



**Path To Shine® Handbook**  
**Part 1: Making the Decision**

Version 1.3  
February 2014  
[www.pathtoshine.org](http://www.pathtoshine.org)

# You are a Marvel

By Pablo Casals

Each second we live is a new and unique moment of the universe, a moment that will never be again . . . And what do we teach our children? We teach them that two and two make four and that Paris is the capital of France.

When will we also teach them what they are?

We should say to each of them: Do you know what you are? You are a marvel. You are unique. In all the years that have passed, there has never been another child like you. Your legs, your arms, your clever fingers, the way you move.

You may become a Shakespeare, a Michelangelo, a Beethoven. You have the capacity for anything.

Yes, you are a marvel. And when you grow up, can you then harm another who is, like you, a marvel?

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## Introduction

Path To Shine® is a unique after-school mentoring and tutoring program for at-risk and under-served children. The purpose is to encourage children to stay in school until they graduate by partnering with faith communities to provide the academic support necessary for elementary students to develop good academic skills and the self-confidence needed to find their own "path to shine."

Each public school community has children who can benefit from a mentoring and tutoring program. Wouldn't it be awesome if every school had a Path To Shine® program that they could offer?

## Mission and Vision Statements

### Vision Statement

Inspiring under-served children to achieve hope-filled dreams.

### Mission Statement

Path To Shine® provides mentoring and tutoring support for at-risk elementary school students. With 1 mentor for every 2 children, Path To Shine® seeks to help students graduate elementary school, while learning to make productive life choices that can lead to high school graduation.

### Short-term Vision

Path To Shine® was able to expand the program during 2012 & 2013 so that by January 2014 we were serving 100 children. The next goal is to have 12 locations operating serving 200 children, and this will be achieved by reaching out to more communities and establishing new programs.

### Long-term Vision

To reach more children! There are about 1,500 churches and religious buildings in Atlanta. If 50 of those institutions would each take on 20 children, that would be 1,000 children who could be helped. Keeping each program to no more than 20 children ensures the program is manageable and sustainable on the macro level. Additionally, the volunteer tutors do not feel overwhelmed, and the 2:1 ratio guarantees each child receives plenty of attention.

The program is structured to be highly cost effective. Our Director started the program with costs of less than \$100 for 8 months for 20 children. School supplies, used books, the space for tutoring, snacks – all of these components were donated. The tutors and guest speakers donated their time as well.

## How it Works

Path To Shine® meets with a group of no more than 20 children, once a week after school for about 2 ½ hours. The size of the group is driven by the number of adult volunteers; this ensures a small ratio of no more than 2 children per adult.

The programs are designed to be flexible, and working with other groups is encouraged. Collaborating with another congregation - or with 4 congregations as in our Macon program - allows for the pooling of resources. One congregation may have sufficient interest to want to start a Path To Shine® program. Another congregation may be conveniently located within walking distance of an elementary school and have the space to host the program. Yet a third resource might be the snack provider. And all 3 communities may provide volunteer tutors and materials.

The volunteer tutors make a large commitment when they agree to be a part of the program. While some of the tutors are certified teachers, almost any willing adult can help at-risk children. Being there consistently and listening deeply are incredibly important. With a maximum of 2 children working with each adult, there is time to foster meaningful relationships. The children and tutors genuinely care about each other, and they ask about each other when one is missing.

The guest speakers are another key component of the program. They come from varied backgrounds, but each one shares their journey as they speak to the children. Speakers are asked to spend 20 minutes openly talking about struggles they dealt with as children, and choices they made while growing up that allowed them to become successful as adults. Afterwards, there is time for the children to ask questions. This is another way in which we teach the children the importance of making good choices.

## Success Stories

*From the children.....*

“Will you help me color? I want to do a good job.” This was the request of a special education student who wanted to make a card for one of his Path To Shine friends. Jimmy has many hurdles to overcome, but he has a good heart and likes to help clean up. He challenges us with his mood swings, which are heightened because he does not receive the medication he needs on a consistent basis. But his teacher has seen him make progress this year, and she credits Path To Shine with helping.

Jacob was in fifth grade, and at the end of his first semester he was failing all of his classes. His parents do not have a lot of extra money, but they got a private tutor for two hours a week, and they requested a place for Jacob in the Sunday afternoon Path To Shine program. His final report card revealed all Bs and one C, a vast improvement. Jacob is proud of the progress he has made, and it shows in the way he holds himself. He has seen his efforts rewarded, and he is motivated to keep doing well.

Amy's teachers noticed that she was not grasping concepts as quickly as her peers. They sent home paperwork requesting permission to test her for possible learning

disabilities. The paperwork was not returned because her mother cannot read. We worked with the mother to complete the paperwork and returned it to school. Amy is now supported with additional resources at school, and she is making progress.

Zach had to do summer school at the end of first grade because his standardized test scores were weak. After a year with Path To Shine, he made a lot of improvements, and there was no need for summer school after second grade.

*From school staff.....*

A school social worker reported that the children who attend Path To Shine once a week make more progress than the children who attend typical after-school programs 3 or 4 days a week.

