

Getting Practical—Ways to Partner with Schools

You will be struck by how long this Appendix is. But don't be intimidated. It's long because there are so many options. So, the easy way to get through this section (as you begin to consider a school partnership in your church) is to quickly scan through the overall list. You will quickly find that there is literally something there for everybody...every school...and every church. The length of this section is because some of the activities/projects/approaches need detailed description and many of them make more sense when a story of success is connected to them. So, scan the outline to make it easy to get through and then only read the details of programs that may be of interest for your ministry. I included major items. There are additional ones in the addendum that are fairly self-explanatory.

I. Activities that help the students:

1. Art Masterpiece

- A. Brief Description: Volunteers called "Art Guides" bring prints to the classroom and present a lesson and art activity planned for a particular grade level.
- B. You will work with the school and the coordinator for their school or district. They provide the art print for you to use. Some districts have lesson plans and supplies for you to use. However, some of the Title 1 schools cannot do this program unless they get help with the supplies. Below are some examples of what I have done in the Chandler School District. At that time the church provided many of the supplies that were not a part of regular classroom supplies.

EX. Artist: Wassily Kandinsky-Composition Storm (2nd grade)

Activity: Water color & Crayon Abstraction

Supplies: 1 large sheet of white construction paper (1 per student) objects to trace (color boxes, cookie cutter shapes, etc.), crayons of all colors, water colors, brushes, cups for water.

EX. Artist: Unknown-Black Bull (Kindergarten)

Activity: Cave Art

Supplies: Brown paper bags (grocery bags) torn into pieces roughly one

foot square, black, brown, yellow and red crayons, glue and masking tape. (The crayons will have the paper removed for this project), sheet with cave figures that they can use as sample for their art.

- C. Story: The volunteers realized they did not have to be good at art but willing to share with kids and have fun!
- D. Cost: None to minimal depending on which school.

2. Remedial Reading / Tutoring

- A. Brief Description: Individual adults who can read, no special training or expertise is required, work one on one with a student who needs extra practice in reading. It is suggested to work with two students once a week for 30 minutes each.
- B. What to do and how to do it: The school (possibly reading interventionist or specialist) determines the children from the lower grades that they would like tutors to work with. Then you work with the classroom teachers to set up a time and day to meet with the child.
- C. Story: We have 5 tutors that work with 12 students and they all enjoy the time with their students. They have said the teachers are flexible and so appreciative. Each has also said it is so much fun and really rewarding to see them improve and know that they have had a part in that.
- D. Cost: Varies from minimal to significant. I have piloted a program that works really well and is easy to implement and can offer information and train your volunteers. This program is very effective and easy, however, there is a cost to getting the kits.

3. Book Buddies or Book Pals

- A. Brief Description: Read to a classroom of kids once or twice a month for 30 minutes. I usually read to a couple of classrooms. If you choose the same grade level you can just read the book to each classroom.

- B. What to do and how to do it: Have the school ask teachers that would be interested in having a reader come to their classroom. Usually the younger grades (K, 1, 2) are particularly interested. However, the upper grade teachers also ask for readers. Once you have been assigned to a classroom or two classrooms. Choose a book, practice reading it out loud with expression, and then read it to the kids. Sometimes I choose a book that I can take in a treat as a surprise. EX. IF You Give a Moose a Muffin. Then I buy the mini muffins at Costco and hand them out. I found the Title 1 students did not know what muffins were which is why I did that. I always clear it with the teacher first.
- C. Story: It is so fun to read to the kids and interact with them on a consistent basis.
- D. Minimal Cost (some books can be checked out from the Library and lessons are sent via email by the liaison coordinator \$200.

II. Assist with student needs

- 1. Back to School Drive
 - A. Brief Description: Children and families buy some extra school supplies when purchasing their supplies.
 - B. What to do and how to do it: This is a great project for July and August. Send out a note saying: "Families are invited to show love to others by picking up school supplies for children at the Elementary school and for others that may need them. While you are out shopping for your school supplies put in extra for another child. We will fill backpacks up with needed items and distribute them at the elementary school. This is one way you can show the love of Jesus to others!" Have your Children's Church or a SS class fill the backpacks. Collect the items in large containers and take them to the school to be distributed to the teachers and principal.

