

Compendium of Local Church Exercises to Help us Grow in the Lord From S.C.R.A.T.C.H. – After School Ministry

What: We have created an after-school program for the kids of our community. Helpers and kids gather each Wednesday from 3:30 p.m.-5:15p.m. for active games, music, a Bible story, memory verses, crafts and a healthy snack. So far, we have tended to minister to kids who do not participate in a lot of organized sports.

Why: The kids in our circle of influence need to know Jesus and they are disciples in training. We take this seriously. If you minister to kids, often you are also ministering to their whole household.

How: We followed elements that are encapsulated by the acronym “**SCRATCH**”.

S - See the need - “Open the eyes of my heart, Lord”. **Seek** God’s will in prayer and in Scripture. **Seek** the council of the Pastor, the board, friends and others. **Surrender** all to God - even the impossibilities. **Study** the town demographics - particularly the numbers and grades of school age children. **Seek** to understand and help **shape** your church’s vision for children and **study** what other churches in your town are offering children.

C - Create a plan by asking yourself [or a team of interested people, if you have a team] for details of what is envisioned. “**Could** we do an after-school program from 3:30 pm-5:15 pm or perhaps an early evening program from 6:30 pm-8 pm?” **Consider** the needs of the town children and what **components** could be offered. There are Sunday School materials available at The Foundry. There are lots of free lessons online [with online sources, be **careful** of the theology of the teachings]. **We do not water down the Gospel.**

R - Recruit Christian helpers. Your local church is the 1st place to recruit from. **Recruit** your Pastor and let the Pastor **release** their inner child; even if the Pastor attends fifteen minutes each week, the children will get to know who the Pastor is by name! **Recruit** Gr 7 or 8 (Christian) kids to help. **Recruit** the “I don’t do kids” folk by **recognizing** and encouraging their other gifts like: financial support, providing snacks, prepping craft pieces at home, and of course asking them to pray. **Recruit** people from other churches in town; the **prerequisite** is that they must love kids.

A - Ask God for children. **Ask** for help. **Accept** help. **Ask** for prayer. **Apply** for every grant possible - whether from town, corporate, or district funds.

T - Training: have your people complete the mandatory Ministry Safe training. **Train** folk on how to: **think** like a kid again, play, do a craft, tell a Bible story, teach a Bible concept, be silly, teach a memory verse, be like Jesus, be child-friendly. **Teach** kids to serve others by engaging in things like: raking leaves, baking cookies, caroling, cleaning, etc.

C - Communicate through word-of-mouth and social media platforms. **Connect** to your church’s website by establishing an ‘After School Program’ page. **Contribute** your program information to your town’s events page. When possible, advertise, **create** flyers, post notices at schools, make posters, hang up outdoor banners, LED signs, supply grocery store handouts etc. **Create** everything to look **crisp**, simple, professional and appealing to kids. Volunteer at the school/library/pool/rink to get to know kids and to **care** for them. **Communicate** with your kids via postal mailings and regularly **communicate** with your volunteers and your **church**.

H - Seek the Holy Spirit’s guidance. Cultivate **healthy, happy** relationships. **Humor-** see the humor of things- kids love to see we are relaxed and can laugh at ourselves and with them. **Honour** the children’s’ quirks. Be **humble** and love unconditionally. Be ready- kids are **hectic** and they often know only one speed- Mach 5! Make Jesus their **hero** and show them through example. **His** Story- your program is writing a new chapter on someone else’s life! **Hallelujah!**

Contact: Dorothy Reeder / Main Avenue Fellowship, Sundre, Alberta / nanider1@gmail.com