

# CONGRADUATIONS! CLASS OF 2010 GRAD EVENT

## ConGRADulations! Class of 2010 Grad Event Leader Guide



### Introduction

It is the end of another beginning. Depending on whom you talk to, it is known as either “*graduation*” or “*commencement*.” The “graduation” crowd is mostly made up of the graduating Senior Class. They see this as the time that they finally come of age and bring to a close their childhood. At graduation, they tend to want to look back, to remember the fun things they did as children together.

Those who see this event as “commencement” tend to be parents, school officials, and youth leaders. We can see very clearly the future that looms just over the horizon for the Senior Class of 2010. We want our Grads to look ahead and make the wisest choices they can — choices that we adults know shape a person’s entire lifetime.

The surest way to see if a Senior is concentrating on “graduation” or “commencement” is to ask them a simple question: “What do you want to be when you grow up?” Upon hearing that question, some students will look a little sheepish, smile self-consciously, and innocently shrug their shoulders. Others will stammer out something

that makes little sense, but sounds suspiciously like something their parents would like them to say.

No matter how much your Grads want to focus on the past, their minds unwillingly sneak past graduation and look into the misty fog of the future. They wonder if they are doing the right things with their life. They question the directions they are headed. They hope everything will fall into place and work out well.

# CONGRADULATIONS! CLASS OF 2010 GRAD EVENT

11

## The Resources

With over one million copies given to graduates by over 25,000 churches, the ConGRADulations! CD-DVD-Gift Book is the #1 grad gift of this decade.

**The Music CD** features 16+ songs dealing with grad issues like success, friendship, the future, and personal faith; original recordings by today's most popular Christian artists –Skillet, tobyMac, Relient K, Flyleaf.

**The Media DVD** is loaded with personal videos to the Class of 2010: from fellow classmates, from previous graduates, from the top names in Christian music, from top speaker-authors (Francis Chan, Dave Ramsey, Dr. Steven Meyer). All offer words of wisdom and encouragement to the Class of 2010.

**The 48-page Gift Book** has amazing graphics, words of wisdom, author and speaker advice, grad encouragement, song lyrics and a greeting page for you to write a personal note to your grad.

**The Polycase Gift Package** allows you to include a personal note, your own CD with youth group pictures, gift coupons, a gift card, or additional gifts.

**The Three Sessions** written by long-time Interline Editor Ken McCoy deal with key issues facing the Class of 2010 and help you prepare them for the biggest transition of their young lives. These sessions are available online at [grad2010.com](http://grad2010.com)

**The Transition Resource Website** [Grad2010.com](http://Grad2010.com) offers grads more videos, more music, more transition ministry weblinks, more connection to ministries and fellow grads.

## This Leader Guide

Use these resources to plan an event for your graduating seniors that will encourage them to celebrate their past, to reinforce the core values of a Christian, and to provide them with some skills they will need in their near future. Through the three sessions and the Grads-only experiences you provide, your graduating seniors will reaffirm their unique position, and resolutely determine to pursue the dream that God has for them.

Using the music and media of *ConGRADulations* to reinforce the Biblical message makes sense. Most youth leaders are aware that teenagers listen to a lot of music. From the time they wake up in the morning until they fall asleep at night, music is the soundtrack of their lives. Its impact is undeniable. By making use of this *ConGRADulations* Grad Event you are tying into the power of music in the lifestyles of your grads. By getting *ConGRADulations! CD-DVD-Gift Book* into their hands, you'll be achieving the much-sought-after *double-whammy* effect that they discover the truth during your sessions, and then that truth is reinforced every time they listen to the *ConGRADulations!* songs on their iPod, watch the videos, take a look at the Gift Book. Make certain that every graduate gets his or her own copy of *ConGRADulations!* and you can be assured that your teaching will have the maximum impact possible!



It is the end of another beginning.

# CONGRADUATIONS! CLASS OF 2010 GRAD EVENT

## The Disease

It usually happens sometime just after Christmas. You notice it first in the eyes. There is an unmistakable dullness of the eyes, a reluctance to initiate or maintain eye contact, and a general downcast direction to their vision. The disease then spreads to the rest of the body. The infected body begins to slouch even more than usual during ministry events. It then moves to the back of the room. Arms are crossed and shoulders shrugged. In advanced cases, the body completely disappears from all youth ministry functions. It is a disease that strikes a majority of graduating seniors in their last year of high school. And it is the bane of youth leaders everywhere: *Senioritis*.

