

Why Schools Matter to the Church Outline

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School partnerships are part of a larger mission of engaging our communities. For this work to be effective, the local church must have a clear theological grounding. Rev. Asa J. Lee provides theological and biblical framing for engaging our schools.

The School as Community Institution

- Our schools are places of communal gathering and are integral to our communities.
- The populations of our schools give us insight into our communal makeup.
 - Demographics
 - Family structures
 - Social income
- The principal of a local school must be expert in the issues affecting the community.

The Church as Community Icon

- Our churches are often detached from our communities. The older a church is, the more disconnected it is from its surrounding community.
- Churches, however, are still one of the few places where:
 - People from various backgrounds (not necessarily diverse) gather
 - Captive audiences participate in “God talk”
 - A group of people with similar concerns and values talk about esoteric concepts like the Kingdom of God
- A church is a community icon more than an institution.

The Church’s Reasonable Service

- Matthew 25:31-45 states:
‘For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family,[g] you did it to me.’

- Partnering offers the greatest opportunity to serve. The opportunity to share with schools powerfully demonstrates the work and love of God.
 - Through partnerships with schools, churches can come to understand the landscape of their community's needs.
 - The makeup of a school — its constituent families and students, the quality of teachers, the access to resources, and even its academic profile (free and reduced lunch rates, teacher-student ratio, test scores) — communicates so much about its surrounding community.
 - Working in the local school better equips the church to reach their community.
- Together we make a greater impact. Our churches have critical access to elements of our society that schools need for us to reach.
 - Schools provide learning and opportunities for development through social and cognitive skills.
 - Schools also need students to have social/emotional development opportunities.
 - Extra curricular activities have a pedagogical function.
 - Where there are fewer arts, music, and athletic programs, the need for social/emotional development is greater.
- Churches are social/emotional learning centers. (Rev. Tim Warner, Chief Community Partnership Officer, MCPS)
- Church/school partnerships help both institutions make a greater impact in their communities.

The Church's Transformation

- At the heart of the Christian witness is the idea of rebirth and transformation. This is true of individuals as much as it is of institutional life.
- When people or churches begin to serve, they experience new life and new vitality.
- Working in schools can revitalize a church's self concept and brings new life to its ministries and communities.

