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Toward Love & Good Deeds

Welcome to the exciting experience of bringing a Godly influence to your school with grace and confidence. God is already at work in the lives of people at your school. He used Christians last year in your school, and now He wants to use you. In fact, He placed you right where you are for a reason!

For many years, our public schools have been seen as battlefields. However, nothing much grows on a battlefield. Instead, we can look at our schools as gardens to cultivate. This booklet gives you 52 ways to plant seeds of love and truth in the lives of those God has put within your sphere of influence. *These are the people who influence your children!*

Schools are enriched when Christians appropriately express their faith in word *and* deed. Over the years, a vocal minority has intimidated many educators and school officials into thinking that there is very little room for expression of, or teaching about, Christianity. Now is the time for people to restore what the law already allows: freedom of religious expression and appropriate inclusion of religion in the curriculum. Let God use you to make a difference.

You Are Not Alone

As a Christian in a public school, you are not alone! The majority of Christians with school-aged children send them to public schools. In all likelihood, there is at least one Christian involved in every classroom in your school (the teacher, or a student, or a parent). Imagine the positive impact of dozens of Christians on your campus participating in God's activity! *You will experience greater confidence and peace of mind as you connect with one another for mutual support.* As the Bible says, "let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds." (Hebrews 10:24)

This booklet will show you how to connect with other Christians in your school as you encourage one another in your efforts toward two objectives:

- Protecting your children's faith and values while in school.
- Enriching the lives of other children, teachers, parents, administrators and staff with legally appropriate exposure to the message of the Bible and the contributions Christianity makes to the world, to America, and to their lives.

The Building Blocks For Expressing God's Love At School

You will want to use these first seven ideas throughout the school year to maximize the impact of all your activities. These are seven important building blocks to give you a firmer foundation for using all the other forty-five ways to bring a Godly influence to your child's school and classroom. In fact, as you make these first seven activities a part of your life you will see God open doors beyond the ideas contained in this booklet!



Create a List of People in Your Life At School

Who are the adults who influence your children's lives at school? Who are the people God placed in *your* life at school? The first step in bringing a Godly influence to your children's school is to identify these two categories of people. The last pages of this booklet provide you a place to list their names. First, list your children's teachers. After this, you can include other teachers, parents, administrators, and school staff. Your list may range from six to twenty. It should include Christians and non-Christians.



Pray for the People on Your List

Acts 1:14 tells us the Apostles were people of prayer, and God used them to influence 3,000 in one day! Pray regularly for the people that you list for idea #1. Ask the Lord for opportunities to cultivate relationships and plant seeds. To find support groups for this, see ideas #43 and #45.

First-grader Amanda Rawlings wanted to tell her classmates about Jesus, but she ran into a problem – her teacher thought such a discussion in a public school was illegal.

"The teacher told my daughter that it was against the law to talk about God in a public school," explained Amanda's mother, Sharon Rawlings.

"She also stopped a child from reading a book brought from home which mentioned Jesus. Many of the students felt they had no rights to discuss God around school."

Sharon began praying for the teacher and the situation. With a prayerful and loving attitude, Sharon also gave a Gateways Christmas booklet to the teacher. Her gentle efforts brought about a change in the teacher's attitude by the time her younger daughter, Emily, had the same teacher a couple of years later. Sharon was thrilled when the teacher welcomed the mother and her daughter to share the Christmas story with the class.

In all of this, Sharon could have demanded her rights. Instead, she is a good example of how parents all across the country are influencing teachers with information, not only concerning the law, but also on the value of allowing students to learn about Christianity.



Plan How You Will be an Influencer

As you read through this booklet, use the monthly planning calendar near the back to plan your activities.



Prepare to be an Influencer

Peter's sermon in Acts 2 reveals that he was prepared. He quotes heavily from the Old Testament. He had done his homework! You, too, can be prepared as you use each idea. Visit the Web site of Gateways to Better Education at www.gtbe.org. We have an ever-expanding list of helpful articles.

Arnie, a sixth-grade teacher, had a problem. As part of his vocabulary lessons he would read from sources that introduced his students to new words. On occasion, he would read from the Bible.

One mom complained to the principal. She told the principal she didn't want Arnie—or anyone—to ever use the Bible in the school.

"The principal wants to support me," Arnie said, "but he must respond to her complaint." Arnie was frustrated and concerned. Could he defend his actions, or would he have to stop reading the Bible to his students? I referred him to the California state standards that expect sixth-grade educators to have students read many of the Old Testament stories.

"Not only can you use the Bible for vocabulary words," I explained, "you can read about creation, the Exodus, the Ten Commandments, and David and Goliath. Plus, you are supposed to teach them about the life

and teachings of Jesus as described in the New Testament."

