

# HSM DISCUSSION CREWS

## **Why the switch from core groups?**

All ministry “structures” come with their strengths and weaknesses. Core groups were great at providing a space for friendships to flourish over a long period of time. Unfortunately, groups can easily become exclusive at the expense of total class unity, along with other challenges.

Discussion crews, we believe, will also provide a wonderful space for friendships to grow deeply. The upside to this structure transition is more exposure to students (and volunteer leaders) within the broader ministry. This will allow more perspectives to be heard and more friendships to be made. To add, students will be under the guidance of multiple Christ-following adult leaders, as opposed to one, over the course of their 4 year track in high school.

An often overlooked piece of the equation for a healthy high school ministry is the volunteer leaders. This “discussion crew” structure provides co-leadership. Volunteer leaders will grow alongside each other and have more opportunity to rest, giving students better quality discipleship.

## **What is a discussion crew?**

A discussion crew is a small “crew” consisting of 8-15 students and facilitated by 2 volunteer leaders. The primary purpose of this group is to seek unknown truths together over the course of 9 months (one school year) through reading, examining, and discussing Scripture.

## **How it works?**

Students will fill out a discussion crew application available on **September 12th & due September 19th**. On this app they will request for 3 friends and 2 leaders of their choice for their crew, along with logistical information and other questions. Jordan and Amy will take that information and prayerfully create the discussion crews which will be announced **October 29th**. Please remember that these groups will not consist of one, big friend group. There will be mixed personalities for a purpose. Discussion crew applications will happen every Fall.

# FAQ'S

**Q: What is your reasoning behind getting rid of the core group model that has been around for 30 years?**

**A:** The CG model has been great for a long time in some circumstances, but it also has had its flaws. We recognize that one model that has worked might not always be the right fit. We believe that the new discussion crew model can create a more unified ministry in this season, while also can helping to foster deep growth and maturity in our students through discussion. Students will have more opportunities to build friendships with other students beyond just a core group, and we see a real benefit in having students be led by multiple Christ-following adult leaders over the course of 4 years, instead of just 1.

**Q: When students put in requests for a specific leader or friends, will they be granted all of their requests?**

**A:** We want there to be familiarity within discussion crews, but this is not meant to be a big friend group. We want students to learn how to be in relationship with students they wouldn't otherwise know and hear alternative perspectives. We can guarantee that they will have either the leader of choice or one of their friends of choice. *Not all requests will be granted, but all requests will be taken into prayerful consideration.* We can also guarantee that they can hang out with their friends or preferred leaders outside of discussion time!

**Q: Will the discussion crew leader for my child change each year?**

**A:** Potentially. Each year students will re-apply to be in a discussion crew. If the leader they want to request is leading a crew within their age range, the student can request the leader, but no request is 100% guaranteed. Every school year we will adjust the crews according to various factors such as the availability of our volunteer staff, age of the student, and any other needs that discussion crews will have.

**Q: I want my child to feel safe to share. How will they be able to do that if their group changes all the time?**

**A:** We acknowledge that this is not an easy task. As groups change, we will intentionally foster time each year for discussion crew leaders and students to gain trust early in the year. We will equip and train our leaders to protect the vulnerability of students who share. We expect our leaders to set the tone and create a group dynamic of openness and safety. Our hope is that every student will feel the freedom to be who they are and say what they think, and our leaders play a big role in helping to form this culture in our ministry. The hope of our discussion crew is primarily to seek truth together from God's Word. We are hopeful that a byproduct of that is vulnerability in discussion crews. We also predict some familiarity of people, even as groups change each year.

**Q: My kid wants to be with their friends. This seems like it takes away the "fun" of hanging out with your friends at church.**

**A:** We recognize that each student is not always going to be in a discussion crew with their closest friends. However, we want to acknowledge that this discussion crew model is different from the core group model. These groups are formed solely for the purpose of discussion. Outside of discussion time, we want students to hang out with their friends and whoever else they want to hang out with. We hope our ministry can become more united than ever before as students are exposed to different faces and build relationships with more than just their core group over 4 years in HSM. Our main goal is to help students move toward Christian maturity and adulthood. We believe that relationships grow when we do that together!

**Q: How will you be equipping leaders to shepherd a new crew each year well?**

**A:** HSM has monthly leaders meetings, 1 annual leader retreat & 4 trainings outsourced by an organization that exists to equip volunteer youth leaders. We will constantly be equipping, supporting & challenging leaders to grow in their ability to lead discussions. To add, we will give leaders space in the beginning of the fall to spend time with students so that they can get to know each other outside of just discussions. We also see a benefit in the co-leading model to help leaders grow alongside one another and sharpen each other as they lead crews together.

**Q: What if my kid doesn't get along with his group? Can they change groups?**

**A:** We will handle this normally, in the same way that we do currently. If your student is having trouble with their group, we would be more than happy to have a conversation with them and hear them out. We cannot guarantee any changes for the school year, but are happy to listen and accommodate in some way if needed to do so. The benefit of the new model is that it allows for change each year if some crews don't click perfectly. In the beginning of the school year we will ask every student to at least give it a try before asking to switch.

**Q: My kid is going to be a senior and now has to change groups. How is this fair to them?**

**A:** Even if students are incoming seniors, we still see the value in restructuring to the discussion crew model. With the current numbers of students attending HSM on Wednesdays, we believe that this restructure will be great for the incoming senior class in order to provide them larger discussion crews and more community at HSM. It will also give them a unique leadership opportunity within their discussion crew.

**Q: My kid is too mature to discuss with younger kids.**

**A:** We hope they can demonstrate this maturity, lead by example, and help bring others into spiritual maturity with them. We see value in students learning how to interact with others who are different from them. We think that is what contributes to growth in maturity on both sides. We value students like yours as we seek to help all of our students grow into Christian adulthood.

**Q: My student really thrives with consistency. How can we still give them consistency with leaders and other peers if their group changes each year?**

**A:** Students are not spending most of their time in HSM in discussion crews. All times outside discussion can be spent with any leader and all students. In addition, leaders will most likely move up along with

students. So, there will be some level of consistency throughout the four years. Staff will be consistent across all grades as well.

**Q: My kid had a great Junior High group and now they have to split up?**

**A:** We recognize that some groups do love the core group model and this will be a challenge, but we also recognize that a shift to something like this will connect students with more people by the time they graduate. By the time of high school graduation, students will have interacted, discussed, and connected with more students outside of just their grade group. They will also have been known and shepherded by more than one adult during their time in HSM. We believe that this is valuable for overall HSM unity and community.