

Serve Our Schools

**A Resource to Encourage and Equip Churches
for Ministry Partnerships with Public Schools**

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YOU ARE INVITED!

“I opened the mailbox and found a crisp white envelope with my full name penned in calligraphy across the front. I broke the gold seal on the back and opened the envelope to discover a very special invitation engraved on fine linen paper. I was invited to be a special guest at a gala celebration considered by most people to be the premier event of the year for our city. I placed the invitation in a safe place and made certain to tell everyone of my plans to attend and be included among the most prominent citizens of our fair city.”

Joe, an average resident of a typical town in South Carolina

It feels good to be invited, to be included, to be involved in something meaningful, something important, and something people deem worthwhile.

- US Presidents invite citizens of our nation to become community volunteers.
- Schools invite the community to get involved to help educate children
- God invites you to join him in His mission to redeem a lost world to Himself.

You are special. You may feel very ordinary, but you are special, because you have the potential to make a real and lasting difference in the lives of children, in the character of your community, and in the expansion of God’s Kingdom by responding to the invitation to get involved in serving children and families through our public schools.

Portrait of Schools in South Carolina

Source: QUICK FACTS -EDUCATION IN SOUTH CAROLINA 2007-08
SC Department of Education

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|---------------|
| • School Districts | | 85 |
| • Schools | | 1173 |
| • Students in grades K-12 | | 690,434 |
| • Professional Staff (principals, teachers, etc.) | | 59,293 |
| • Expenditures statewide | | \$8.7 billion |
| • Largest School | Wando High School (Charleston) | 3,051 |
| • Smallest School | Daufuskie Elementary (Beaufort) | 12 |

□ Why churches should reach out to schools in their communities

● Real Mandates

⇒ Jesus wants us to be His witnesses everywhere – even in our schools.

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Acts 1:8

⇒ We are called to be salt & light to the world

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men... You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Matthew 5:13-16

● Real Needs

⇒ Behavior problems are epidemic – there is a growing lack of respect and discipline

⇒ Test scores are going down, and the drop out rate is going up

⇒ Violence – fights, gangs, shootings – students and teachers do not feel safe

⇒ There is a decrease of parent involvement and community support

⇒ Teacher burnout and turnover are on the rise. Personnel are stressed and distressed

⇒ Resources are tight – especially in today’s economy

● Real Opportunities

⇒ Children and families are in crisis – unemployment, poverty, homelessness, domestic violence, abuse, divorce. Churches must respond with help and hope.

⇒ Public schools are one of largest unreached mission fields in our nation
55 million children and youth are enrolled in grades K-12 in 98,000+ schools
20% of these students *may be* active in a local church
80% are unchurched and go home after school to unchurched families!

⇒ Servant Evangelism is the key to reaching people in schools with the gospel
By responding with real help for real needs of real people the church will

- Connect to its community and build positive relationships
- Strengthen the reputation and role of the church in the community
- Influence and impact communities for Christ
- Change lives and transform communities
- Fulfill the Great Commission of making disciples

● Real Impact

“Across the nation, schools are defying expectations and succeeding. What makes them different? In nearly every case, a community rallied to improve its schools. We all reap rewards from good schools: The education of young people affects everything from the economy to national security. The key is to get involved, whether or not you have children.”
(PARADE, August 27, 2006)

□ What Impact Can One Church Make on One School?

(From the website of School/Church Partners-Westminster Presbyterian Church-Dayton, Ohio)

Why should my church enter into a partnership with a public school?

First, many of our schools need help, especially in urban areas. Test scores and attendance are poor, violence is pervasive, teacher morale is understandably low and funding is not what it ought to be. The need is great, it is real and it is just down the street. Buildings are in disrepair and books and supplies are outdated and inadequate.

As a School Church Partner, you won't be able to correct all these problems, but you can make a significant impact on the school with whom you partner. For example, we have a tutoring program here at Westminster every Wednesday and Thursday after school for 32 students. Our goal is to assist students who have come close to passing the Ohio Proficiency Test but who have not quite succeeded. Often, the extra help throughout the school year by a caring tutor can make a huge difference.

As a church partner, you can also work with the school to offer incentives to improve student attendance. Several of our study and fellowship groups here at the church help with monthly pizza parties and/or prizes to those students having improved their attendance. We also send in volunteers to supplement the social worker's efforts to teach conflict resolution. We try to boost teacher morale by sending volunteers to assist teachers. Volunteers pitch in to monitor classrooms, give makeup tests, read to students, run off worksheets, chaperone field trips, etc. You can make a tremendous difference by helping one school.

A lack of education is associated with most every economic, social, health and civic problem in our cities. A direct correlation exists between education and the majority of needs in our country.

Partnering also provides an avenue for your church members to put their faith into action! As Christians, we are to show our faith by our works (James 2:18).

A School Church Partnership affords your congregation the opportunity to do something positive for our youth and to be witnesses for Christ. No, you should not impose your Christian values on others, but you can model Christ in a school while sharing Christ at church.

□ How will you respond?

Every invitation includes a footnote **R S V P** which means *Please Respond*

These letters represent four ways we can respond to God's invitation to serve schools

Each is vitally important and, when pursued alone, can make a difference.

When all four are pursued together, we can make a miracle!

□ R is for Relationships

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind and with all your strength...and love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus

- Jesus made it very clear. Life is all about relationships – loving God and loving people.
- The key to effective ministry is relationships. It starts with people caring about people.
- Relationships are a natural part of life.
- Relationships are established in trust and built in time.
- Relationships usually grow out of a common interest or cause.
- Relationships are essential to life. God designed us to be interdependent with one another.
- Relationships enable the love of God and the gospel of Christ to flow into the lives of others.

□ Who are the people you will relate to in a public school?

- Principal** This person is a proven professional who loves children and understands education. They are accountable to the school district for more than educating students. They are responsible for safety and security, supervision of staff, maintaining discipline, crisis intervention, community relations, transportation, budgets, facility management, and much more. Principals need and welcome community involvement and support.
Principals respond well to alliance.
- Teachers** Classroom Teachers, Teacher Aides, Substitute Teachers, Media Specialist, Reading Specialist, Computer Specialist, Coaches
They have to do more and more with less and less each year.
Teachers respond well to assistance.
- Staff** Office Personnel, Guidance Counselors, Cafeteria Staff, Maintenance Staff, Security Officer, Bus Drivers. Each provides vital service to children.
Staffs respond well to appreciation.
- Parents** Children are unique individuals. Their parents are even more unique. However, most parents have something in common—they love their children and want the best for them.
Parents respond well to affirmation.
- Students** They come from different backgrounds. They have different personalities, strengths, interests, and dreams. They do not look alike, think alike, or act alike. Yet, all students want to be safe, satisfied, and successful.
Students respond well to acceptance.
- Community** Schools and churches usually exist in and serve the same community. Some people are involved in both. Some will not be involved in either. Most people in a community understand the importance of education. People who do not have children in the schools may feel they should not have to support schools with their time or taxes. But, most people in most communities want a better life and welcome positive change.
Communities respond well to action.

□ How can you get to know people in the school?

Most churches have children and families who are involved in local public schools.

Work through these members to begin building relationships in the school

You may have school employees who are members of your church.

You may have retired teachers who know teachers in the school.

Contact the principal and schedule a tour of the school.

Invite the principal to speak at the church in a worship service or prayer meeting or informal fellowship with those interested in serving the school.

Attend PTA meetings, Open House, school events, concerts, athletic events, etc.

❑ Schools know the need for relationships within the community

“...the majority of our parents do not become involved in the school. This is a problem, along with shrinking budgets, changing demographics, and the many different levels of school readiness among our students as evidenced in our demographic data and student achievement scores. It is also clear that we must develop new strategies for engaging the parent and community support we know is essential for our students’ success. In addition, beyond engaging our parent community, we need to explore partnerships with churches and civic groups.”

(from the website of Simpsonville Elementary School - Strategic Plan)

❑ The importance of relationships between churches and schools

(From the website of *Scripture Union*, a non-denominational, Christ-centered movement, founded in 1867, working in partnership with individuals and churches across the world to use the Bible to inspire children, young people and adults to know God.)

Church & School

Schools and churches share a common concern - they want the best for our young people. The church has always had considerable involvement in education. Even today, almost a third of the schools in the country are church schools. But as schools in general have developed closer links with the community, that partnership has been emphasized even more.