If you've been working with kids for a while, you've seen the victims. Let's face it: you've *been* a victim of Senioritis yourself! A significant challenge to a youth minister is to keep seniors involved all the way up until graduation. When Senioritis hits, it is a huge disappointment to those that work with teenagers. Just when

you think that all your hard work is going to pay off, your seniors mentally check out of high school — and your ministry along with it. Here are some pointers that will help you avoid and deal with this insidious disease.

## Preventative Medicine

It is always easier to prevent a disease than to deal with it once you have it. The same holds true for Senioritis. There are several things you can do in advance to minimize its impact:

## Ministry Structure

Many youth leaders do not realize how much the way that they organize their ministry contributes to the onset of Senioritis. Programs that do things *for* the students rather than *with* them encourage the disease. A good motto for your ministry's structure could be "*Student Led/Staff Directed*." By involving the students in *doing* the ministry, rather than merely watching the ministry being done to them, you can ensure that more seniors will remain involved in the ministry all the way through graduation.

## Leadership Responsibility

You may be thinking, "But we do involve our kids in the ministry. We ask them what they want to do, and have them plan the activities." If so, then you're getting there. However, planning and promoting activities won't always keep the attention and loyalty of a sharp 17-year-old. But when real responsibility is planned into the ministry, seniors stay enthusiastic. What's "real" responsibility? Give them positions on your leadership team that make seniors responsible for *people*, not just tasks. When students know that others are entrusting them with the growth of younger Christians, they then tend to take the preparation of ministry training more seriously.

## Anticipation

One of the toughest issues concerning working with seniors is that they sometimes feel that they have already experienced everything available to them in their youth group. But, by reserving some activities, opportunities and responsibilities just for them, you create anticipation... kids can hardly wait to become a senior so they can be on the Senior Staff/ go to the Seniors' Only retreat/sit in the balcony — or whatever you can creatively "sanctify" ("set apart") for seniors' use. Most high school campuses understand this; that's why there are Senior Squares/Quads/Benches/Halls at most schools.

## Bookend Events

Related to the *Anticipation* medicine is the idea of "bookend events" for seniors. At the beginning of the school year, schedule a Seniors-Only event (retreat, day-trip, etc.), and then plan another at the end of the school year. During the fall event you want to accomplish some goal-setting for the year, some planning and dreaming about making this final year their best one. Then, work that plan as hard as you can! At the conclusion of the school year, use this material for a Grads' Event where you recapture the great moments of the previous nine months.

## Emergency Room Procedures

Let's say it's too late for you to do the items listed under *Preventative Medicine*. Are you stuck with some listless, apathetic Grads? What is there that you can do to reinvigorate them? Try these "Three P's":

### Pray

It is wise to take a cue from Jesus; when His disciples asked Him why a particularly stubborn demon wouldn't respond to them, Jesus said, "This kind can come out only by prayer." That's not to say that your Senioritis victims are demon-possessed (!) — just that sometimes the best thing you can do is talk with God. Only He can change people from the inside out. Your prayer should be that He would grant your seniors a "willing spirit" (*Psalm 52:12*).

### Parents

One group of people is generally more interested in your Grads than you are: their parents! By communicating with parents the signs and pitfalls of Senioritis, you can enlist their support to work with you to keep the involvement of your seniors high on the priority scale.

### Persuade

Most people avoid conflict. When they sense that something is wrong, they want to pretend that everything is all right. As a youth leader, you need to realize that Senioritis, although common, is not good. By talking with your Grads about what they are experiencing, you may be able to help them identify their condition, and determine to make the most of their final weeks in the youth ministry.

Senioritis is, as problems go, a fairly benign disease. But it is a problem that most youth leaders deal with every year. You can, with some work, help seniors to have a tremendous final year of high school — one that they will look back on fondly as a watershed period in their life.

# SENIORITIS

# Grads-Only Programs

The ConGRADulations! Class of 2010 Resources have been designed for you to use in a variety of ways. The three sessions can be used all together in sequence, or you can pick-and-choose one or more sessions to use. These ConGRADulations! Resources are great for Sunday morning Christian Education classes, midweek youth meetings, retreats, small Bible study groups – the options are practically endless!

