

Developing a Heart for the Needs of Children and Schools

Outline

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The Changed Context of Schools and Churches

Missional Mandate for Reengagement

Prayer

- Pray for the administrators, teachers, staff, students, and families in your local schools and for educational policy makers.
- Include in pastoral and congregational prayers.

Education

- Lift up the value of education.
- Offer parenting classes.
- Offer ESL or basic literacy classes.
- Help church members, particularly those without children in school, engage with schools.
- Provide forums and other occasions where current local education conditions and issues might be explored.

Communication

- Announce major school events.
- Encourage members to show their support.
- Celebrate accomplishments of students and educators.
- Build relationships and maintain ongoing communication with parents, students, teachers, and administrators.

Special Observances

- Celebrate the beginning of the school year with recognition of teachers and students.
- Connect the celebration with an opportunity for church members to provide materials previously identified in working with school officials (supplies, clothes, backpacks, books, uniforms, etc.).
- Hold a Children's Sabbath sponsored by the Children's Defense Fund, which also provides materials at <http://www.childrensdefense.org>.
- Celebrate graduations and honors for students and teachers.

Cultivate Congregational Support and Awareness

- Stay abreast of local education issues and needs.
- Hold information sessions. Invite the principal or a panel of other school leaders to speak at your church.
- Be a cheerleader for schools and kids. Share success stories about teachers and students.

Offer Services

- Offer transportation or childcare so parents can attend back-to-school nights, PTA meetings, or teacher conferences.
- Offer your church as a location for any school activities for which your church's location or facilities might work better than school facilities. Music recitals are an example.
- Offer to accompany parents to school meetings if that would be helpful, including the offer to provide translation assistance.

Advocate

- Work together with parents to foster their engagement in school issues and to encourage them to advocate for their children and their schools.
- Be an advocate for public education. Keep up with the work of local school board as well as relevant state and federal policies. Support adequate and equitable school funding.
- Remind everyone of the church's commitment to the entire community.

Closing Prayer

