

Andrews University

School of Education

REFLECTION / IMPROVEMENT PROJECT PAPER

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of the Requirements for the Course

EDAL 660: Planning & Operating Educational Facilities

Development

Professor

Duane Covrig, PhD

By

Nicole Benoit-Roy

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Introduction

Planning and Operating Educational Facilities! Scary term! At first sight, that is. My first encounter with this term was full of wonder. I know what each word means separately, but it's enough to raise someone's cortisol level when put together. However, thanks to Dr. Covrig and how he taught this class, he made it manageable and digestible, especially for a summer course. I've made many discoveries going through this class. I use the word 'discoveries' because some of what I've learned were forgotten principles that I have stopped using entirely and, therefore, forgotten about them. I have learned so much in this class that if I were to write about all of them, there would be no book in this world that could contain the information. With that said, I will reflect on three different topics that piqued my interest the most in the class and two improvement projects. First, I will reflect on week four's topic: Prudence and Safety. Next, I will reflect on week six's topic: Welcoming Places and Spaces. Then, I will reflect on week nine's topic: School Safety. Lastly, I will discuss the two improvement projects I engaged in this summer and provide visual evidence (see Appendix).

Prudence and Safety

This topic was on my high-interest list because it behooves me to always plan and consider my student's safety as an early childhood educator. During that week, I learned of God's omnipotent power to keep all his children safe. I am living proof because there have been many incidences in my life where, had it not been for His protection, I would not still be alive, such as a time during my childhood when I was choking on a dumpling. It was nighttime. There were people around me, but no one noticed. I sure needed heaven's Heimlich maneuver. On one occasion, one of my special needs students was choking while eating. Again, God came through. As educational leaders, we serve food within our facilities. Should we consider what we serve and the bite-size of what we serve? I think so for the safety of everyone within our facilities.

Another important lesson I learned was how traditional school designs (Pemberton, 2016) affect our students. The traditional school buildings, unfortunately, were not designed to accommodate a

student-centered learning environment. Instead, they were designed to accommodate a teacher-centered learning environment. According to Nair (2014), the way the traditional school buildings were designed, they cannot “keep up with the technology-driven skills demand of today’s labor market” (p. 5).

In addition, research indicates that using a student-centered learning model helps students acquire a deeper understanding of any subject (Nair, 2014). Traditional school design favors rote memorization instead of assisting the students in connecting with a lesson through hands-on experiences. Sadly, I was a victim of the rote memorization learning style during my early education years in my country. No one paid attention to how I learned, and I did not have the language to voice that rote memorization didn’t work for me; therefore, I couldn’t cope and didn’t thrive in school until I came to America. While rote memorization may work for some students, I know it doesn’t work for all. Facility leaders of traditional school buildings must be mindful of their student learning needs to make a positive difference in their lives. Technology advancements have made it possible for educational facility design to evolve. As a facility leader, I take notice.

Welcoming Places and Spaces

This topic on welcoming places and spaces was fascinating because of its relevance in my life as a teacher. In the spiritual application for this week’s topic, I learned how Solomon built a magnificent temple for the Lord. Under God’s instructions, the temple’s spaces were supposed to be welcoming and beautiful as it was to receive the presence of the Most High God, the One who created the heavens and the earth. Collaboration was crucial in accomplishing this task. King Solomon and King Hiram collaborated to achieve a temple of such splendor (1 Kings 5). As educational leaders, we have to collaborate with stakeholders and community leaders to create welcoming places and spaces in our facilities. I understand that, at times, involving others in our projects may cause friction between team members. However, building a team and getting the members to accept and share the vision is necessary for every leader. Though there may be some Judases among the team members who want to stunt the project, we are still not one-man islands. As a leader, I praise God for those difficult team members in Children’s Ministries

for they help to challenge and strengthen me. As in creating spaces, leaders have to make good first impressions in their behaviors.

This class made me realize that educational leaders should pay attention to making sure they make good first impressions starting at the main entrance of their establishments (Nair, 2014). When I attended high school and college, I never paid attention to whether the space and place were welcoming or not. I just entered the space; saw what I saw, and that was that. However, this class got me thinking about and comparing my educational spaces. My college's lobby was welcoming, whereas my high school's was not. And then, I thought about the space I create for my students in Children's Ministries. While in my head, I'm not thinking 'welcoming space,' but I arrange the space so that I automatically decide what I want the parents and the children to see first when they come in. There are many ways I like to create a welcoming space; however, my favorite is to first and foremost make sure the place is clean and tidy. In my opinion, receiving someone in a dirty place is the ultimate disrespect. First impressions matter! They determine whether an establishment will stay open for long or close soon after.