You can do a “Mix-N-Match” with these Grads-Only events. You may want to use a couple of the sessions as supplemental Sunday School curriculum for a couple of weeks, followed by a Single-Event for Grads. Or, use one or two of the sessions in the Midweek Program, have an Event for Grads using one of the sessions, and finish with an Overnighter. The possibilities are limited only by your imagination, so get creative!

## Three-Week Series Midweek

Set aside a block of time for you to concentrate on your graduating seniors, and use this material as the foundation of your curriculum. Plan on promoting this series heavily to your Grads; many kids are not motivated by the subject matter, but if you communicate this series as an “exclusive” opportunity for a select group, it will have more appeal. You can use this material in at least three settings:

### Sunday School

If your church has an extremely organized Sunday School, you will want to get the Superintendent’s permission to use this as a special curriculum supplement for graduating seniors. It might also be necessary for you to get approval for forming a three-week class of exclusively seniors. Start the series no later than six weeks before graduation.

If your midweek ministry program can handle it, create a series sometime before graduation that honors seniors. Using this material as a guide, adapt it to fit the other grades too. By honoring the seniors in this way, you are giving the younger students a reason to look forward to becoming seniors themselves.

### Single Event

Many churches and ministries have a Graduation Banquet at the end of the school year. This material can be adapted to become the theme of your banquet or other single event for your Grads. The benefit of having the *ConGRADulations! CD-DVD-Gift Book* to give as a gift and continuing reminder of the ministry you have had with the seniors makes using this material all the more attractive.



# CONGRADUATIONS! CLASS OF 2010 GRAD EVENT

## BIGGER IDEAS

You might have additional “firepower” and want to do something a little bigger like an Overnighter or Travel Camp for your seniors. We have outlined some basic ideas on how to use the resources in these types of events.

### Overnighter

The Overnighter is especially good for smaller groups (a dozen Grads or less with a couple of leaders), and packs a lot of bang into a small amount of time.

Meet with your seniors and choose a time and place for the Overnighter. Try to go someplace that has plenty of “Brag Factor” — someplace that the students can brag about before and after the trip. Rent hotel rooms (avoid staying in homes, churches or camps) to increase the “special” nature of this trip. Get the hotel to let you use one of the meeting rooms through the second evening, and rent a room on the second day for students to use to change/shower/etc. in. Choose a location that has plenty of activities available to do during the day and evening. Plan to leave town early, and get back as late as you can!

#### Overnighter Schedule

##### Friday

- 1:00 - Load vans at church
- 2:00 - Depart
- 5:00 - Arrive at hotel, get into rooms
- 6:30 - Dinner
- 8:00 - Session 1
- 9:30 - Free Time/Recreation

##### Saturday

- 8:30 - Breakfast / Coffee shop
- 9:30 - Session 2
- 11:00 - Check out of rooms  
Recreation/Sightseeing
- 12:30 - Meet for Lunch
- 1:30 - Recreation/Sightseeing
- 6:30 - Fancy dinner
- 8:30 - Session 3
- 10:00 - Special Activity  
(hot-tubbing\*,  
ice-skating,  
rollerblading, etc.)
- 12:00 - Load vans, head  
for home

### Travel Camps

As the name implies, a Travel Camp means that you stay on the move. Travel Camps afford plenty of “brag factor” as well as momentum for your ministry. That’s because students don’t have that many opportunities to do these kinds of things, and because the nature of a Travel Camp requires some preparations beforehand by the participants. (For instance, it would not be wise to attempt a week-long bike ride without getting your rear-end used to the bicycle seat!)

There are as many variations on the travel camp theme as there are youth leaders, but the two most-common ones are:

#### Base Camp With Day Trips

In this version of the Travel Camp, you sleep in the same place every night, but each day’s activities are different, and may take a couple of hours of driving to get there from the Base Camp. Some Day Trip ideas are: water-skiing, sightseeing downtown, rappelling and rock-climbing, State/County Fair, hiking, sailing, bicycling, amusement/theme park, etc.

#### On-The-Move Camp

“Getting there” is the idea of this camp experience. Spending a few days canoeing, large-craft sailing, bicycling, houseboating, backpacking, or whatever-ing is a great way to gain some last shared experiences with your seniors. Make sure that you bring along with you an expert in the particular travel mode you choose. There’s nothing but trouble ahead for you if you are biking 200 miles and no one knows how to change a flat inner tube!

