

Kids helping kids!



LESSON PLANS

DAY 1 // COOKSON HILLS INTRO

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

To visually introduce your kids and volunteers to the ministry of Cookson Hills and present the goal you've chosen.

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Equipment necessary for showing a video to your group
2. Cookson Hills (5 minute video): <http://www.cooksonhills.org/VBS/AboutCooksonHills.mp4>
(If a physical copy is needed, please email rachel.wages@cooksonhills.org at least 7 business days before your VBS begins.)
3. Copies needed of **Send Home Flyer**: Color: <http://www.cooksonhills.org/VBS/SendHomeFlyer.pdf>
B&W: <http://www.cooksonhills.org/VBS/SendHomeFlyerBW.pdf>
4. Optional: DIY large scale thermometer to track your group's progress.

LESSON (10 minutes)

1. Start off your Cookson Hills introduction by showing video. (5 min)
2. You or someone in the church can share a short story about their connection to Cookson Hills. Maybe you can tell a story about a time you visited, or how long your church has supported the ministry. (2 min)
3. Reveal the goal amount you've set and what this amount can accomplish (text provided below). If you've made a thermometer, now would be the time to unveil it. (3 min)
4. Pass out the **Send Home Flyer** during dismissal that kids can share with their parents. (1 min)

CHOOSE YOUR VBS OFFERING GOAL

SUPPLY DRIVE — Throughout the year, about 75 kids will call Cookson Hills home. During this time, many basic needs arise. A supply drive will put tangible goods directly into the hands of the kids at Cookson Hills. In order to steward finances well, please only choose this goal if you or a member of your church will be able to drop off the supplies at our main office.

Printable sign for drop off containers: <http://www.cooksonhills.org/VBS/SupplyDrive.pdf>

\$100 — Starting over can be scary, especially when you're 9 and you don't know anyone in your new home. A \$100 goal can supply a new child with their basic hygiene needs, and pillows and blankets to curl up in at the end of a long day.

\$300 — Our on-site Christian school allows our students to get an education in a safe place that also encourages them to get to know Jesus. A \$300 goal can supply an entire classroom with everything they need for 1 month! From curriculum and supplies to technology and textbooks, you can equip an entire classroom!

\$500 When you've been through a lot of hard and scary things in life, the best way to heal is to talk to a Christian counselor who can help you walk through your messy past. A \$500 goal can cover 6 months of counseling for a child who has been through a lot of hard times in their young life.

\$800 — As a kid, some things in life are unknown, like what is for dinner tonight or if there will be any blue popsicles left when you get home. Did you know that some kids wonder about where their next meal is coming from or what day they'll get their next meal? A goal of \$800 will provide 530 meals for the children at Cookson Hills and give them security by knowing that one of their most basic needs will be met.

\$1,200 — When you've been through a lot of scary things in life, you remember those things for a long time. A goal of \$1,200 can provide 1 month of fun, positive, lasting memories for the entire campus. With volleyball, basketball, cross country, equine experiences, and summer trips to swim, fish, or visit the zoo, this goal will help our kids replace bad memories with new and positive memories to carry with them for the rest of their lives!

DAY 2 // CAMERON'S STORY

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

Hear a personal story about a kid who is enrolled here at Cookson Hills, and learn to empathize with those who are hurting.

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Equipment necessary for showing a video to your group
2. Cameron's Story (2 minute video): <http://www.cooksonhills.org/VBS/Cameron.mp4>
(If a physical copy is needed, please email rachel.wages@cooksonhills.org at least 7 business days before your VBS begins.)
3. Bible
4. Optional: DIY large scale thermometer to track your group's progress.

LESSON (10 minutes)

1. Recap the goal amount for your group to raise for Cookson Hills. (2 min)
2. Show Cameron's video. (2 min)
3. Host a discussion. (5 min)
 - a. Sometimes, bad things happen in our lives that are completely out of our control. For Cameron, it started when he was really young and his mom did not take care of him, this is called neglect. Then when he was 5, his great-grandmother unexpectedly passed away. These types of situations are called "traumatic".
 - b. Traumatic means that you've gone through something that was extremely scarring, painful, or terrible.
 - c. When people go through "trauma" they usually try and find ways to deal with the pain themselves.

Q: Can anyone tell me what ways Cameron tried to deal with his pain?

A: Became addicted to video games, cell phone, and tv.

A: Stopped having friends because of his addictions.

