

One Church One School

Partners for Education Excellence





One Church One School

One Church One School is an initiative that encourages and supports Diocesan parishes to be salt, light and leaven in their communities. Specifically, One Church One School exists to promote partnerships between churches in the Diocese of Dallas and public schools (or private schools with needs) in order to support efforts in achieving excellence in education. The Episcopal Community Service Network believes that the success of students can be tremendously improved by the involvement of churches as partners with schools to provide support and to enhance the quality of education through tutoring, mentoring, teacher appreciation or other needs that may have been identified.

Our Goal

The goal of One Church One School is for every parish in the Episcopal Diocese of Dallas to develop at least one partnership with a local school in order to build bridges between various members of the community and the congregation of the local church. This initiative is simply about “Being” the church to our neighbor.



1. Your Church Identity

Before starting a partnership with a neighborhood nonprofit, organization or school, it is important to be clear about the mission/vision of your church.

How does serving others in the world and the community fit into the mission of your church?

What is your church’s philosophy about serving outside the walls of the church?

What is your church’s mission statement for community outreach?

Consider studying the Scripture to better understand God’s desire for us to reach out and love the poor, the widowed, the orphaned, the sick and friendless.

2. Define Your Community

Define a small geographical area such as a neighborhood, zip code or block area in order to begin understanding the world in which your church is located.

Start by collecting basic population and demographic data as well as other community data about the defined area (i.e. schools, other agencies).

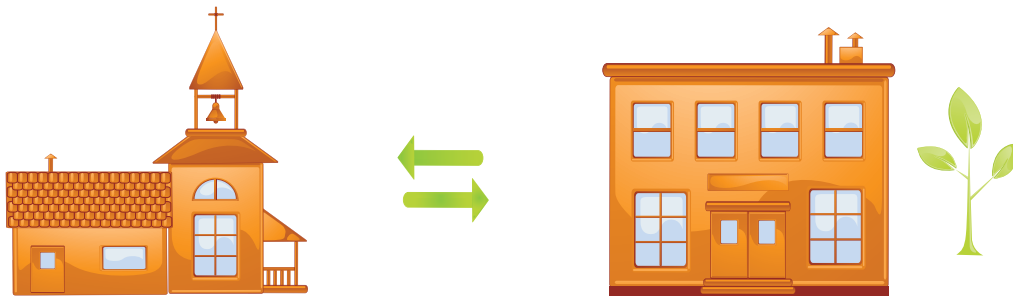
Consider sharing information about your community with the congregation

3. Identify A School

Identify schools in the neighborhood or nearby to the location of your church. Parishioners may tend to be more interested in a school that is located in close proximity of the church.

Search online to gain more information about the schools of interest. Most school districts have websites and those websites often have links to a particular school website. Also check out www.citydata.com.

Typically schools having a larger percentage of minorities or low-income students will be identified as having the most needs.



4. Initial School Contact

Once information has been gathered, select a school to visit.

Learn the Principal's and Vice Principal's name and call to make an appointment.

Keep the first appointment more formal with the goal of getting to know the school and having the school leadership get to know your church. Only one or two people from your team should attend. Ask for a tour of the school during the first meeting.

Ask the principal what the school's biggest needs are.

Be prepared to tell the school why you are there. That is, that you want to get to know the school in hopes that a partnership might be developed. And that you have no agenda except to see how your church might be able to help support the school.

Never go with an agenda or ideas about what you "think" the school needs. Be prepared to listen well.

5. Arrange a Second Meeting

If the first meeting went well and there seems to be an amicable relationship, arrange a second meeting to discuss in more detail what the school's needs are and what the church might be able to do to help.

Ask the Principal to bring other leaders in the school, i.e. counselor, reading specialist, librarian, etc.

Develop a small team from the church to oversee the process moving forward.

Have a brainstorming session to allow the Principal and teachers list what their needs are. Prioritize those needs and come to some agreement as to what the church is going to do to assist the

6. Build Relationships

- Develop a small team from the church to oversee the process moving forward.
- The Principal may want to establish a contact person from the school as well.
- Consider starting with one easy "first step" project for the school in order to build relationships and trust among the school staff.
- Examples might include; lunch for staff, grounds beautification or helping in the school library... any activity that shows your presence.

7. Develop a Plan

Based on information from the second visit, develop a simple plan that reflects the discussion from above. Start small, such as having a lunch for teachers and staff or planting a garden on school grounds. These initial "first step" opportunities build relationships and trust.

An example of a plan might include:

Key Goals (what is the end result, the desired goal)

Major Actions/Tasks (what actions need to take place in order to accomplish the goal)

Responsibility (identify those who can make things happen)

Timing (what is the timeframe to complete your goals, actions)

Measurement (how will you know that you have completed your goal- or moved closer to the end result.) This is most important for activities that involve benchmarks, TAKS, other measurements of education.

Share the plan with school and church leadership to make sure everyone is in agreement for moving forward.

8. Getting the Congregation Involved

Advertise, advertise, advertise! Communicate to the congregation what the plans are with the school, how many volunteers are needed and specifically what you are asking volunteers to do.

- Be clear about “time” commitment. Put in writing if necessary.
- Use sign-up sheets, posters, bulletin and newsletter notices to inform the congregation.
- Consider having the Principal come speak to the congregation about the school and the needs of the school and the future plans.
- Call people personally to take on a leadership role or to simply volunteer.
- Plan for appropriate back ground checks, orientation for volunteers as necessary (i.e. through the school or school district).

9. Follow-up

Once programs are underway, continually follow-up with the Principal and other school leaders to insure that the programs are running smoothly.

Determine process for addressing issues as they arise.

Meet frequently (once per quarter) with leaders involved in ministry at the school.

Once or twice per year, have volunteers get together to share their stories, discuss issues with the programs, success stories, etc. Share these wonderful stories with the rest of the congregation.

Celebrate success of your ministries or programs.

10. Types of School Projects (partial list)

- Tutoring (reading, math skills)
- Mentoring (see school counselor or school districts first to see if they have an established program).
- Teacher lounge refurbishing, painting, art for bulletin boards.
- Field Day volunteers.
- Field Trip volunteers.
- Backpack and school supplies drive (beginning of school year).
- Grounds beautifications (plant shrubs, flowers).
- Teacher appreciation (lunches, snacks or small gifts for teachers and staff.
- Supply drive (teachers never have enough supplies!).



11. First Amendment: Separation of Church and State

According to Public Schools and Religious Communities, A First Amendment Guide published by the First Amendment Center, schools and religious institutions may have different missions, but they share many of the same civic and moral values. Both are located in most neighborhoods and each is committed within its own role to the wellbeing of children.

By working together in ways that are permissible under the First Amendment, as interpreted by the U.S. Supreme Court, schools and religious communities can do much to enhance the mission of public school education. For recommended guidelines for developing partnerships between churches and schools, go to www.firstamendmentcenter.org or see Resources and Tools on this website for a printable PDF version of the entire document.

12. Safe Church Practices

Safe Church Training offered by the Diocese is required for all church employees and all volunteers who spend extended periods of time with children or youth. Churches engaged in partnerships with schools in where lay leaders, employees or clergy come in direct contact with children (i.e. tutoring, mentoring programs), are required to offer safe church training to those staff and volunteers who participate in those activities. In addition, schools and or school districts may have requirements as well before involvement.

For more information or to schedule Safe Church Training, contact Deacon Pam Dunbar, 214-826-8310 or pdunbar@episcopal-dallas.org.