Arnie was amazed and quickly found a copy of the state standards at his school. Now, well equipped, he was able to defend his actions and teach more confidently in his classroom. Because of his newfound confidence, Arnie started an after-school Bible reading club to provide students with a foundation for the history they would be studying in their middle school years.



Participate in God's Activity

Each year, God brings another Christian family into the life of your children's teachers. As you and your children enter a new school year, you are filling the vacancy left by another Christian parent. Who knows how God used parents before you? When you plan (idea #3) and prepare (idea #4) you are ready when God opens a door of opportunity. Even when you have to talk to a teacher or the principal about a concern, it can be an opportunity to see God at work through you (see ideas #49-51). Don't miss out on how God wants to use you this year.



Encourage Others to Become Influencers

You'll need encouraging support at your school. Most likely, you have some Christians on your list of people within your sphere of influence. Encourage them to become a Godly influence in their children's classrooms. Give them copies of this booklet and regularly encourage them (after all, they *are* on your list of people to influence). Imagine, one day, knowing dozens of Christians at your school who are fulfilling Hebrews 10:24 as they consider how they can "spur one another on toward love and good deeds" in looking for ways to bring a Godly influence to those around them. *The more like-minded friends you have at school, the more encouraged and confident you will feel.*



Sign Up to Receive Our Encouraging E-newsletter

At Gateways to Better Education, we will keep an eye on the calendar for you and send out reminders for the best times to use ideas from this booklet. You will also receive encouraging stories of parents and teachers who are successfully benefiting from using the ideas in this booklet *as well as new ideas.*

We can also help you build and maintain your community of support through our E-mail newsletter. Encourage your friends to visit the Web site at www.gtbe.org and sign up for the E-newsletter. You will be a blessing to your friends as they access practical help *and* we will be helping you expand and strengthen your own community of support!

Remember, the first seven ideas give you the foundation for future success. Now you are ready to move forward with greater confidence.

Expressing God's Love By Promoting Freedom

8 **One Nation Under God**

Students learn to recite the Pledge of Allegiance but many have not been taught the meaning of the Pledge – especially what it means to be one nation under God. You can help promote a better understanding of the Pledge. Gateways has produced a colorful, glossy poster measuring 11" x 22" – perfect for classroom bulletin boards. Give posters to your children's teachers; one to every teacher in the school; one to every student in a class, or every student in the school. Help students learn to appreciate concepts expressed in the Pledge -- such as liberty, justice, and national unity -- as well as to recognize that our freedoms come from God, not the State.

The PTA in the Santa Ana Unified School District in Orange County, California distributed 64,000 posters to every student and teacher in commemoration of Patriot Day (September 11). The Milltown, New Jersey PTA gave 525 posters to children in two local elementary schools for Memorial Day. In a thank-you note to the Milltown PTA, one student wrote, "Mom and Dad really liked it because now I know what I'm saying."

You can use the posters any time, or you can tie them to patriotic days: Patriot Day (Sept. 11), Citizenship Day (Sept. 17), Veterans' Day (Nov. 11), Presidents' Day (the 3rd Monday of Feb.), Memorial Day; Flag Day (June 14), or Independence Day. (See resource ordering page.)

9 **Teach About the Creator of Liberty**

Teachers across the country can follow the recommendation of the California Department of Education in teaching about the Creator mentioned in the Declaration of Independence. In its *History-Social Science Framework for California Public Schools: 2001 Updated Edition with Content Standards*, the California Department of Education recommends the following for U.S. History in the eighth grade: "Readings from the Declaration of Independence should be used to discuss these questions: What are 'natural rights' and 'natural law'? What did Jefferson mean when he wrote that 'all men are created equal' and 'endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights'? What were the 'Laws of Nature' and 'Nature's God' to which Jefferson appealed?" (p.100) (See www.cde.ca.gov/board)

10 **Celebrate Religious Freedom Day (January 16)**

Each year, the President proclaims January 16 as Religious Freedom Day. In his 2004 proclamation, President Bush said, "I urge all Americans to reflect on the blessings of our religious freedom and to observe this day through appropriate events and activities in homes, schools, and places of worship." You can encourage your school to commemorate this *government-sponsored* celebration by holding assemblies, having classroom discussions, inviting guest speakers, and distributing the U.S. Department of Education's guidelines on students' religious freedom. (See #11-15.)

Promote Students' Religious Liberty

11 **Teach Students' Liberties at Church**

Inform the public school students at your church about their religious liberties. Public school students have the right to pray, read their Bibles, witness, and express their faith in other ways.