So how are schools and churches linked? People are the main and most obvious way. Many people in churches also go to school every day as teachers or pupils. But there are others for whom school is their place of work - secretaries, classroom assistants, learning mentors. Alongside them are others whose job gives them contact with schools: nurses, librarians, inspectors and so on. Increasingly, many others take on a role in school in a voluntary capacity: governors, Parent-Teacher Association members, assembly teams, and others in a wide variety of roles.

All of these people are called by God to be his visual aid in the schools in which he has placed them. They are God's people in their schools, demonstrating in word and deed the difference that Jesus makes.

SOURCE: <http://www.scriptureunion.org.uk/YourCommunity/Schools/ChurchSchool/2893.id>

It is interesting to note that *Scripture Union* is based in England, not the United States.

❑ Healthy Relationships Have Boundaries

While schools are open to help from the community, they are by purpose places of education, not evangelism.

The most effective way to interact with the school is to support the needs of the school and develop a relationship over time.

Trust and respect are essential for building mutual and healthy relationships that will lead to opportunities for ministry and a positive witness for Jesus Christ.

Remember that when we serve as the *salt of the earth*, our good works make a positive impact on others. While serving we, the *light of the world*, let our light shine and others see our good works and glorify God.

It's time to serve and shine!

□ Know the Limits

School guidelines restrict how volunteers may exercise and express faith at school.

While involved in activities at the school or during school-sponsored events, you may not be able to engage in the following:

- Lead students, teachers, administrators or anyone else affiliated with the school in unsolicited prayer in school.
- Attempt to convert anyone to your faith during activities in the school.
- Preach the Gospel in school.
- Teach your religious principles.
- Solicit funds for your church.
- Use school property for religious purposes without permission.
- Use religious tracks as class or individual instruction.
- Disparage any other religious belief or lack of any religious belief.

□ The Good Old Days

We may yearn for the good old days when children and teachers could read and study the Bible in school, pray and openly talk about God and matters of faith. Regardless of how much we miss those days or believe they should return, those days are passed. We can fight to overturn laws that restrict the free expression of religion in schools, or we can obey the words of Jesus and commit to be salt and light in a lost world.

And, remember what Paul said in Galatians 5:22-23

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”

Each of us can live lives that reflect the character of Christ and point others to Him.

□ Project or Partnership?

Many churches around the state and across the nation do mission projects to assist local schools, and these projects are helpful and appreciated.

However, projects usually address a specific need and a specific time.

Schools have many needs all the time.

A mission project may help a student or a school temporarily, but ongoing relationships are the best way to bring lasting transformation to people and communities.

Projects open doors to build relationships that can lead to partnerships.

As the people in your church get to know the people in the school, relationships will develop and the mutual trust and respect will be a firm foundation for developing a positive and productive partnership that will benefit the school, the church and the community.

❑ **Benefits of Partnerships with Public Schools**

- Partnerships enable churches and schools to do together what each is limited to do alone.
- Schools and churches exist in and serve the same communities.
- Schools have regular contact with children and families, but are limited by policy and resources in what they can do to minister.
- Churches have the mission and means to minister, but do not have the regular contact.
- Together we can share resources to effectively meet the needs of children and families.
- Partnerships allow the community to discover the identify and passion of the local church
- Partnerships build bridges of understanding that foster outreach and ministry.
- Partnerships reveal new prospects and new servants.
- Partnerships enable the church to go beyond its walls to meet needs and share God's love.
- Partnerships encourage members to look outward rather than inward.
- Partnerships are effective Ministry Evangelism - as we serve others, we can share Christ.
- Partnerships enable local churches to function as the Body of Christ.
- Partnerships breed partnerships. Teachers and parents encourage their churches to partner
- Partnerships encourage people to mobilize rather than criticize.

❑ **The Challenge – “Adopt-a-School”**

What if every school in South Carolina was “adopted” by one or more churches?

There are 1164 schools in SC and over 7000 churches.

It is possible for every school in SC to have a church partner in its community that is committed to providing ongoing service to the needs of the school and its faculty, students and families.

Imagine what God could do if we were all willing to go back to school – to serve!

Pray and ask God what He wants. Then obey what He says. No more, no less.

Are you ready to accept this challenge? Contact the Missions Mobilization Group of the SC Baptist Convention for assistance and to register the school you wish to adopt.

❑ **Steps to Forming a Partnership with a School**

1. Meet with the principal to identify needs of the school that the church could address
2. Present needs to the church and pray for direction about what to do.
3. Offer to do whatever the school needs and do it well, over and over
4. Discuss with the principal the possibility of an ongoing partnership.
5. Decide specific actions (tutoring, school supplies, landscaping, etc.) church could do
6. Design a partnership agreement stating the purpose and goals (*See sample below*)
7. Lead the church to formally adopt the partnership
8. Invite the principal to a worship service to sign a Partnership Covenant and pray
9. Don't take advantage of this relationship - Respect the authority and boundaries

□ Principles for Church & School Partnerships

1. Pray for God to open doors and guide the ministry.
2. Be sincere and genuine in your concern for the school.
Be motivated by serving others, not growing the church.
3. Build relationships. Get to know the principal.
Go with a parent in your church to meet their child's teacher.
Adopt the child's class and show them love.
4. Discover needs - Meet with the principal, teachers, and the PTA.
Ask how you can help. Be prepared to serve wherever and however needed.
5. Dream Tall . . . Start Small
Focus on open doors. Do ordinary things with extraordinary effort.
6. Enlist a ministry team of parents from the church and community, teachers, and others to coordinate. It is best for the school to have one primary contact person from the church.
7. Involve as many volunteers as possible from the church and community.
8. Put the partnership on your calendar, in your budget, and on your prayer list.
9. Work within limitations and guidelines. Do not abuse the partnership.
Serve as you can and let your light shine everywhere all the time.
10. Monitor and evaluate the partnership regularly. Make improvements constantly.
11. Recognize volunteers and ministry highlights. What gets noticed, gets done!
12. Review and Renew the partnership annually. Set new goals and press on.
13. Patiently Persist – Don't give up – Be faithful and God will make you fruitful.

[Sample School Partnership Covenant]

_____ Church
and
_____ School

Partnership Covenant

The members of _____ Church this day enter into partnership with Principal _____ and _____ School.

The members of _____ Church commit to provide volunteers to:

- Assist the faculty and staff in performing their educational responsibilities through such activities as tutoring, reading assistance, and participation in coached projects.
- Communicate care and concern for students by means of personal interaction through such things as mentoring, lunch buddies, and _____.
- Provide practical assistance through administrative and maintenance projects.
- Provide support to the faculty and staff in practical ways.

The staff and faculty of _____ School commit to:

- Provide volunteer opportunities for _____ Church members.
- Provide training and evaluation for volunteers.
- Communicate ideas as to how _____ Church members can provide support to the staff and faculty on a personal level.

This document is not intended to be a binding contract, but is intended simply to be an expression of the voluntary relationship between _____ Church and _____ School. This partnership agreement will remain in effect throughout the _____ school year. Either party, at its sole discretion, may terminate the agreement prior to that time. This partnership may be extended if both parties are in agreement.

Pastor, _____ Church
Date: _____

Principal, _____ School
Date: _____

Superintendent, _____ County School District

□ How Government Views Involvement of Churches in Public Schools

The following excerpts are from a document published in 1997 when Richard W. Riley, former governor of South Carolina, was the US Secretary of Education. You can locate the entire document online at www.ed.gov/inits/religionandschools/faith-support.pdf

How Faith Communities Support Children's Learning in Public Schools

"There is a new and growing tone of civility. That's good for America and good for public education. Our public schools should not be the public space for a war on values. When you put schools in the middle, education loses. This is why I am encouraged when people of faith reach out to each other and act on their faith and help raise our children."

Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley

Religion and Education Summit, St. Petersburg, Florida

September 19, 1997

Faith communities, in reaching out and connecting to families and children, often become involved in education in their local community. When Secretary of Education Richard Riley issued the guide of *Religious Expression in Public Schools*, he opened the door to education partnerships with faith communities as another effective way to support children's learning. Across the nation, excellent examples abound of the positive impact that faith communities have in encouraging and enabling families and communities to be involved in children's learning. Many faith communities partner with schools to provide tutoring, safe havens, after-school programs, mentoring, and summer activities. Faith communities often inspire their membership to volunteer in behalf of children, youth, and families in the nation's schools. In this way, community groups, businesses, family organizations, and local government agencies join the partnership, resulting in a broad-based effort to help educate children. Following are examples of faith communities at work in a variety of areas that support children's learning.