A: Additionally- things he shared in his written story, he skipped almost 60 days of school and he only ate foods that were not good for him.
 - d. While playing games and watching tv all day may sound fun, these were not healthy ways for Cameron to work through the bad things that had happened.
 - e. For Cameron, the best thing for him was to come to Cookson Hills and begin to heal from the hard things in his life. At Cookson Hills, Cameron has been able to meet with a counselor two times a week, and be a part of a family who plays games together and goes outside. He's learned how to make friends and he's kicked his addictions!
 - f. Just because you've gone through something really hard in your life does not mean that you will need to leave your family and go to Cookson Hills, too. But if you have gone through something really hard in your life, or maybe you saw something really bad happen, it's very important to talk to a grown-up about it. You might feel scared or nervous to talk about it, but grown-ups have been there too. We've gone through hard things too, we will listen.

g. If you've never been through something like this, chances are you know someone who has. If this sounds like you, it's important to show empathy.

Q: Does anyone know what "empathy" means?

A: It does not mean you feel bad for someone.

A: It DOES mean, that you put yourself in their shoes and consider what it would feel like to be them.

h. Empathy is an important part of our relationship with Jesus. He often spent time with people who were hurting and felt the pain they felt.

i. The Bible also teaches us it's an important piece of following God.

Read scripture verses:

- Matthew 7:12 (ICB), "Do for other people the same things you want them to do for you."
- Galatians 6:2 (ICB), "Help each other with your troubles. When you do this, you truly obey the law of Christ."
- Hebrews 13:1&3 (ICB), "Keep on loving each other as brothers in Christ. Do not forget those who are in prison. Remember them as if you were in prison with them. Remember those who are suffering as if you were suffering with them."

4. Close with prayer. (1 min)

DAY 3 // MISSION OF COOKSON HILLS

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

To learn more about the mission of Cookson Hills, the kids we work with, and scripture we use for guidance.

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Cookson Hills Mission Statement Scramble: <http://www.cooksonhills.org/VBS/MissionScramble.pdf>
2. Scripture Scramble: <http://www.cooksonhills.org/VBS/ScriptureScramble.pdf>
3. Bible
4. Optional: DIY large scale thermometer to track your group's progress.

LESSON (13 minutes)

1. Recap the goal amount for your group to raise for Cookson Hills. (1 min)
2. Brain Refresher: (2 min)

Q. Who knows where Cookson Hills is located?

A. Northeast Oklahoma

Q. Who can tell me what Cookson Hills does?

A. Cookson Hills provides home, school, and therapy for kids who are at-risk.

3. Activity: Mission Statement Word Scramble (3 min)

Ask for 4 student volunteers to come to the front. Randomly hand each volunteer one page of the Mission Statement word scramble. Instruct the volunteers to put themselves in the correct order!
(For an added challenge, have the kids do this without talking!)

4. Transition Discussion (3 min)

Q. What does 'kids who are at-risk' mean?

A. Kids who are not likely to have a successful future.

- a. As we talked about yesterday, some kids go through trauma or really difficult situations and they try and get through it all on their own. But when you've been through hard things, you can't just get through it on your own. You need grown-ups who can help you through it.
- b. You may remember Cameron developed some habits that were making him, "at-risk."
 - He began skipping school often
 - He didn't have any friends because he spent all of his time playing video games.
 - These two things were setting Cameron up to not have a successful future.
- c. For other kids, things that can make their future unsuccessful would be their family constantly fighting, poor behavior choices, using drugs or alcohol, homelessness, or being hurt (abused) on purpose by grown-ups.
- d. Cookson Hills is a place where kids who are at-risk can come to live, heal, and live a better life. A verse we like a lot here at Cookson Hills is Psalm 18:18b-19, (ICB):

"The Lord supported me. He took me to a safe place. Because He delights in me, He saved me."

6. Activity: Scripture Scramble (3 min)

Ask for 4 student volunteers to come to the front. Randomly hand each volunteer one page of the Scripture Scramble. Instruct the volunteers to put themselves in the correct order!

7. Close in prayer. (1 min)

DAY 4 // STORIES & PRAYERS

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

For VBS attendees to empathize with the stories of children at Cookson Hills and pray for them.

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Multiple copies of *Real Kids, Real Stories* (Pages 9 and 10)
2. Predetermine places around the room for groups to spread out and hear a story of a student as read by their group leader.
3. Optional: DIY large scale thermometer to track your group's progress.

LESSON (10 minutes)

1. Recap the goal amount for your group to raise for Cookson Hills. (1 min)
2. Brain Refresher: (2 min)

Q. Who can tell me: What does Cookson Hills do?

A. *Cookson Hills provides home, school, and therapy for kids who are at-risk.*

Q. What does empathy mean?

A. *Putting yourself in someone else's shoes to understand what it would feel like to be them.*

3. "Today, we are going to break into smaller groups and spend some time hearing more stories and praying for the kids at Cookson Hills." Feel free to dismiss kids to their groups at this time. Group leaders can choose to read one story or both, and then have a student lead their prayer. (6 min)
4. Optional: Repeat yesterday's scripture scramble activity. (2 min)

"The Lord supported me. He took me to a safe place. Because He delights in me, He saved me."

