



CHURCHES PRAYING, SERVING AND
CELEBRATING TOGETHER

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Serving Public Schools

Churches Joining Together to Serve Public Schools

This information packet has been designed to help churches understand the needs within our public schools, and how we might be able to join together to serve the schools, teachers, and students, and make a Kingdom Impact.



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For more information, contact Unite!

www.UniteUs.org

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Why Get Involved?

Why should churches get involved in serving our public schools? If we, as the Body of Christ, have any desire to see our communities transformed by the love of Christ, we must acknowledge that public schools are a vital component in achieving such a transformation. Our public schools are the very “hub” of our communities.



Contrary to popular beliefs (and somewhat fueled by the controversies surrounding the separation of church and state), public schools are often willing and desirous to receive volunteers and encouragement from Christians and churches. The main reason is that their needs are so tremendous!

A Servant’s Heart **“How Can We Serve You?”**



Louise Radloff has been a valuable servant of Gwinnett County Public Schools for 30 years as a teacher and a school board member. Louise has expressed her thoughts that churches have an incredible opportunity to make a Kingdom impact, if we go to serve with a servant’s heart without an agenda.

Instead of serving with an agenda, why not serve with a heart of unconditional love for our public schools, teachers, students, and parents? As we invest ourselves in building relationships, our faith and the Gospel will be evident through our words and actions. When principals, teachers, students, and parents know that we care, they will eventually want to know why.

Needs and opportunities to serve vary from school to school, and the willingness of the school to work with churches is often directly related to relationships and willingness of the principal to involve churches. New serving relationships may easily develop if the Church simply asks our public schools the question, “How can we serve you?”

Priorities in Serving

While it is clear that there are critical needs at each age level (elementary, middle, and high school), Louise Radloff suggests that the most strategic group to focus on is elementary school aged children. It is at the youngest ages that students need to learn skills and be encouraged so that they can discover success as they move into middle and high school. If students don’t learn to read by 3rd grade then they may never catch up or move forward.



Statistics & Information



of

The following are a few statistics and relevant information regarding the needs of public schools. There is certainly more information available pertaining to this issue, but this will at least provide enough information to help substantiate that churches must address the needs of our public schools.

- **Georgia has the second highest high school dropout rate in the country (www.georgiago.org).**
 - Over 40% of Georgia's students left school without graduating (national average dropout rate is 28%)
 - Only 32% of Georgia's students who enter 9th grade are likely to graduate from high school four years later and enroll in college within a year.
 - The economic impact of high school noncompletion in Georgia is \$17.6 billion.

- **Public Schools have major challenges because of the tremendous growth of non- English speaking families.**
 - Gwinnett County has one of the fastest growing limited English proficiency populations in the United States
 - 800% increase in Hispanic residents in Gwinnett (from 1990 – 2000) – nationwide increase was 58%
 - 60% of Hispanic and Asian populations in Gwinnett report they speak English “less than very well”
 - 1 in 5 families, in the Gwinnett County School System, speak a language other than English at home.
 - Many international children and students are struggling in school, because their parents cannot help them with their school work.

- **Students are looking in the wrong places for fulfillment!**
 - In Gwinnett County, 31% of high school students report having sexual intercourse and 39% of teen pregnancies resulted in abortions.
 - Police have identified 1,500 persons involved in 171 gangs in Gwinnett, while 34% of high school students and 25% of middle school students had seen someone threatened by a gang.

Opportunities to Serve

There are many ways to serve and make a Kingdom impact in our public schools. The following are some ideas and suggestions of how we, the Church, can make a difference in the lives of school leaders, parents, students, and families by serving our public schools.

The following are a few initial suggestions on how we might be able to serve school leaders, students, and parents.

School Leaders

(Superintendents, school boards, principals, administrative staff, and teachers)

- 1) Equip church members with a biblical worldview and life view, and then encourage them to serve on school boards, PTA, and other leadership roles in schools.
- 2) Ask school leadership how we may serve them and become volunteers. This is the most visible way to show we care!
 - a. Volunteer in the church office
 - b. Volunteer for sports programs
 - c. Volunteer for special events/work projects
 - d. Volunteer as a translator
- 3) Encourage, equip, and commission teachers
 - a. “Bless a Teacher” – find out some needs of a teacher – i.e. supplies
 - b. Volunteer as a Teacher’s Assistant
 - c. Recruit prayer partners for the faculty
 - d. Organize Teacher Appreciation events at the school
 - e. Gather teachers from our churches together for encouragement, training, and commissioning - “how to have a Kingdom impact as a public school teacher”
 - f. Cast vision with our young people about considering teaching as a career.



