



HOW TO GET STARTED

1

Your Church Identity – In preparing to enter any partnership, the first step is to know your church mission and how the partnership fits within it.

- How does community outreach fit into the mission of the church?
- How committed to community outreach is the top level leadership of the church?
- How does your church articulate the relationship between service and evangelism in light of whole-gospel proclamation?
- What is your church's mission statement for community outreach?
- Create a School Partnership Team and appoint a Primary Contact Person dedicated to this effort.

2

Identify a Potential School Partner – gather information to help determine which school to pursue.

- Consider the schools in your neighborhood first and prioritize low-income and under-performing schools.
- Learn more about the schools of interest. Consider demographics such as percentage of students on free or reduced meal programs, academic performance, and programs already present. Most districts offer this information on individual school websites.

3

Meet with a Key Person from the school to get acquainted and explain your hope to serve as a partner.

- At most schools, the Principal, Vice Principal, or volunteer coordinator will be the Key Person. Call and make an appointment. Only the Primary Contact Person (and potentially one other person from your team) should go to this first meeting.
- Keep the meeting brief. Clearly explain that the purpose is to see if there is a potential for partnership, and that you have no agenda but to see how you can partner with the school while developing your congregation into well-rounded and engaged citizens.
- Ask questions about the school's successes, what they are proud of and celebrate.
- Ask questions about the school's biggest needs. Do not bring up what you think they need, instead, listen well.

4

Arrange a second meeting to discuss potential actions

- If the first meeting goes well and there seems to be an amicable relationship, arrange a second meeting to discuss in more detail what the school's needs are. Ask the Key Person to invite other leaders in the school.
- Have a brainstorm session to allow the school leadership to list their strengths and assets, followed by their needs.
- Let the school know your church would like to help with something on the list.





5 Build Relationships

- Consider starting with one simple project.
- You'll have a good idea of what to do from the list compiled through the brainstorm step. Here are some examples of simple services: ground beautification, lunch for staff, or painting a mural. An activity you can do well is best.
- Investing in school leadership as you serve, and going above and beyond what you promised will help build trust.

6 Develop a Plan

- Begin to develop a plan based on previous discussions with school leadership.
- An example of a plan might include:
 - | Key Goals
 - | Major Actions/Tasks
 - | Responsibility
 - | Timeframe
 - | Measurement- How will you know you have completed your goal? This is most important for activities that involve benchmarks or other measurements of education.
- Share the plan with school and church leadership and get their feedback.

7 Build and prepare your team

- Primary Contact Person - Your team should identify someone who will facilitate all communication with the school.
- Separation of Church and State Policy - Your team should be familiar with this.
- FOR versus WITH Relational Dynamics of Partnerships - Read, understand and train your team in this concept for creating healthy partnerships.
- Consider having the Principal come speak to the congregation about the school.
- Plan for appropriate background checks and orientation for volunteers as necessary (depending upon school and district regulations).

8 Follow Up

- Once programs are underway, continually follow up with the Principal and other school leaders to ensure that the programs are running smoothly.
- Determine process for addressing issues as they arise.
- School Partnership Coordinator should meet frequently (once per quarter) with the other church volunteers involved in projects at the school.
- Once or twice per year, have volunteers get together to discuss issues and share stories. Share stories with your congregation.
- Celebrate the success of your partnership with school leadership!