#### Travel Camp Schedule

##### Day 1

- 1:00 - Load vans at church
- 2:00 - Depart
- 5:00 - Arrive at site, set up camp
- 6:30 - Dinner and Cleanup
- 8:00 - Session 1
- 9:30 - Free Time/Recreation

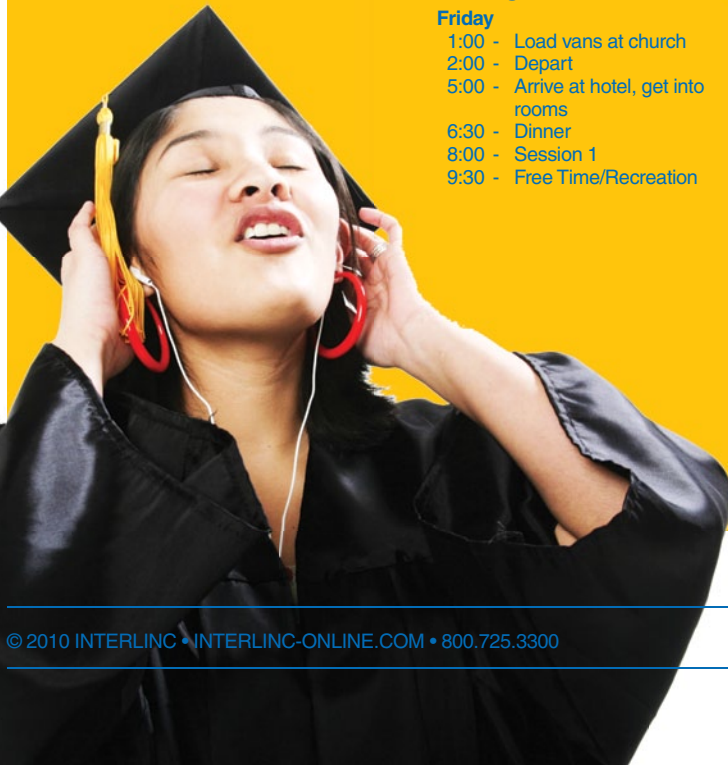
##### Daily Schedule

- 7:30 - Breakfast prep
- 8:15 - Breakfast and Cleanup
- 9:00 - Quiet Time
- 10:00 - Break camp, Travel
- 12:30 - Lunch
- 5:00 - Arrive at site, set up camp

- 6:30 - Dinner and Cleanup
- 8:00 - Session
- 9:30 - Free Time/Recreation
- 11:00 - Lights Out

##### Final Day

- 7:00 - Breakfast prep
- 7:45 - Breakfast and Cleanup
- 8:15 - Quiet Time
- 9:00 - Final Session / “Say So” testimonies
- 10:30 - Break camp / head home



# CONGRADULATIONS! CLASS OF 2010 GRAD EVENT

17

## “The Big Idea” Adopt A School

There are hundreds of students in the Class of 2010 that have not yet been touched by your youth ministry. Without sounding overly dramatic, this “Big Idea” Grad Event may be their last chance to hear the Good News. A Billy Graham Crusade study found that 85% of the Christians in America came to Christ before they turned 18, and 95% before their 21st birthday. If the Class of 2010 graduates without giving the Gospel a fair hearing, only 15% of them will experience eternal life. Your efforts with this event could be the most effective energy you spend this year!

### The Vision

What do you envision could happen through this “Big Idea” Grad Event? Notice that we used the word “through” — not “at.” In order to effectively communicate to your leaders and your seniors what this event is, you need to establish what you hope happens *as a result* of doing it. Here are some key ideas to keep in mind as you develop *your vision* for this ministry opportunity:

- Your “vision” should be about people, not numbers. You should think “How would this influence (name of ‘dropped’ senior)?”
- Your “vision” *should* be measurable in terms of impact, not attendance. For instance, rather than saying, “We hope to have 500 seniors attend” you could say, “Imagine what will happen if we reach the entire Senior Class of 2010 at Central High!”
- You should be able to clearly communicate your “vision” to others. Boil it down to a single sentence.
- Your “vision” should be impossible. It should *require* the involvement of God to be successful. That’s called “faith.”