Psalm 18:18b-19

DAY 5 // CELEBRATE!

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

For VBS attendees to celebrate and let Cookson Hills hear from you!

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Smart phone, camera, or small video camera
2. Optional: DIY large scale thermometer to track your group's progress OR some sort of visual representation to show the kids what they've raised!

LESSON PREP

Cookson Hills wants to hear/see you! To prepare for this lesson, please consider the following things:

- Do I want to take a video or picture of our group?
- Do I want to have the kids hold any signs for our video/image?
- Where do I want the kids sitting/standing for this?
- If we're doing a video, what short phrase should I have all the kids say?
Example: Adult, "From our kids at (church name) to yours at Cookson Hills"
Kids all say, "We love you!"
- Are there any kids who do not have a photo release or whose parents I should speak with before posting this photo/video to social media?

LESSON (10 minutes)

1. Reveal the final amount your group to raised for Cookson Hills. (2 min)
This may mean you should do your final collection at the very start of your final day events so that you have time to count up for this big reveal.
2. Let the kids know that we want to hear how they did with the challenge! So take a picture or video! Don't forget to upload it to Facebook, make it public, and tag us @CooksonHills! You can also use # such as: #cooksonhillstorystarter, or #cooksonhills. Your post can include what your goal was, if you achieved it, and what your gift can help us accomplish! Thank you for supporting our mission!

REAL KIDS / REAL STORIES

"I AM NOT ALONE"

RAY – Class of 2018



Cookson Hills was my home for almost 4 years. I still remember that first day I arrived. I had just turned 13 and I was a handful. I was constantly disrespectful to authority figures, including my housedad, and I thought I could just make it on my own. I didn't really want anyone else in my life.

Now looking back over the past 4 years, I have learned so much about doing life with people. My houseparents have showed me over and

over they wanted a relationship with me and I will never have to deal with stuff alone. My housedad has influenced me to be a better person, I can truly see that he cares about me and my future.

I've also seen the value of relationships on the basketball court. When it's nearing the end of the fourth quarter and we are down, there is no way that one person can bring a team back by himself. The team has to have faith, come together, and help each other in any way possible. You can't be selfish when you are trying to work together; otherwise you will most likely fail.

These lessons came in a very practical way at the end of my freshman year when I found out that my dad had died. Of course this was very difficult news to receive, but I immediately realized how many people around me truly cared about me. I learned that just because I didn't have a dad anymore, it didn't mean I had to be completely on my own. I found an adult mentor who really helped me get through things. He is one of the major father figures in my life and always will be.

I am not alone.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ray is from Wichita, KS and enjoys playing football, basketball, and guitar.

"FINDING HOPE"

CATREENA - Class of 2020



Hi, my name is Catreena. I would like to share a little of my story and talk about the hope that I have found. My life hasn't been easy, but I'm grateful that God has brought me through.

I was born and raised in the state of Kansas. Growing up, I knew a lot of people, but they weren't all good. My father was an alcoholic and a drug addict. He was not in my life a lot - he only visited my family once or twice. I never knew if he actually loved me and that was a tough thing

as a child. Then in the fourth grade, he passed away. It's strange how even though we didn't have a close relationship, his death deeply affected me.

After that, everything went downhill. I hardly ever talked to my mom and I hung out with horrible people. I began to hate God because I thought he took away my dad. I felt like my heart was ripped away from me and I was completely alone. I always felt terrible because people around me told me that I was useless, worthless, ugly, horrible, and good-for-nothing. And the sad thing was that I believed them. For pretty much all my life I believed that I had no value.

Then I came to Cookson Hills in 8th grade. At first, I was scared. I was scared that I would never change. I was scared that I would make bad friendships again. I had always struggled with bad friendships in the past and I was tired of being around people who tried to pressure me into doing things. But two weeks after arriving at Cookson Hills, I started to meet some great friends. They were so sweet. And I realized they actually cared about me and accepted me for who I am.

Now I can look back and see the changes in my life since I first arrived at Cookson Hills. That girl who I used to be is gone. I have found better friends, and most importantly, I have made Jesus Christ my Lord and Savior. I wanted him to help me and I wanted to follow him. I am so thankful that I am surrounded by people who love me and that I have a God who has changed my life.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Catreena is from Edwardsville, KS and enjoys writing, drinking sweet tea, and chilling with friends.