

Courage 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)

Find small-group leaders (Page 4)

Ready your students for the retreat (Page 5)

Prepare day-of logistics (food, nametags) (Page 6)

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/courage-retreat-materials. Please fill out this form at least **four weeks before** your retreat.

Inform teachers, counselors and staff about your retreat (Pages 7-8, 10-11)

Inform parents about your retreat (Page 9)

Spanish, Hmong and Somali versions of our enclosed parent letter are also available on Youth Frontiers' website.



Courage Retreat® Overview

The Youth Frontiers Courage Retreat includes a dynamic mix of activities designed to have the greatest impact on participants. Generally, the Courage Retreat runs **five and a half hours** in length. The retreat focuses on how fear and pressure to follow the crowd can prevent students from acting with courage. The retreat helps students ask themselves important questions like: “What effects do my actions have on my school, my classroom, my friends and myself?”



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’re treating themselves and others at their school.



PRESENTATIONS

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



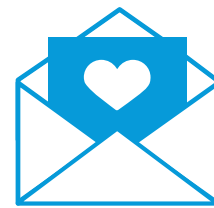
SMALL GROUPS

Students meet in small groups, led by high school or adult leaders, to process what they are learning and experiencing throughout the day.



SHARING

Students get the chance to safely and publicly express how they will show more courage to their teachers and classmates every day.



FOLLOW-UP

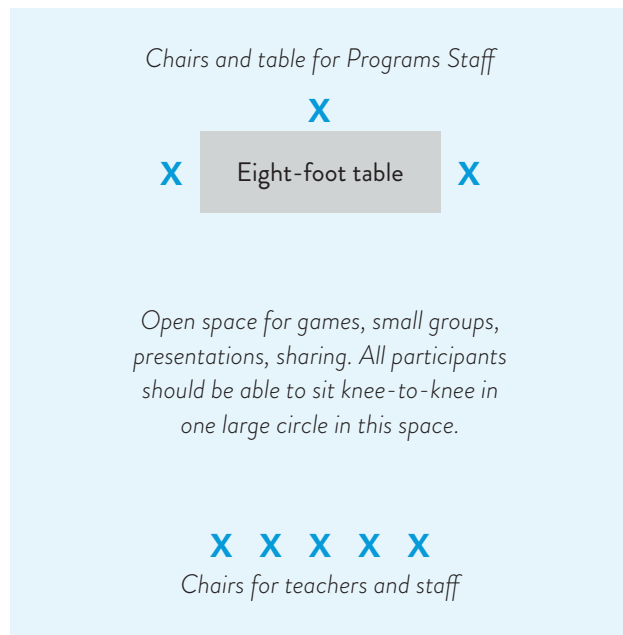
We equip schools with follow-up materials, language and measurement tools to reinforce the lessons students learned on the retreat.

Booking a Facility

Though we strongly recommend you select an off-campus location for your Courage 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 Courage Retreat lasts five hours and 30 minutes. 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



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. Small-group leaders need to arrive 45 minutes before the retreat begins.

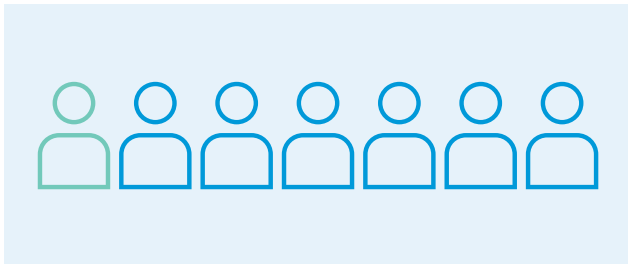
Transportation costs are paid by the school and are not included in the Youth Frontiers retreat fee.

Small-group Leaders

Small-group leaders establish the energy and tone of the retreat and have a major influence on its success. Students will meet in pre-assigned small groups for discussion three times during the retreat. Each discussion is facilitated by a small-group leader and allows students to talk about the messages of the day. We ask that small-group leaders arrive at the retreat ready to be present, engaged and committed to helping make the day a positive, meaningful experience for all.

Youth Frontiers recommends recruiting parents as small-group leaders. Leaders could also be local community members or high school students in the **11th grade or above**. Successful high school leaders are positive role models and demonstrate leadership potential in and/or outside of the classroom. We suggest reaching out to high school teachers, counselors and coaches for leader recommendations and sharing the opportunity with your local high school's student leadership and volunteer groups (e.g. Student Council, Link Crew, Key Club, etc.). There should be a gender balance and the diversity of the leaders should be similar to that of the students.

1:6 Ratio



We also recommend one leader for every six students.

There should be no more than eight students per leader. Our Programs Staff reserve the right, per our contract, to shorten or reschedule a retreat if there are not enough leaders/chaperones present.

Expectations

Small-group leaders are expected to:

- **Arrive 45 minutes before the retreat** begins and stay for the entire retreat. It is disruptive when leaders leave early.
- **Lead small groups.** This is their biggest responsibility of the day. They will need to be able to communicate well, keep conversations going and help students listen and share respectfully.
- **Help control the crowd.** During the large-group activities and talks, leaders need to spread out and sit with the students, not with each other.
- **Bring their own bag lunch**, unless your school is able to provide lunch for them.
- **Participate, have fun and encourage** students to do the same. Comfortable clothing is recommended.

Visit youthfrontiers.org/courage-retreat-materials for small-group leader recruitment tips and volunteer appreciation certificates.