After-school Programs

Faith community leaders can help students stay safe and be productive during the after-school time by starting or supporting extended learning programs in local schools and communities. . . . By sponsoring alcohol- and drug-free activities, and by providing extracurricular learning opportunities, mentors, internships, and community service work, faith communities are making a difference for youth in their community.

College Planning

. . . . many lower-income families do not know how to plan for a college education, often because they simply never have done it before. Faith communities can play an important role in this process. Through leadership and youth activity programs, faith communities can echo the high standards that schools and families set for students, encourage students to work hard and earn the best grades they can, connect them with mentors who will help them in their studies, and make sure that students and their families know about financial aid opportunities.

Reading

Members of faith communities can provide resources and encouragement to parents in their community, collect children's books to distribute to local families, be volunteers in an ongoing reading effort in the local community, connect to a public library's summer reading program, or begin a weekly family reading program held at the faith community's facility.

□ **S** is for **Serve**

“Small Things Done with Great Love Will Change the World” Mother Teresa

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Philippians 2:5-8

Jesus is our model for ministry. This scripture passage identifies two requirements for serving others – the right attitude and the right action - “..he *humbled himself and become obedient..*”

• **Attitude**

The right attitude is essential to serving others.

Many people are critical, judgmental, and negative about our schools. Usually, the loudest critics are not involved in the schools and do little if anything to make a positive impact.

Be positive - affirm, encourage, support, appreciate, and build up those who work in our schools. People respond much better to compassion than criticism.

Look for the good in every person and every situation. Focus on the good, highlight the good, and reward the good. Soon you will see good all around you.

Rather than rant about what cannot be done, resolve to serve however needed wherever doors are open. Seek to understand the challenges facing our schools and ask what you can do to help.

Everyone values and needs encouragement.

Teachers need encouragement. Knowing someone cares makes all the difference.

Students need someone to say “Good job,” or “I’m proud of you,” or “You can do it.”

Christian students need encouragement to live out their faith at school.

If your church has people who work in schools, they are your missionaries. Encourage them and equip them to be ambassadors for Christ in the school.

• **Action**

Actions speak louder than words.

People are most responsive to the gospel when we are most responsive to them.

Jesus said we are *salt and light*. Christians make a difference in the world by meeting the needs of others and letting the Jesus shine through in all they do.

A favorite activity in elementary school is Show & Tell. A child gets to show or demonstrate to the class something of importance or value and tell all about it.

Christians need to practice more Show & Tell everywhere we go.

We must look for ways to serve & shine in our schools.

Many churches in our state and nation serve schools in creative and exciting ways.

Projects and partnerships are making a real difference in the lives of students, families and communities and churches.

36 Strategies for Serving Our Schools

That's one for every week of the school year!

Achievement Awards

Provide incentives to recognize and motivate students for academic success. Work with the principal to determine goals and guidelines for recognition.

Sponsor Award Days for each grading period (usually 9 weeks), semester and end of the year. Gifts may include award certificates, t-shirts, books, school supplies, gift cards, etc.

Sponsor "Student of the Month" luncheon or pizza party. A student from each class is selected and recognized for achievement, behavior, etc.

Work with teachers to establish a goal for the class to work toward. Provide a pizza, popcorn or ice cream party for the class when they reach their goal.

Adopt-a-Class

You may start with a class of a child or a teacher in your church or check with the principal to see which class needs assistance. Meet with the teacher to discuss specific and appropriate ways to help in and out of classroom.

Assist a teacher or small group of teachers by running off copies, giving make-up tests, working with small reading groups, chaperoning a class party, etc.

After-School Program

Many schools and communities have effective after school programs.

Check with the coordinator to identify needs and opportunities to assist.

Enlist volunteers to help with homework and enrichment activities.

Provide refreshments, especially home baked cookies, brownies, etc.

If there is not an after school program for the school, talk with the principal about the need and possibility of the church sponsoring an after school homework center. Often, the school will allow you to use school facilities which limits transportation and liability issues for the church.

Book Bags

Teachers and guidance counselors usually know which students need a book bag.

Some students may start the year with an inexpensive or a used hand-me-down book bag and may need a new one during the year. You may want to provide several extra book bags that the school could store and make available as needed during the year.

Larger and sturdier book bags are needed for middle and high school students.

To make a connection with a student or family, you might host a Back-to-School event at your church where families could enjoy food and fun activities, and children would receive a book bag. You could even provide games where children win school supplies as prizes.

Book Buddies

Volunteers are assigned to a child and spend 30 minutes or more at least once a week reading together at the school in the media center or other designated place. You will listen to the child read as well as read to the child.

Career Day Speaker

Local community businesses present information to students regarding a variety of careers. Community and business leaders work hand-in-hand with the school guidance counselor to plan and participate in this all-day event. Church members in various vocations can talk with students about their careers.

Chaplain

Serve as a volunteer chaplain for school sports teams or be available during school, community or family crises. Contact the SC Baptist Convention for information on training in crisis counseling to equip volunteers to serve effectively in critical situations.

Christmas – Sponsor a Child or Family

Sunday School classes, small groups, and mission groups could sponsor a child or family for Christmas. Contact the school guidance counselor to identify which families need assistance. The counselor should be able to obtain a list of clothing sizes and others items on the children's wish list. You might give the parents a gift card to a local store to shop for food or gifts they can give to the children for Christmas, or to purchase something they need.

While some people may not celebrate Christmas or recognize it as the birthday of Jesus, you can give out of your faith and as an opportunity to show God's love.

Christmas Stockings

Fill a stocking with candy, fruit, small gifts, school supplies and perhaps a gift card. Provide one for each teacher and staff member at the school.

Church Facilities

Allow the school to use church facilities for special programs, PTA meetings, athletic events, community gatherings, etc. This is especially needed during school construction when space is limited to the school.

Class Grandparent

Senior adults can "adopt" a class at the school and visit regularly to read, assist with classroom activities, tell stories, help with homework, etc. Children enjoy and relate well to older adults, especially when they show up with homemade cookies to eat while listening to a good story.

Classroom Supplies

Every classroom needs supplies other than what children bring to school. Items include paper for copies, art supplies, Kleenex, hand sanitizer, etc. Budget cuts make it impossible for schools to provide all necessary supplies. Teachers must use their own funds to purchase extra supplies. Check with teachers to see what supplies are needed to begin the school year. You might provide a gift card at Christmas to help teachers purchase supplies for the second semester. Most school PTA organizations help teachers with supplies. You could partner with the PTA, especially in low-income neighborhoods where resources are limited.

Clothing Exchange

Collect and offer nearly new school clothes at very low cost.

Funds could go to the school for special projects

Vouchers could be given to parents with several children or in a financial crisis

Collect coats, gloves, scarves, etc. to give to children for winter months.

Computer Tutor

Volunteers can work individually with students in the school computer lab. Many students may not have access to a computer or the Internet away from school and may need help after school to work on an assignment or project.

Family Movie Night

Show a movie at the school or church on an evening or weekend. Provide free concessions. Students could earn free tickets for their family as a reward for behavior, attitude, attendance, or academic achievement, etc.

Gift Cards

Give teachers a gift card from a retail store, favorite local restaurant, mall or school supply store at the beginning of school year, Christmas, and birthday. They may choose to do something for themselves, but most will probably buy something for their students. That's just the way teachers are.

Greetings Cards

Send cards to teachers and staff on birthdays and holidays. One volunteer could coordinate this project and have cards prepared for church members to sign on Sunday or at other church events.

Guest Speaker

Speakers visit a class or whole school to share information and experiences with students that help enrich and expand the curriculum for students. You could speak about a specific topic of interest, demonstrate a hobby, share a talent, tell about an international trip, etc. Coordinate with the teacher on learning activities.

Incentives

Certificates, awards, T-shirts, parties, etc can be simple and effective ways to recognize and encourage individual and class achievement.

Work with the principal or teacher to determine what achievement should be recognized and what reward will be most appropriate.

Praise, affirmation, and a pat on the back are always appropriate and effective for students, teachers and anyone.