- C. Story: After doing this for a number of years the city started a unified effort where many churches worked together and the backpacks with supplies were passed out at a district event before school. I am proud that we were a part of getting that started and continue to minister with the city and school districts.
 - D. Minimal whatever individuals can do. However, If you decide you want to do 20 backpacks you may want to advertise how many spiral notebooks, pencils, markers, erasers, crayon boxes, pens, etc. that you hope to collect. You can always donate extra to the classroom teachers.
2. Back 2 School Bash
- A. Brief Description: Hold a “Back to School Bash” in August and celebrate the start of a new year
 - B. What to do and how to do it: You can do this many different ways. You can have a party at the church where you play games, have food, give away prizes. You can have more of an outreach event in which you give out free school supplies, haircuts, and hotdogs, etc. Families could also have the opportunity to enjoy food, carnival games, door prizes, music, inflatables, entertainment, and more. ALL FOR FREE! Start small.
 - C. Story: I held a 50’s party at the church. The kids were so excited to come and wear an outfit. I provided extra skirts, scarves, etc. for the school kids that did not wear a costume. We gave away awards for the best outfit and played some group games. Had root beer floats and hotdogs. It was a hit!!
 - D. Moderate (Asked for \$3 a person to cover the cost of the food.) Decorations and prizes were done separately.

III. Support and affirm teachers

1. Meals for Teachers:

- A. Brief Description: Provide breakfast or lunch to teachers and staff. This could be for Teacher appreciation week or for one of their teacher work days.
- B. What to do and how to do it: Determine what meal you want to provide. Ask the school if you can prepare it or if it needs to be outsourced.
- C. Story: The teachers were so excited to be treated to a lunch that we catered in from an Italian restaurant.
- D. Catering may be easier but it is a significant cost depending on the number of teachers. Often a restaurant will give you a discount if you let them know it is a church and who you are doing this for. Most schools will let you bring in food that you have made.

2. Monthly Teacher/Staff Encouragement

- A. Brief Description: A simple treat or item with a cute note put in the boxes of the teachers. I often bless the support staff as well when I do these smaller items.
- B. What to do and how to do it: Bring individual treat for the teachers with a note of encouragement. (Ex. You are a LIFESAVER and make a difference in the lives of kids. Attach a little baggie that you filled with 5 or 6 lifesavers candies.
- C. Story: I have seen teachers stand at their boxes and say, "I can't believe they did this for us!"
- D. Minimal. Bags of mini candy or other items such as tea bag, sticky notes.

3. Back to School Treat

- A. Brief Description: Provide water, cookies and chips to staff to kick off the beginning of the school year.

- B. What to do and how to do it: Put the treat in a basket or on a tray with a note. I usually put them in a sign holder and set it by the items I brought. WELCOME BACK! This basketful of treats is to wish you a year of bountiful learning in your classrooms. We hope you have a great year! You friends at Renovation Church
- C. Story: They are so appreciative.
- D. Minimal (Costco cookie tray is \$19. Have people donate a box of goodies like granola bars, individual bags of chips, candy bars, etc. to put in a basket.

4. Christmas Gift (or end of the year gift)

- A. Brief Description: Give a \$5 gift card to a nearby coffee shop to the teachers at the beginning of the year, for Christmas, etc. as a boost and way to let them know you appreciate their efforts. Often at Title 1 or low income area schools, they don't receive a lot of positive reinforcement.
- B. What to do and how to do it: Have members of the congregation, small group, Sunday School class collect offering and use this purchase a gift card. Buy dollar store cards that don't have a religious message. Have individual with legible handwriting write a personal note inside. See verbiage below:

Merry Christmas!

We are so grateful for your wonderful service to the children of our community. Teaching can be a great challenge and we are thankful that you are willing to help children learn and lay the foundation for them to reach their potential. Many of the things you do on a daily basis may seem to go unnoticed. However, we want you to know that we are aware of your wonderful efforts and hear about the difference that you are making in their lives. Please enjoy this small token of appreciation for all you do.

Your friends from Renovation Church

- C. Story: Teachers are always amazed at the generosity of the church. They also really appreciate a hand written note. We have received cards from individual teachers as well as one in which the teachers all signed it.
- D. Moderate. It depends on the size of the gift card you decide to bless them with. A favorite of the teachers was Harkins Movie cards from Costco.

