

Wisdom Retreat Prep Pack

Preparation Checklist Now that your retreat date is set, you will need to complete each item in the checklist below to ensure the success of your retreat. If you have any questions, please call 952.922.0222. We're honored to be working with your school.

Book a facility (Page 3)

Ready your students for the retreat (Page 4)

Prepare day-of logistics (food, nametags) (Page 5)

Complete Priority One (P1) Form (Online)

This form tells us everything we need to know to prepare for your retreat. Find your P1 Form at youthfrontiers.org/wisdom-retreat-materials. Please fill out this form at least **four weeks before** your retreat.

Inform teachers, counselors and staff about your retreat (Pages 6 and 7)

Inform parents about your retreat (Page 8)



Wisdom Retreat Overview

The Youth Frontiers Wisdom Retreat includes a dynamic mix of activities designed to have the greatest impact on participants. Generally, the Wisdom Retreat runs **five and a half hours** in length. The retreat focuses on increasing class connectedness during a critical time in students' lives. We want to provide students with the opportunity to strengthen relationships and bring healthy closure to their high school years.



WELCOME

We welcome students with music and high-energy activities that break down social barriers. Our goal is to encourage students to take positive risks and connect with one another.



GOALS

After building a sense of community, our staff shares the retreat's goals. We encourage students to take a closer look at how they could nurture wise choices for the remainder of the school year.



PRESENTATIONS

Programs Staff share personal stories centered on the values of the retreat. With humor and heart, staff challenge students to make a positive difference in their lives.



SMALL GROUPS

Students meet in small groups to connect with one another and reflect on their time together.



SHARING

Students get the chance to publicly share positive memories and thank classmates and teachers.



FOLLOW-UP

We equip schools with a follow-up evaluation to help measure the effectiveness of the retreat.

Booking a Facility

Though we strongly recommend you select an off-campus location for your Wisdom Retreat, doing so is optional. Retreats at a neutral location are more effective and free from distractions. Schools typically reserve a space at a nearby community center, religious center, banquet center, hotel conference room or similar type of facility.

The Wisdom Retreat lasts five and a half hours. Please have the facility opened **at least one hour before students arrive** to allow the Youth Frontiers staff to set up and **remain open for 30 minutes after the retreat** for tear down. Please notify the facility staff that the retreat will be loud. Since music is an important element of our retreat, we use our own sound system to play live and recorded music throughout the day.

Ideal Room for Your Retreat

Chairs and table for Programs Staff

X

X Eight-foot table X

Open space for games, small groups, presentations, sharing. All participants should be able to sit knee-to-knee in one large circle in this space.

X X X X X

Chairs for teachers and staff

- 1 The minimum area for a group of 100 students is 1,600 square feet (allow 16 square feet per participant).
- 2 A carpeted room is recommended since students will spend a significant amount of time sitting on the floor.
- 3 We need **one eight-foot table** and **three chairs** for the Programs Staff, along with multiple garbage and recycling cans.
- 4 Chairs are also needed for teachers and staff to sit on. If you have a student in a wheelchair, chairs will need to be provided for their entire small group.

Transportation

When holding your retreat off-site, please arrange transportation to and from the facility and notify Youth Frontiers of the exact arrival and departure times. We also need to know if students are arriving in shifts, as the retreat will not begin until all participants are present.

Transportation costs are paid by the school and are not included in the Youth Frontiers retreat fee.

Preparing Your Students

Student Expectations

To maintain our program's quality and effectiveness, we ask that students do not use their phones on our retreats. These experiences are about building community and connection with the people in the room, and it's important that all participants are fully present. Refraining from cell phone use during the retreat also shows respect for all participants and facilitators.

The Wisdom Retreat is designed to be an experience that every student can participate in. During the retreat, your students will engage in high-energy group activities and quiet, reflective moments. These transitions from high to low energy can be difficult for some students. We recommend having an alternative activity and space for students who are unable to meet the behavioral expectations of the day.

We'd also like to remind you that the Wisdom Retreat is interactive, so comfortable clothing is recommended. Because we are on the floor for parts of the day, skirts and dresses are not recommended.

How to Talk to Your Students About Their Retreat

An important step in getting ready for your retreat is informing and getting your students excited about the experience. Outlining clear goals and expectations for the day will set your students and the retreat up for success.

We suggest emphasizing the below three points with your students:

1

The Wisdom Retreat will be a highly interactive experience. It is not a lecture on wisdom.

2

You and your classmates will be asked to participate in games, team-building activities, small-group conversations and moments of reflection.

3

The goal of the retreat is to build connections as a class and to bring closure to your high school years.

Retreat Day Details

Food

Youth Frontiers retreats have built-in time for both a mid-morning snack and lunch. On the morning of the retreat, the Youth Frontiers Lead Program Facilitator will confirm your lunch time with your main school contact. Typically, lunch occurs between two and a half and three hours after the start of the retreat and is considered part of the experience.