The U.S. Department of Education has issued guidelines clarifying these rights of religious expression. Gateways to Better Education has written a reproducible summary of the U.S. Department of Education guidelines written in grade-appropriate language. It is called "Free to Speak" and is available on our Web site at www.gtbe.org.

Distribute the "Free to Speak" handout to children's ministries and youth groups and discuss the issue of religious freedom. You may want to tie it in to Bible lessons on boldness using Daniel, Esther, Peter, and Paul as examples.

12 **Build Students' Confidence at Bible Clubs**

Devote a campus Bible club meeting to the topic of students' religious liberties and discuss appropriate ways students can express their faith in school work, homework, artwork, music, and in talking to classmates and teachers.



Foster Freedom in Your Classroom

There is nothing illegal or inappropriate about a teacher informing his or her students about their religious liberties. In fact, the U.S. Department of Education has asked educators to inform students of their civil liberties. Timely tie-ins: while reviewing class rules, when teaching about the Pilgrims (they came here for religious freedom), Religious Freedom Day (Jan. 16), National Day of Prayer (1st Thursday of May), and Citizenship Day (3rd Friday in September).

Distribute copies of "Free to Speak" and discuss it (see idea #11). Ask the students to give examples of various ways religious faith can be expressed in homework, artwork, and class discussions.



Let Freedom Ring at Your School

Inform all the students and their parents through a school-wide distribution. Use the complete document from the U.S. Department of Education. It is entitled, "Guidance on Constitutionally Protected Prayer in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools." A school principal can explain the importance of informing teachers, students, and parents, by quoting the introductory letter Secretary of Education Rod Paige wrote concerning guidelines: "I encourage you to distribute this guidance widely in your community and to discuss its contents and importance with school administrators, teachers, parents, and students." (www.ed.gov)



Proclaim Liberty Throughout Your School District

Create district-wide awareness of students' religious liberties by initiating a distribution of the entire USDOE report to parents, teachers, and students. Build support for this by talking to friends within the district. Then, along with three or four others, visit the district superintendent and explain why you believe this is a good thing to do (e.g., it will clear up confusion, it promotes tolerance, it promotes freedom). If he is reluctant, you can take your request to individual school board members.

Expressing God's Love Through Holidays



Re-focus Halloween

If the school insists on having some kind of Halloween celebration, recommend that they steer away from the ghoulish and occult and, instead, focus on the event as a fall festival. To help teachers and administrators with this issue, give them copies of the Gateways booklet, *Teacher's Trick or Treat*. It includes a humorous story of a feisty, talking pumpkin who explains the problems of treating evil lightly: "When you turn evil into a game it trivializes it and numbs children to its darkness." The card includes quotes from *Occult Crime Control: The Law Enforcement Manual of Investigation, Analysis, and Prevention*, concerning the problem of "self-styled Satanists" in high school students. (See resource ordering page.)

Talking Turkey About Thanksgiving



Encourage Teaching About Thanking God

To help your children's educators teach that Thanksgiving is a national holiday to thank God for His blessings, give them Gateways' *Thanksgiving Restoration Cards*. The cards use a humorous story of a talking turkey to explain to a public school teacher what the holiday is officially meant to be. The cards include legal documentation and lesson plan ideas. They also include quotes from various Presidential Thanksgiving Proclamations as well as statements from the Supreme Court. (See resource ordering page.)



Connect the Pilgrims With Students' Religious Freedom

Even though Thanksgiving is an annual holiday to thank God for His blessings during the previous year, it seems inevitable that teachers will teach about the Pilgrims' first Thanksgiving in America. This is a perfect opportunity for parents (as guest speakers) or teachers to include a lesson on students' religious freedoms. Here's the connection: The Pilgrims came to the New World for religious freedom, and our country still cherishes that freedom. In fact, the U.S. Department of Education issued guidelines explaining the religious liberty students have in public schools (see #14).

Use this as an opportunity to explain and discuss those liberties. It will make history relevant to the students' lives!

19 Read and Discuss Presidential Thanksgiving Proclamations

Parents or teachers can read and explain the President's Thanksgiving proclamation to the class. Usually this is posted on the White House Web site (www.whitehouse.gov) just a few days before the holiday. If your presentation is before the current year's posting, type the word *Thanksgiving* in the White House search engine to find last year's proclamation. You can also download a photograph of the President to use as a visual aid while reading the proclamation. For a copy of President Bush's post-9/11 Thanksgiving Proclamation along with discussion questions, visit www.gtbe.org.

20 Share Family Thanksgiving Experiences

As a parent, read a thanksgiving story to the class and share with the children what your family is doing to celebrate the holiday. Amidst talking about family gathering and feasting, be sure to talk about how your family thanks God for His blessings, and give one or two examples of what you are thankful for around the dinner table.

