

Missions Education—Where To Begin?

Nancy Tichy

Just where do you find the seed thoughts for missions education in church or Christian school? They're usually planted in the heart of an adult who wants to enlist kids for God's global cause. Check out some ideas that even a beginner can use to chart a course designed to take kids from self-absorption to participation in God's Kingdom business.

Multiply Your Vision

If you're a "committee of one," pray for others to partner with you. God may already be preparing someone close to you to share your vision. You can begin by surveying the resources that are available once you do get going, but don't venture out alone. Pray for your pastor and others in leadership. Pray for those involved in children's ministry and on the missions committee, if there is one. Pray until God puts together a task force of men and women who share your concern.

Introduce Your Vision

Be positive and enthusiastic. Be a catalyst. There's nothing quite as thrilling as influencing others to join with you in God's work. Use current examples of people who are doing missions education successfully, and point out some of the significant resources that have been developed in just the past five years. Explain that discipling kids for mission benefits everyone involved—the kids and the church or school, the lost, and it brings God glory! Develop a case for missions education being central—not peripheral—to children's destinies.

Start With Prayer

When you have enlisted a few "believers," begin to pray together. PRAY! PRAY! PRAY! Prayer is the fuel of missions, and it is also the basis for success in missions education. People who may not get involved in the programs you create will, nevertheless, PRAY. Be specific and rejoice in the answers.

Survey and Record

What is already going on in your school or church missions efforts? Investigate matters relating to budget and expenditures, teaching from the pulpit and in classes, short-term trips your church endorses, agencies that have support on a monthly and a seasonal basis, and any community outreach efforts.

Introduce a Plan

Brainstorm with your task force to write a short and simple mission statement and a set of goals. Include ways you think these goals could be implemented. You'll have, in effect, a strategy which will develop, change and be refined as time goes by.

Optimize Partnerships

Don't be surprised if your concerns are not greeted enthusiastically. Most church mission leaders and school administrators are not looking for more to manage. Suggest ways you can enlist help for the activities you suggest. Often people who are intimidated by or indifferent to working with kids on a regular basis will take on a task that is short-term or that makes use of their creative hobbies and interests. Locate these people and convince them of their value in the big picture.

Seek New Beginnings

Think big, but start small! In most cases, it is better to do something small and succeed in a big way. Then you can build on that success for expansion of your vision.

Share Ideas and Existing Resources

Build on what is already going on. Ideas for this are abundant. One church has a missions "story lady" who visits classes on a rotating basis with her apron of treasures. Another puts a missions giving and education component into their children's church program or their Vacation Bible School. Older kids can host a person or small group getting ready for a short-term missions trip; after the interview, kids pray for them. Get kids involved! Serving younger children, puppet shows, drama and music, feeding the homeless, teaching ESL—*doing* it along with *hearing* about it makes a big difference.

Expand as He Leads

Ask God to give you the resources to firmly implement plans—to last! Hopefully your vision and goals incorporate deep spiritual development, including biblical literacy, Christian life disciplines, understanding cultures and religions different from ours, and strategies that kids can be a part of now. This will not take place quickly. It is, however, worth the effort needed to succeed.

Develop a Network of Resources

Contact mission agencies, your denomination or association, and children's ministries that combine missions and kids. Share ideas that work. Attend missions conferences at national and regional levels. Network with Margie Marsh, ACMC's Children's Education coordinator (margiemarsh@acmc.org). Or contact me (909-782-0171 or Ftichy@aol.com).



Nancy Tichy and her husband Frank serve as Inland Empire (California) regional representatives of the U.S. Center for World Mission.