School Safety

The topic of school safety was a sensitive one for me. As an educator/parent, the issue of school safety can stir up some discomfort within. I was reminded of many school shootings (DOS, 2012; Politifact, 2015) that happened over the years. Events of which I did not want to be reminded. The spiritual application highlighted some unpleasant events in the bible, such as the story of David and his men in 1 Samuel 30:4, where they wept until they had no more strength to weep. In addition, the gospel of Matthew presents this account of an unfortunate event saying, "A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted, because they are no more" (Matthew 2:18, NKJV). The biblical account of those mourning scenes tells me that crimes and violence have been around for centuries, yet no one is ever immune to them. With all the shootings taking place in our schools, my advisor once told me that educational leaders are responsible for what happened in their school buildings, even in their absence. I must admit when he told me that, it shook me. Many

questions ran through my mind. I wondered whether being an educational leader is really what I want. I could not fathom being held accountable for something for which I was not even around. Then I realized if I'm not an educational leader, I'm going to be something else, and crime is everywhere. I may as well be what God has called me to be. Then again, I don't think I could go against God. Therefore, an educational leader I will be. Praise His name.

Thinking about the learning environment I use, I realized the church facility that houses the Children's Ministries Department is unsafe. We've had frequent occasions where strangers entered the building unnoticed. We have a security camera at the front door, but often, no one monitors the camera, which compromises the children's and staff's safety. Our security is also compromised for inside threats because of the eye-level windows, which are ungated, giving intruders easy access to the building. And once an intruder enters the building, there is not a safe place for members to hide. Some physical safety vulnerabilities are also present on the church grounds, such as a covered, dark stairway leading to the basement and a low climbable fence in the back of the building, attracting intruders. There is no safety in the building's infrastructure. Therefore, there is a need for some safety recommendations.

As a facility leader, my recommendations for making the place safer would be to delegate someone to monitor the camera from morning until church service is over; install bullet-proof windows (Godin, 2016) with iron gates; install bullet-proof inside and outside doors; put safety locks on all doors; and lastly, access for church visitors should be monitored and recorded. As educational leaders, our students' and staff's safety are of the utmost importance. Therefore, our building infrastructure must reflect it. Although the building's infrastructure doesn't guarantee us any security, as a leader, I ensure the children's safety by making sure they never leave Sabbath school with a stranger.

Improvement Projects

Cluttered Closet - Low Budget (\$100: low-cost but must have 4-8 hour labor need).

As director of the Children's Ministries Department at my church, I am responsible for making sure everything in the department runs smoothly, including protecting our supplies and furniture from

theft. We recently bought new chairs for Sabbath School. We hold Sabbath School classes in a multi-purpose room. Before this improvement project, we had no guarantee our furniture would still be there from one Sabbath to the next. While scouting the facility one Sabbath, I discovered an unused, cluttered closet with wooden shelves that could be used as a storage space for our furniture and other supplies if decluttered and cleaned up. I received approval from all responsible parties.

The size of the closet space is only 4 x 4, a total of 16 square feet. This decluttering project is considered a low-budget facility improvement assignment because it did not require much financing. The clean-up required bleach, soap, a sponge, a broom, and a mop. I estimated a budget of \$10 for these items. As for labor, it took about 2 hours to go shopping, declutter, and clean the space. I used another 2 hours to sort our supplies and put them on the shelves while leaving the floor space for our folding table and chairs. This project was completed in two days, two hours each day. It didn't require many workers; however, I did ask for assistance to remove a heavy suitcase left in the closet.

Classroom Renovation - High Budget: (above \$5000; with 5-day long labor need).

The church has been under renovations for many years now. Every so often, there is a new project underway. The look of our Children's Sabbath School classroom and security in the building has always been my concern as director of Children's Ministries. The room was in dire need of a facelift. It is a 230 sq. ft room. Though only 230 sq. ft., it is used for multiple Sabbath School classes simultaneously. It is often used to house food for the Community Service Department upon arrival during the week. And then be cleaned up afterward to prepare for Sabbath School. This situation was not ideal because there was always some residue of what occurred during the week in the room when we arrived on Sabbath. Additionally, the walls got scratched, and wall décor was often damaged through all the activities and moving about in the room. Before the renovation, the room was painted with multi-colors. During the renovation, I painted it only one color so I can use the children's work to add colors to the room.

A significant section of the ceiling was also damaged due to a persistent leak. The goal of this renovation was to improve the aesthetic look of the classroom and establish a sense of security in the building as well. The room needed painting to cover all the scratches and damages. We needed new

classroom doors with see-through glass to help with security issues we've been having in the building. Now that the new doors are installed, we can see who comes in from inside the classroom when people enter the building. Labor cost was estimated at \$1000 as church volunteers did the work. I estimated an additional budget of \$4500 for the purchase of three see-through glass doors, five cans of paint, one air conditioner, floor waxing materials, a small cabinet for storing teaching materials, a small Bible-story-print area rug, four kid-sized chairs, extra decorative, teaching, and sensory materials such as writing sand. I estimated a total budget of \$5500 to complete this project. I presented the proposal and got approval from the church committee during our monthly meeting on the 4th Sabbath of June 2021. By God's grace, everything went as planned. This project was completed by the last week of July 2021. This project took more than five days. However, I volunteered my time and put in the hours (20) I needed for this class.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I consider the lessons I learned from this class and the projects invaluable. I am no longer afraid of putting together this chain of words, Planning and Operating Educational Facilities. I am now more confident in tackling school facility issues relating to prudence and safety, welcoming places and spaces, and school safety. Having led the improvement projects required much time. However, it was time well spent for the learning I have acquired. For instance, I learned to collaborate with my church officers and wait for approval to complete the projects.