21 Reach Out to Schools With the Ministerial Association

In Greenville, Tennessee, many of the local pastors came together and ordered enough *Thanksgiving Restoration Cards* to send to teachers throughout the local school district. Approach your local ministerial association and suggest the churches show a united desire to see children and young people learn the significance of Thanksgiving this year. It will also send a powerful message to the school administrators that community leaders are looking for appropriate, culturally-relevant inclusion of religion in the public schools.



For additional articles, research, and tips on how to implement the 52 ideas, visit www.gtbe.org.

Include Christ in Christmas

22 Encourage the Teacher to Teach About Christmas

To help your children's educators teach about the birth of Jesus, give them Gateways' *Christmas Restoration Cards*. The cards use a humorous story of Santa explaining to a public school teacher that the holiday is really about Jesus and that teaching about it is not only legal, but also good education. The cards include legal documentation and lesson plan ideas. They also include a statement from the National PTA endorsing the singing of Christmas carols as well as an answer to the misconception that "equal time" must be given to the holidays of all religions. (See resource ordering page.)

23 Help Every Teacher in the School

Give a *Christmas Restoration Card* to every teacher in the school and help make a better holiday for children in many classrooms.

Judy Johnson of Novi, Michigan helped restore teaching about Jesus at Christmas in her child's elementary school. "It was easier than I thought," said Judy. "I was truly amazed!" She purchased 60 Christmas cards, shared the cost with neighbors and friends at church, then she helped distribute the Christmas Restoration Cards to all the teachers in the school. Judy reported that "one mom later said that her son's kindergarten teacher was so grateful for the card and information and couldn't thank her enough for it."

"I never really thought I could make a difference in my little corner of the world, but God saw fit to use me with a few little cards to rally parents from all walks of life and from many different religious denominations to come together for a common purpose in our public schools."

24 Present Integrated Lessons About the Birth of Jesus

Kimberly Mutschler, a fourth-grade teacher in California, read to her students from Luke 2 in the *Living Bible*, and taught them related vocabulary words for a language arts unit. They sang Christmas carols as a music unit and colored nativity scenes for an art unit. "It makes the season more exciting and more meaningful for me and my students," said Kimberly.



Share Family Christmas Experiences

As a parent or teacher, read the biblical account of the Christmas story to the students. Share what the holiday means to your family (as a parent) or Christian families in general (as a teacher). However, you cannot appeal to students in the class to make a statement of faith.



Explain to Students the Figures in a Crèche

You can tell the Christmas story using the aid of a crèche. In the Eighth Circuit Court case of *Florey v. Sioux Falls* in 1980, the Court confirmed that "the use of religious symbols such as a cross, Menorah, crescent, Star of David, crèche, symbols of Native American religions or other symbols that are part of a religious holiday is permitted as a teaching aid or resource provided such symbols are displayed as an example of the cultural and religious heritage of the holiday and are temporary in nature."



Flannel Board Christmas Presentation

Arlette, a children's neighborhood Bible club teacher, volunteered to visit a classroom and use her flannel board to tell the Christmas story. Prior to visiting the classroom she reassured the teacher that she would explain the story as "what Christians believe," and without an invitation to express faith in Christ. The teacher invited another class to hear the presentation. "She was so pleased," reported Arlette, "that she said I have a standing invitation to come every year, and that she would like to get the whole school to participate!"

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day & Jesus



Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (the third Monday of January)

Expose students to Dr. King's ideals rooted in biblical thinking. He based racial equality on "all God's children" being "created equal" as stated in the Declaration of Independence. Students can study Isaiah 40:3-5 announcing the coming of Jesus in studying Dr. King's "I have a dream" speech because one of the things he dreamed of was the second coming of Jesus Christ: "I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted,

every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together."

In his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," Dr. King defended his Civil Rights activity by appealing to the Bible. He quotes Matthew 5:43-44 and describes Christ's crucifixion. It is well within legal boundaries for students to read Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount as well as to read the description of Christ's crucifixion. How could a student truly understand Dr. King's references without reading the actual stories from the Bible?

For an article on this along with classroom discussion questions, visit www.gtbe.org.

Resurrect Easter at Your School



Encourage the Teacher to Teach About Easter

Give Gateways' *Easter Restoration Cards* to your children's teachers to help them better understand how to teach about the religious aspects of the holiday. The cards use a humorous story to show that teaching about Easter is not only legal, but also good education. The cards include legal documentation and lesson plan ideas that pass constitutional muster. They include statements from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the National Education Association (NEA) endorsing teaching about the role of religion in American history. (See resource ordering page.)



