

Andrews University

School of Education

PUBLIC RELATIONS: COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS
REFLECTION PAPER AND ARTIFACTS

Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Course
LEAD 525 PR: Community Partnerships

Professor

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By

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Introduction

Having been through this Public Relations: Community Partnerships course, I have acquired many skills. Public relations skills are a “wide range of capabilities and proficiencies that typically fall under the category of communications and marketing” (Indeed, 2021). This paper reviews and reflects on my overall educational leadership work related to school community relations. I review EDAL Standard 4 using best practice statements from national standards and scholarly materials and present my experiences and learning in community relations leadership, a vital role for school administrators. First, in this paper, I discuss the Community Relations Expectations of School Leaders. Second, I present my LEAD 525 PR: Community Partnership Learning. Third, I share the Social Media Platforms I Use for building public relations and community partnerships and my learning from a 2-hour Social Media 101 course. Fourth, I talk about Church-School Relationships based on two lived experiences. Fifth, I review my Learning About My School Community: My Virtual Preschool Website Analytics. Finally, I end with a conclusion summarizing my community relations development.

Community Relations Expectations of School Leaders

A community relationship is important in schooling, and principals need to focus on this area, especially when working with families, and local groups like churches. According to Lathan (2022), “Effective school leaders build and sustain the reciprocal family and community partnerships and leverage those partnerships to cultivate inclusive, caring and culturally responsive school communities” (Section 2, para. 2). Among the many **traits of successful principals is their ability to build community networks through which they market their schools in the community.** Lathan (2022) states that it is essential to **build community networks so that school leaders can be visible, develop trust, and be transparent in their**

schools and community, as well as create a sense of shared purpose with students and their parents, staff, and community members.

LEAD 525 PR: Community Partnership Learning

This one course, LEAD 525 Public Relations: Community Partnerships, helped me develop an understanding of various areas of relationship-building principals need to attend to such as **Community-School Partnerships, which include Business partnerships, University partnerships, Service-learning partnerships, and School-linked Service Integration** (C. Garcia, personal communication, December 1, 2009). I particularly enjoyed having had the opportunity to customize my own learning in this class to fit my work with preschool and church families. This class has increased my community leadership experience. There were many topics of interest that I included on my tailored list for learning such as these weekly discussion topics: Social Media Platforms I Use, Church-School Relationships, and Learning About My School Community: My Virtual Preschool Website Analytics. I also engaged in many community-building activities and among them were: Using Social Media for God's Glory; What, When, and How to Eat; and Author Reading of Jesus Loves Us And Our Favorite Colors which I will reference as part of a church-school relationship activity.

Social Media Platforms I Use

In this unit, I was able to put into perspective all my social media accounts. I had to face the fact that I had too many, more than I needed. For instance, I have two LinkedIn accounts, three Facebook pages, three Facebook Groups, Facebook Messenger, Twitter, Twitch, Instagram, TikTok, Pinterest, and four YouTube channels. Most of my social media accounts are used for business purposes. Some of them were originally used for personal reasons (see Appendix A).

They are best used for business because I do not have a personal use for them. For instance, I use them for promotional purposes and to connect with clients. Some accounts such as Twitch I signed up for, but haven't had a chance to use them yet. My time on social media has not been consistent for fear of developing an addiction. Research has shown according to Morgan (2017) that bingeing on social media can lead to compulsive over-use which can take "us away from other things we also need to do, such as physical exercise, face-to-face conversation and reading for pleasure" (Section 2, para. 1). Even though social media can be useful **for promoting school programs and community interactions**, school leaders have too much responsibility as it is to be bingeing on those platforms. Through the Online Communication Spectrum shared by the professor, I learned that there are a plethora of communication tools on the internet to further my public relations development. I also learned from this 2-hour course, Social Media Course 101, about Frequency and Timing for posting on social media which will help with my bingeing tendency.

Church-School Relationships

According to McGlothlin (2017), "Partnerships between churches and schools are a natural progression toward meaningful community engagement and ultimately a glimpse into the kingdom of God." I recall two past church and school relationship experiences that did not, in my opinion, give a glimpse of the kingdom of God. I worked at a school that had an excellent church-school relationship as the pastor was also the principal. However, the school could not remain in operation due to financial struggles. Employees were getting aggressive as they discovered that their paychecks had no provision. I would have liked for the church to provide for the school's financial needs. In LEAD 525, I learned from a classmate that "financial reasons are always given as the reasons for closing schools. I think our schools are our churches' babies

and should therefore be protected from financial woes” (P. Campbell, personal communication, March 16, 2022). Frankly, the only connection I noticed between the church-school relationships was that every school program such as Christmas plays and graduation ceremonies was held at the church.