References

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Feedback-Grade (A): Nicole, Full log... great hard work on the hours. Nice work on the church and effective reflection on your learning in this course. Thanks for all you do for your church!!! May God continue to give you an eye for facilities and for beauty and order and cleanliness in his places: home, school, and church!! Duane

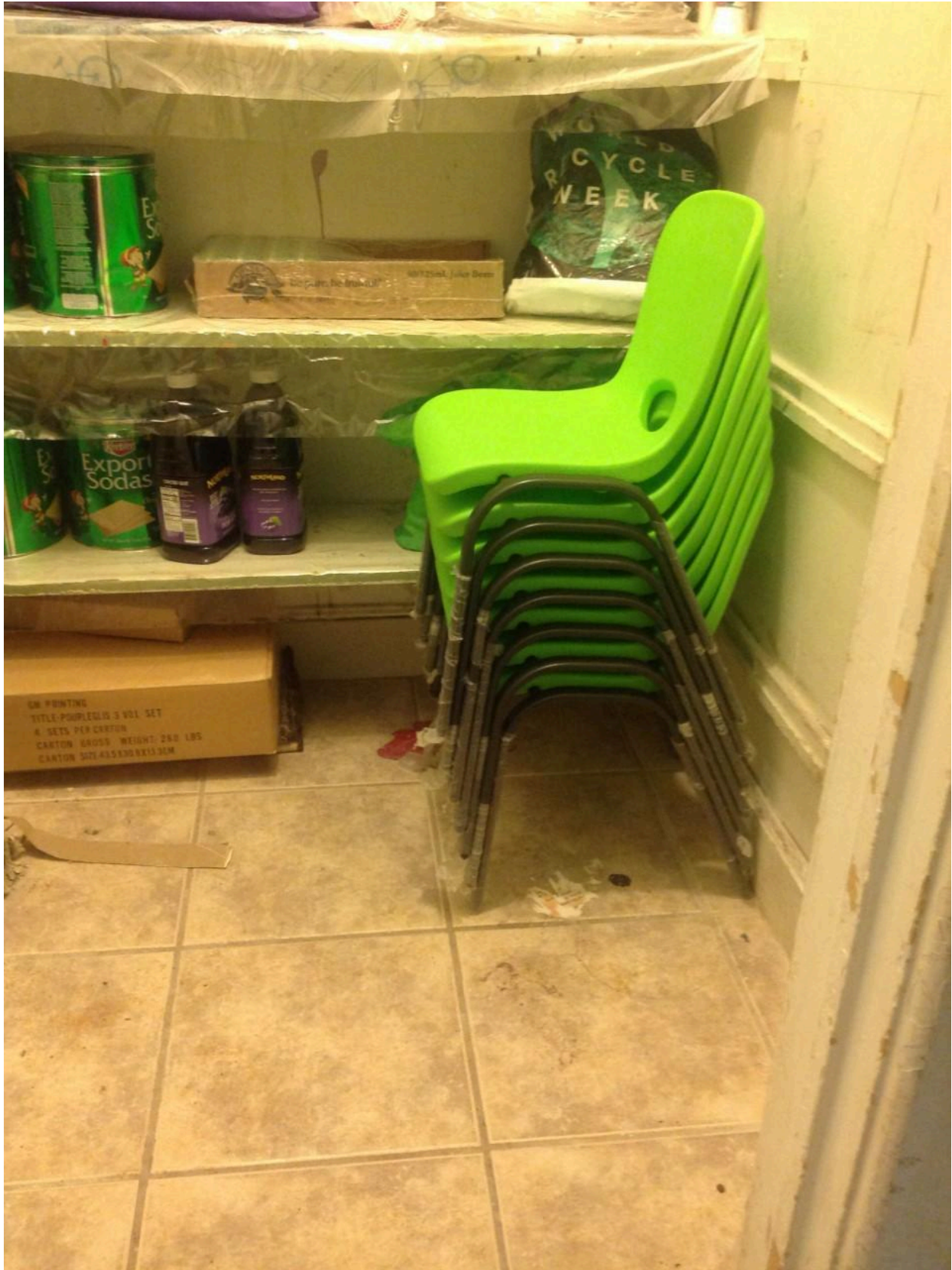
Appendix

Below are the Before (cluttered closet) and After pictures (decluttered closet) for the Low Budget project: (< \$100: low-cost but must have 4-8 hour labor need).









Below are the Before and After pictures for the High Budget project: (above \$5000; with 5-day long labor need).

Classroom's door with No see-through glass and multi-color painted walls. Below this picture, please find the improvement pictures.