Landscaping

Work alongside students and parents on a workday to beautify school grounds. Provide flowers, shrubs, mulch, etc. Weed beds, rake leaves, prune shrubs. Keeping grounds looking nice promotes pride. Students, parents and community feel better about the school. When people feel better, they usually act better.

Lunch Pals or Breakfast Buddies

Get permission from the principal to visit the school to eat breakfast or lunch with a child or class. This is a good time to encourage students toward their goals and to boost their self-esteem.

Mentoring

Mentors are usually screened, trained and matched with a student. The amount of time and scope of activities will depend on needs of the student and availability of the mentor. Several mentors may get together to take students to a ball game or other event. Even just one hour a week can change a student's academic performance and future prospects.

Prayerwalk

Gather your Sunday School class, mission group or church congregation to meet at the school to Prayerwalk the campus in the week before school starts and during standardized testing. Contact the principal for permission and a list of specific prayer requests for the school.

Reading Program

Sponsor a "Learning to Earn" reading program over the summer. Work with the school media specialist or a teacher to get the suggested reading list for each grade level. Work with the local library to help children get a library card and check out books to read.

Assign a book buddy to meet with the child weekly to ask questions about what the child has read and to sign the child's reading log. If each book was worth two dollars and a child read 10 books over the summer, they would earn \$20.

Rather than give cash to the children, you could partner with a local business to donate or match your investment and provide gift cards for the children who participate in the program. Children are able to purchase items they like. This teaches the relationship of learning to earning and purchasing.

Recreation Teams

Sponsor children to play in church recreation programs such as basketball, soccer, or cheerleading. Waive the fees for children from low-income families.

This is a great way to reach out to children and families who do not attend a church. At recreation practices and events, make sure parents from the church interact with parents of children from the school.

For more information about reaching children through sports and recreation, contact
Upward Sports www.upwardsports.org
Victory Sports Outreach www.victorysportsoutreach.org

Rock –n- Read

Donate rocking chairs and provide volunteers to read with students. This could be done in individual classrooms or in another designated area of the school such as the media center. Teachers may choose to offer this activity to all students, to those who need a little extra attention, or as a reward to a student.

Santa's School Store

Students earn points for behavior, homework, attitude, etc and use them to buy presents for Christmas (Inexpensive items donated by church members)

Select and publish a date to open a Christmas Store at the school or church where children can shop for presents for family members and friends.

Have volunteers assist with wrapping presents.

Include a free copy of The Christmas Story with each purchase (*contact your local Christian bookstore for assistance.*)

School Supplies

Work with school guidance counselors and teachers to provide school supplies especially for children in need.

Supplies may include notebook paper, composition books, notebooks, subject dividers, pencils, crayons, glue, scissors, etc.

The school can provide a list of what supplies are needed for each grade level.

Supplies are needed throughout the year, not just at the start of school.

You may choose to provide extra supplies for the school to stock and make available to teachers to give to students as they are needed during the year.

Science Project

Help a student with a science fair or other project. You might assist with ideas, or to conduct experiments, obtain resources, and create displays.

This is a great way to reach out to single parents.

Shadowing

Shadowing is a day of authentic experience, which introduces students to a particular job by pairing them with an employee in the work environment. The student shadows the worker for a specific time to better understand the requirements of a particular career. Check with the school about an existing shadowing program or for interest in beginning one.

Special Days

Help with festivals, field days, field trips, Book Fair, Health Fair, Science Fair and other school events. There are always needs and something anyone can do.

Teacher Appreciation

At the beginning of school year, on a teacher workday during the year, and at the end of the school year, have a special meal, inspiring speaker, and a small gift. Recognize each teacher, provide certificates, or write thank you notes.

Get a list of everyone who works at the school and have church members write thank you notes to each person and distribute them at the luncheon.

Contact a local coffee shop or other business for donations of \$5 gift cards to their business. Include a gift card in each thank you note.

Teacher Workdays

Provide breakfast, lunch, or snacks during the day. You could serve a meal at the school or invite the school faculty and staff to attend a luncheon at the church. Involve women from various groups and classes in the church to decorate tables.

This event does not need to be long. Teachers have much to do on workdays.

Check with the principal to determine the best time. Often teachers are involved in staff development meetings on workdays.

Testing Monitor

Volunteer to help watch a class or individual students during testing. This service is usually needed during standardized testing or final exams.

Transportation

Use the church minibus to carry kindergarten or special education classes or other groups on local field trips. The costs to schedule school buses and drivers often prevents some classes from taking trips to a fire station, grocery store, farm, public library or other places of interest and enrichment.

Tutoring

Many students at all grade levels can benefit from one-on-one help in one or more academic subjects before school, during school, or after school. Check with the principal about opportunities to get involved and the best way to help.

How Churches Can Help Schools Respond to Children and Families in Need

Ms. Kathy Barbee, LMSW, Coordinator of School Social Work Services for *The School District of Greenville County*, contacted the school social workers working in Greenville County schools to identify practical ways churches can respond to the needs of children and families in need. In a personal interview with her, she provided the following information and suggestions. This information is representative of needs you will find in every school district in the state.

Most school districts have a social worker or someone to help coordinate assistance to families in need and crisis. Some schools, including Title 1 schools, may have a social worker that works with the children and families in that school. This person could help your church respond in positive and practical ways to those in greatest need in your community.

Shoes

Many children skip school or are unable to focus on their schoolwork because they must attend school wearing worn out or hand-me-down shoes that are uncomfortable and do not fit. A small investment in a new pair of shoes can make huge in the self confidence, safety and success of a child in school.

Rack Room Shoes sponsors a program called *Shoes That Fit* that enables customers to make a donation in the store to provide shoes for children. Rack Room has adopted over 400 schools in the communities where it operates stores, working with teachers and social workers to identify and assist the children most in need.

For more information, contact www.shoesthatfitrackroomshoes.com

Gift Cards

School social workers can use gift cards as emergency funds to provide food, shoes, hygiene items, etc to families in need. Churches that have food and/or clothing pantries may contact the school social worker or guidance counselor to make these resources available.

Vouchers could be presented to families to come to the church to receive assistance, which provides an opportunity to pray with the family and identify other ways help can be provided.

Specific School Supplies

Most schools received donations of notebook paper, pencils, crayons, etc. But often, specific supplies, such as subject dividers for 3-ring notebooks, are not available. Special situations may require a student to have a calculator, special dictionary, or a sturdy book bag.

Families in need do not have resources to purchase these items. You can provide the items or provide funds for social workers or teachers to purchase the items.

Socks and Underwear

Most school social workers report the constant need for children to have new socks and underwear. Children tend to make fun of other children when they can see or smell that they are not clean. Social workers are trained to handle these situations with compassion, gentleness and privacy. You can either have a special drive to collect these items and give them to the school or provide funds for social workers to purchase them as necessary.

Financial Assistance

Funds are always needed to help families with rent, utilities, prescription medicines, etc. Most churches have policies and procedures for assisting families in need and would need to work with the school to decide on a referral process.

You might provide funds to the school to assist families in emergencies, or the school may refer families to contact the church for assistance.

Direct contact with the family provides the church the opportunity to provide spiritual and financial counseling.

In every situation, it is extremely important to respect and protect privacy and confidentiality.

Crisis Counseling

School counselors and social worker may refer families to pastors for counseling in times of crisis. The church may partner with other agencies in the community to provide access to professional counseling and intervention.

Contact with individuals and families in various crises provides opportunity for spiritual counsel as well. Again, confidentiality is necessary to protect the family as well as the church's reputation and relationship with the school.

Christmas Gifts for Middle School Students

Most families are able to find community sources to provide gifts for children at Christmas. There are fewer sources available to provide for middle and high school students.

Social workers can provide information (age, gender, size, gift suggestions) needed to purchase gifts. The church may or may not be able to have contact with the student. In either case, you would be able to include a note with the gift sharing the true meaning and purpose of Christmas.

Sponsor a Student

Full participation in school activities often requires fees. There are costs for field trips, athletic events, school photos, school yearbook, club dues, PTA membership, etc.

Some children cannot afford to have their photo taken or attend a ball game. Some students must remain at school while their class takes an exciting field trip.

A family or Sunday School class, or mission group could sponsor a child and provide for these expenses. The principal, teacher, or counselor can usually give an estimate of total expenses for the year. You could provide for expenses one at a time or all at once.