Developing a clear, concise, and winsome “vision” the “Big Idea!” Grad Event is vitally important. Your ability to enlist the support of your volunteer leaders, your currently active seniors, your congregation, and others is

directly attributable to your ability to communicate your vision for this event. The better you are at telling others what God could do through this event, the more successful your event will be!

### Find the Funds

When you planned your budget for this year, you probably did not have a project with the scope of the *Big Idea* in mind. Doing something of this size carries a pretty hefty price tag. Purchasing a copy of *ConGRADulations! Class of 2010 CD-DVD-Gift Book* for every senior at a local school is a perfect fundraising project. Here are some ideas about gathering those extra funds.

### Partner With Business Owners

Many business professionals who are Christians are as concerned about reaching young people with the Gospel as you are. They often regard you and your staff as their emissaries, doing what they wish they could do. They correctly understand their role as enabling you to do what God has called and gifted you to accomplish. When they can be involved in tangible ways through donating their time, their resources, and their relationships, they get a real sense of being involved in the ministry *with* you.

Many Christian business people are looking for effective ways to be involved in reaching teenagers with the Gospel. They are willing and open to opportunities for participation. And, their business experience has taught them that investing in the right resources can be very profitable. Your approach should help your friends in business see the opportunity that the Class of 2010 represents, and show them how an investment can result in eternal profit.

### Initial Contact

Send a letter to your Christian business contacts that will communicate the urgency of reaching the Class of 2010 and sketch a brief outline of the *Big Idea*. Send out only as many letters as you can follow up with a

phone call five business days later. (If you send out 100 letters on Tuesday, can you make 100 phone calls the following Monday?) Send ten letters a day, and make sure you contact each recipient within a week.

### Follow-Up Phone Call

Give the letters five business days to reach their destination and get read. Then, make a follow-up phone call to each recipient. The purpose of the call is to:

1. Get their initial response to the *Big Idea*. Are they interested?
2. See if a follow-up appointment needs to be scheduled.
3. Ask if they are ready to make a contribution right away.

If your Christian businesspersons are ready to make a donation immediately, arrange to drop by personally and pick up their checks. Doing so communicates your gratitude and helps them identify themselves as working with you to reach the Class of 2010.

### Appointment

If you need to personally talk with your potential sponsors, make a morning appointment that will take no more than fifteen minutes. During your conversation, keep in mind this main point: people generally support *people*, as justified by the cause; they don’t tend to support a cause as justified by people. In your fifteen minutes with them, cover these topics:

1. **The Opportunity.** Point out the statistics that show the responsiveness of young people to the Gospel and the issues they face.
2. **Your Efforts.** Presumably you have spent three or four years working with the Class of 2010. Briefly recount some of the accomplishments achieved in that time (events you’ve held, relationships with students and school personnel you’ve established, etc.). Emphasize that this last push has not been your only attempt to reach these students.
3. **Big Idea Campaign.** Talk about the importance of music, how it can communicate God’s truth

again and again as students listen to the album. Explain how the *ConGRADulations! Class of 2010 CD-DVD-Gift Book* can carry a message of hope and a place to turn to in times of need. Brainstorm on some ways these can carry a message from the business... a win/win situation for you and your potential sponsor.

4. **The Options.** Show your friend how they can help reach an entire class, by providing the finances to get *ConGRADulations! Class of 2010* into the hands of a lunch table crowded with seniors, or a classroom full of students, or a busload, or even the entire class of graduates.

When you have only a couple of minutes left in your appointment, ask if they would like to make a donation to this campaign. If they are willing, go ahead and take their checks right then, or arrange to have them picked up. If they don’t want to decide right then, ask if you can call them back the next day. Emphasize that the time is short, and that you need to act quickly if you are going to be able to get the gifts ordered in time to get them to the seniors. Thank them for allowing you to share your burden with them, and close the appointment with a prayer for the Class of 2010.

### Parental Involvement

The parents of your seniors are an important source of support for your *Big Idea* campaign. These are people who are very acquainted with you, your ministry, and other seniors. Invite them to a separate Parents’ Meeting for you to share some of the same information you covered with your business contacts. Invite some seniors to give their testimony about what the youth ministry has meant to them, and what they are attempting to accomplish for God’s Kingdom in these last weeks of high school. You might even show one of the videos/multi-medias that you are developing for your Grad Event. Ask the parents to get involved by choosing a group they want to get a *ConGRADulations! CD-DVD-Gift Book* to — lunch table, classroom, bus load or entire class.