Best Practices

- Provide a mid-morning snack. You have the option to bring snacks for students, like granola bars, during the first small-group conversation.
- Ask students and/or your cafeteria to provide **bag lunches**. This allows the most flexibility.
- **Keep lunch in the room.** Students and leaders will not be allowed to leave the retreat site for lunch, even if you have an open lunch policy at your school. Using your school cafeteria is not recommended.
- Have **garbage and recycling cans** in the retreat room.

Nametags

Students need to be wearing their nametags before the retreat begins. Distribute nametags to the students prior to your arrival at the retreat location. When students are wearing nametags, Programs Staff can immediately begin connecting with students by name.



Pro Tip: Some school communities will also add preferred gender pronouns to the bottom left corner of their students' nametags.

For Your Staff

Staff Expectations

- **Select staff/chaperones to be present.** One staff per every 30 students.
- **Attend the teacher meeting(s)** with the YF Lead Program Facilitator.
- **Be present** with the students during the large-group activities and topic-based talks.
- **Participate** in activities as they feel comfortable.
- **Assist** with any behavior corrections or disciplinary problems as needed.
- **Help distribute** snack, lunch and retreat materials as needed.

Participation Benefits

1

Teachers/staff will better understand the language of the retreat, enabling them to reinforce those lessons in the classroom.

2

The retreat experience builds community. Teachers have told us that the retreat gives them a chance to see students in a different light, and many students say the same about their teachers.

3

The values we discuss are timeless and everyone can benefit from this experience.

Special Note

Sharing

During both small-group conversations and large-group sharing, students will be asked to refer to their own experiences at school.

At the end of your Wisdom Retreat, there will be time for students to share some thoughts and reflections from the day. Our staff will create expectations for your students regarding what is appropriate to share. The students will be asked to focus on what they want to do personally to improve themselves and their community, and to refrain from blaming or dwelling on past conflicts with classmates.

Occasionally, students may bring up emotional or personal experiences. To ensure appropriate sharing, our staff will redirect students, when necessary, to stay within proper boundaries. We recommend that you have a counselor or mental health professional present at the retreat in the event that a student requires further support.

If, during any part of the retreat, a YF staff member is made aware of a student referring to wanting to hurt themselves or others, our staff will document the incident and relay it to one of your staff, ideally a counselor or school psychologist.

Sample Memo to Staff

Dear Staff,

I am excited about the upcoming Wisdom Retreat to be presented by Youth Frontiers, Inc. Youth Frontiers (YF) is a nonprofit organization that has been delivering retreats to schools since 1987. They provide schools with experiences that inspire character, civility and community so that our next generation of leaders is grounded in character. Last year, YF worked with more than 127,000 students and educators throughout the country.

On the day of our retreat, you are asked to fully participate in the retreat experience. Youth Frontiers recognizes how busy educators are and that you may want to complete work outside of the retreat room. However, I ask that you remain present for the duration of the retreat to not only assist with behavior corrections as needed, but also to experience the power of the retreat for yourself.

Your participation is important, both to understand and be able to reinforce the messages of the day.

Youth Frontiers asks teachers and staff to:

- **Select staff/chaperones to be present.** One staff per every 30 students.
- **Attend the teacher meeting(s)** with the YF Lead Program Facilitator.
- **Be present** with the students during the large-group activities and topic-based talks.
- **Participate** in activities as they feel comfortable.
- **Assist** with any behavior corrections or disciplinary problems as needed.
- **Help distribute** snack, lunch and retreat materials as needed.

The Youth Frontiers Wisdom Retreat is scheduled on _____ for the 12th-grade class, and will be located at _____.

Visit youthfrontiers.org/wisdom-retreat for more information about the Wisdom Retreat. For additional resources, visit youthfrontiers.org/wisdom-retreat-materials.

Thanks in advance for your support and participation at this important event.

Sincerely,

School Principal or Staff Member

Sample Letter for Parents/Caregivers

Dear Parent/Caregiver,

Our school believes that to do well in school, students need to feel connected to their school community. In our ongoing effort to create a positive and caring school culture, we are having a Youth Frontiers Wisdom Retreat.

Youth Frontiers (YF) is a nonprofit organization that has been delivering retreats to schools since 1987. They provide schools with experiences that inspire character, civility and community so that our next generation of leaders is grounded in character. Last year, YF worked with more than 127,000 students and educators throughout the country. On the Wisdom Retreat, the YF Programs Staff will focus on creating a more positive school community by engaging students in a variety of activities that help them reflect on their high school experience and commit to leaving a positive legacy at our school.

This high-energy, interactive retreat is scheduled on _____ for the 12th-grade class and will be held at _____.

To reinforce the positive effects of the retreat, we believe it's important for the entire community to be involved in supporting and communicating the messages delivered on the retreat. Because of this, we encourage parents and caregivers to inquire about their student's retreat experience by asking the following questions:

1. What activities did you find fun?
2. Did you see any of your classmates in a new way?
3. How will you use the lessons of your high school experience moving forward?

Visit youthfrontiers.org/wisdom-retreat for more information.

Sincerely,

School Principal or Staff Member