Have Children Distribute Information to Teachers

One way to distribute the *Easter Restoration Cards* to all the teachers in a school is to have students in a Bible club participate in the distribution. For example, the children in the *Good News Clubs of Greater Dallas* distributed 300 *Easter Restoration Cards* to teachers in 14 schools. In their clubs, the children were learning about sharing their faith with others. They personally delivered the cards to their teachers along with a personal note. The *Good News Club* leaders gave cards to any remaining teachers who did not have students in the clubs.



Read About the Resurrection in Class

It is legal to read the Bible in order to explain the holiday. The federal court case of *Florey v. Sioux Falls* in 1980 confirmed the fact that “music, art, literature, and drama having religious themes or basis are permitted as part of the curriculum for school-sponsored activities and programs if presented in a prudent and objective manner and as a traditional part of the cultural and religious heritage of the particular holiday.”



Share Family Experiences

As a parent, offer to read the Easter story to the students. You will want to find an age-appropriate picture book for younger students. Share what the holiday means to your family and what you plan on doing for Easter. However, you cannot appeal to students in the class to make a statement of faith.



Show a Video About the Life of Jesus

To supplement the academic study of topics such as: Christianity, Western civilization, Easter, or Martin Luther King, Jr. (see idea #28), a teacher can show a video on life of Jesus. The video should not include a devotional or evangelistic message. If the teacher uses a video with such a message at the end, simply stop it before that part.

Phyllis, a middle-school mom, saw God open the door for her to talk about Jesus with her son's eighth-grade Social Studies teacher. During an open house at the beginning of the school year, the teacher told parents he was going to include a section on world religions. The mom used that as a starting point for conversation. Then, about a month before Easter, Phyllis gave him material on how he could legally teach about Jesus' death and resurrection. This prompted another conversation that ended with the mom giving the teacher a copy of a video on the life of Jesus. A few days later, her son reported that the teacher was spending the next four days showing and discussing the video in class.



Be sure to sign up to receive the Gateways E-newsletter. You will receive tips, success stories, how-to's, and news throughout the school year. Visit www.gtbe.org.

Expressing God's Love In the Curriculum



Refer to Religion at School

Include references to religion in lessons and school communications. Educators should include “church or temple” when asking students about weekend activities. School materials and classroom discussions should include “youth pastor, priest, or rabbi” when referring to seeking guidance and advice. “Career Days” should include representatives of various religious denominations. In other words, religious activity and people of faith should be considered an obvious and normal part of the local community.



Create Awareness of Academic Standards About Christianity

You may be surprised to discover that state academic standards around the country expect students to learn about the Bible, Jesus, and the contributions Christianity has made to the world, to America, and to their own lives. You can promote more awareness of these expectations by giving your children's teachers copies of your state's academic standards regarding the Bible and Christianity.

Unfortunately, many public school educators think that their schools must be “religion-free zones.” Even many Christians serving in the public schools think they must teach their students as if God were irrelevant to the subject — never pointing out how religion relates to the subject, and certainly never referencing Jesus Christ or Christianity.

However, states around the country have developed academic standards outlining what they want students to learn. Here are just a few examples:

In California, sixth-grader students are to “Note the origins of Christianity in the Jewish Messianic prophecies, the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth as described in the New Testament, and the contribution of St. Paul the Apostle to the definition and spread of Christian beliefs (e.g., belief in the Trinity, resurrection, salvation).”

Colorado school officials expect that, “Seventh-grade students will explain the origins and significance of Judaism as the first monotheistic religion based on the concept of one God who sets down moral laws for humanity.”

Texas academic standards state that "The student is expected to...explain the significance of religious holidays and observances such as Christmas and Easter, Ramadan, and Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah in selected contemporary societies."

Stephen is a fifth-grade teacher in California. After a friend directed him to the Gateways Web site, he wrote: "I have been empowered to bring truth into my classroom as never before. It has been so awesome to know that what I'm doing is well within the guidelines of California education code."

To find your state's academic standards regarding religion, visit www.gtbe.org.

Make the Case for Christianity

There are ways to include lessons about the Bible and Christianity without mixing church and state. Educators need to know that teaching students about the Bible and the many contributions Christianity makes to the world is culturally relevant, academically legitimate, legally permitted, and morally imperative. These four points are clearly made in the well-documented, 14-page *TrendWatch* report, "Choosing the Right Path: When Teaching About Christianity in Your School." It includes quotes from the National Education Association, the National PTA, and Anti-Defamation League, all supporting the teaching of religion in schools. It cites Supreme Court and federal court cases; and it includes studies on the positive impact of religion on behavior of at-risk students. The report also gives four practical ways any school can appropriately be inclusive about religion without fear of violating any church-state prohibitions.

To receive copies of this *TrendWatch* report, see the resource page.

