

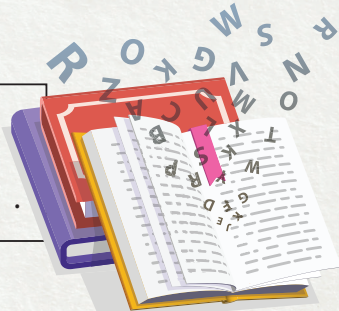
SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

WE SERVE *Churches*
AS CHURCHES SERVE *Others*

SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

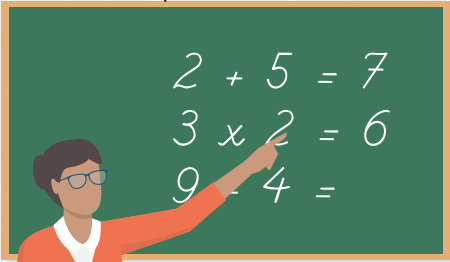
Tennessee teachers are burnt out and resigning in high numbers. Tennessee students are struggling academically, facing unprecedented pressure from social media, and coping with struggles at home. Tennessee Baptist churches can meet the tangible needs in our communities by partnering with our local schools and building relationships that can lead to gospel transformation. If you are looking for ideas of how to partner with a local school, we hope this serve guide will provide some practical steps for getting started.

Approx 68% of 4th graders in TN scored below proficient reading level in 2024.



Teachers spend an average of **\$750 out of pocket** for essential supplies.

Only 34% of students met expectations in Math achievement scores last year.



According to the National Assessment of Adult Literacy, **2/3 of students** who cannot read proficiently by the end of the fourth grade will end up in jail or on welfare.



1 in 5 children in Tennessee are hungry.



85% of all juveniles who interface with the juvenile court system are functionally low literate.

19.1 percent of Tennessee children under 18 live below the poverty line.



GETTING STARTED

PRAY! Ask God's guidance in choosing a school and for favor with administration and staff as you move forward.

Consider where your church already has staff or student connections.

Focus on one school and its specific needs.

Contact the school and ask for an appointment with the school principal. Be clear about why you want to meet.

Be patient if the principal is delayed in getting back to you. Remember it is a hard job! Consider dropping off a personal note and treat.

PRINCIPAL MEETING

Approach the meeting as a learner and listener. Do not come with your own agenda. Let the principal know you are there to serve the school's needs.

Acknowledge the difficulties schools are facing and your appreciation for the work of the staff to invest in children.

Questions to ask:

- How can we help?
- What are your greatest needs?
- What keeps you up at night?
- Is there some way we can encourage your teachers and staff?
- Are there some student needs we can help with?

Remember that it takes time to build trust. Listen carefully and do not make promises you cannot deliver.

Always UNDER promise and OVER deliver.

Pray with the principal and plan to connect on a consistent basis.



BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND SERVING WELL

- 1 Pray consistently for the school, administrators, teachers, and staff and maintain a relationship with the principal.
- 2 Commit for the entire school year and commit realistically. Planning for a long-term relationship will build trust.
- 3 Work with the school to support the school improvement plan. Get involved in the PTO. You may learn of other needs through this group.
- 4 Have volunteers engaging consistently with the school partner. Try to be present for school activities and events. Be intentional getting to know staff.
- 5 Focus on encouraging teachers and staff. Find tangible ways to bless them.
- 6 Be available to provide support during times of crisis.
- 7 Partner with other churches and local agencies to meet needs in a school.
- 8 Be sensitive to church/state boundaries. Remember we are invited guests.



ENCOURAGING TEACHERS AND STAFF

Pray for teachers in your own church. Recognize them at the beginning of the school year and have a time of prayer and commissioning for the year ahead.

Write notes of encouragement. This is a great way to involve people in your congregation that cannot physically serve in the school.

Provide snacks in the teacher workroom or **provide a special breakfast or lunch** and serve the teachers.

Host a coffee cart or celebrate teacher birthdays each month.

Purchase classroom supplies for teachers and students. This is often a need in January when students run out and teachers replenish out of their own pockets.

Provide intentional and consistent encouragement to first-year teachers. Pair retired teachers in your congregation with them.

Invite the principal to a service to share needs.