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 Courage 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.** Please see the Courage Retreat Outline on the final page of this packet to learn more about the energy levels of different activities.

We'd also like to remind you that the Courage 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 Courage Retreat will be a highly interactive experience. It is not a lecture on courage.

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 take responsibility for your actions.

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

Before your retreat day, you will need to assign students into small groups. The groups should be as gender balanced as possible and avoid having good friends or high-conflict relationships in the same group.

Assign a number to each group (one to 15, for example), and make a nametag for each student using their first name and group number. Do not use letters or symbols to represent the groups. Be sure nametags are at least 48-point type or handwritten in large, legible penmanship so our staff can read them from far away.

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 and small-group leaders 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.
- **Initiate** any behavior corrections and address 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. Before the retreat, small-group leaders will be instructed to be mindful of maintaining appropriate boundaries for the students in their small-group conversations and to redirect the conversation if a student is sharing personal information that is inappropriate for a peer setting.

At the end of your Courage Retreat, there will be time for students to share some thoughts and reflections from the day. Our staff will set expectations for the students that this should be a time for them to share a commitment to make their class and their school better and that they should 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 someone else, our staff will document the incident and relay it to one of your staff, ideally a counselor or school psychologist. Small-group leaders will also be asked to be aware of similar comments and to relay that information to one of our staff.

Sample Memo to Staff

Dear Staff,

I am excited about the upcoming Courage 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.

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 to be able to reinforce the messages of the day, and to help build on the momentum created from this experience.

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.
- **Initiate** any behavior corrections and address disciplinary problems as needed. Please have a plan for students who demonstrate they are not ready for the retreat experience.
- **Help distribute** snack, lunch and retreat materials as needed.

The Youth Frontiers Courage Retreat is scheduled on _____ for the _____ grade class, and will be located at _____.

Visit youthfrontiers.org/courage-retreat for more information on Youth Frontiers and to watch a video about the Courage Retreat. To view an outline of the retreat day, go to youthfrontiers.org/courage-retreat-outline. For additional resources, visit youthfrontiers.org/courage-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 Courage 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. On the Courage Retreat, the YF Programs Staff will focus on creating a more positive school community by engaging students in a variety of activities that enhance self-confidence, empathy and connectedness.

This high-energy, interactive retreat is scheduled for _____ for the _____ 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. What were the small-group leaders like?
3. What were some of the social fears that you discussed during the small-group conversations?
4. What's a fear you really struggle with?
5. What is one thing you can do tomorrow at school to show more courage?

Visit youthfrontiers.org/courage-retreat for more information on Youth Frontiers and to watch a video about the Courage Retreat.

Sincerely,

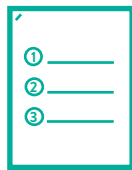
School Principal or Staff Member

** This letter is also available in Spanish, Hmong and Somali versions on the YF website.*



Follow-up Materials

Character matters every day. To support your ongoing efforts to inspire character in your students, we provide several follow-up tools. You can find all of our follow-up materials at youthfrontiers.org/courage-retreat-materials. If you have any questions or feedback, please let us know by emailing info@youthfrontiers.org.



Reflection Journals

We provide journal exercises that help students to reflect on the retreat soon after it happens. Students solidify their role in making their school a more positive place.



Student Evaluations

Our online evaluation measures shifts in cognition, attitude and perception of behavior as a result of the retreat experience. Your evaluation link will be emailed to you two weeks after your retreat.



Flashback Video

This short video features some of our Retreat Facilitators and reminds your students of the messages of courage that they learned on their retreat.



Conversation Starters

Dive deeper into the lessons of the Courage Retreat with these thematically grouped conversation starters. These are ideal for morning meetings or advisory periods.

Courage Retreat® Outline

The Courage Retreat is filled with activities that most students find refreshing and energizing. For some students, we know that these activities may cause stress and anxiety. We want every student to be a part of the retreat, but we understand if accommodations must be made for some students. Please use this information to talk with your students ahead of time about what they should expect and to decide if accommodations should be made. A YF staff member will be available on the day of your retreat to answer any questions you have.

MINUTES	ACTIVITY
10	WELCOME & GAMES
20	SHOW ME THE MONEY
10	GET ACROSS
20	MONGO VOLLEYBALL
10	GOAL OF THE DAY
25	SMALL GROUP 1
25	LARGE GROUP
10	DRAMA
15	TALK 1
15	SMALL GROUP 2
35	LUNCH/DANCE
10	LEADER INTERVIEWS
25	JUMP ROPE ACTIVITY
20	TALK 2
15	SMALL GROUP 3
10	COURAGE CARDS
25	PEBBLE IN THE POND
5	CLOSING REMARKS
5	CLASS CONNECTION

GAMES & ACTIVITIES

Students may be asked to find partners, shake hands and give high-fives or have close physical contact with one another. Students are encouraged to participate as they feel comfortable. Welcome activities can be loud.

CONTENT

Throughout the day, we take breaks from the high-energy activities to talk about courage. We encourage students to be active listeners during these times, and ask that staff remain in the room.

MUSIC & DANCE

We use music to create class unity, reinforce our message and give students a chance to expend energy. There will be loud cheering, singing and dancing during these times. We encourage students and teachers to use ear plugs if they are sensitive to loud noise.

SHARING

The retreat day culminates with sharing, giving students the chance to be heard by their class. Students are expected to be quiet during this time and show respect for their peers.

