround a school in:



To create a strong support system for students, it's essential to develop a network of parents connected to each school. This network will help model faith-based living for students by praying together and disciplining their children.

How to Build a Parent Network

1. Collect and Add Parent Information:

- Start by gathering a list of parents' names and contact information. Invite them to First Priority fundraising and training events.

2. Enlist a Priority Parent Network (PPN) Captain:

- Identify a parent at each school who can serve as a PPN Captain. This person will be responsible for communicating with the group of parents at their school, recruiting new members, and organizing events.

3. Recruit and Engage Parents:

- Encourage the PPN Captain to recruit additional parents for the network. Invite these parents to participate in fundraising and training activities.

Sources for Building the Network

1. From the School:

- Students are involved in various school activities, and parents often get to know each other through these events, such as band concerts, away games, and booster club activities. Utilize these connections by having a parent from one group reach out to other parents with similar interests, such as other Christian band parents.

2. From the Churches:

- Engage pastors and youth pastors in supporting First Priority. They can provide access to the parent community within their congregations. Consider hosting vision-casting meetings in churches specifically for parents, and encourage them to join the Parent Network through prayer opportunities.

3. From the Business Community:

- Remember that many business people are also parents. They work alongside other parents and share a common desire for the best for their children. A network like this not only supports parents but also helps connect students.

PRIORITY PARENT NETWORK

YOUR JOB

As a parent, your role is straightforward: **be a fan in the stands**. You are part of a network of parents around each school, dedicated to modeling healthy family relationships, discipling your students, and supporting the First Priority club through prayer, participation, promotion, and provision.

Think of it like being at a football game or any school sporting event. Often, the most passionate people aren't the players but the fans, who go to great lengths to cheer for their team, sometimes even to the point of embarrassment. Similarly, in First Priority, parents are the passionate supporters students need as they work to make Christ known at their school. Sharing one's testimony or the Gospel for the first time can be nerve-wracking, and students need encouragement and support. As a parent, you have one of the strongest voices in the community to advocate for and promote First Priority.

THE EPIC CYCLE

The saying "failing to plan is planning to fail" holds true. Without a well-thought-out plan to reach the school, we won't achieve our goals. As the adult network supporting students, it's crucial that we promote our plan to the participants to build an efficient team. The EPIC Strategy is a four-week cycle that guides students through four distinctive club meetings. We refer to it as a cycle because club meetings occur once a week, with the cycle repeating every four weeks. The success of this plan hinges on effective planning and execution.

For more details on the student's role and how you can best support them, refer to the [EPIC Guide](#).



PRAAYER

1

Praying for Our Students as Campus Missionaries

Just as we pray for missionaries around the world, we should also pray for our students. Since a growing percentage of people who come to know Christ do so before the age of 18, our middle and high schools represent the largest mission fields in our country. Our Christian students are the missionaries God will use to bring about spiritual awakening. Considering the significant influence peers have on one another, there's no better time in history to support them in this mission.

Prayer Strategies

There are numerous ways to organize a group of parents to pray for student missionaries. Below, we outline one strategy, but feel free to get creative!

Student Missionary Card: How It Works

- 1. Contact Churches and Youth Leaders:** Reach out to pastors, youth pastors, and churches in your network. Explain the concept of commissioning students as missionaries within their church and get agreement from the students in the youth group to have their photos taken and printed on cards.
- 2. Commissioning Ceremony:** After the student missionary cards are printed, hold a commissioning ceremony during a church service. This can be done by having the students come to the front of the church or youth service, where parents and elders can pray over them as they prepare to serve as God's instruments in their schools.
- 3. Encourage Congregational Prayer:** Ask the pastor to encourage the congregation to take a student's photo missionary card, place it on their refrigerator, and pray for that student regularly.
- 4. Distribute and Track Missionary Cards:** Place the printed missionary cards on tables where adults willing to pray can pick them up. Be sure to collect contact information from all adults who commit to praying and add them to your prayer database.

**STUDENT
MISSIONARY CARD
EXAMPLE**



PARTICIPATION

2



While parents primarily focus on the prayer network, there are additional ways they can contribute to the success of the club, potentially increasing attendance from 12 to 120 students. Each school has a Campus Coach assigned by the First Priority network of churches. The Campus Coach's role is to guide students in their efforts to impact the school for Christ. Collaborate with the Campus Coach to understand the specific needs at each school.

Parents should play a behind-the-scenes role. According to Equal Access guidelines, students should lead, faculty should open their rooms and remain passive, and Campus Coaches should provide guidance from the sidelines. Too many adults present can create issues and may even jeopardize the club's operation. Stick to your role, and remember to pray for the club's success. If you want to be involved during club meetings, consider organizing a group of parents to pray off-site during those times.

GENERAL WAYS TO PARTICIPATE

SUPPORT CLUB PLANNING:

- Open your home to host leadership meetings and provide snacks for the team each month.

ASSIST AT MINISTRY EVENTS:

- Help with school assemblies and other events that First Priority organizes. These are excellent opportunities for parents to support students in sharing Christ with their peers.

PROVIDE FOOD FOR OUTREACH WEEKS:

- Depending on the timing of the club meeting, offer snacks like donuts or pizza. Having food available, especially if the club meets over lunch, allows more time for the speaker to share the Good News of Jesus Christ.

OFFER TRANSPORTATION:

- Provide rides for students who cannot get to school early, particularly if the club meets before school starts.

PROMOTION

3

When First Priority is operating effectively, all schools in participating areas should be on the same week of the club cycle. The final meeting of each cycle is dedicated to presenting the gospel. The term "week" is used because different schools may have their meetings on different days; for instance, one school might meet on Tuesday, while another meets on Thursday. The role of the Parent Network is to ensure that all churches are informed about the Gospel presentations happening on campuses. People can't pray for something they don't know about.



