

CHAMELEON PROJECT

LEADER IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Chameleon Project Leader Guide! This 8-week summer program challenges students to stop "changing colors" to fit in and instead embrace their God-given identity. As a leader, you play a crucial role in guiding students from being chameleons (changing to blend in) to champions (standing firm in their true identity).

This guide provides implementation strategies, weekly preparation tips, small group facilitation techniques, and practical advice for maximizing student engagement and transformation.

PROGRAM FOUNDATIONS

Core Message

The central message of the Chameleon Project is: **"God created you to STAND OUT, not to BLEND IN."** Every activity, message, and interaction should reinforce this truth.

Seven Key Themes

1. **DON'T BE A CHAMELEON:** Living Your True Colors (Genesis 25:24-34)
2. **FILTERS OFF:** Living Authentic in a Fake World (Daniel 1:8-21)
3. **CANCEL-PROOF:** Standing Firm When Culture Pushes Back (Daniel 3:1-30)
4. **LEVEL UP:** Pursuing Purpose Over Popularity (Genesis 37:1-11)
5. **MAIN CHARACTER ENERGY:** Finding Your Identity in Christ (1 Samuel 17:38-40)
6. **NO CAP:** Dating Different in a Hookup Culture (1 Thessalonians 4:3-7)
7. **SQUAD GOALS:** Choosing Your Circle Wisely (1 Corinthians 15:33)

Program Structure

- **Weekly Wednesday Services:** 7:00-8:30 PM (July & August)
- **Weekly Small Groups:** Integrated into Wednesday service

- **Daily Text Messages:** Faith-building content sent to students
 - **Special Events:** Social events, fundraisers, and activities
 - **Awards Service:** Final celebration on the last Sunday in August at 6:00 PM
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LEADERSHIP ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Youth Pastor / Program Director

- Cast vision for the Chameleon Project
- Deliver weekly messages or coordinate guest speakers
- Oversee program implementation and leader training
- Manage budget and resources
- Communicate with parents and church leadership
- Lead weekly leader meetings

Small Group Leaders

- Facilitate weekly small group discussions
- Build relationships with 5-8 assigned students
- Track student participation and growth
- Pray for students daily
- Communicate with students between gatherings
- Help with program setup and teardown

Support Team Members

- **Games Coordinator:** Prepare and lead icebreakers and team competitions
- **Worship Leader:** Plan music aligned with weekly themes
- **Tech Team:** Manage slides, sound, and media elements
- **Hospitality Team:** Create welcoming environment and prepare snacks
- **Registration Team:** Track attendance and manage point system
- **Prayer Team:** Commit to covering program and students in prayer

PRE-PROGRAM PREPARATION

4 Weeks Before Launch

- **Leadership Training:** Host comprehensive training session
 - Review program themes and materials
 - Clarify roles and expectations
 - Practice small group facilitation
 - Build team unity
- **Parent Communication:**
 - Send information packet
 - Hold parent information meeting
 - Gather necessary permissions and contact information
- **Environment Preparation:**
 - Order themed decorations
 - Create promotional materials
 - Design t-shirts and program logo items

2 Weeks Before Launch

- **Promotion Push:**
 - Student invitations and social media campaign
 - Announcements in church services
 - Personal invitations to potential students
- **Final Prep Meeting:**
 - Walk through first service flow
 - Confirm all materials and responsibilities
 - Prayer over the program and students

1 Week Before Launch

- **Text Message System Test:**
 - Send welcome message to registered students
 - Confirm all numbers are working properly
 - **Final Environment Setup:**
 - Transform meeting space with chameleon theme
 - Prepare small group spaces
 - Set up registration and check-in system
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WEEKLY IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

Standard Wednesday Schedule

- **5:30 PM:** Leadership Team Arrives
 - Prayer time (15 minutes)
 - Final setup and preparation (45 minutes)
- **6:30 PM:** Doors Open
 - Welcome team greets students
 - Pre-service activities begin
 - Registration and check-in
- **7:00 PM:** Program Begins
 - High-energy welcome (5 minutes)
 - Worship (15 minutes)
 - Icebreaker/team competition (15-20 minutes)
 - Weekly message (20 minutes)
 - Small group discussion (20 minutes)
 - Announcements and closing (10 minutes)
- **8:30 PM:** Program Ends

- Leaders available for prayer and conversation
- Quick leadership debrief

Weekly Leader Meeting (Recommended: Sunday afternoon or Tuesday evening)