Include the Words of Jesus in a Quote-of-the-Day

Find inspiring and character-building quotes. Establish a routine of having the quote on the white board each day for students to read. Ask the question, "What do you think he (or she) meant?" Since Jesus and other biblical writers have had such a profound influence on Western civilization, it is culturally relevant to include quotations from the Bible. In just a three-minute discussion, you can stimulate thinking; inspire good conduct; and, improve students' cultural literacy. Parents can encourage teachers to do this, and they can also include this as part of their family dinner or bedtime routine. If a daily quote is too much work, try a quote-of-the-week.

Offer to be a Guest Speaker

If you have a job that is relevant to a particular subject, if you have traveled to a place the students are studying, or if you have a hobby or sport related to a lesson, you can offer to share your experience with the class. There may be appropriate ways to make a reference to your faith in your presentation. For example, explain the importance of honesty in the workplace, and briefly how your religious beliefs shape your character.

Introduce Students to the Idea of Intelligent Design

There are appropriate ways to expose students to a biblical view of origins without teaching them about creationism or without mentioning the Bible. For example, in teaching about weather and clouds, a teacher (or a parent at home) can point out the difference between random chance (clouds looking like animals) and intelligent design (sky writing); or when studying rock formations or geography, a teacher could, again, point out the difference between random chance and intelligent design by contrasting cliffs that look like faces and the faces on Mt. Rushmore.

Percival Davis and Dean Kenyon describe how scientific study can lead a person to recognize intelligent design. In their textbook, *Of Pandas and People: The Central Question of Biological Origins*, they point out:

"Whenever we recognize a sequence as meaningful symbols, we assume it is the handiwork of some intelligent cause. We make the assumption even if we cannot decipher the symbols, as when an archaeologist discovers some ancient inscription on stone. If science is based upon experience, then science tells us the message encoded in DNA must have originated from an intelligent cause."

For an expanded article on this topic, visit www.gtbe.org.

Introduce a Teacher to a Better Definition of Tolerance.

The view that tolerance means "accepting everyone's ideas and behaviors" is impractical in the real world. You will find a more practical definition of tolerance in the dictionary's second definition of the term: *the allowable variation from a standard*. This is the definition by which we most commonly live.

For example, our standard (ideal) for marriage may include love, support, and nurture. However, our allowable variation from the standard is a marriage filled with anger and disharmony. But, what goes beyond the allowable variation, what is intolerable, is spousal abuse. This practical definition is valuable for classroom instruction because it honors students' moral frameworks developed by their religious education and families. Rather than teach them that tolerance is best demonstrated by an *absence* of judgment, it teaches that tolerance requires making judgments: first, establishing a standard, and second, establishing the limits of the allowable variation.

For an expanded article on this topic that you can give to a teacher, visit www.gtbe.org.

41 Donate a Book to the Classroom or Library

You can expose students to a biblical perspective on topics by donating books that reflect it. Donate books that teach character qualities, Intelligent Design, Christian holidays, and biographies of famous characters in history who were Christians. It is perfectly acceptable for a teacher to have such books on the shelf when they are included with many types of books and there is no evangelistic offer extended to the reader.

42 Include the Bible in Your School's Reading Program

Do you want to see dozens of children reading the Bible in your school? That's what happened at Ft. Gibson Intermediate Elementary in Ft. Gibson, Oklahoma. The school was using the *Accelerated Reader* (AR) program. It is a computer-based program that tests students' comprehension after they have read books. There are thousands of books for which AR has comprehension tests, but the Bible was not one of them.

Author Suzanne Eller, in her article "It's A Book Isn't It," reported that fourth-graders Brooke Marshall and Emily Cook wanted to see the Bible included in the program. They approached fifth-grade teacher Teresa Minor, the sponsor of the school's Christian club. She contacted AR. Due to their efforts, AR now includes the Bible in its comprehension tests for all schools across the nation!

Teresa began approaching people in the community who, then, donated 48 Bibles for the school library. The school librarian reported that all the Bibles were usually checked out. Eller explained, "Teresa is amazed

to see the desire students have to read the Bible. 'It's not unusual to see Bibles at recess or in the cafeteria,' she says."

For more information on the *Accelerated Reader* program, visit www.advlearn.com.

Expressing God's Love At School With Others

43 Pray with Other Mothers

Moms In Touch, International has over 20,000 prayer groups and 100,000+ mothers praying each week for their children, their schools, their teachers, and administrators. A *Moms In Touch* group involves two or more moms whose children attend the same school, meeting for one hour each week to pray. To find your school's group, or to start a prayer group, call (800) 949-MOMS or visit their Web site at www.momsintouch.org.

