ABSTRACT

Joshua D. Locklear, USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS IN A LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT (Under the direction of Dr. William Rouse, Jr.). Department of Educational Leadership, March 2019.

This study examines the impact of social media use as a communication tool within a local school district. Surveys were designed to gauge the effectiveness of communication efforts between district administrators, school administrators, and stakeholders, as well identify the forms of communication that each of the groups prefer. There was a total of 241 participants who completed the surveys, which were administered in three phases. The results were analyzed and used to plan a professional development session for district leaders in which they received training on various social media channels and they were challenged to begin implementing them in their communication with faculty, staff, parents, and community members. The results indicate that transparency between schools and stakeholders positively impacts public perception of local schools, and therefore the school district. It is recommended that district administrators create and implement a comprehensive communication plan, which includes a policy to assist employees in appropriate use of social media.

USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION

WITH STAKEHOLDERS IN A LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

A Dissertation

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by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the students within the Public Schools of Robeson. As a self-proclaimed lifelong learner, I have consistently searched for strategies, techniques, and tools that can potentially increase the learning capacity of the students within the Public Schools of Robeson County. Along the way, I have experienced failures, successes, accomplishments, setbacks, disappointments, and victories. It is my goal to ensure that each child receives a quality education that adequately prepares them for college and careers upon their graduation from high school. I firmly believe that our students can have the ability to compete with students from other districts, regions, states, and countries.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible without the individuals who have inspired, motivated, and believed in me during my career in education.

First, I would like to thank my wife, Amber, whom I dearly love. During the time spent working toward completion of this dissertation, she never once complained about the long hours I spent reading other studies and writing this one. In fact, she encouraged me to apply for the leadership program at East Carolina University and always ensured me that I could and would be a successful doctoral candidate. There were many times in which Amber had to attend events by herself, yet she and always understood. Her support throughout this process has been relentless and unwavering. She has been an outstanding wife as well as an excellent mother to our children, Alyssa and Joshua II.

My parents, Kim and Rhonda Locklear, have been an inspiration to me throughout my life. They have always encouraged and challenged me to be a model and responsible citizen. I am extremely grateful for the values they instilled in me as a young child growing up in a small community. Additionally, my sister and niece, Beth and Brooklyn Locklear, have taught me throughout the years that life is about learning, living, and loving.

My career in education began as a science teacher at Purnell Swett High, under the direction of Mr. Antonio Wilkins, who was the principal at that time. I am grateful that he was willing to take a chance on me, as a lateral entry teacher, and without his guidance and support, I would not have made it this far. He has continued to challenge and encourage me during my transformation from the classroom to administration and I am very grateful for the friendship we have formed.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In today's public school settings, principals are expected to be much more than managers. They must be masters of collaboration, teamwork, and instructional leadership (Nettles & Harrington, 2007). Whitaker (2003) describes principals as the tone-setters: "Effective principals understand they are the filters for the day-to-day reality of school. Whether we are aware of it or not, our behaviors set the tone" (Whitaker, 2003, p. 5). School leaders must be willing to adapt to an ever-changing society in order to meet the ever-changing expectations. It is necessary they commit to becoming the change agent and provide the example for others to follow. Johnson (2010) reminds leaders they must visualize success on a daily basis. Black and Gregerson (2003) proclaim that leaders must be able to anticipate change by recognizing the signs that show change on the horizon. The Every Child Succeeds Act (formerly known as No Child Left Behind) and the Race to the Top initiative have plagued public education with the perception that schools in America are failing (Lynch, 2014). These federal mandates have assisted in the requirements of increased accountability from federal and state teacher evaluation initiatives, aided in the rationale for the growing number of charter and private schools, and helped pave the way for parents exercising their right to proclaim their option for school of choice. Now is the time for administrators to provide clear, consistent, and timely communications.