- Review previous week's wins and challenges (15 minutes)
 - Preview upcoming week's theme and responsibilities (20 minutes)
 - Small group leader check-in (15 minutes)
 - Prayer for students by name (10 minutes)
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WEEKLY THEME IMPLEMENTATION

WEEK 1: DON'T BE A CHAMELEON

Preparation Focus:

- Create visually striking contrast between "chameleon" and "true colors"
- Prepare personal examples of times you've been tempted to blend in
- Practice the Esau/Jacob story for maximum impact

Environment:

- Entrance: Display showing chameleons changing colors
- Stage: Begin with muted colors, transition to vibrant colors during message
- Small Group Areas: Identity reflection stations

Student Engagement Strategy:

- Have students identify one area where they tend to change colors
- Challenge them to stand out in that area this week
- Text message followup specifically addressing these areas

Small Group Discussion Tips:

- Start with low-risk questions about external pressures
- Gradually move to deeper questions about internal identity
- End with commitment to one "stand out" action

WEEK 2: FILTERS OFF

Preparation Focus:

- Gather examples of filtered vs. unfiltered social media posts
- Prepare personal story of removing a "filter" in your life
- Familiarize yourself with Daniel's story in Babylon

Environment:

- Entrance: "Filter station" showing how filters change appearance
- Stage: Before/after displays showing reality vs. filtered reality
- Small Group Areas: "No Filter Zones" with authentic conversation prompts

Student Engagement Strategy:

- Have students identify their most common "filters"
- Challenge them to post one completely unfiltered truth this week
- Text message encouragement when they follow through

Small Group Discussion Tips:

- Model vulnerability by sharing first
- Create safe space by establishing confidentiality
- Celebrate small steps toward authenticity

WEEK 3: CANCEL-PROOF

Preparation Focus:

- Research current cancel culture examples relevant to teens
- Prepare personal story of standing firm despite criticism
- Practice telling Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's story

Environment:

- Entrance: "Pressure Test" interactive station
- Stage: Fire-themed elements representing the fiery furnace

- Small Group Areas: "Stand Firm" spaces with solid foundations

Student Engagement Strategy:

- Guide students to write their "Even if..." statements
- Role-play standing firm in difficult situations
- Text message reminders of their commitment

Small Group Discussion Tips:

- Acknowledge the real cost of standing firm
 - Balance conviction with kindness
 - Focus on God's presence in the fire, not just deliverance from it
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WEEK 4: LEVEL UP**Preparation Focus:**

- Gather examples of teens choosing purpose over popularity
- Prepare personal story of a difficult but purposeful choice
- Study Joseph's story for relevant application points

Environment:

- Entrance: "Level Up" gaming-style progress tracker
- Stage: Visual pathway from popularity to purpose
- Small Group Areas: Purpose discovery stations

Student Engagement Strategy:

- Help students identify their God-given purpose
- Challenge them to take one purpose-driven step
- Text message check-ins on their progress

Small Group Discussion Tips:

- Listen for hints of purpose in students' stories
- Help them distinguish between temporary popularity and lasting impact

- Encourage celebration of others' purpose journeys
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WEEK 5: MAIN CHARACTER ENERGY

Preparation Focus:

- Study David and Saul's armor story for modern application
- Prepare personal story of finding your unique strength
- Gather examples of Biblical characters embracing their unique identity

Environment:

- Entrance: "Main Character Mirror" reflection activity
- Stage: Spotlight elements highlighting individuality
- Small Group Areas: Identity strengths assessment stations

Student Engagement Strategy:

- Guide students to identify their unique strengths
- Challenge them to use those strengths this week
- Text message affirmations of their identity

Small Group Discussion Tips:

- Focus on God as the Author of their story
 - Help students identify "armor" that doesn't fit them
 - Celebrate unique differences within the group
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WEEK 6: NO CAP

Preparation Focus:

- Research current dating culture statistics and trends
- Prepare to handle sensitive topics with grace and truth
- Develop clear, biblical explanations for boundaries

Environment:

- Entrance: "Truth or Cap" interactive game
- Stage: Visual representation of guardrails on a mountain road
- Small Group Areas: Single-gender spaces for honest conversation

Student Engagement Strategy:

- Guide students to establish personal boundaries
- Provide practical tools for maintaining those boundaries
- Text message encouragement for dating differently

