

# The Best Thing That I Do

by Dan Snook

Children's Pastor, Warwick Assembly of God

**D**o you want to make a huge impact on your children's church kids that they will remember for a lifetime? Would you like to meet unchurched kids in an atmosphere where they are comfortable and feel free to talk? Sound too good to be true? But wait! If you keep reading right now, I'll tell you how you can do this AND suffer for Jesus all at the same time! Say your prayers, break your fast, and head to school for lunch!

## Here's what you do:

**1** Pass out permission forms printed on colored card-stock to all of your kids at church – see example.

**2** Cut off side tab of returned cards and place in a cookie jar or something – I have a wonderful "Grandma Maxine" jar, and we "pick her brain" each Sunday.

**3** Each Sunday, you will draw another name out of the jar. Here's the catch – they have to be present that morning or their name goes back in the jar.

## Some things to consider for your card:

**1** Do any of the schools in your area have an abbrevi-

ated day that would result in a shifted lunch schedule?

**2** Do any of your kids go to private or Christian schools – often these schools don't have a cafeteria. They may bring in food from the outside, which means that you have to preorder your lunch that morning.



## What to do when you arrive at the school:

**1** Make sure that you take off any "weapons" like small pocket knives or Schrade tools that you may generally carry.

**2** Go straight to the office. Once there you should:

- Tell the secretaries that you are a Children's Pastor, and tell what church you are from (this begins the process of build-

ing a good name for your church in the community).

- Show them the card and explain that you draw a different name each week. They will be confused at first, because it is very unusual for a nonrelative to visit a child, and they may be unsure of its appropriateness. Once they see that you have your ducks in a row with a parent's signature, they may ask to photocopy the form (I volunteer that suggestion for their comfort). Once they understand who you are, they are then thrilled to see you and very grateful for your interest.

- Find the VISITOR'S LOG and fill that out.

- Look for their school's visitor sticker sheet or roll somewhere on the counter. Fill it out and wear it visibly.

- If you've brought a camera (digital is the best way to go) show it to the secretaries and ask them about their school's policies concerning photos of children. They usually don't know and have to ask. Many schools will let you take a picture of the child only, not with a crowd of kids in the picture. This is because many children come from split homes, and occasionally one parent is "hiding" the children in a new neighborhood

and doesn't want to be found by the "ex." The schools are then nervous about your picture showing up on the web and being seen by the wrong person. Fat chance, but that's the concern. I always volunteer to let them see any of the pictures that I've taken, and tell them that I will gladly delete any they are concerned about. I've never had that happen.

### **Once you are in the cafeteria:**

**1** Introduce yourself to the teacher or lunchroom worker who is milling around with the kids. This is the person who will know where the class is supposed to sit, if the class is in line, and if the teacher is there or eats in the teacher's lounge. Get help in finding your kid as they look amazingly the same when there is a sea of them. You've only got 30 minutes and you can't afford to lose time looking around. They tend to not see you either, and forget to look for you as they get caught up in the routine of school.

**2** Jump in line with the kid. You have got to cut in line or you won't eat together. It may seem rude, but the kids know that adults jump the line, and they are not offended. It's standard policy.

**3** Find out how many students are in the class that day. If you can afford \$10 for the lunch, you can eat and buy an ice cream or big cookie for every single student in the class. They

cost \$.35 typically. Get all the same kind to avoid fighting. Ask for a box to put them in and let the kid you are visiting be the hero by getting to pass them out. He will know who is in his class (but at a different table) and he and your ministry get built up in the eyes of everyone in the entire lunchroom.

### **Surprises to look out for:**

**1** Little Joey may hang all over you in church and be wide-open and personable, but shut down completely when you sit down beside him in the lunchroom. Suddenly, he is very concerned and uncomfortable about what his friends will think about you. It'll shock you the first time it happens. What to do:

- Give Joey some time to evaluate the situation. Spend time getting to know the names of his classmates at the table. Make it funny by calling girls George and boys Edweena. This takes the heat off of Joey, and he can relax as all of his peers begin to have a good time.

**2** The class goes wild and suddenly you've got a "no talking" situation on your hands in the cafeteria. Awkward. This usually happens when I put my Billy Bob teeth in. I let the teacher in charge know ahead of time that I tend to get the kids a little riled, but that I will try to keep it down. They will laugh and cut you all a little slack.

**3** Many kids want to hold your hand and hang all over you when you follow them out onto

the playground. I don't mind at all when it is the child whose parents have given me permission. But when it is other adorable children, then you've got to think fast. This is the hardest situation to handle. Mr. Anotherkid is not going to appreciate coming to school and seeing me hold hands with his son on the playground. Do your best to break the hold by changing the game to something without contact, or with tons of running around – making it difficult to maintain a grip.

**S**o that's it! Another successful venture into the public school system. The kids love ya, the teachers are thrilled that you took the time, and the other Christian adults in the school will go back to their churches with this idea. The entire school office now knows who you are and where you go to church, and they won't forget. A few more visits and they will light up and immediately ask you who you are there to have lunch with today. It can open doors into the school that would never open to you otherwise. Make sure that you check back out at the main office, and use that time to develop those relationships. When you get to church the next Sunday, show the pictures that you took, and laugh about all of the crazy stuff that happened, and get ready to pick Grandma Maxine's brain again. The kids love it.