For middle and high school students, this ministry can be handled through a mentoring relationship or work experience with the church. Students are “hired” to help with various tasks around the church. Funds are paid directly to the school to cover costs for various school activities.

Emergency Dental Care

Imagine trying to listen in class or take a test when you are hurting from an abscessed tooth. Many children do not have access to dental care, especially in emergencies.

You may have a dentist in your church or community who would provide care at a free or reduced rate. You could arrange for the counselor or social worker to refer the student to the dentist who would then bill you for services at the agreed rate.

A related ministry is to provide toothbrushes and toothpaste to teachers to distribute to children as they talk about dental care. Contact your dentist for help with this project.

Spanish Dictionaries

Schools with a large number of Hispanic students need copies of *Langenscheidt Pocket Dictionary-Spanish* for students to use in testing.

The best way to meet these and other needs that may arise is to . . .

1. Adopt a School in your neighborhood
2. Work with the school counselor or social worker to identify needs.
3. Decide what the church can and cannot do to help
4. Develop a relationship with a key person at the school to keep communication flowing easily. This person might be a social worker, counselor or Administrative Assistant.
5. If necessary, the church might partner with other churches and businesses in the community to respond to the needs of children and families in the school.

In every response to any need, remember three important principles.

Make prayer the first thing you do

Let Jesus be evident in everything you do.

Let showing the love of God be the best thing you do.

□ **V is for Volunteer**

Everyone can be great, because everyone can serve.” Martin Luther King, Jr.

“Don’t ever question the value of volunteers. Noah’s Ark was built by volunteers; the Titanic was built by professionals.” Dave Gynn

□ **Volunteers are Vital to Education**

Every school in SC uses volunteers to help accomplish its tasks and achieve its goals. Principals, School District Superintendents, and Volunteer Coordinators agree on the vital importance of volunteers in the education process.

“South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) encourages and values volunteer involvement in our public schools. A volunteer’s talents and skills can offer enrichment to the school curriculum, and your willingness to be involved benefits students, school staff, parents, and your community.”

(From brochure “Volunteers in Education” published by the SC Department of Education)

It is common for a local school to have dozens of volunteers who each give an hour or more of service to the school each week.

In South Carolina, the value of one volunteer hour is \$15.85.

If only 20 volunteers each served in their school one hour per week of the school year (36 weeks), the value to the school would be \$11,412 for 720 hours of service

If this scenario was repeated in every school in the state (1167) the total value to education in our state would be over 13 million dollars.

The fact is most schools have more than 20 volunteers and many who give more than an hour of service each week. Volunteers are a valuable asset to education!

Why is volunteering good for me?

Research indicates that volunteers feel healthier and better about themselves and are committed to the success of their communities.

Why is volunteering good for schools?

Volunteers provide an extra set of hands, help increase community support for schools, and give teachers more time to concentrate on instruction.

Why is volunteering good for students?

Volunteers in schools lower the adult to student ratio, show students that adults outside the school think education is important, and help students see that giving back to their community is worthwhile.

(From brochure “Volunteers in Education” published by the SC Department of Education)

- **All school districts have policies and procedures for using volunteers**

Districts usually require volunteers to complete an application, submit to a basic background check, attend an orientation, and wear a photo ID badge while serving at the school.

In some cases, the school district may coordinate volunteers, but usually the principal or an assigned faculty member of the school will handle this task.

Check with the principal or office manager in the school for details on the process for enlisting, approving and utilizing volunteers.

Work closely with the school to properly screen and supervise volunteers.

Protect our children, our schools, our churches, and the cause of Christ.

- **Schools have a variety of needs, and needs may vary from school to school**

Volunteers may do anything from reading to children to beautifying school grounds. This allows volunteers with different personalities, abilities and interests to serve the school in their own comfort zone.

Take the time and effort to carefully match volunteers to needs so their service can be a positive and meaningful experience for them, the student and the school.

- **Volunteers can use special skills to serve beyond the usual needs of a school**

There is always a need for volunteers to help with reading, tutoring, office help, etc. Whatever special interests or talents you have, there is a place for you to serve.

Volunteers can also work in the drama department at the high school sewing costumes and building sets.

Volunteers can help in the music department by assisting with special programs, chaperoning concert trips, or repairing instruments and equipment.

Volunteers can help coaches with athletic practices. Often volunteer coaches are needed to help with sports other than football and basketball, such as soccer, golf, and lacrosse.

- **The school in your community may not need additional volunteers**

Don't be discouraged or disappointed if the school in your community has enough volunteers. Many schools are located in neighborhoods where there is active parent involvement along with volunteers from civic groups, churches and businesses.

Schools that need volunteers the most may be located in communities that have fewer resources. A larger church or a church across town could partner with a smaller church to adopt a school in its low-income neighborhood to assist the school in meeting the needs of children and families in that school and community.

- **Retired adults are excellent volunteers**

There is a special bond between children and older adults, like the connection to a grandparent. Retired adults have wisdom, experiences, and skills that can be used to help children and schools in many ways. And they usually have a little more time, compassion and patience for working with children.

The following ideas for retired adult volunteers are suggested in a booklet published by the Education Oversight Committee of the SC Department of Education

- Serve as a classroom assistant.
- Volunteer as a classroom reader.
- Serve as a school ambassador who arranges and guides school tours for prospective students and parents.
- Volunteer as a classroom speaker to talk about the importance of setting goals.
- Provide students with personal perspectives of historical events.
- Work with the local high school to hold a senior prom that includes senior citizens and high school seniors.

IDEA - Retired teachers could volunteer to mentor new teachers

(From the website of Alliance For Quality Education in Greenville, SC)

School districts nationwide report difficulty in keeping new teachers; in fact, districts report newly hired teachers are leaving their systems at alarming rates. Based on the most recent data, *Greenville County Schools loses nearly one-fourth of new teachers in their first five years of teaching.* Turnover rates in some South Carolina schools are as high as 45%.

- **It is best to have one person or team to coordinate church volunteers**

This person can get a list of needs from the school to communicate with the church. It is easier for the principal or school office to deal with one person rather than with dozens of eager volunteers who call the office asking how they can help.

- **Train volunteers to serve effectively and represent Christ and the church well**

They should understand the purpose of the church's partnership with the school.

They should understand and accept the boundaries in which volunteers serve.

They should understand how to relate to and work with children

They should be dependable, respect authority, maintain confidentiality, and always display appropriate appearance and conduct.

- **Appreciate and Affirm Volunteers**

What gets recognized . . . gets done. Work with the principal to conduct a Volunteer Appreciation Event such as a luncheon or banquet or special time in a worship service. Present certificates and/or a small gift. Ask the pastor and principal to thank volunteers and encourage others to commit to serve in the school.

- **Start by serving where doors are already open**

Don't dream up things you can do for the school. Respond to needs they identify.

Don't be discouraged or angry if you cannot serve in ways you see as important.

Be available to serve as needed. As trust grows, other doors to service will open.

- **Join the PTA**

Become a member, get involved, go to meetings, serve wherever needed

For information, contact your school or the SC PTA state office in Columbia

Email - office@scpta.org

Website - www.scpta.org

- **Serve on the SIC (School Improvement Council)**

School Improvement Councils (SICs) serve the school principal and faculty in an advisory role, bringing together parents, educators, students, and community representatives to collaborate on the improvement of their local school.

SICs are mandated by law to exist in every public school in SC. Over 15,000 people, consisting of elected parents, teachers and students, appointed community members and other volunteers and school administrators serve on 1164 SICs in the state.

Most schools are looking for community representatives to serve on the SIC. This is a great place for church members to serve and have a voice in guiding the school.

- **Join the Booster Club to help with athletic events**

High schools have fewer needs for volunteers and fewer opportunities to get involved in the school. The Booster Club is a great place to meet other parents and students and serve needs in the school. You may help with fund raising, concessions at athletic events, awards ceremonies and other activities.

- **For more information about volunteering in schools in South Carolina, contact**

Peggy Hogan – SC Department of Education – (803) 734-4798 – PHogan@ed.sc.gov

Web: www.ed.sc.gov/agency/Educational-Services/Community-and-Parent-Services

We are grateful to Ms. Hogan and to Ms. Sandra Welch, Volunteer Coordinator for The School District of Greenville County for the information on volunteering in public schools.