WAYS TO PROMOTE:

1. Announcements during church services.
2. Notices in the church bulletin.
3. Communication with church prayer chains.
4. Network communication through paper newsletters, email, text, Facebook, etc.
5. Local church promotions such as First Priority Sunday, guest speakers, bulletin inserts, and First Priority videos during church services.
6. Designating a First Priority month and scheduling a speaker for a Sunday morning service.
7. Hosting a church commissioning service for students.

It is crucial for parents to lead in encouraging the church to pray for and commission students as they seek God's guidance in reaching their schools. Too often, students are made to feel they should remain quiet and wait until they are older to be valued in the church. Imagine if our churches were genuinely excited about sending students to school as missionaries—America would soon experience a significant transformation!

4 PROVISION

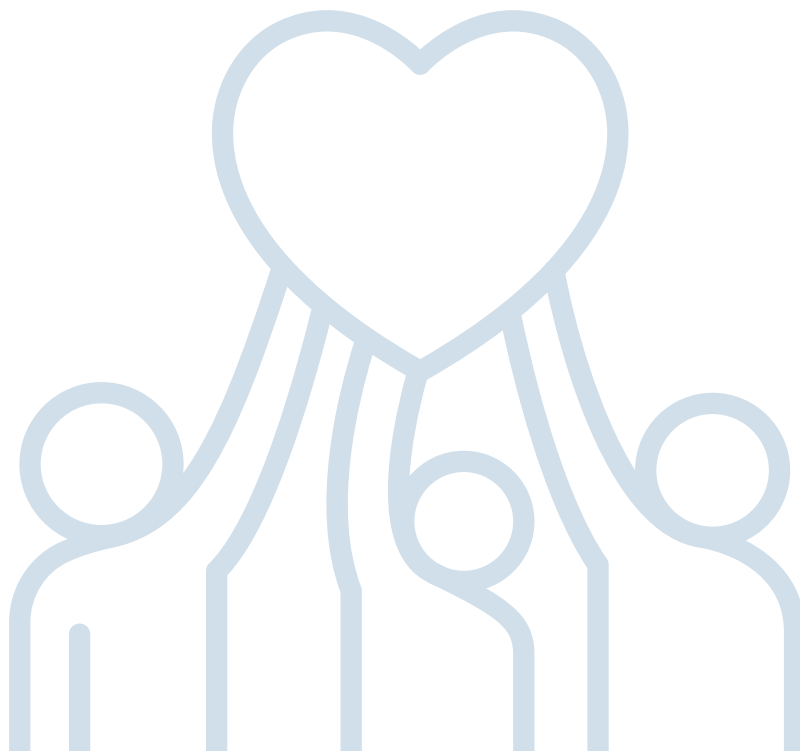
You've likely heard the saying, "You get what you pay for." This principle applies to First Priority as well. Every impactful ministry requires funding to operate effectively. Financial support for First Priority helps cover the costs of food for Invite Weeks, school outreach activities, and area-wide outreach events like See You At The Pole. Additionally, it helps fund a First Priority Director who can assist more churches in getting involved in more areas and schools. The more students we help "call on the name of the Lord," the more who will be saved and spend eternity in the presence of Jesus. Each local First Priority network has leadership and an annually set budget to manage the ministry entrusted to them.

WAYS TO PROVIDE:

Parent Donors: Many parents are willing to sell coupon books, cookies, and more to fund their kids' activities, such as marching in parades or participating in tournaments. Booster clubs and parent organizations raise millions of dollars annually to support students. High school football programs alone can require hundreds of thousands of dollars to operate. Similarly, First Priority in your city and on school campuses also requires funding. A small group of parents contributing \$25-\$75 per month could provide a stable financial foundation for the First Priority club at school.

Church Mission Budgets

and Offerings: First Priority, at its core, is a local church strategy. We believe that through church mission budgets and special offerings, churches can help fund the local First Priority. Most churches allocate a missions budget to support missionaries and mission projects. To support First Priority, find out who manages your church's budget and request that the ministry be included.



Local Business Donors: Through the network of parents, there are countless connections with local business owners. Parents can play a crucial role in educating these businesses about the ministry of First Priority. We've found that business people are often deeply invested in the well-being of their city. They care about the moral and spiritual development of our youth, recognizing that the emerging workforce in their community needs to be of good moral character. While pastors and youth pastors may come and go, business leaders often have a lasting presence in the city.

Fundraising Events: As First Priority continues to grow, there will be numerous opportunities to host events that raise awareness and funds for the ministry's ongoing needs. Parents can assist in organizing and supporting these events.



Parents, churches, business leaders, and fundraising events are all excellent avenues for supporting First Priority. The strategies outlined in this guide are all viable and effective. Can they succeed? Absolutely. Will they succeed? That depends on us. Can God reach your city? YES! Will God reach your city? The "can" is up to God; the "will" is up to us. Will you take the steps necessary to help students fulfill the Great Commission in their schools?

As a parent, you are one of First Priority's greatest assets. Over time, many churches may have lost sight of the Great Commission. You might think that someone "in the ministry" could easily approach churches with this idea and receive enthusiastic support, but this isn't always the case. From experience, a parent often has more influence than someone who has been in "the ministry" for 25 years. When parents speak up about the state of student culture, church staff tend to listen.

As the saying goes, "A hundred years from now, it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in, or the kind of car I drove... but the world may be different because I was important in the life of a child." - Forest Witcraft

TO TAKE THE
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CHRIST TO
EVERY
STUDENT

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