A school counselor passed along the following comments from a participant's teacher: "Alex will repeat Kindergarten but his teacher feels he is making progress. She is beginning to see him making connections. She wanted me to pass on how much Path To Shine has helped and how appreciative she is of all of your efforts."

*From host sites.....*

"I hear nothing but good things about the program and what you are doing."  
Pastor Randy Cheek, Olive Springs Baptist Church

"I was initially overwhelmed that 17 kids came, but then they were so attentive and well-behaved. We will have them back ANY TIME!" Gigi Fernandez, Our Pal's Place

*From volunteers.....*

"Volunteering with Path To Shine® helped me remember why I became a teacher." Ginny Parrino

"What you are doing is truly an amazing thing to watch." Dr. Ron Wilson

"When I got your email about Mary it made me so happy. I haven't stopped smiling all afternoon and I've said to everyone I've encountered today, 'Oh! Let me tell you about Mary!' " Sydney Busby

"I have had a very challenged and extreme path this past two years. It is easy to get mired down in yourself. Today I realized it is not about life being easy or hard, but the results you produce with that life." Bonnie Rhinehardt

## I'm interested! How can I do this in my community?

It is not as tough as you may think to create a Path To Shine® program in your community! By following this section carefully, you can develop a successful and sustainable Path To Shine® Affiliate. If you have any questions regarding the steps, please do not hesitate to contact a Path To Shine® representative.

### 1. Meet with Path To Shine®

The first step is to simply meet with a Path To Shine® representative so we can provide an overview of the program, the involvement needed, and its benefits to both the congregation and community as a whole. The representative will meet you in person at a mutually agreeable location, and the meeting should last approximately one hour.

### 2. Vestry and Outreach Committee (or Equivalent) Approvals

In order to discern if Path To Shine® is the right fit for your congregation, discuss the program with both your Vestry (or Board/Council/other governing body) and the Outreach (or Missions) Committee. Once it is determined that Path To Shine® is to become part of the vision of the congregation, it's time to share the program with the broader body.

### 3. Determine if There's Interest Within the Congregation

**Find 2 or 3 leaders from the congregation to spearhead the Path To Shine® effort.**

This step is of utmost importance to ensure long-term sustainability. Below are a few guidelines around selecting appropriate leaders:

The Leaders **should** be:

- Lay people
- Organizers
- Motivators
- Willing to ask for help

A Leader doesn't have to be:

- An educator
- Bi-lingual, although this can be helpful
- Smarter Than a 5<sup>th</sup> Grader!

The Leaders must **NOT** be:

- Clergy
- Anyone already overcommitted
- Anyone who does not pass required background checks
- Anyone who is unwilling to attend any of the training sessions

#### **4. Invite Path To Shine® to Preach for your Congregation**

The next step is to arrange for our Executive Director to visit and address your congregation either by preaching or through an alternate but similar forum. Simply call or email to arrange this; there is a suggested donation to Path To Shine® of \$100 before the visit. While it might be tempting to arrange for her to preach at the initial meeting, please complete Steps 2 and 3 to obtain buy-in from your community's leadership before proceeding.

You must now determine if there is sufficient support within your own congregation to proceed. If you plan to collaborate with another community, now is the time to check with them as well. If you are ready, then it is time to become an Affiliate.

#### **5. Affiliate with Path To Shine®**

The next step is to invest in the program. To become an Affiliate, there is a one-time fee of \$400 payable to Path To Shine®.

New Affiliates are provided with the following:

- 10 hours\* of face time (includes meetings, parish presentations, Q&A sessions)
- Complete Handbook with forms, guidelines, tips, logo etc.
- Group time curriculum with lesson plans for 2 full years. All books provided for Year 1 at no charge; books available at cost for Year 2
- 5 hours\* of volunteer training at the Affiliate location
- 2 site visits (once the program is running)
- Box of used books to get started

\*Additional time will be charged at a consulting fee of \$35 per hour. Travel expenses (e.g. car/mileage and hotel accommodation) must be reimbursed by the Affiliate.

On-going support includes:

- Website page for each Affiliate with a link to the Affiliate's parish website
- Access to Path To Shine's® Facebook page
- Access to PayPal site for donations
- Articles in the quarterly newsletter (Feb, May, Aug)
- On-going email and phone support as needed
- Semi-annual meetings with other Affiliate coordinators
- Grants are written on behalf of the entire Path To Shine® organization. Affiliates can apply for grant monies from Path To Shine® Main Office.
- On-going updates with regards to training opportunities, legislative changes, useful sites, etc.
- Brand new books sourced through First Book, shared with Affiliates at no charge
- Annual training for new volunteers will be offered at the end of August at St. Benedict's Episcopal Church in Smyrna, GA. The cost is \$45 per person.

An annual renewal fee of \$100 will be payable on the anniversary date of the receipt of the initial Affiliate check.



## **6. Receive Materials**

Once we receive your check, you will be provided with the materials and access to the website hosting the materials. After reviewing the materials, it is important to sign the Affiliate Agreement and return to Path To Shine® Main Office as soon as possible.