Parents of Children in Public Schools

- 1) Start or join a “*Moms in Touch Prayer Group*” and pray for parents and children
- 2) Train parents on how to have a Kingdom impact at their children’s school
- 3) Teach ESL to immigrant parents - Apartment ministry or at schools
- 4) Provide assistance to “needy” families by connecting them to resources in the community and helping to connect non English speaking parents to their children’s schools.



Students

- 1) Mentoring and Tutoring during the school day*
- 2) Go and read with children
- 3) Create *After School Programs* for the students*
 - Apartment ministry
 - Good News Clubs (CEF) at the school
- 4) Train our students to reach students (and families) in their relationship network, via children & student church ministries and /or Para church student ministries
- 5) Prayer walk school campuses
- 6) Teach Bible as an elective off site – (e.g., Norcross Learning Center)
 - *The Released Time Center for Christian Education* (www.rtccenter.org) is an excellent resource for this opportunity.
- 7) Provide school supplies for “needy” children
- 8) Open your church for after school programs or recreational activities



* According to Louise Radloff, schools tell her that the biggest need is for mentors and tutors for the students!

Getting Started

Below are several suggested steps that your church may want to take to begin exploring the process of how God may use your Church Body to serve our Public Schools.



1. Pray

As a pastor and a congregation, begin seeking God for direction and clear opportunities to serve a public school.

2. Adopt (or Target)

Consider focusing your church's efforts wholly on one (or more) schools by "Adopting" or "Targeting" a school in proximity to your people and/or your church*

- See attached list of Gwinnett County, N. Fulton County schools, and S. Forsyth County schools. Visit county and local school websites: www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us and www.fultonschools.org.

3. Partner

Find out if other churches are involved at the school or invite other churches and work together!

4. Apartment Ministries

Target an apartment complex near you to do after school programs, teach ESL, etc.

- See attached list of apartment locations through Whirlwind Missions – (www.whirlwindmissions.org)

5. Cast Vision

Mobilization begins with vision. Cast vision within your church of this serving initiative and make known opportunities to get involved in order to make a significant Kingdom impact by serving our public schools.

6. Visit a School Principal

Contact the principal and build a relationship by determining the needs and opportunities to serve. Be sure to go as a learner with a "servant's heart"

7. Go for it!

Don't wait for the timing to be perfect. It will never be just right.
Jump in and go!

* "Adopting" a school is doing any of the things that are mentioned in the Opportunities List or other ideas at a specific school(s).



Compassion in Action Weekend Service Project Ideas

Compassion in Action Weekend may be a great way to try out your leadership abilities by serving as one of several Public School Project Coordinators. By focusing on one day of serving, you will be instrumental in helping others get connected in serving at a local public school. For more information, visit www.UniteUs.org or call 678-405-2164.

Examples of Service Projects:

- Plan a Work Project (i.e. landscaping, playground, painting, etc.)
- Bless a Teacher (i.e. provide much needed supplies for the classroom, or perform a work project in their classroom).
- Plan an afternoon (or after school party) on a school day.

Vision for Ongoing Serving

The vision for serving in the public schools is not limited to one weekend, but extends throughout the year. Following *Compassion in Action Weekend*, there will be opportunities for Public School Coordinators or other volunteers to continue serving in ongoing roles within our local public schools.

Public School Coordinator

Responsibilities Include:

- Identify a project(s) for CIA Weekend with a local public school.
- Talk with the principal or a teacher to find out how we may be able to serve them.
- Be willing to partner with other churches that want to participate in serving.
- Decide on a service project(s), keeping in mind that this is a great opportunity to give people a first exposure to be involved throughout the year with the school.

Those interested in serving as leaders will serve primarily as a liaison between the school and church to assess needs within the schools, communicate the needs to the church, and invite people to serve. We are excited as to the prospect of the lives of students, teachers, and families being transformed by churches as we continue to work together to serve and positively influence our local public schools. For questions or more information, contact Unite! at 678-405-2164.