

Connecting with School Communities

Why connect with schools?

- Schools communities are integral to the wider community.
- Schools are one of the significantly influential environments that shape what happens for children in our society.
- Children spend a significant amount of time at school.
- School is a significant environment for relationships and interaction, especially peer to peer, not just for learning.
- Affecting positive outcomes for children through the school environment can increase positive life outcomes and contribute to the health and well being of children both in and out of the school environment.

How should we connect with schools?

- Our motivation and attitude should always be to serve the school community. This means finding out what we can do that will be most beneficial to that school - ask them what they need.
- It is helpful to have some ideas/suggestions as to how we might assist or support school communities but we need to be very careful not to think we know what they need or to want to do the things that suit us rather than them.
- Building a relationship with the school is vital and may take some time so we need to be prepared for that and take a long term view.
- We must ensure that what we offer to the school is achievable and sustainable. This may mean starting with trial periods and/or short term projects; setting definite parameters about periods of time, size of groups, frequency etc; - don't promise what you can't deliver!

Possible pathways for connecting with the school communities:

- RED CAP (we could really do more with this if we use it as an intentional strategy of TSA partnering with State (or Federal) education departments)
- School Chaplaincy (as an intentional strategy of TSA to provide training and encourage our people to take up opportunities)
- Assist existing school chaplains with programs
- Mentoring - working one on one with individual children in the school environment
- Mentoring - World Vision Kids Hope Aus.
<http://www.worldvision.com.au/ourwork/solutions/KidsHopeAus.aspx>
- Mentoring/assisting on school camps - at times schools have difficulties in getting enough leaders for camps

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- Christian Religious Education (very few Salvationists currently volunteer to teach RE in schools how do we change this?)
- Breakfast clubs
- Homework Clubs
- Basic cooking & nutrition classes such as Mini Chefs (especially in areas where children are likely to be responsible for their own meals due to lack of parental provision - this runs the whole socio- economic gamut from kids suffering neglect due to parents with addictions to kids with workaholic parents who are not at home)
- Community gardens, kids get to grow their own vegies and herbs (could be run in conjunction with a cooking program)
- Offer to teach craft skills: eg knitting, crocheting, chess, meccano - building, specific art forms etc.
- Be a part of the school ANZAC ceremony, give out a drink and anzac biscuits for the kids to have after the ceremony, let them know what TSA does to support the troops, find out if there is an RSDS Sally truck that could be available if you are in a location to access that
- Team building activities
- Team sports
- Help out in the school tuckshop - once a week/ fortnight /month /for a couple of hours
- See if the P & C have any projects that could do with some extra help to make happen
- Some schools run community playgroups - find out if we can assist in some way
- Paint & Play (Community playgroups - ACT) like to have extra helpers without children
- Do something for World Teacher's Day: eg Teacher's Pancake Breakfast + decent coffee.
- Special group days: eg Grade 6/7 moving on to high school - Offer to assist with a special dinner if school community cannot afford a formal function.
- Make a pack to give out that contains things / information that might help children with transition points (eg primary to secondary school, high school to secondary college).
- Help out with or provide for special days like Mother's / Father's Day (eg SAES trailer BBQ breakfast)
- SUPA clubs (partnering with Scripture Union)

This is by no means an exhaustive list but it offers a number of options that will help to build relationships with schools by meeting a number of different needs that the school community might have.