

# Ministry in the Public Schools

## Kids Finding Christ at School - How Can That Be Legal?!

It is a common belief that God is not allowed in the public school classroom. Common—yes. True—a resounding NO! Just ask any *Child Evangelism Fellowship*® volunteer. Thousands of children are hearing and responding to the Gospel message right in their public school classrooms. Here is how it happened.



### What Is a Good News Club?

From the beginning of CEF® the *Good News Club*® has been at the heart of our ministry. Clubs meet once a week, usually during the school year, in homes, churches, schools and other locations. You can host or teach a *Good News Club* anywhere children gather!

Children hear the Gospel through Bible and missionary stories, songs and games and are encouraged to have a daily quiet time using *60-Day Wonder Devotional Books*. Evangelism and discipleship are primary goals. Clubs can be held at various locations and times but the end result is always the same—kids come to know Christ as Savior!

“We often whine and complain about the loss of our liberties. Yet, we have a tremendous opportunity to start Good News Clubs at every elementary school. If every school had an ongoing club we could positively change the future of America through one or two generations. Yes, you might find some resistance from school officials....However, I am confident we will win...and open the door to present the Gospel to hundreds of thousands of young people. The *Good News Club* case has now given us the high ground and we should seize the opportunity.”



Mat Staver  
Founder and Chairman  
of Liberty Counsel





In 1996 the interim superintendent of Milford Community School in New York refused to allow *Good News Club* children to ride the bus to their off-campus meetings, though he continued to allow the Boy Scouts to do so. “Okay,” teacher Steve Fournier decided. “We’ll just meet at the school.”

But the *Good News Club* was also denied access to the school, the superintendent calling it “nothing more than religious worship.” He rebuffed all Steve’s attempts to meet and discuss the problem with him and asked, “Where are you going to get the resources to take this to court?” Steve says, “What this man didn’t count on was the power of God. While I didn’t have the resources, God certainly did.”

Steve continues, “Little did he know that this decision would pave the way across the nation for the very thing he hoped to prevent.” The Fourniers began a court battle that culminated in a landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision in June 2001 confirming equal access to public schools. In that decision the Court ruled:

- Our free speech rights had been violated because of our religious viewpoint.
- Restrictions must not discriminate against speech based on viewpoint.
- Permitting *Good News Club* to meet on school premises does not violate the Establishment clause.
- The danger that children would believe the school to be endorsing religion is no greater than the danger that they would perceive hostility toward religion if the club were excluded from this public forum.

Since this groundbreaking decision, the number of after-school clubs has increased by almost 365 percent! Last year 11,417 children prayed to receive Jesus Christ as their Savior in their public school *Good News Club*.

The war has been won at the highest court level but smaller battles against our freedom of equal access continue. For each court victory and out-of-court settlement there are countless children who will hear the life-changing message of Christ.

Moises Esteves, associate director of USA Ministries for *CEF*, says, “Most schools open up to *Good News Club* without any legal problems. Some schools open up after receiving a letter from our lawyer. A very small number of cases require going to court. The majority of Christians in this country right now think we can’t be in schools, but we can.” Churches all across the USA are partnering with *Child Evangelism Fellowship* to take advantage of this opportunity to impact the next generation. Your church can impact your community!

**For you or your church to become involved in a Good News Club® call 804-814-5508.**

- **After-school**—Currently 2,247 Good News Clubs meet after school on school property. Parents must sign permission slips for children to attend.
- **Released time**—More than 760 Good News Clubs meet during school hours at another location such as a church. Parents must sign permission slips and club teachers walk or transport the children to and from the clubs.
- **Regular**—1,066 Good News Clubs are being held in other locations, such as homes and community centers.
- **Preschool**—There are 301 Good News Clubs exclusively for preschoolers, usually meeting in day care centers.

“Teran\* is eight years old and has been in trouble at home and at school for losing his temper and fighting. He received Christ in *Good News Club*. I took him home after club so I could meet his parents. His father told me, ‘Teran used to fight all the time....Now he doesn’t fight or lose his temper anymore. It is because of your class. Do you have a class like that for me?’”

—Bev Blades, California

\*Name has been changed.

