

Best practices from churches around the country

Well, it's that time of year when kids and families begin a new school year. But of course, in 2020, everything is different. Across the country, school districts are wrestling with what can be done safely with child education. Some places will have students back in classrooms, with many precautions; other places are looking at various hybrid models and still others will do online classes only. Often the directives from public education change weekly or even daily. In other words, everything is upside down, which seems to be standard operating procedure for most of our lives during Covid.

All of this chaos is very upsetting for families and many churches are looking at ways to minister to families as school begins. Here are some best practices.

- Develop an online support for parents: Some churches are doing parenting forums with a panel of teachers and school psychologists. Others have Zoom forums just to give parents a place to talk.
- Contact the local school administration and find a way to help out: Some schools need help with registration or physical help cleaning, donating school supplies, etc.
- Write notes to teachers: notes of support are greatly appreciated by teachers who are working under lots of stress.
- Provide technology: Particularly in places where classes will be online, there are families that cannot afford laptops or I Pads and churches can donate equipment to help out.
- Transform church practices: For example, many churches do a "Blessing of the Backpacks" this time of year. Congregations are doing a virtual version of this or are doing a caravan through neighborhoods and having a social-distance blessing on the front lawns of homes (if you do this, have members invite neighbors to bring their kids).

While the Covid crisis continues to cause great upheaval, churches are finding creative ways to minister and share the Good News that God is present, even in the most difficult of times.

May this be a creative and faithful week ahead, as you minister to others.

Blessings,
Paul