- **Opportunities for Volunteers in Public Schools**

In March of 2007, Peter C. Gorman, Superintendent of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools held a Faith Summit and invited the leaders of the various churches and faith communities in Mecklenburg County of North Carolina. He outlined several challenges facing public schools and encouraged the faith community to get involved as volunteers, mentors, and partners in the schools in their neighborhoods.

The Easter Sunday, March 23, 2008 edition of the Charlotte Observer newspaper included an article describing the success of the school/church partnerships and the positive impact on the school, church and community. By fall of 2008, over 100 faith partners were serving in the schools with hundreds of volunteers helping to improve everything from school safety to academic achievement.

The following list of volunteer opportunities is published on the website of the largest school district in the Carolinas, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District.

While most of these activities would apply to any school, this is not a complete list of what volunteers can do. Check with the school principal on how you can best serve.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools - Office of Strategic Partnerships Elementary Level Volunteer Opportunities

These suggestions are only a beginning!

- Tell stories to children
- Listen to children read
- Conduct flash card drills
- Provide individual help to students or teachers
- Assist in learning centers
- Set up learning centers
- Help contact parents
- Reproduce materials
- Check out audio-visual equipment
- Work in clinic or media center
- Practice vocabulary with non-English speaking students
- Make instructional games
- Play instructional games
- Play games at recess
- Assist with visual tests
- Prepare visual materials
- Develop programmed materials
- Grade papers
- Prepare bulletin boards
- Help with book fairs
- Help underachievers
- Reinforce reading fluency
- Help select library books
- Assist with field trips
- Make props for plays
- Set-up bookstore or book exchange
- Gather resource materials
- Help children learn to type
- Help children with arts and crafts
- Help with cooking projects
- Check-out books from the library
- Set-up experiments
- Take attendance
- Collect lunch money
- Escort children to bathroom, media center, cafeteria, etc
- Work on perceptual activities
- Make list of library resources
- Prepare teaching materials
- Work with handicapped child
- Record grades
- Supervise test taking session
- Discuss careers or hobbies
- Show a film to a group
- Help children with physical activities
- Reinforce learning the alphabet
- Reinforce recognition of numbers
- Drill recognition of color words
- Talk to children. Be a friend
- Help children with motor skill problems
- Help children learn a foreign language
- Play a musical instrument
- Help students play instruments
- Make puppets
- Dramatize a story
- Help with handwriting practice
- Set up "store" to practice math skills
- Drill spelling words
- Tell stories -with puppets, flannel board
- Assist with sing-a-longs
- Show slides - life in other countries
- Discuss care and training of pets
- Demonstrate different artistic abilities
- Discuss life from the point of view of a person with a handicap
- Discuss different handicaps and importance of understanding others
- Discuss attitudes, feelings & emotions
- Share ethnic backgrounds /experiences
- Discuss farm life and farm animals
- Demonstrate gardening skills
- Help prepare assembly programs
- Discuss holidays and special occasions
- Discuss aspects of safety
- Share information about local history
- Help office staff with mass mailings

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools - Office of Strategic Partnerships Secondary Level Volunteer Opportunities

Fewer volunteers are used in secondary schools than at the elementary level. However, there are many ways in which they can help in middle and high schools.

Below is a list of ways that secondary level schools can utilize volunteers:

1. Sign-up as a special speaker about careers related topics and experiences, etc.
2. Help students in the guidance office find answers to questions about careers and universities
3. Help students on special projects
4. Help students with resource materials in the library
5. Assist in the school clinic
6. Read textbooks to students with reading programs
7. Assist students with various special needs
8. Assist in science labs
9. Assist in vocational classes
10. Accompany students on choral, band, club or athletic trips
11. Assist talented students in art, music, acting, etc.
12. Help arrange field trips
13. Sponsor school clubs
14. Assist in developing school publications
15. Assist in putting on student performances
16. Help students who were absent make up assignments
17. Help non-English speaking students with vocabulary and conversational skills
18. Assist in organizing a college fair
19. Assist teachers in gathering resources for units of study
20. Serve as math tutors
21. Serve on a "homework hotline" team
22. Assist athletic coaches
23. Serve as a listener for students
24. Perform clerical duties
25. Assist in arranging and supervising special school events
26. Oversee a study hall for students who must arrive at school early
27. Assist the school counselor or social worker

□ **P** is for **Pray**

“If we can’t take prayer to schools, then take schools to prayer.”

Greer Baptist Association, PrayerWalking all Schools Challenge

The letter P in RSVP represents Prayer

While prayer is the final of the four basic responses to the invitation to serve in public schools, it is the most obvious starting point for ministry.

In the Bible study, *Experiencing God*, Henry Blackaby instructs that “a servant does not tell the master what he or she is going to do. A servant waits and listens for the master to tell the servant what needs to be done.”

Before beginning any ministry activity, we should always pray and ask God what He wants. His will, His ways, and His timing are always best.

Ministry is always more effective when we pray first, then go to work.

□ **How You Can Pray for Your School**

9 prayer strategies for 9 months of the school year

- Meet with the principal to pray for him or her and the needs of the school.
Ask for specific items your church could pray for each week.
- Prayerwalk the school campus before the start of school each year.
Challenge other churches in your area to join you and prayerwalk every school.
- Observe School Zones – when you drive through a school zone, slow down and pray.
- Church members can adopt teachers and pray for their needs and their students.
Email is an easy and effective way to stay in touch with teachers for prayer requests.
- Sunday School Classes can adopt a school classroom or grade level for prayer.
- Organize a Moms-in-Touch group to meet weekly at a designated time and place to pray for a specific school and its students, faculty, etc.
For information, contact: Moms in Touch International www.momsintouch.org
- Weave prayer through every project and effort to serve in the school.
- Include the school in the church’s ongoing prayer ministry.
List needs and requests in your bulletin, newsletter, prayer guide, and bulletin boards
- Pray for schools in your services, Bible study groups, and mid-week prayer meetings.

Praying For Our Schools

(From *The Prayer Bulletin* - August, 2004 *The Prayer Closet* - Dr. Kevin Meador)

In August, most parents and children are either heading back to school or making preparation to return to school. This should stir and motivate you to pray for your school or the schools in your area. The following prayer guide will help you to pray for spiritual awakening in your schools.

Spirit Pray that the Holy Spirit would powerfully move among the young people. Plead that His power would fall on them and meet their particular spiritual needs. Pray that He would convict and call lost youth to the Lord Jesus Christ. Pray that He would convict and renew the faith and commitment of saved youth. Ask Him to reveal His mighty power in the lives of young people (John 16:7-11; Psalm 80).

Confession Pray fervently that young people will acknowledge their sin. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal their sin to them in fresh and powerful ways and that He will move them to confess their sins. Pray that God would grant repentance to young people. Ask Him to create within them a hunger for the God, His Word, and holiness of life (Psalm 51; Acts 3:19; 1 Peter 1:15-16; Psalm 42:1-2).

Homes Ask God to transform the homes of the young people. Pray that the Holy Spirit would bless the marriages of the parents. Plead that the parents and the children will have good and healthy relationships. Pray that their homes would be places where Christ is exalted and the Word of God is the foundation (Ephesians 5:22-6:4; Proverbs 5:15-23; Psalm 127).

Obstacles Pray that any obstacles to this awakening would be removed by the Holy Spirit. Ask God to deal with anything that might hinder the experience of a genuine work of the Holy Spirit. Pray that Satan's plans for these young people would be destroyed. Plead that he will have no effectiveness in getting a stronghold in their lives and in destroying their lives (Ephesians 4:30; 1 Peter 5:8-9; John 8:44).

Openness Pray that the young people will have openness to the Word of God. They are hearing so many messages. Ask God to give them a hunger for the Word of God. Pray that the lost youth will be open to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. Plead that the believing youth will build their lives on the Word of God (1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Leaders Pray that God would raise up young people who have a heart for Him and for spiritual awakening. Ask Him to mold young men and women who will be the vessels through which He can send awakening. Pray that He will give these young people a fearless and relentless attitude toward God, His Word, and spiritual awakening (2 Chronicles 7:14).

Guides to help churches pray for schools are located on the website of:

The Prayer Closet
Dr. Kevin Meador
595 Stratton Road Hickory, MS 39332
(601) 646-2295
www.prayerclosetministries.org

□ School Prayer Groups

Meeting to pray specifically for schools can be an effective way of focusing prayer. This is a way of bringing people from different churches together to pray for one school or a group of schools.