IV. Programs/activities that help parents

1. ESL (English as a Second Language) classes

- A. Brief Description: Teach English classes to the parents by providing a class once a week at the school for 60 to 90 minutes where they can practice speaking and writing English. Provide table leaders (they don't need to speak Spanish) to help a small group of students after someone shares a simple lesson.
- B. What to do and how to do it: Arrange with the school to advertise the class and provide a space for you to meet. Then gather materials or curriculum that you will use. I always begin by reviewing the letters and sounds and how to read simple words. I start with some lessons on "Family" ...My name is.....I live.....etc. After I see the make-up of the class, I can better decide what kinds of things to discuss. I have also used books and have some great resources for anyone that would like to see them.
- C. Story: When I began at a local school in Chandler, the principal said she really wished they could have English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for *parents*. As we began to meet that wish...we saw amazing things happen. People came to class in huge numbers. As time went on, they gained confidence as well as English skills and many got jobs in the district or at businesses. One even opened up a restaurant. The District recognized how helpful this was to the community so they started programs at many of their other elementary schools and hired staff to teach them.

This kind of relational development with the parents created many opportunities to have spiritual conversations and to pray with them. This engagement basically provided the environment where we were “given the key to the school” and all kinds of opportunities were opened up for us to make connections with the staff and students. Many relationships developed with families in the school and this provided the opportunity to connect families to the church. We invited these students to come to family events like “Gingerbread Decorating Night” VBS, etc. They loved coming and always told us how special and accepted we made them feel. The feeling was mutual!!

D. Cost: Books can be expensive. I contacted a local business the 2nd year we held classes and applied for a grant from them. We received \$1,000 grant which made it possible for us to get books for the next several years. I have them keep their books at the school as sometimes they don’t continue to come and then I can give it to someone else. At the end of the year, I give them a graduation certificate and let them take their books home so they can review.

Please note I have lots of things I have developed that I can share and help you get started. It does not have to be difficult.

2. Free Rummage Sale (Also called it Free Market)

- A. Brief Description: An event in which parents shop for free (or they get a coupon for reading with their child as a ticket for early entrance) and fill up a bag with items that their family needs.
- B. What to do and how to do it: Advertise at the church for people to bring in gently used items of all kinds (clothes, toys, furniture, kitchen items, bedding, tools, etc.). You will need a place to store these items for several weeks. Then recruit a team that can help you organize them the day you choose to have it at the school. We held it after school so it was convenient for the parents to stay and “shop. We put up signs

in the cafeteria so they knew what was in each area. We had bags for each person at the door and books right at the inside that each of the kids could take.

- C. Story: It went so well. It was so wonderful to see how polite they were and how they shared sets of dishes, etc. After several years I was able to get the ESL class to organize it and run it. They were so excited because they got to see everything ahead of time and got to shop 15 minutes early.
- D. Cost: None unless you want to serve food or buy bags with the churches name on it

V. Family Partnerships

(It is ideal for these to be developed to connect Church families to partner with School families in a long-term, consistent basis. The purpose would be to develop a relationship in which you can experience life together. It is the most transformative way to reach and help those in your school community. Relationship building is the key to the family partnership being successful and really impacting each other.

1. Christmas Family Partnership“
 - A. Brief Description: We work with school administration, teachers, and social workers at local schools to partner with families who need help for Christmas
 - B. What to do and how to do it: The teachers are asked if they have families that need assistance. Then the school gives them a form to fill out. Once the families choose to participate, their names are given to us and we work to match them with a church family for “adoption. One Sunday at the church we make the family information available and ask people to read through the names, ages, and their gift requests. Then they fill out a card indicating which child, adult, or family that they would like to partner with. We then email them the list of requested items and ask them to purchase what they would like and return it to the church wrapped with a tag on it within

2 weeks. (Handouts and additional descriptions of the promise are available upon request.)