Communication with stakeholders is vital to creating trustworthy relationships between school districts and stakeholders. Managing communication effectively is a key leadership skill that can be used to assist in establishing transparency, identifying gaps, managing change, solving problems, and strengthening working relationships. The lack of communication, or ineffective communication, can lead to poor perceptions of public education as well as poor

educational leadership. According to Hall (2006), there are ten key factors to an effective communication campaign:

1. Identify who your key audiences are – both internal and external.

2. Use multiple mediums to deliver the messages.

3. Communicate on a consistent and predictable basis.

4. Communicate at the level and in the manner they will understand (Put your pride and educational-eze away).

5. Find powerful images to reinforce your key messages – pictures really are worth a 1,000 words.

6. Students are powerful components in delivering your message when used appropriately.

7. Develop a catch phrase that captures the mind and heart and then use it in all communication to help instantly identify your department.

8. Focus more on the "why this is helping instruction and students" and less on the technology.

9. Skew the balance to stories (the human side of how it is making a difference) and less news (telling them about progress the department or district is making).

10. Be sure to keep your stakeholders aware of where you are going next. You want them to own the vision and be excited about it. (p. 20)

Moran (2016) encourages educators to create a routine of communicating with parents in order to anticipate concerns before they arise.

Social media is a growing communication tool that more people are using to connect with one another about topics that are of interest to them (King, 2015). The 21st century parent is

communicating through cellular phones and social media. According to Greene-Clemmons and Flood (2013), fewer and fewer parents are communicating with teachers by sending notes. In today's society, district and school administrators are faced with public expectations that insist they provide real-time information using digital means (Tienhaara, 2016). Previous research has concluded that social media can be an effective tool for increasing the engagement and participation of communities while offering the opportunity for instantaneous communication that can be shared through multiple facets, erase language barriers, and reach a variety of stakeholders regardless of their socioeconomic status (Flemming, 2012; McLeod & Richardson, 2013; Poterfield & Carnes, 2012). Clark (2012) of *Forbes Magazine* stated, "the school districts that will thrive will be the one using social media to engage their community, and aggressively enhance and protect their reputation" (para. 5).

Public education is constantly under the microscope and has been so for some time (Hampton, 2016). According to DuFour (2015), citizens have heard since 1983 that America's public schools are terrible. Many critics and opponents of public education wait for opportunities to scrutinize any negative aspect that is portrayed and it is fundamental that school systems begin to create positive press for themselves in an effort to promote their schools (Carr, 2011c). Cox (2012) urges school leaders to incorporate social media tools into their communication efforts to proactively participate in shaping their public image by sharing accomplishments and success stories on a frequent basis and in a convenient manner. In a study conducted by Cox and McLeod (2014), superintendents expressed that social media outlets allow districts to control their image. Clark (2012) stated:

> Given so much negative media about public education, schools can no longer leave public relations to chance. Social media allows schools to direct their followers to newspapers and TV segments featuring positive information. School districts can also use

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social media to highlight the hard work of their students and staff, and their school district's accomplishments. (para. 4)

Commitment to changing the public opinion includes the willingness to work collaboratively while developing open relationships which are inviting and respectful with the diverse cultures that are represented. Sergiovanni (2009) explains that connections within a system are everything and that the unity of parents, teachers, students, and communities for a common cause is essential in building relationships that could determine the quality of schools. In order to begin changing the image of a system, a partnership must be created between individual schools and the communities they represent. In *The Ethics of School Administration* (Strike, Haller, & Soltis, 2005), the concept of schools becoming a community is fundamental in the culture of a school. Sinek (2009) explains a possible reason for the successfulness of the human race:

> We've succeeded as a species because of our ability to form cultures. Cultures are groups of people who come together around a common set of values and beliefs. When we share values and beliefs with others, we form trust. Trust of others allows us to rely on others to help protect our children and ensure our personal survival. (p. 88)

In order to create communities, we must begin to form strong bonds with the families that we serve. Parents need to know that their children are in a safe environment, with adults that truly care for them and have their best interest in mind when making decisions. Just as it is important to receive buy-in from parents, we must also appeal to the students. Moran (2016) insists that parents and students must feel the sense of community when they walk through the doors and they need to be welcomed like family by teachers and other staff members.