Small Group Discussion Tips:

- Consider separating by gender for deeper discussions
- Balance grace and truth when discussing past choices
- Focus on the protection of boundaries, not just restriction

WEEK 7: SQUAD GOALS

Preparation Focus:

- Study Biblical examples of godly friendship
- Prepare personal story of how your circle influenced you
- Develop practical friendship evaluation tools

Environment:

- Entrance: "Circle Check" interactive assessment
- Stage: Visual representation of friendship circles
- Small Group Areas: Friendship building stations

Student Engagement Strategy:

- Guide students to evaluate their friendship circles
- Challenge them to strengthen positive relationships
- Text message prompts for friendship building

Small Group Discussion Tips:

- Help students evaluate influence without judgment
 - Provide strategies for difficult friendship conversations
 - Emphasize being an influencer, not just being influenced
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FINAL WEEK: AWARDS PREPARATION

Preparation Focus:

- Gather transformation stories from throughout the program
- Prepare meaningful awards for each student
- Develop compelling recap of the 7 themes

Environment:

- Entrance: Photo journey through the 8 weeks
- Stage: Celebration atmosphere with award elements
- Small Group Areas: Reflection and testimony stations

Student Engagement Strategy:

- Guide students to reflect on their 8-week journey
- Prepare selected students to share testimonies
- Text message final encouragements and celebration invites

Small Group Discussion Tips:

- Focus on specific growth observed in each student
 - Help students create ongoing accountability plans
 - Celebrate growth while acknowledging continuing journey
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SMALL GROUP FACILITATION STRATEGIES

Creating Safe Space

1. Establish Ground Rules:

- Confidentiality (what's said here stays here)

- Respect for different perspectives
- No judgment of others' journeys
- Everyone has the right to pass

2. Model Vulnerability:

- Share appropriate personal examples first
- Admit your own struggles with authenticity
- Show how you've grown through challenges

3. Respond to Vulnerability Well:

- Thank students for sharing
- Validate feelings without validating unhealthy choices
- Never use a student's vulnerability as a teaching moment

Effective Discussion Facilitation

1. Question Progression:

- Start with easy, low-risk questions
- Move to thought-provoking questions
- End with application questions

2. Handling Silence:

- Be comfortable with 5-7 seconds of silence
- Rephrase questions if needed
- Use prompts like "Anyone else have thoughts on this?"

3. Managing Dominant Talkers:

- "Those are great thoughts. Let's hear from someone who hasn't shared yet."
- Use written reflection moments to give everyone think time
- Privately affirm dominant talkers while encouraging listening

Pastoral Care Moments

1. Recognizing Need:

- Watch for emotional responses during discussions
- Notice changes in behavior or engagement
- Pay attention to concerning comments

2. Responding Appropriately:

- Move conversation to private setting when needed
- Ask permission: "Would it be okay if we talked about this later?"
- Know when to involve parents or youth pastor

3. Follow Up Plan:

- Text message check-ins after vulnerable moments
- Specific prayer for specific struggles
- Clear boundaries on what you can/can't handle alone

TEXT MESSAGE STRATEGY

Best Practices

1. Timing:

- Send messages between 3-4 PM on school days
- Send weekend messages between 10-11 AM
- Avoid sending after 8 PM

2. Response Management:

- Designate who will respond to message replies
- Establish 24-hour maximum response time
- Create standard responses for common questions

3. Tracking Engagement:

- Note which messages generate in-person conversations
- Track which students engage with messages
- Use insights to improve future messaging

Weekly Implementation

1. **Wednesday:** Theme introduction after service
2. **Thursday-Tuesday:** Daily themed messages
3. **Special days:** Additional event reminders

Customization Tips

1. Add student names when possible
 2. Reference group-specific moments
 3. Adjust language to match your speaking style
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POINTS SYSTEM MANAGEMENT

Point Earning Opportunities

1. **Weekly Participation:**
 - Wednesday attendance: 100 points
 - Small group participation: 50 points
 - Journal completion: 50 points
 - Bringing friends: 200 points per friend
2. **Special Challenges:**
 - Weekly theme challenges: 100 points
 - Social media challenges: 50 points
 - Service projects: 150 points
3. **Event Participation:**
 - Car Wash (July 12): 300 points
 - Bottle Drive (July 25): 300 points
 - Social Events: 200 points each
 - Putt-Putt & Pizza: 200 points
 - Camp Out: 500 points