44 Help Another Moms In Touch Group Get Started

If you are already in a *Moms In Touch* prayer group, you can inspire someone to start a new one in another school. If your children are in elementary school, find out if there are *Moms In Touch* groups in the middle schools and high schools where your children will be attending. (Use the *Moms In Touch* group locator on their Web site.) If there are no groups already started, begin to network your way to someone at those schools and give them *Moms In Touch* brochures. Make an announcement at your church or at women's Bible studies in churches near the school you are targeting. Give a brochure to friends who are in their last year at your school and who will be moving up to the school where you want to start a group. Host a meeting in your home and ask your *Moms In Touch* group to invite their friends from other schools. At the meeting you can show a video provided by *Moms In Touch*. Call (800) 949-MOMS or visit their Web site at www.momsintouch.org.

45 Promote Teachers Praying Together

Fellowship And Christian Encouragement (FACE) for Educators is a national organization of thousands of educators who meet weekly on their campuses before school to pray, read the Bible, and encourage one an-

other. Specially written devotional materials geared for educators are provided free of charge. To get started in your school, visit www.prayingeducator.org; or write to P.O. Box 365, Windsor, CO 80550; or call (970) 266-0492.

46 Help Students Pray and Support One Another

You can encourage students at your school to join with millions of other students on the third Wednesday of September to participate in what is called *See You At The Pole* (SYATP). Students meet at their school's flagpole to pray—for their school, friends, teachers, government, and nation. It is student-initiated, student-organized, and student-led. It is legally protected. In fact, the U.S. Department of Education has specifically recognized the legality of this annual event. Free publicity, ideas for organizing, and clip-art for creating materials are available at www.syatp.org. While this is usually done at the secondary school level, parents are beginning to initiate SYATP events at their children's elementary schools. It is a good way to meet other like-minded parents.

47 Promote Campus Challenge Sunday (Early September)

The Sunday prior to the *See You At The Pole* (SYATP) event (see idea # 46) is designated as "Campus Challenge Sunday." This is a time for churches to show their support for the event. It is also a good opportunity to create a list of public school parents and teachers in your church for future networking. For a list of promotional ideas you can use in your church, visit www.syatp.org.

48 Start a Good News Club at School

Do you know that students in your elementary public school can sing worship songs in the classroom, pray, hear Bible stories, and accept an invitation to become a Christian – right in a classroom? It is all part of a growing movement of after-school, on-campus clubs called *Good News Clubs*. In the Supreme Court case of *Good News Club v. Milford Central School District*, the Court ruled that it is lawful for a religious club to meet on campus after school. Parents are helping start more and more Good News Clubs across the country. In the Dallas area, there are 15 clubs on public school campuses. In Southern California there are nearly 50 clubs!

Sara, an eighth-grader in El Cajon, California, says of her school, "A lot of kids are doing drugs and doing a lot of bad stuff." But, she says the club helps her stay out of trouble. When the Los Angeles Times ran a story on her club, she told the reporter, "It is another chance so we can stay out of trouble."

For the local *Good News Club* director in your area, visit www.gtbe.org.

Expressing God's Love When Voicing Concerns

49 Seek an Alternative Assignment

This is a non-threatening way to approach the teacher when you do not want your child participating in a particular classroom activity. Start your conversation with the teacher by acknowledging, with genuine respect, her authority to teach her subject as she sees fit. This will circumvent the natural defensiveness any teacher is bound to feel when confronted by a disapproving parent. No one likes to be criticized.

Follow this with a friendly but firm reminder that though the classroom is hers, the child is yours. You know how you want him to develop, and long after he has graduated from this class you will still be responsible for his academic and moral growth. Therefore, without challenging the teacher's right to teach, you are asking her to provide an alternative educational activity for your child. That does not mean having him sit in the hall while the lesson is taught. An alternative educational activity means he works quietly at his desk on another assignment or goes to the library.

This technique works well when you are trying to have your child "opted out" of a specific lesson or activity.

50 Ask a Teacher to Reconsider a Lesson

When you want the teacher to reconsider using a lesson or activity, use this three-step approach: (1) Start your conversation by saying, in a non-threatening, inquisitive, and friendly manner, "Help me understand what you want the kids to learn"; (2) When the teacher has explained herself, affirm what she is trying to do in general. For example, "I appreciate that you want the students to learn..."; (3) Transition to your concerns with the phrase, "But have you considered...." It also helps to offer an alternative book or activity idea.



51 *Talk to the Principal About a Concern*

The principal is used to hearing parental complaints. If you approach her as just another complainer, you run the risk of being categorized as a “problem parent.” If, however, you come to her as a friend and supporter of the school, someone who is protective of the school’s reputation, her response may be quite different. Begin your conversation with “I thought I should alert you to a potentially embarrassing situation.” This brings to the administrator’s awareness something she might not have known was going on.