Have Sunday School classes or small groups **adopt a teacher** and provide ongoing support throughout the year.

Volunteer in the front office, library, or cafeteria. Ask how volunteers can help with teacher duties like carline or rotating through classrooms so teachers can have a bathroom break.

Help with bulletin boards, Field Day, special incentives, or family engagement nights.



MEETING STUDENT NEEDS*

Some ways your church can meet student needs are being reading buddies, the ARISE2Read program, or through weekend food backpacks.

READING BUDDIES

Reading Buddies meet once a week for 30 minutes with a student throughout the year.

Usually reading buddies meet with second or third grade students.

Talk with your assigned Reading Buddy's teacher about the best time and location for you to meet. This should be a place where you are always visible to others. A volunteer should never be in the room with a student by themselves.

Ask the teacher if they will provide a book on your buddy's reading level or if you should bring a book. (Do not bring Bible stories or Bibles.)

Exchange email addresses with the teacher so that you can have continued conversation.

Arrive on time so that students will not miss instructional time or be late to another activity.

Spend a few minutes getting to know your student. This can also be done as you are walking to your meeting area.

You will spend time listening to the buddy read and reading to him/her. You might let them decide who goes first. Read to them with expression and take time to look at pictures. Make your time together fun!

Your teacher may give you a list of questions to ask after reading. If not, feel free to naturally ask questions about what you have read. Ask: details about the story; favorite character; what they enjoyed most; what happened first; and what happened next (sequencing).

If your Reading Buddy shares something of concern with you, discreetly share with his/her teacher.

If you are unable to come to school on your scheduled day, let your Reading Buddy's teacher know ahead of time. Your buddy will be looking forward to seeing you!

ARISE2READ

ARISE2Read is an excellent program that focuses on literacy in 2nd grade students. Through ARISE2Read, volunteers tutor students one hour per week utilizing a simple sight word approach. ARISE2Read provides books for the students to enhance literacy. <https://arise2read.org/>

You can watch a Compassion Ministry Webinar with the founder and director of ARISE2Read [here](#).

WEEKEND BACKPACKS

1 in 6 children in Tennessee face hunger. Weekend backpacks are a way churches can provide food for children over the weekend.

Work with the school guidance counselor or social worker to determine the number of food bags needed at the school.

Consider partnering with other churches in your community if there is a great need.

Some ways to get the food for the backpacks are:

- Partner with your local food bank to purchase the food items or pre-packaged bags of food.
- Purchase food and package each week.
- Have planned monthly collections from your church congregation.

Plan on shopping in bulk and putting food in gallon Zip-lock bags. Involve church ministry groups in packing the bags.

Pray over the bags and deliver them to the school so that they can be discreetly put in students' backpacks.

Minister to the families receiving the bags at Thanksgiving or Christmas.

What to include in the weekend backpack:

- Each bag typically includes 12-14 items that could be eaten for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Snacks are also included.
- **Breakfast:** Individual packages of oatmeal, grits, muffins, or cereal; shelf stable milk.
- **Lunch & Dinner:** Individual pasta (ravioli and Spaghetti O's); individually packaged cans of vegetables (green beans, carrots, peas) and fruits (applesauce, peaches, fruit cocktail); individually packaged pasta dinners with sauce; macaroni and cheese; Vienna sausages; canned meats; soups; pork & beans.
- **Snack Items:** Fruit roll-up/fruit snacks; crackers; granola bars/cereal bars; dried fruit (raisins); beef jerky/sticks; individual juice boxes.

Other Student Needs

Clothes to be kept in the office in case of accident or need.

Personal hygiene items (deodorant, toothpaste, toothbrush, feminine hygiene)

Lice kits for school nurses

Coats

Field trip expenses

Christmas support for the students

*Know the school's volunteer guidelines and security protocols regarding child safety. At the least, volunteers will be asked to have a background check.

We pray as you seek to serve your local schools and build meaningful relationships with teachers, staff, and students that God will lead people to your church and saving faith in Jesus.

If you have other questions about partnering with schools, please contact:

Beth Moore, Compassion Ministry Specialist, bmoore@tnbaptist.org
or **Anna Yadkowski**, ayadkowski@tnbaptist.org





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