

## The Opportunity to Make a Difference



*Ola was one of the many children who touched my heart, and whom God used to shape my calling. I want to become a missionary nurse so that I can share hope with children like Ola on a daily basis, not the hope of hours' worth of laughs, but the hope of Jesus Christ that is eternal.*

—Bethany, Team Member to Russia



It is a tradition among most Christian schools to provide rich outreach and service projects as opportunities to expose students to experiences that touch the world of real people and real situations—to life in some of the most challenging circumstances. These experiences give students the life-changing opportunity to make a difference.

Many of those schools offer short-term mission trips that not only engage students in an array of good-will projects but also integrate opportunities for students to engage in disciple making. In these cases, students tell others about the gospel of Jesus Christ and how they might know Him.

The Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) provides a special service to Christian schools by assisting them in offering such short-term mission trips for their high school students. During the past year, ACSI assisted 12 schools across North America in developing trips to Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, Paraguay, Russia, and South Africa. Nearly 200 students participated in these mission trips. These mission teams visit homes, orphanages, and hospitals; conduct church services; help with Bible schools and basic English classes; and serve in other types of ministry requested by the host organization. Trips generally last from 10 days to three weeks.

This current year has seen exploding growth in interest and involvement. Currently, ACSI is working with 18 Christian schools to provide trips for more than 280 students who will be serving in one of the following countries: Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Hungary, Russia, and Thailand.

In addition to these ACSI-planned mission trips, hundreds of other schools work with churches and mission agencies to provide these rich learning opportunities for their students. Perhaps one or more of your own students will be participating in one of these life-changing experiences in the coming weeks.

Individual student testimonies reflect the powerful results of short-term mission trips. Abbey, a team member to Paraguay, wrote, “Paraguay was the point in my life when God really showed me my gifts and began to change me ... I’m glad that God changed me—His plan for me is so much better than mine for myself.”

A team member to Russia said, “Ola was one of the many children who touched my heart, and whom God used to shape my calling. I want to become a missionary nurse so that I can share hope with children like Ola on a daily basis, not the hope of hours’ worth of laughs, but the hope of Jesus Christ that is eternal.”

Christian schooling is not about providing a fortress where students learn to hunker down and avoid the world and a pervasively negative culture. Rather, Christian schools provide places where students can launch into real-life lab experiences such as short-term mission trips and other outreach and service opportunities. As I reflect on my years as a Christian school administrator, I can identify no single curricular activity that has had a greater or more lasting influence on students’ lives than personal involvement in mission trips.

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