Starting a Group

- Share the idea with some people who might be interested.
- Plan an initial meeting.
- Produce a written notice about the initial meeting. Make sure there is a way for people to be informed of future meetings even if they can't make the first one.
- Prepare to start small. Even two or three praying regularly can make a huge difference, but be ready to grow, too!
- Contact known Christians in the schools you will be praying for. Invite them to the meeting, or to give you suggestions for prayer.
- If your group is praying for a single school, you may want to inform the school about what you are doing. It can save misunderstanding, and you may be amazed at the response.
- Pray about your plans.

The first meeting

- Share your vision for the group with everyone, and develop the vision as people have new ideas.
- Give everyone space for questions, comments, etc.
- Determine the frequency of the meetings.

Questions to Answer

- Where will you meet?
- What day and at what time?
- How often will you meet and for how long?
- Will you always meet in the same place?
- Who will lead the meetings?
- How will you make sure anyone interested hears about it?
- How will you discover what needs to pray for?

What to pray for

- Pray about the whole of school life: pupils, staff, class teachers, management, appointments, Christians in the school, special events, exams, discipline, safety, etc...
- Keep a record of the things you pray for, and how God answers.
- You may be asked to pray for things that are confidential. Make sure the information is kept within the group.

Keeping going

- Think long term. Sometimes we need to pray about things for a long time.
- Look for ways of sharing with local churches what has been going on in your group. Have a regular way of getting your group advertised in churches, perhaps through their weekly or monthly newsletters or website.
- Invite a special guest from time to time, to pray with you or share some things for prayer. This could be a local Christian involved in education, some pupils from school, or a volunteer working in the schools.

Campus Ministry Organizations

Good News Club®

Sponsored by *Child Evangelism Fellowship*

Meet On Campus / After School for elementary school students

A June 11, 2001 Supreme Court ruling gave equal access to school facilities after school hours. This decision opened the door for CEF to go to public elementary schools and teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the children.

By partnering with a local Child Evangelism Fellowship office, churches from the surrounding community “adopt” the elementary school and provide the volunteers needed to conduct an after-school Good News Club, a fun evangelistic club for boys and girls ages 5 through 12. Volunteers complete a national background check and are then trained on club procedures. Children who receive parental permission remain at school for one hour once a week to participate in the Good News Club.

At the club children sing songs, memorize God’s Word, hear life changing Bible lessons, and play review games to reinforce the truths of each lesson. Most importantly, the children are given the opportunity to receive Christ as their Savior. For the children who accept Christ or who are already Christians, the club includes activities that encourage children to grow in Christ. Children love the Good News Club which is evident from the thousands of children who attend weekly.

Typically 20%-50% of the student population enroll in the Good News Club and 1/3 to 1/2 of these children will be unchurched—the Jerusalem for the adopting church. The adopting church provides a church home for the child and his family. This can be a tremendous outreach as members of your church volunteer as teachers, helpers, and prayer partners in the Good News Club and then participate in the visitation.

Not all children can stay for the Good New Club that meets at the school, so volunteers lead a community Good News Club in recreation centers, homes and in neighborhoods. The community Good News Club follows the same format as the after-school Good News Club.

The Need

- A child is abused or neglected every 35 seconds
- A child is born into poverty every 40 seconds
- A child dies before his or her first birthday every 19 minutes
- A child is killed by gunfire every 3 hours
- 1 out of every 5 girls under the age of 16 will give birth to a child this year
- As children and grandchildren go to school, there will be over 100 weapons that enter the campus along with them
- 40% of the children in our area live in single parent homes
- Nearly 80% of the children in our area do not attend church on a regular basis (less than once monthly)

Our Impact and Value

The effect on a child:

- A personal relationship and eternal life with Jesus Christ
- Decreased behavioral problems
- Increased grades at school and on standardized test scores
- Increased moral values, character qualities, and respect for authority
- Positive relationships among peers

The effect on the community:

- Decrease incidence of juvenile delinquency
- Positive relationship between the local church and school
- Increase of volunteers to serve in other areas at the school
- Increased academic support without tax increase
- Safe haven for children after school

From Vaughan E. Overman, Principal - Taylors Elementary School, Taylors, SC

Over the past five years as principal of Taylors Elementary, I have personally seen firsthand the benefits of the Good News Club (GNC). This past fall it was an honor for me to be invited to the Child Evangelism Fellowship Dinner. This was a wonderful opportunity to learn more about the mission and purposes of the GNC. Over the years, I have watched as our Good News Club has grown in numbers of students participating. I believe that this is attributed to the energy and dedication of the GNC volunteers and to the enthusiasm of the students.

The students who belong to the GNC proudly wear their GNC t-shirts each Tuesday. Many of the students say that this is one of the highlights of their week. Conversations that I have heard among students serve as evidence that the GNC is making a positive difference in their lives.

Many of the students who attend the GNC have been affiliated with a church throughout their lives. However, there are other children where this weekly experience is their only time for fellowship, singing and learning God's word.

We are fortunate to have the GNC volunteers. Each volunteer goes through extensive training in order to work with the children. I have never seen anything but a tremendous amount of patience, commitment and guidance displayed towards all children. The volunteers arrive early, stay late and are always well-organized for the meetings.

We have formed a partnership with the GNC. The yearly soup and salad luncheon that is provided by the volunteers has become a favorite tradition with the staff. An angel necklace made by the GNC volunteers has been treasured by teachers at Taylors Elementary. GNC volunteers have helped with numerous school-wide events. This amazing group of volunteers is definitely seen as members of our school family. As we plan special events, it goes without saying that the GNC members will be invited.

This group of volunteers has truly made a positive impact not only with our students, but with our entire staff as well. Our students who participate in GNC seem better prepared to work through problems and see situations in a more positive light. I feel fortunate that the GNC has become an integral part of the school life at Taylors Elementary.

**Child Evangelism Fellowship - South Carolina Chapters
Good News Clubs in Elementary Schools**

CEF of Catawba

1849 E Blackstock Rd
Roebuck, SC 29376
Contact: Pat Hellings
Email: pat-cef@juno.com
Phone: 864 574-0236

CEF of Greenville/Piedmont

4 West Main Street
Taylors, SC 29687
Contact: Betty Jo Bateman
Email: cef@cefgreenville.com
Phone: 864 292-5842

CEF of Catawba River Chapter

114 Williams Street, Ste 101
Lancaster, SC 29720
Contact: Carol Kolb
Email: cefcrc@comporium.net
Phone: 803 283-3981

CEF of Orangeburg/Lower Savannah District

382 Broughton Street
Orangeburg, SC 29115
Contact: Judy Boyleston
Email: judycef@bellsouth.net
Phone: 803 535-0061

CEF of Columbia-Midlands

500 St Andrews Rd
Columbia, SC 29210
Contact: Frances Sims
Email: frances@cef-sc.org
Phone: 803 798-4405

CEF of Palmetto District

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Summerville, SC 29485
Contact: Shannon Staples
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CEF of Greater Florence District

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Contact: Teri Brehio
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CEF of South Carolina

PO Box 211084
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Contact: Richard Summerford
Email: cefofscinc@juno.com
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CEF of Greater Pee Dee

1320 Highway 501 Business Unit H
Conway, SC 29526
Contact: Deborah Tompkins
Email: cefofgpd@yahoo.com
Phone: 843 347-4233

CEF of The Lowcountry District Chapter

PO Box 986
Beaufort, SC 29901
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Released Time Bible Study

Bible classes sponsored by local Christian Learning Centers in partnership with churches
Meet off campus during the school day for elementary, middle and high school students

What is Released Time Bible Education?

[From websites of *School Ministries* - www.schoolministries.org and www.releasedtime.org]

Released Time Bible Education

Teaching the Bible devotionally to public school students during school time but off school premises and always with parental permission is Released Time Bible Education.

The Bible has been and can be legally taught on a devotional basis at a time set aside during the school day when public school students, with parental permission, leave the school premises to attend religious education classes led by religious or community groups. These classes, known as Released Time programs, are held off school premises, usually in a nearby religious facility.

Since its inception in 1914, millions of students from kindergarten through high school have participated. Currently over 250,000 students participate. The U.S. Supreme Court has upheld Released Time as protected by the Constitution of the United States.