- C. Story: The stories are amazing. In over 12 years of doing this we have never had a family that refused for the team to pray with them. Some families have broken down and shared really deep needs and were so thankful that we would pray with them. I cannot really express how impactful our families have found this to be. One family this year said that it had the bigger impact on their kids than they anticipated and they had some really good conversations at home.
 - D. Cost: The suggested spending amount to keep things fair between children in the family is \$50 per child and \$25 gift cards for the parents. Some SALE shoppers can get some clothes and a toy for less!
2. Ongoing connections with families (Valentine's, Mothers' Day, Easter)
- A. Brief Description: Meet or call the family that you have partnered with each quarter at a minimum. Occasionally go out and do things together or come to outreach activities planned for these families at the church..
 - B. What to do and how to do it: Life on Life may look very different for each family partnership. In order to help facilitate this, each family will be asked to fill out a questionnaire identifying hobbies, birthdays, etc. This will provide each of you with important information that will help deepen your relationship. EX. You may want to get together and celebrate a birthday with a cake or brownies.
 - C. Story: We have taken our family to Peter Piper and it was so much fun. They were waiting for the van on the curb all dressed up and ready to go. They said they never get to go there. We have had picnics in the park and eaten and played games together. They enjoyed bringing something too.

Outing Example: Easter Celebration

1. Stop by Little Caesar's Pizza. Arrive at the house and greet the children and parents. Pray for the food and eat pizza together.
 2. Hide the plastic eggs that you prepared ahead of time in their yard for the children to find. After everyone has finished eating and the eggs are hidden, allow the children to enjoy the egg hunt! (Option: Could hide an empty egg and talk about how this reminds you of the empty tomb....Jesus rose from the dead. It gives you one way to share about Jesus' death and resurrection.) You may want to bring Easter baskets for the children with a candy and little treats (hair bows, book, matchbox car, etc.) You can put their names on the outside. Bring one for your children too!
 3. Pray together before you leave thanking God for Jesus and praying for any needs, etc. Invite them to Easter Service.
- D. Cost: Varies depending on what you do. If funds are available, an account could be set up to help each church family do an outside activity together (approximately \$25-50). EX. Take your family to Peter Piper, the zoo, children's museum. A list of ideas will be provided for you.
3. Partnership Events held at the church (Game Night, Dinner, Celebration, Water Party/Carnival)
- A. Brief Description: An event at the church in which you invite all of the families that you "adopted or partnered with" at Christmas. IN addition, invite all those who partnered with these families and gave gifts at Christmas.
- B. What to do and how to do it: Send an invitation to the house or email it if you have that information. Then follow it up with a personal call. Make sure they don't need a ride to the event. Then plan a simple event where your church families and school families can interact and the families can play together.
- Ex. Game Night Put out board games (Trouble, Uno, etc.) on tables and on the floor (Twister), balls, etc. games that they can play when they come in and throughout the evening. Serve pizza or something easy if it is over dinner. Have a "make your own sundae bar" for a treat. Have some relays and other group games after they eat. Then

give away some prizes) could be donated items or Dollar Store items, grand prize Movie Night basket) Have fun together!!

- C. Story: It is so special to see the families connecting and kids playing together that don't know each other. It provides an easy way to encourage them to be a part of your church community. When they come on a Sunday they are excited and say, "I know you!"
- D. Minimal to moderate depending on what you do.

2. Easter Baskets

- A. Brief Description: Prepare Family Easter baskets and take them by the homes of the families you partnered with at Christmas.



Invite the families to join you for the Easter Service.

- B. What to do and how to do it: Ask the congregation to bring candy, small toys, books, colors and gift cards for parents to put in a family Easter basket. Purchase large plastic handled bins from the Dollar store and put in items for each child in the family. .Put in a children's bible or devotional and a DVD for the family. Cover them with clear bags and tie the top with ribbons and an invitation for your Easter Service. .

- C. Story: We had 22 people come in 2018 and 45 people come to church in 2019. I think part of the increase was I asked a few couples in our congregation to stay after the service and host an Easter dinner and egg hunt for the school families. It was so special!!
- D. Cost: Donations for Easter baskets. I spent \$1 on each large, plastic handled bucket (see picture above); grass for the bottom, and the DVD's from the Walmart bin \$3-5 per video.

