


ELFISH ANTICS

ON SOCIAL MEDIA

A photograph of three people dressed as elves in green and red outfits with striped leggings, sitting on a yellow tractor. They are holding large Christmas trees. The tractor has two large round headlights. The background is a wooden wall with a chain-link fence.

**Pleasant Valley Primary
Uses “10 Days of Elfmas”
and “Bedtime Stories”
to Engage the Community**

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School, Battleground PS*

PRINCIPAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

Creating a Culture, Engaging Families and Communities

When I went through my master’s admin program, they forgot to cover how to dress up as an elf, make a fool of myself out in our community, and then post the evidence for 10 straight nights leading up to winter break for all to see.

So, you might be asking yourself right about now why on earth three competent school leaders would do this to themselves and why we’d allow someone to take up to 50 pictures in order to try and find 10 that are suitable to post on social media?

Thanks to an idea by our staff-led social media team this year, our assistant principal, our instructional coach and I found ourselves dressed up as elves and were “lost” in a variety of locations around our greater school community. Putting our shame aside, we went around to 10 different businesses within our community to take pictures which we later posted via social media. We “served” lunch at Burgerville, snuggled in a pet bed at a local pet store, used a froyo machine, drove a tractor at a local farm, drove Santa’s sleigh in a hot chocolate company’s storefront, and more.

10 DAYS OF ELFMAS

The 10 days leading up to our holiday break, we posted an elf picture taken at a different business within our community, many of which have supported our school in various ways over the years. After each picture

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was posted, families had to identify the location, go to the business, take a family selfie, and then reply using their picture on social media. We offered a commemorative ornament each day to the first family who posted their family selfie at the correct location, and then included all the other families who posted their picture in a final drawing at the end of the event. We felt this would be a fun way for our families to get out into our community, do something fun

as a family, and say thank you to the businesses by driving traffic through their doors.

At first, I was asking myself the same question because I do remember in my admin program being given stern lectures on the following topics — to think things through before making a decision, not to take on other people’s monkeys, and to remember that everything you do

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is watched, scrutinized, and used to judge you as a basis for how you are performing as a leader. So, to answer your question, after thinking through this idea when it was presented to me, the only option I felt we had was to move forward because in my short time as a building administrator, the one thing I am sure of, is that students, staff, and families love when we step out of our normal routine as building leaders, break through our comfort zone, and do something that makes others view us as real people. Fortunately for the three elves involved in this social media event, our primary students (K-4) loved seeing us in the various locations, poses, facial expressions, and situations that made us, in that moment, more than school

leaders. Students were able to see us as individuals who, just like them, have a silly side and enjoy being themselves!

Beyond this, in a strange roundabout way, this campaign was a way to encourage our students and staff to take risks and do something without concern for the outcome, but rather because of the potential of the outcome. This is something that is regularly encouraged at Pleasant Valley Primary and is even spoken within our school motto: Be Kind, Work Hard, and Show Courage. In order to show courage, you have to be willing to take risks and step outside of your comfort zone. When the PVP elves did this, we built a stronger sense of community both within our school walls as well as connecting with community stakeholders.

The intended purpose of this event was to do something over the course of 10 days that would encourage our families to follow our three social media platforms (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram). We wanted to grow the connection and engagement with our families. We started sharing out cool things happening around our school, which included work and experiences by students as well as the hard work and energy that staff put in each and every day! What came of our social media efforts was so much more.

BEDTIME STORIES

A second social media event our team implemented this year was an idea posed to them by Talea Jones, one of our third-grade teachers. We call it “Buddy the Beaver’s Bedtime Stories,” which we posted every Wednesday night via our school’s YouTube channel. Each week a staff member

BJ Rush (Instructional Coach), Craig Pearson (Principal), and Kara Kent (Assistant Principal) of Pleasant Valley Primary dress up as elves to engage the community on social media.



“ So far we have recorded stories in the school library’s rocking chair, our own homes with our own children tucked in, by living room fireplaces with our pets, and more.”

read their favorite bedtime story in their school-appropriate pajamas. To date, we recorded stories in the school library’s rocking chair, in our own homes with our own children tucked in, by living room fireplaces with our pets, and more.

By doing this, we let students into the lives of our many amazing staff members. Students get to see them not as their teacher or librarian, but rather as an individual who actually goes somewhere at the end of the day that doesn’t include the office, the staff room, the one and only faculty restroom, or the copy machine. I’m sure many of you have



Mrs. Brown, featured in this video, is one of our social media team members who creates and manages the bedtime stories for us.

had this experience: you see a student at the grocery store and they give you that look that says, “Wait, what are you doing at the grocery store? Shouldn’t you be at school?!”

Posting these bedtime stories allows us to break through that mindset and show students that we have homes, we have families, we even have a bed that we sleep in. We have pets, blankets, fireplaces, and other things similar to them in their lives

outside of their school day. Granted, we may not have Fortnite, Ninjago, or Minecraft, but you get the point! As crazy as this sounds, sharing a bedtime story with our students is honest and sincere and yet another way to connect with all 523 students we interact with every single day. When students can connect to us as individuals, we can strengthen those relationships and leverage them at school.

Our social media team (second-grade teacher Jessica Brown and third-grade teacher Camille Ingram) feels that sharing these stories each week promotes reading at home. Families can simply play the video and watch it together.

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Individual students can feel cared for by having a bedtime story read to them by a staff member, as many of our students don't have someone read stories to them at home. This unique experience is also a way to promote literacy. Hearing a fluent reader share a story is a great way for students to learn how to incorporate inflection and voice in their own reading.

TAKE A CHANCE

As the principal at Pleasant Valley Primary, I consider myself blessed to be part of a caring, creative, and supportive group of staff that takes risks and pushes each one of us beyond what is comfortable in order to better serve students. I also enjoy learning each and every day how to best engage with our students, families, and community. Face-to-face engagement (open house, conferences, family nights) is critical, but online engagement can be equally important in order to help build culture and community as a school while sharing the story of who we are at Pleasant Valley Primary. This, the



social media engagement, is what I often ignored and honestly didn't give a chance until I got out of my own way and allowed staff to take it on. I would encourage you, as a building leader, to take risks, break through your comfort zone, and watch the

amazing connections that can take shape through this kind of activity. In the end, social media engagement will better serve your students, staff, and families to all help make your school a more enriching community. ■



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Link available on our Facebook page

School web page:
pvp.battlegroundps.org