History of Released Time

[from the website of School Ministries]

Released Time Bible Education programs were first started by Dr. William Wirt, a School Superintendent in Gary, Indiana in 1914. He created the program as a way for public school children to receive religious education during the school day.

In 1952, the Supreme Court upheld the legality of such programs in its *Zorach v. Clauson* decision. The Supreme Court found that those off-campus programs operating with parental permission for students were legal as long as the programs were not supported by the United States taxpayer. Since 1952, the Supreme Court has upheld the Released Time program operations as legal under the Constitution of the United States.

How Released Time Will Help

Released Time Bible Education provides the unique opportunity of allowing students to learn about God during the school day.

Studies done by *School Ministries* have shown that those students who participate in Released Time programs have shown increases in critical learning skills and have fewer behavioral problems. Our studies have also found that Released Time can reduce the rate of psychological problems such as severe depression, attention deficit, and hopelessness.

Released Time programs give today's youth the hope and the opportunity to transform their lives through accepting Jesus Christ. Youth will be able to grow spiritually in a familiar environment with their classmates and will then be able to return to their homes to share the Good News with families.

Local Churches Reach Students for Jesus Christ through Released Time

From Rev. Joe Price

**Associate Pastor- Washington Baptist Church in Greer, SC
President - Greer Christian Learning Center**

Long before I became the associate pastor of Washington Baptist Church I was the president of Greer Christian Learning Center, a role which I continue to fill today. I am pleased to share how Washington has been involved in taking the gospel of Christ to the greatest mission field in America – the children of our public schools.

Greer Christian Learning Center was born nearly thirteen years ago as a ministry to teach the Bible to young people during the school day via Release Time. God used ordinary people (as He usually does), who had no expertise or experience to know what to do or how to begin, to start this ministry. This group of people knew one thing, the call of God was real, and we had a choice to obey or disobey. We submitted to the Lord, and committed to obey everything He called us to do, knowing His first command was to trust Him. God's word tells us that "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6), and our desire was to be pleasing to Him. Every word from God has been a call to trust Him, for this ministry was something we could not do on our own.

GCLC began in 1997 with 120 students meeting in a small church next door to Greer Middle School. Today, more than 600 students meet at a facility across the street from Greer Middle School and Greer High School. Hundreds have come to know the Lord through the ministry of GCLC and many lives have been changed as a result of hearing God's Word, for God promised His Word would never return unto Him void (Isaiah 55:11). All of this came as a result of obedience to God by the board of directors of Greer Christian Learning Center and the churches who also responded to God's call to support His. Washington Baptist is one of those churches.

When Greer Middle and High Schools moved to a new campus, we at GCLC faced a decision. God had already begun a miracle by calling us to build a new facility near the new schools to house GCLC and its ministries. Our choices were to suspend classes until our facility was built, or find an alternative meeting place. Washington Baptist Church, which is located 1 mile from the schools, offered to allow GCLC the use of its facilities, free of charge for almost 2 years! This was a blessing to us and to the students. Only God knows the impact on the individual students during those two years. Once the building was completed, we then needed to transport the students from the school across the street to our new facility. Once again, Washington, along with a few other churches, provided buses and drivers each week. Without these churches stepping up we would not have been able to function. These churches have been faithful through the years to stand in the gap to allow God to work through them to present the gospel to these students. It reminds me of the story of the paralytic who was brought to Jesus by his friends. These churches do not allow any obstacle or excuse to prevent them from obeying the great commission! What a frightening thought that there might be students who desire to attend who couldn't because of a lack of transportation.

Finances have also been a challenge to us, but an opportunity to watch God respond to our steps of faith. We believe God instructed us to trust Him to meet all of our needs, so we do not rely on fund raisers. We pray and trust and God provides in miraculous ways. These same churches, along with a few others, give to the work of GCLC through their budgets. God multiplies these offerings to be enough to meet our needs, with very little left over. God is always on time, and His provisions are always enough!

As I stated in the beginning, we believe that the students in our public schools are the greatest mission field in America today. Many of them will never hear the gospel for the first time at home or in a church. Many came to GCLC out of curiosity, to get away from school for awhile, or because their parents made them come. But while they were in the classes, they heard the gospel, the Holy Spirit convicted, and they accepted Christ. They probably never would have heard anywhere else. It is unthinkable for any church to reject an opportunity to be part of a great commission effort to bring young people to Christ. And it can be as simple as providing transportation or money. How irresponsible it would be for a church to send money for mission work in far away places, and at the same time reject a very practical opportunity to reach the lost in their community. My prayer is that all our churches will look to see what God is doing in their communities. That will be God's invitation for them to become involved. Then it's a matter of obedience or disobedience to the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

Released Time Christian Education

- Released Time Bible Education** www.releasedtime.org
- School Ministries** www.schoolministries.org
- Best Network** www.bibleeducationweek.net

Christian Learning Center of Florence County
 Serving in Florence County Contact: Louanne Stewart 843 669-1728

Christian Learning Centers of Greenville County
 Serving Greenville County Contact: Janice Butler 864 236-0450

Christian Learning Centers of the Upstate, Inc.
 Serving Anderson & Pickens Counties Contact: Mack Edwards 864 947-1853

Clarendon Christian Learning Center
 Serving Clarendon County Contact: Erie Brown 803 433-9193

Coastal School Ministries
 Serving Myrtle Beach and Horry County Contact: Dawn Hensley 843 293-0446

Greer Christian Learning Center
 Serving Greer Middle and High Schools Contact: Kathy Neely 864 848-3591

Midlands Christian Learning Center
 Serving in the Columbia area Contact: Grayson Hartgrove 800 851-8179

Spartanburg County Bible Education in School Time
 Serving Spartanburg County (District 7) Contact: Drew Martin 864 573-8583

Organizations & Resources for Ministry with Public Schools

American Center for Law & Justice	www.aclj.org
Book of Hope - God's Word / Every Student	www.bookofhope.com
Campus Alliance	www.everyschool.com
Campus Revolution	www.campusrevolution.net
Child Evangelism Fellowship	www.cefonline.com
Claim Your Campus	www.claimyourcampus.com
Fellowship of Christian Athletes	www.fca.org
Fields of Faith (FCA Campus Event)	www.fieldsofffaith.com
First Priority	www.fpoa.org
Kids Hope USA	www.kidshopeusa.org
Mentor Youth	www.mentoryouth.com
Moms in Touch International	www.momsintouch.org
NAMB-Student Evangelism	www.studentz.com
National Network of Youth Ministries	www.youthworkers.net
Revive PrayerWalk	www.reviveprayerwalk.com
See You At The Pole	www.syatp.com
Student Venture	www.studentventure.com
Teens for Christ	www.teensforchrist.org
Young Life	www.younglife.org
Youth Alive	www.yausa.com

Closing Challenge . . .

Do you remember the invitation Joe received in the mail? Here is the rest of the story.

Joe reserved the date on his calendar, rented a tuxedo, and rehearsed his manners for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be part of the biggest night of the year in his city.

He arrived at the civic center and made his way to the elegant banquet hall. Joe walked proudly to the registration table and stated his name. The woman at the table searched the guest list, but did not find Joe's name. He indicated there must be a problem as he reached for his invitation in his tuxedo pocket. Then Joe heard the words that turned his anticipation into anxiety. "When did you respond to your invitation?"

"Respond?" Joe replied. "What do you mean?"

At the bottom of the invitation, in the same ink and just as clear as the date and place of the event, were the letters R S V P along with a telephone number and date to accept the invitation and reserve a seat at this wonderful celebration.

Joe had failed to respond to his invitation. The banquet was full and he would miss out on what could have been the most wonderful experience of his life.

You have been invited to participate in perhaps the largest and most important activity in your community—the education of children. Shaping the lives of children is one of the most worthwhile things we can do. It can make a lasting difference in our communities. Doing this in the name of Jesus and for the glory of God makes an eternal difference.

Don't be like Joe and fail to respond.

R S V P today . . . and get ready for one of the most exciting experiences of your life.

Your invitation is open. The deadline is uncertain, so please R S V P immediately.

For More Information:

Resources are available on the web at www.scbaptist.org/southcarolina

Contact: Tim Rice in the Missions Mobilization Group at SCBC at
800 723-7242 or 803 765-0030 ext. 3822 e-mail: timrice@scbaptist.org

Contact: Tom Capps at Greer Baptist Association
864 877-7670 or email: tcapps@greerba.org