## **7. Arrange for Path To Shine® to Give the Parish Presentation**

This next step allows for a space for people to hear more about the program than they would in a sermon. It also serves as the catalyst for recruiting volunteers. Your identified leaders need to proactively reach out and encourage as many people as possible to attend.

The presentation provides further information about the challenges of education in under-served communities, program structure, success stories, and requirements. The presentation is approximately 20-30 minutes. To ensure there is sufficient time for questions you should allow about 1½ hours for this meeting.

## **8. Assess the Interest of the Local Community (i.e. Where will we find the children?)**

### **Apartment Communities**

One easy place to start is in an apartment community. Working with the Apartment Manager, you can distribute flyers and invite families to register to gauge interest. This method provides a catalyst for connecting with the family and may help in understanding the challenges of the entire family. The Path To Shine® parish leaders will be responsible for distributing and collecting all of the necessary paperwork.

#### **Benefits:**

- Easy to meet the children off the school bus and get the children home afterwards. (No need to arrange transportation.)
- Easy to connect with the rest of the children's family
- Apartment Manager can be an on-going resource for additional children

### **Schools**

Another place to start is at a nearby school. The school method requires less up-front logistics than the Apartment Community method, as the school typically identifies the children, and handles the paperwork.

#### **Benefits:**

- School finds the children
- School manages the registration forms
- School gathers the children on the appropriate day
- More visible support for the program in the school, which can help foster relationships with the children's teachers

## Other Geographical Opportunities

Some neighborhoods might have a community center that serves as a hub for community activities such as a Saturday sports program. Another neighborhood might have a local food pantry or monthly food truck providing meals for families. A free medical clinic could also be a source of information for making connections you're your intended audience. Other options could be at a community Children's Home, or a church with a mid-week early evening youth program AND transportation.

NOTE: It is important to begin the search for students and volunteers concurrently in order to prevent a situation where you have volunteers but no children or vice versa.

### 9. Host Location

The ideal host location is a church or community center that is within walking distance of the local school or the neighborhood with which you plan to work.

### 10. Volunteer Eligibility and Training

#### Background Checks

Each tutor participating in the program will need to undergo a criminal background check, a sex offenders' registry check, and sign a **Release & Waiver of Liability form**.

Path To Shine® suggests that First Advantage be used as a resource for processing the background checks of the volunteers. There is a fee (\$8.50 as of Feb. 2014) associated with this service, and we recommend that the volunteers pay this fee. More information about the organization can be found at: [www.fadv.com](http://www.fadv.com)

The check can be conducted on-line from your office, and includes both a national criminal database check as well as the sex offenders' registry check; the report is instant. If you decide to use First Advantage please contact our Main Office so that we can guide you through the process.

Potential volunteers MUST complete the **Background Check Permission** form before you conduct the check.

#### Volunteer Training

Path To Shine® will provide training for volunteers. The training will last approximately five (5) hours and will be offered once at the Affiliate's location. Training sessions at other locations will be made available and volunteers are welcome to attend those. The training will include:

- Overview of Path To Shine®
- Role of the volunteer
- Serving and protecting the children and the Church
- Reading skills
- Racial diversity
- Socio-economic diversity

## Safeguarding God's Children

All volunteers must *also* undergo the anti-sex abuse training provided through The Episcopal Church, called Safeguarding God's Children. This training is offered in various locations throughout the year, either free of charge or for a nominal fee. It may also be taken on-line but volunteers must request this option and be set up through Path To Shine®. This training is not provided in the Volunteer Training curriculum. At the end of this training, volunteers will sign a **Compliance Agreement Form**, indicating that they have taken the training and understand the guidelines.

If your church is a denomination other than Episcopal, there may be an equivalent program that can be substituted. Please talk to our Main Office about this.

### 11. Recruiting the Children

#### Search Process

To begin the search process, you will need to have the **Registration Form** found in Part 2 of the Handbook. This form is used to help determine needs based on age, grade level, and location.

After you have received these forms from candidates, the appointed program leaders will determine both the number of students to accept and target age group, based on available tutors and information provided.

#### Acceptance into the Program

Once a child is accepted into the program, it is important to ensure limited liability to your organization and protection for the participants.

The parents/guardians of all participants will need to sign the **Participant Release & Waiver of Liability** and provide the information on the **Medical Form**. These forms are also found in Part 2 of the Handbook.

### 12. Launch the Path To Shine® Program!

Congratulations! By now, you have a trained leader, trained volunteers, and children to serve. It is time to prepare for Program Launch. In Part 2 of the Handbook, we've provided you with **The Essential Checklist** and many other resources to make sure you are ready to go. Part 3 contains additional information with suggestions about curriculum and structuring group time, as well as ways to help you start the first week successfully and continue on your journey.

## I am ready to start this program today! Where do I start?

The first step is to contact Path To Shine®. You may either send a note to our Executive Director via e-mail: [lesleyann@pathtoshine.org](mailto:lesleyann@pathtoshine.org) or call her at 678-279-4308.