Tracking System

1. Digital Options:

- Church management software
- Google Forms/Sheets
- Youth ministry apps

2. Physical Options:

- Student punch cards
- Wall tracker with student names
- Individual point passports

Rewards Implementation

1. Reward Levels:

- 25,000 points: Jet Ski Rental (30 minutes)
- 100,000 points: Shopping Spree (\$25.00)
- 25,000 points: Putt-Putt Golf (18 holes)
- 50,000 points: Go-Carts
- 60,000 points: Water Park

2. Distribution Timeline:

- Weekly point updates
- Mid-program reward options
- Final Awards Service celebration

PARENT PARTNERSHIP

Communication Strategy

1. Before Program:

- Information packet with themes and schedule
- Parent meeting explaining purpose and expectations

- Permission forms for activities and text messaging

2. During Program:

- Weekly email with theme overview
- Mid-program parent update
- Celebration invitation

3. Special Situations:

- Individual parent meetings for concerns
- Growth celebration communications
- Support requests for specific needs

Equipping Parents

1. Discussion Guides:

- Weekly theme overview
- 2-3 discussion questions for home
- Next steps suggestions

2. Growth Indicators:

- What to look for at home
- How to affirm authentic living
- When to celebrate "standing out"

HANDLING CHALLENGING SITUATIONS

Spiritual Questions

1. Doubt and Questions:

- Welcome questions without judgment
- Point to Scripture while acknowledging complexity
- Follow up with recommended resources

2. Faith Decisions:

- Be prepared for salvation responses
- Have next steps clearly outlined
- Involve parents appropriately

Behavioral Challenges

1. Disruptive Behavior:

- Address privately, not publicly
- Focus on behavior, not character
- Establish clear expectations going forward

2. Friend Conflicts:

- Listen to both sides separately
- Guide toward biblical conflict resolution
- Follow up to ensure resolution

Crisis Intervention

1. Know Your Reporting Requirements:

- Be clear on mandatory reporting laws
- Have reporting procedures documented
- Know who to involve immediately

2. Emergency Protocol:

- Medical emergency procedures
- Mental health crisis response
- Parent contact process

POST-PROGRAM SUSTAINABILITY

Continuing the Journey

1. Fall Follow-Up Plan:

- Regular youth program integration

- Monthly theme reinforcement
- Student leadership opportunities

2. Discipleship Pathway:

- Next steps for growing students
- Mentorship connections
- Service opportunities

Evaluation and Improvement

1. Leader Debrief:

- Full-team evaluation meeting
- Written feedback collection
- Improvement plan for next year

2. Student Feedback:

- Anonymous surveys
- Focus group discussions
- Individual growth stories

PRAYER STRATEGY

Leader Prayer Focus

1. Daily Personal Prayer:

- Pray through student list by name
- Pray for specific known struggles
- Pray for theme application

2. Team Prayer Times:

- Pre-service prayer huddle
- Weekly leader prayer meeting
- Prayer partners among leadership team

Student Prayer Engagement

1. Teaching Prayer:

- Model authentic prayer
- Provide guided prayer experiences
- Create safe spaces for prayer requests

2. Prayer Opportunities:

- Small group prayer time
 - Prayer response stations
 - Prayer partners among students
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RESOURCE DIRECTORY

Message Resources

1. **Scripture References:** Detailed Bible study notes for each theme
2. **Illustration Ideas:** Age-appropriate stories and examples
3. **Application Points:** Practical next steps for each message

Small Group Resources

1. **Discussion Guides:** Weekly question progressions
2. **Activity Instructions:** Interactive elements for each lesson
3. **Follow-Up Templates:** Text/email frameworks for continued conversation

Administrative Resources

1. **Budget Templates:** Financial planning documents
 2. **Promotion Materials:** Customizable graphics and announcements
 3. **Evaluation Forms:** Leader and student feedback tools
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CONCLUSION

The Chameleon Project is more than just an 8-week summer program—it's a transformational journey that can impact students' identities for a lifetime. As leaders, your authentic modeling of these principles is as important as the content itself.

Remember that transformation happens at different paces for different students. Celebrate small victories, be patient with struggles, and trust God's timing in each student's life.

Your investment in these students will echo into eternity as they learn to stand out rather than blend in, living as the unique individuals God created them to be.

"You were created to STAND OUT, not to BLEND IN!" – The Chameleon Project