VI. School Events (Orientation, Meet the Teacher Night, Misc. School activities)

1. Help with Activities at their Request

- A. Brief Description: Going to the school at the designated time to be available to do what they need.
- B. What to do and how to do it: Usually this just means serving pizza or checking people in or handing out packets. This does not take any training or prep, just a willingness to serve.
- C. Story: It has been fun to interact with the families and gives a better feel about the demography of the school.
- D. None

2. Summer Book Giveaway

- A. Brief Description: •Collect gently used books to send home with the kids over the summer.
- B. What to do and how to do it: Have members of the congregation and their friends collect gently used books to donate to the school. The school had us set them up on tables in the cafeteria by age level. Each class came in and chose a book or two to take home for the summer.
- C. Story: The kids were excited about getting to choose a book. They often wanted to take one for a sibling. If you have enough donated you can allow them to take two. We gave

them a bookmark and a little chart for them to mark their reading time.

3. Treat for testing week for the students

- A. Brief Description: Make a note (Ex. "You are a TESTING STAR and we are BURSTING with joy at your success.") and attach a little treat to it for the kids testing (all 3rd grade students.)
- B. What to do and how to do it? Buy huge bag of Starburst candy and put 5 or 6 in snack sized bag. Staple the not to the top and take them to the school. (We also brought otter pops that we froze in the school freezer and let them pass out.)
- C. Story: The kids were excited about getting a treat. Teachers appreciated us sending something for them. You could also send something before they start testing as an encouragement. (Ex. You are such a SMARTIE (candy); we know you are going to do well on the tests.)

Additional Ideas:

- Provide weekend food bags as a huge percent of students at schools are on free lunches during the school week.
- Two nights per week provide homework help. Offer classes to help parents learn how to help their children. One church serves 12 children plus their families (about 50 people) Three churches in Maryland partner to offer semi-weekly suppers and homework help.
- Help with facility repair and improvements. Do you have volunteers with skills that could benefit your local school? Create a team that is willing to give of their time and talent to bless the school.
- Provide staff and materials to start an extracurricular club. For example you could launch a "Speed Stacks" club. We use Speed Stacks as a fun activity at church and we have all the necessary equipment to start a club. Think outside the box. What do you have at your church that could be used to offer extracurricular activities for students?

- Allow the band & ROTC to use your gym for band camp and drill team practice.
- Provide the guidance staff male & female toiletry kits.
- Serve at the prom each year as bathroom attendants and parking lot attendants and have provided hair and make-up artists to fix "wardrobe malfunctions".
- Provided breakfast for students and parents at orientation.
- Serve in crisis response coordinating teens at the hospital and helping with communication between students, the hospital, parents and the schools. Coordinate with the guidance staff to connect local youth pastors to be available for counseling students after the death of a student.
- Provide umbrellas for teachers on bus duty.
- Provide volunteers for Field Days and proctors for standardized tests.
- Administration could use the church for teacher training.
- Tailgate party as an incentive for students to stay for after-school tutoring.

Bishop Dindy Taylor challenges his congregation to give \$10 and 10 hours of service per worshiper to help kids in their school community.

1. See the Engaging Local Schools Resource at <http://www.churchleadership.com/serveyourneighbor/EngagingLocalSchools.asp> for extensive material about how churches work with local schools.
 2. Dr. Lovett Weems, "Identifying Strategic Initiatives" in Engaging Local Schools CD (2014).
 3. Elbert Hubbard, American editor, publisher, and writer, 1856-1915.
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Appendix #X DDENDUM: with shortened verbiage in the bulk of the document. Tony Evans' -Story/The Remarkable Adopt-A-School Program

Kingdom Agenda Flyer by Tony Evans

Dr. Evans shared, "As a boy growing up in the inner city of Baltimore, Maryland, I experienced firsthand the challenges that urban kids face in trying to rise above the poverty, family disintegration, violence, promiscuity and chemical addictions that breed hopelessness in so many of our young people and their families.

The reason for the challenges that so many face is a result of the separation of the spiritual from the social. There is a horrific disconnect between the role of the church on Sunday and the condition of hurting people on Monday. This changed in my own life and family when my father discovered the life-giving power of faith and began integrating the spiritual throughout our everyday lives. This reality, coupled with the impacting influence of a mentor named Martin, dramatically altered the trajectory of my life to where I am today."

There is no greater opportunity in your community to impact more people for God than in your local schools. For every child that attends a school, there is a family. For every teacher, staff member, and administrator there is a famil

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