The traditional line of authority begins with your child's teacher. Try your best to find a solution to your concern with the teacher. If you cannot do that, go to the principal. You may also want to bring a friend or your spouse along. You will feel less intimidated, and if you get flustered, your partner can help you express your concern. Avoid the appearance of going over the head of the teacher or the principal. Instead, try asking, "Who else can help us with this issue?" Solicit advice. In extreme cases, you may need to visit the school district superintendent or a school board member for counsel on how to resolve a problem.



52 *Send a Note of Appreciation*

Educators often hear from complaining parents, but it is not as often that they receive a note of encouragement. Bless your children's teachers and principal with a simple note of thanks. Be specific in your appreciation. Did your child enjoy a particular lesson? Does the teacher give you good feedback on homework? Do you appreciate the principal's friendly attitude? Let them know.



Expand your support network of like-minded people at school and in church by giving them copies of this booklet. Then, help each other with your own tips on the 52 ideas.

Planning Calendar

Suggested months for activities.

Ideas to use anytime: #1-15, 34-46, 48, 49-52

| | | | |
|------|---------|-------|------------------|
| Jan. | #10, 28 | Jul. | #8-9, 11-15 |
| Feb. | #8,9 | Aug. | #8, 11-13, 48 |
| Mar. | #29-30 | Sept. | #8, 11-13, 46-47 |
| Apr. | #31-33 | Oct. | #16, 17 |
| May | #13,8 | Nov. | #17-21, 22-23 |
| Jun. | #8 | Dec. | #22-27 |

People Within My Sphere of Influence

(Refer to idea #1 on page 2)

[illegible]

* For these and additional planning forms, visit www.gtbe.org

My Extended Network of Like-Minded People

It is helpful to know of other like-minded people at your school, and even in the next school your child will be attending. They can lend support for your activities as well as information regarding issues and opportunities they've encountered. These parents and educators may not be in your *current* sphere of activity, but they may be next year or even next semester as your child changes classes.

Compare "spheres of influence" with your friends who are also using their "Expressing God's Love At School" booklet. (Be sure to give your like-minded friends a copy if they don't have one.) Use the space below to list the people your friends indicate are *like-minded* in wanting to bring a Godly influence to your (or their) school. Keep in mind that not every Christian in your school will share your interest regarding how issues of faith should be integrated in public schools.

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* For these and additional planning forms, visit www.gtbe.org

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* For these and additional planning forms, visit www.gtbe.org

Resource Ordering Information



Pledge of Allegiance Poster (see ideas #8-10)

This colorful 11"x22" classroom poster teaches the meaning of each phrase of the Pledge of Allegiance -- including what it means to be one nation under God. Minimum of four posters. 4-9 posters are \$4.00 each; 10-49 posters are \$3.00 each; 50-499 posters are \$1.50 each; 500-999 posters are \$1.00 each; 1,000-1,999 posters are \$0.90 each; 2,000-2,999 posters are \$0.80 each; 3,000+ posters are \$0.70 each.



Holiday Restoration Cards (see ideas #17-27, 29-33)

These eight-page booklets look like greeting cards. They provide a place for a personal greeting and include a light-hearted story designed to explain to teachers the legality of teaching about the holiday. Each card contains different legal documentation and constitutionally sound lesson plan ideas. Minimum order of three cards in any combination. 3-9 cards are \$4.00 each; 10-49 cards are \$3.50 each; 50-99 cards are \$3.00 each; 100-299 cards are \$2.75 each; 300+ cards are \$2.50 each.

Re-focus Halloween (see idea #16)

This booklet helps explain why teachers should avoid the occult trappings of Halloween and offers fun alternative ideas. Price is the same as the Holiday Restoration Cards and can be combined with that order for discounts.



Teacher-Reacher Packet

This convenient packet contains a Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter Restoration Card, two note cards to send encouraging messages, a parent-teacher conference checklist, and instructions. 1-3 packets are \$14 each.; 4-16 packets are \$12 each; 17-33 are \$10.50 each; 34-99 are \$9 each; 100+ are \$8.25 each.

TrendWatch Report (see idea #36)

This 14-page, well-documented report does all the talking for you. You can give it to your public school friends and help them gain the confidence they need to bring an appropriate Christian influence to their schools. Minimum order of four reports. 4-9 reports are \$5 each; 10-49 reports are \$4 each; 50+ are \$3 each.



FREE shipping and handling for all orders.

Call (800) 929-1163 or visit www.gtbe.org

Send check to: Gateways to Better Education, P.O. Box 514, Lake Forest, CA 92609-0514

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