



Helping At-Risk Kids: A Must-Do Plan, part 2 of 3—

Grab Their Hands! They're Drowning!

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Public Schools

You can find favor with the school administrators by volunteering your time and services. (Be prepared to spend months of relationship building with the local public school principals and teachers.) Why do so, you may ask? So that local children's pastors/ leaders can build relationships with the local school administration, teachers and students. Doing so can provide future ministry opportunities to those school leaders and students through church-related activities in and outside of the four walls of the church facilities.

Here are some effective examples of involvement in the Title 1 public schools:

Tutoring, After-School Clubs and Book Fairs

Some "Title 1" schools in low-income communities have initiated tutoring programs in which volunteers can assist. One church leader in our community is currently working with six Title 1 schools by conduct-

ing after-school programs that engage the students in tutorial, occupational, and sports-related activities. Her initial inroad to the school system was to conduct Book Fairs, in which she and other church volunteers gave away books while also doing fun activities such as face-painting. Because she



gained the trust of the administrators of these schools, she was just recently permitted to have a gospel presentation in one of the after-school programs. Another Title 1 school is working with community leaders to provide a reading program to children who struggle with reading. One

home missionary who resides in this area volunteers his time to read to and visit with the students of that school.

Teacher Appreciation

School teachers are just like children's pastors and workers—they receive few words of encouragement and thanks. At the beginning of the next school year, take some baked goods to the school principal and teachers as a token of thanks for their efforts to educate the children. You may be surprised at what doors will open for you by showing your appreciation to these educators.

Adopt a School and School Projects

Many Title 1 schools are in need of repair. One local AG church adopted one of the Title 1 elementary schools here in Springfield and spent a couple of summers painting the walls and replacing some of the decayed wooden structures. Some churches have made financial contributions toward the playground equipment of elementary schools.

School Assemblies

Character Connex was implemented by the National Children's Ministries Agency in 2005. Already, Character Connex teams have conducted hundreds of school assemblies across the nation. A major emphasis in the educational system today is that of character education. Schools have discovered that the greater the emphasis on character education, the higher the grades are and the more students the schools retain. Character Connex can operate as a school assembly and a classroom tool to provide character education.

Back-to-School and Basic Hygiene Kits

Particularly with Title 1 schools, the students often lack the basic essentials for school. You can involve the children in your church by assembling either packets or backpacks containing school supplies or even a basic hygiene kit. Make sure they all have the same ingredients and are equal in value so

no child will feel slighted. (Kit printouts can be found on pages 9 and 10 of this document.)

"Food for Thought"

It is common for students in low-income areas to go to school hungry. Educators now realize that their students' test scores and comprehension levels lower when the kids arrive hungry. One local church that resides near a Title 1 public school provides breakfast to the students as they pass by the church on their way to school.

Many children across this nation rely on school lunches for their main meal. How do those children survive on weekends and during the summer months? The answer is that many go hungry. The wise church will see the opportunity to minister to both the physical and spiritual needs of those children by conducting outreaches in or outside of the church where food is being offered.

Disaster Plan & Counseling

With the rise of natural

disasters has come a tremendous opportunity for the church to minister in the community. The ravages of Hurricane Katrina created such wide-spread devastation that churches were permitted to enter schools and hand out gifts in Jesus' name. One school allowed a local children's pastor to provide spiritual counseling to children upon request. Invitations were made at public schools to Thanksgiving and Christmas celebration events. In New Orleans, a local pastor was permitted to hand out Christmas gifts, during which time he invited the school kids to the church's "Celebrate Christmas" outreach. At that major outreach to the crippled city of New Orleans, approximately 12,500 people came to the Christmas celebration to receive the \$600,000 worth of gifts that were distributed. The good news: About 1,000 people (both adults and children) were introduced to the saving grace of Christ Jesus during that 3-evening outreach!

Questions for Further Study—

1. Have you gone on-line to learn about the educational initiatives—such as character education, trends, and assistance to underprivileged children—being conducted in elementary schools across the nation? Learn everything you can about the needs of the elementary schools so you can (a) better understand how to assist the public school; (b) communicate on a knowledgeable level with the school administrators and teachers; and (c) become more effective in your ministry to the local elementary schools.
2. Have you contacted your local elementary school principal to determine how you and your church can assist the school with special projects and needs? Doing so can begin to develop a strong and lasting relationship with the school leadership.
3. Are you willing to "think outside the box" and pray that God will enable you to expand your ministry, by targeting the public schools? Pray that God will open new opportunities to the children in your community where the children live out their lives. Refuse to wait until children and their families may come to the church to learn about Jesus. GO to them!