The other experience was at the church I now attend. They had a preschool center on site, but with zero church-school relationships. I often wondered, *What is this preschool doing in the community? Why aren't the leaders using it as an evangelistic outlet?* Their indifference sparked in me a desire to make a change for improvement at a spiritual community level. But I declined a leadership offer when I contemplated my previous experience. Instead of making an impact through a leadership position at the school, I chose to make an impact through my Children's Ministries director position at the church.

To rekindle the church and school relationship that was waning in our church community, I collaborated with my church pastor and invited an Adventist school principal from the community to our church. The purpose was to promote Adventist education to our church members in the hope of increasing student enrollment at that school. Furthermore, I advocated for our schools by encouraging the parents to enroll their children in Adventist schools as most of them enrolled their children in charter schools instead.

Through community reading activities, such as the Author Reading of *Jesus Loves Us And Our Favorite Colors* (see Appendix B), I also worked to connect churches and schools. As a representative of my church, I approached a low-income preschool in my church community and offered to engage the children in reading activities. The director expressed her appreciation for this initiative saying there were many community activities she would like her school to participate in but could not afford them. Fulgham (2014) states,

Every school in low-income communities has a plethora of needs, and churches will likely feel compelled to meet each of them. At the end of the day, I encourage churches to prioritize their support for programs and activities that help increase student achievement. . . . As congregations build relationships with the school leadership and faculty, continually ask about ways the church can support student learning. Ultimately we want to help close the academic achievement gap. (Section 6)

During story time, there is a greater opportunity for increasing student achievement as the children's minds are at work and taking in all the language they hear. They, likewise, take in the lessons all the characters learn (Marcin, 2020) while improving their listening skills. I have also donated books (see Appendix B) to low-income schools to help promote literacy development.

Learning About My School Community: My Virtual Preschool Website Analytics

For this weekly post, I set out to find the whereabouts of my virtual preschool website visitors. To facilitate this, I placed a software called RevolverMaps (see Appendix C) on the preschool website to keep track of visitors' locations in terms of countries and cities. Through this tool, I did not have access to specific neighborhoods as they would require zip codes. This tool did not provide such codes. The analytics revealed that most of my website visitors were from Brooklyn, the city in which I live. In reporting the statistics, I created a key to represent the countries and their cities from which came the most to least number of visitors. For instance, A. Brooklyn = 448; B. San Jose = 66; C. Los Angeles = 17; and from China came an unknown city with 28 visitors followed by Beijing = 12. My inquiry mind wanted to know more about those locations. Therefore, I came up with some questions to find out what was the likelihood that a visitor would sign up for my virtual programs. For instance, one of the questions I wanted answers to was how many families with children under 5 are in those cities. The research shows that 5.8% of the 19,835,913 population were from Brooklyn; 7.3% of 945,942 households from

San Jose; and 5.8% of 9,829,544 population from Los Angeles; and 1 out of 4 children per household in Beijing.

Conclusion

My public relations development includes Social media skills, Communication, Research, Time management, and Creativity. In this paper, I talked about Community Relations Expectations of School Leaders, my LEAD 525 PR: Community Partnership Learning, the Social Media Platforms I Use, Church-School Relationships, and Learning About My School Community: My Virtual Preschool Website Analytics. In Community Relations Expectations of School Leaders, I discussed the school leader's ability to build community networks and create a sense of shared purpose with community members. In LEAD 525 PR: Community Partnership Learning, I discussed the community leadership skills I have acquired. For instance, this class has helped to sharpen my understanding of various areas of relationship-building activities such as Community-School Partnerships to which a principal needs to pay attention. Furthermore, in Social Media Platforms I Use, I discussed my ability to leverage the power of social media to connect with the public even though I struggled with time management such as a tendency to binge on those platforms. In Church-School Relationships, I highlighted previous relationships I witnessed between churches and schools and how I advocated for SDA Christian education as a church leader by inviting a school leader to our church to promote Adventist education. In Learning About My School Community: My Virtual Preschool Website Analytics, I shared how I currently use a web-based tool called RevolverMaps to track my virtual preschool visitors' locations. In short, all my experiences in LEAD 525 have helped me in my public relations development. Finally, there are several areas in which I want to continue to grow such as in time management for a better and more productive experience on the social media platforms I use.

