



## Let's Get this Partnership Started: Partnership Toolkit

**THANK YOU** for signing on to NCFLPE. We have two goals: to encourage partnerships with schools in your community, and to encourage advocacy on behalf of public schools in your community and across NC.

**WHAT IS THIS?** This is your Partnership Toolkit! We have gathered ideas from those who are already partnering with schools, and from schools who are partnering with faith and community organizations. These are some ideas for best practices. We are always updating and improving: please send suggestions our way.

**WHO IS IT FOR:** This Partnership Toolkit is for those who hope to help their faith communities partner with local schools. Some of you have long-established partnerships, and some are forging new ones. Please adapt these suggestions to your situation.

### TIPS FOR BUILDING HELPFUL PARTNERSHIPS:

- Cooperation will work most smoothly if partners come to the table with both questions and ideas.
- **Choose a school:**
  - You might consider forming a partnership with a school that is close in proximity to you church.
  - You might consider forming a partnership with a school that is across town but that has very little community support.
  - You might consider forming a partnership with a school in which one of your congregants teaches, or which many of your children or youth attend.
  - Perhaps you will be able to intentionally choose to partner with two schools – one with which you already have relationship, and one which needs an influx of community support.
  - Keep in mind that you will need to talk to the school administration about whether they want or need community partners!
- **Make Contact:** Contact the principal at the school with whom you would like to build a partnership.
  - The principal can either take the lead in communicating needs, or can help you to identify and connect with the professional or volunteer at the school who will serve as your best contact.
- **Train your leaders:** Take time to help form the expectations of those in the faith community who wish to take the lead on this project. Begin with a community meeting or a conference call where these guidelines are communicated:
  - IDENTIFY NEEDS
    - Instead of assuming that you know what the needs are in the community:
      - Ask those who are in a position to know.
  - BE A LEARNER
    - Instead of showing up full of ideas about how you can help fix everything -
      - Communicate support: we would really like to support this advocacy effort and we are ready to listen. How can we partner with you? What is already happening? How can we support what is already happening? Are there needs that no one is yet addressing?
    - Instead of telling people what needs to be done and how best to do it -
      - Talk with principals, school counselors, community coordinators with local shelters or advocacy agencies, and leaders with local groups such as the YMCA or the Boys and Girls Club. You are in the best position to identify who, in your own community, knows what is happening.

- MAJOR IN ASKING AND LISTENING
  - Instead of making hasty conclusions -
    - Ask questions and listen to the answers.
    - Follow up by checking what you have heard: “I heard you say that this is the top priority. Did I understand that correctly? What is the best way for me to help with that need?”
- **Discern Together:** Communicate among your leadership to answer these types of questions:
  - What schools are we already working with? Which are nearby?
  - What can we offer in terms of financial and human capacity to help?
  - What resources and connections do we have within the congregation to help schools meet their needs?
  - What means will we use to engage the congregation in this opportunity on short notice?
  - Do we know other faith communities that we could engage to help us?
  - Who can lead a team to communicate and coordinate with outside partners.

## **PRAY!**

Spend time praying individually and corporately for our public schools. Pray for the teachers and students who gather in classrooms every day. Pray for leaders who making decisions that impact our public schools. Pray for efforts to support the advocacy of teachers in your own community. Pray for guidance and inspiration of the Spirit!

And if you get stuck, email [NCFLPE@ncchurches.org](mailto:NCFLPE@ncchurches.org). We look forward to partnering with you.