

School Public Relations
Education 6307

Course Syllabus

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Course Description:

A course designed to acquaint the school administrator and the teacher with the techniques of dealing with the public in such a way as to give it an intelligent understanding of the aims, the scope, the achievements and the problems of an educational program.

Class Sessions:

Spring Session 2015, Wednesday 6:00-8:45, Del Rio 104

Text:

Kowalski, T. J. (2010). *Public relations in schools* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson. [This text is economically available on coursesmart.com.]

Crilley, J. (2003). *Free publicity: A TV reporter shares the secrets of getting covered on the news*. Dallas, TX: Brown Books.

McEvoy, A. W. (1992). *When disaster strikes*. Holmes Beach, FL, Learning Publications.

Course Calendar:

Jan 21	Introduction/ "Opportunity"; web outreach
Jan 28	<i>Free Publicity</i> ; PSA's
Feb 4	ΦΔΚ survey; Chaps. 1, 2, & 11 [SPR & Community]
Feb 11	Chaps. 6 & 7 [Programs]; Bring survey
Feb 18	Survey due ; Chap. 3 [Legal Aspects]; assign GP#1
Feb 25	Chap. 4 [School Reform] & Chap. 5 [Comm.]
Mar 4	Group PR project #1
Mar 11	Mid-term exam
Mar 25	<i>When Disaster Strikes</i> ; Chap. 13 [Crisis Planning]; assign GP#2
Apr 1	Chap. 8 [Technology]
Apr 8	Group PR project #2
Apr 15	District Policy
Apr 22	Chap. 12 [Bonds]; assign GP#3
Apr 29	News project due ; Faculty scenarios
May 6	Group PR project #3 ; Chap 10 [Media]
May 13	Final exam

Course Requirements:

Regular attendance and participation is required	10	Grade Scale
Public interest inventory	10	A – 92-100
Group public relations plans (3)	45	B – 82-91
Mid-term	10	C – 70-81
Analyze news items	10	
Final exam	10	
Faculty scenarios	5	

Student Expectations:

- The student will demonstrate an understanding of school public relations and develop a clear perspective of the impact of school public relations on the support for schools.
- The student will develop a plan for obtaining community/citizen input on perceptions of needs and performance of the local schools.
- The student will examine and critically evaluate various avenues of communicating with the public, using accepted principles of effective public relations.
- The student will prepare a public relations plan, complete with strategies and sample exhibits, for making significant improvement in selected areas of concern revealed by a recent community survey.

Assignments:

Attendance and participation: All students are expected to attend class regularly and be on time. Because this is a graduate course, expectations for participation are heightened. The value of this program resides both in the shared discourse, lecture, and networking of class members. **If you must miss a class period, prepare a 2 page, single-spaced reflection covering the topic for the evening. Phones:** Please let everyone know you are attending class during this time each week, turn off your phones, and give yourself the freedom to address your full attention to this course.

Exams: There will be a mid-term and final exam synthesizing the learning from this course. Guidelines will be given at an appropriate time before the exams.

Analyze news items: Select **one** daily newspaper from a large **Texan** metropolitan area (*San Antonio Express-News, Houston Chronicle, Dallas Morning News, etc.*). Clip all the articles concerning education (except sporting reports) and the public schools. Use a minimum of 21 issues for this project. Internet newspaper sources from these issues are acceptable. Group the articles according to specific topics (e.g. discipline, finance, accountability, curriculum) and organize into a scrapbook/notebook (an electronic scrapbook is acceptable). Write a summary of the articles within each topic area, including possible political leanings of the newspaper. Most large newspapers devote a daily/weekly section to education; identify the primary education writer(s) and their style/leanings. **Additionally:** Repeat the previous assignment for a local newspaper which covers local school districts; include the same 21 days of the local paper. Exclude sporting event news. *The time frame for the articles should be the span of this Spring semester.* Please note the date of each article. This assignment is due **April 29**.

Public interest inventory: Students will develop a survey/questionnaire to measure public opinion in the local community for a school district. After development, the student will pilot the survey on at least 5 individuals to ascertain usefulness (making certain subjects know this is an unofficial survey). Topics should include: areas of perceived needed improvement; perception of performance of school/district; sources of community school information; greatest priorities/problems facing the school; public willingness to financially support changes/improvements in schools. Bring copies for each student on **February 11**; revisions will be due **February 18**. Refer to the Phi Delta Kappa “Public Attitudes Toward the Public Schools” survey for a helpful example. A grading rubric will be provided.

Group PR projects: These group presentations will be conceived, completed, and presented in class. They will cover topics necessary to school and district life.

No person shall be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any program or activity sponsored by Sul Ross State University on any basis prohibited by applicable law, including, but not limited to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, or disability.

Rubric for Survey Project

1. Can the questionnaire be easily completed in fewer than ten minutes?
2. Are the numbers of items to which the respondent must reply reasonable?
3. Is the text of the questionnaire uncrowded, legible, and easy to read?
4. Is the wording and terminology used in the questionnaire in plain everyday language rather than “educationalese”?
5. Does the respondent have a place to record or check an answer?
6. Are all the possible answers (including “other”) listed at the end of each question to make it easy to tabulate results?
7. Are the items unambiguous, clear, and easy to interpret?
8. Is there a brief introduction to the survey spelling out its purpose and who is sponsoring the survey?
9. Are the questions non-threatening?
10. Are there printed instructions telling the respondent how to complete the survey?
11. Are there demographic questions to assist in obtaining a representative sample?
12. Is there a final open-ended opportunity for respondents to add anything? To get unanticipated information?
13. Is there a note of thanks for taking the time and trouble to complete the survey?
14. Is the survey free of any leading questions that force a particular answer?
15. Do the items adequately survey areas of improvement desired by the public?
16. Do the items adequately survey the public’s evaluation of the performance of the local schools?
17. Do the items adequately ask where the respondent gets information about education and the schools?
18. Does the survey get the public’s perception of the greatest priorities and problems facing the schools?
19. Does the survey get the public’s willingness to support new programs or projects?
20. Is the type font a size and style that is easily read?