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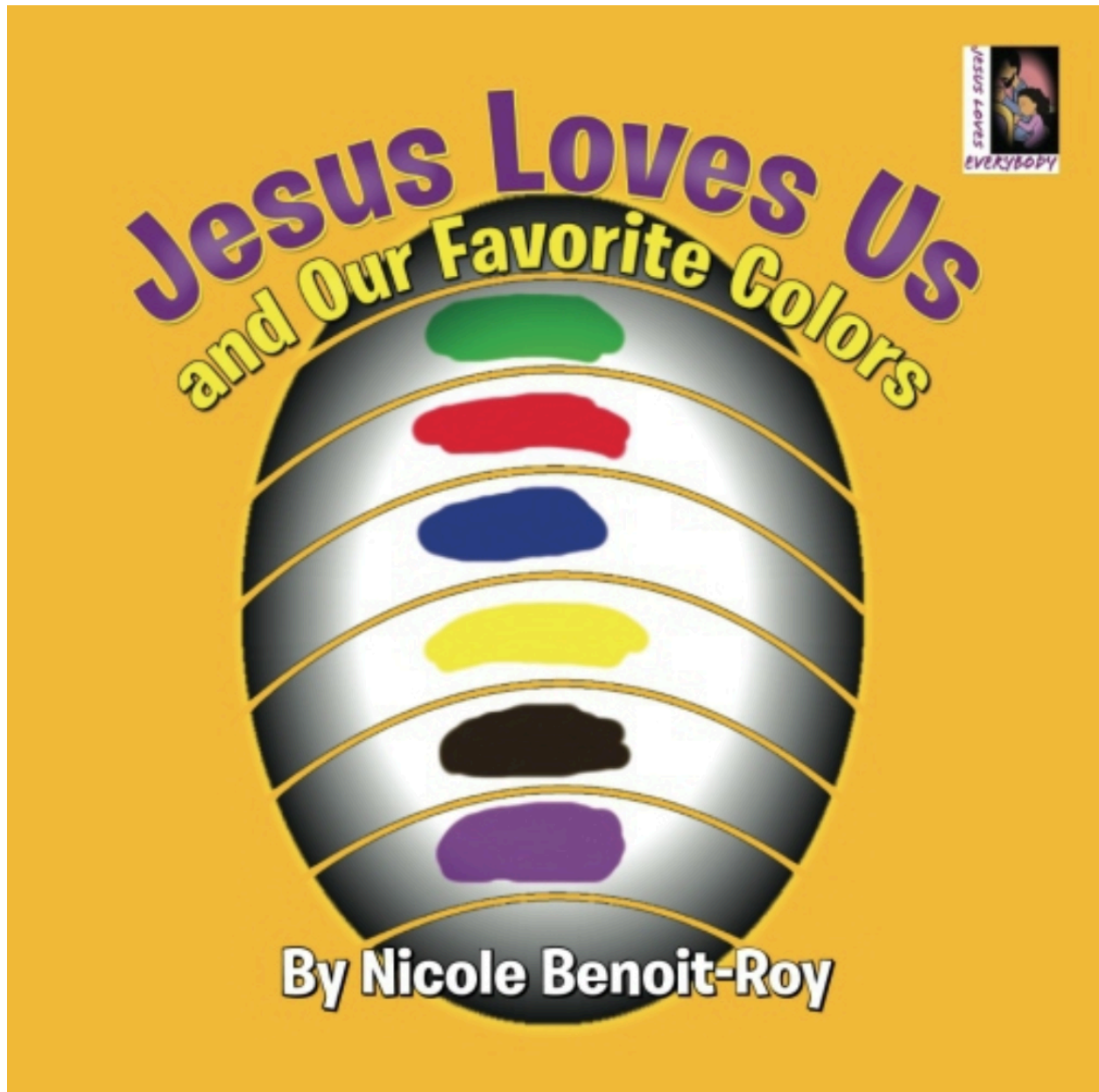
Appendix A

Facebook - Personal to Business Social Media Account

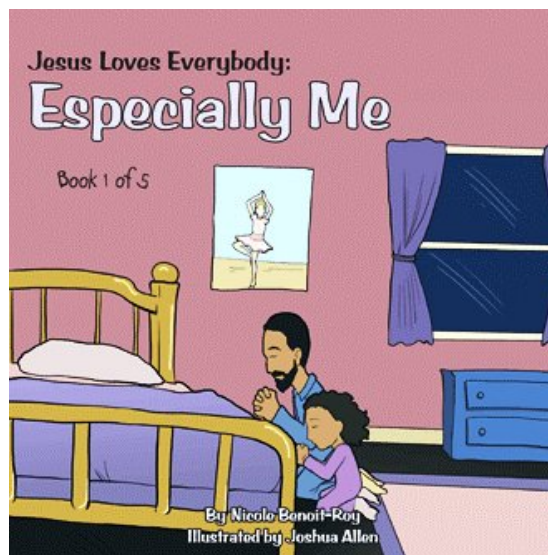


Appendix B

Book read to preschool children at a low-income school in the church community



Book donated to low-income school



Appendix C

RevolverMaps for Tracking Virtual Preschool Visitors' Locations

