

Use your Christmas program to build community

Creating connections through an existing event

“We have a spectacular Christmas program weekend here at Orangevale... I love trying to make positive connections.”

Brad Davis, Principal
Orangevale SDA School

We are learning from exit interviews and school surveys that families who feel positively connected to the community of a school, whether they are Adventists or not, are more likely to continue sending their children to that school. Community is a rare commodity in American life today. Our schools usually have it in abundance--so being intentional about increasing and improving it is another strategy for tying families to your school.

Here is what Brad and Orangevale did last year for their Christmas programs.

Friday evening

- **Soup supper** for all (5:45 pm) — I love that this brings together preschool and elementary school parents. Creating connections between preschool parents and others is another way to improve retention from preschool into your grade school.
- **Preschool Christmas program** (6:15 pm) — Notice this is first and separate so parents of preschoolers can leave to get their kids to bed early.
- **Elementary (K-8) Christmas program** (7 pm) — This is late enough that friends and family members who don't choose to come to the dinner can join for this program.
- **Family reception** in the school gym next door (Immediately after the program) — Brad comments that the gym was well-decorated and over the whole weekend they really worked for a great atmosphere.

Sabbath morning

- **Church performance** (11 am) — Grades 5-8 repeated their performance for the church service. Of course, keeping your students and your school's achievements in the minds of your constituents is always a good thing.

Sabbath afternoon

- **Staff gathering** (lunch and the afternoon) — The staff gathered for lunch at one of their homes, went for a hike afterward together with their children, and ended the afternoon/evening singing carols around the piano.

Delegating:

Volunteers can plan the meal, do the decorating, write the newsletter announcements and invitations, etc. You will want to ensure that the programs are representative and fit in their time slot.

Credits:

Thank you to Brad Davis and his team at Orangevale for creating a weekend full of community and for sharing it with us.

Binder tab: November

School size: All

Marketing process step:

- 1) Who are we?
- 2) What do families want?
- 3) What needs to change?
- 4) How do we tell our community?
- 5) How do we track results?