Statement of the Problem

Although standardized tests are a hot topic, there are numerous reports throughout the United States concerning other facets of public schools. Examples include students being bullied,

teachers being harassed, employees mishandling funds, and grades of athletes being changed. An appropriate, concise, timely, and transparent response of a school district, or lack thereof, can be the difference in receiving modest or mountainous negative attention. Although previous studies have focused on utilizing specific social media tools (Engebritson, 2010; Hew, 2009; Stock, 2009), little research exists that studies the impact of schools using social media to communicate with stakeholders in order to generate an increase in public perception by becoming possessors of their press.

In order to increase parental involvement within the Public Schools of Robeson County (PSRC), leaders must convey the vision for students and the tools that are required to reach the goals that have been purposely set. According to the PSRC website, the mission is to educate all students by building a foundation for learning in an ever-changing global society. In order to truly be devoted to providing each student with a quality education and altering the negative public perception that has historically been received, stakeholders must be empowered and allowed to assist in educating all students within the district. It is crucial that leaders emphasize the importance of developing trust and building and nurturing transparent relationships with students' parents. Randy Sprick (2009) proposes that educators must be proactive in initiating ongoing communication with families. Without efficient and effective communication, attempts to increase buy-in from the citizens of Robeson County will be in vain. Therefore, it is paramount that leaders make a concerted effort to broaden communication strategies in order to impact a greater majority of the diverse population.

Significance of the Study

Parents have a plethora of options when it comes to educating their children in the 21st century. As explained by Collins and Haverson (2010), "people around the world are taking their

education out of school and into homes, libraries, Internet cafes and workplaces where they can decide what they want to learn, when they want to learn and how they want to learn it" (p. 18). With the growing number of charter schools, private schools, virtual schools, and parents opting to home school their children, public education has experienced a decrease in state and federal funding. Public Schools First (2017), reported that as of January 2017, there were 168 charter schools in the state of North Carolina serving six percent of the student population, compared to the 34 original charter schools that were opened in the 1997-1998 school year. Private schools have increased in the number of schools and students as well. NC Administration (2017) reported that there were 742 private schools in the 2015-2016 school year that served 97,721 students compared to 166 schools in 1961-1962 that served 17,431 students. The agency also reported that the number of North Carolina students who are being home schooled has increased by nearly 125,000 students since it first began almost thirty years ago. North Carolina Virtual Public School (2017) managed a student enrollment of 58,000 students during the 2016-2017 school year.

<div align="center">**Demographic Profile**</div>

Robeson County is the twenty-second largest county in the state of North Carolina by population and its 951 square miles rank it as the largest county in the state by land area. It borders Bladen, Columbus, Cumberland, Hoke, and Scotland Counties and is home to the Lumbee Tribe, the largest Native American Tribe east of the Mississippi River. The University of North Carolina (UNCP) and Robeson Community College (RCC) are both located in Robeson County and provide higher education opportunities to Robesonians and citizens outside the county. The diversity of Robeson County is unique as several ethnicities make their home in this county that borders South Carolina. During the 2010 census, 38.02% of the residents were

Native American, 32.80% were Caucasian, 25.11% were African American, and 4.86% were Hispanic or Latino (Wikipedia, 2019). Although an influx of Hispanics has occurred within the past ten year, Native Americans are the predominant race in the county. Therefore, English is the primary language spoken, with Spanish being spoken by 8.1% of the residents. According to the most recent census, 51.3% of the residents in the county are females.

The Public Schools of Robeson County is one of the largest public school systems in the state of North Carolina. According to PSRC (2017), there are over 24,000 students enrolled in the 40 schools the comprise the rural district. The system currently employs 2,100 certified staff, which includes administrators, counselors, and teachers. An additional 1,100 classified employees engage in helping to educate our students within our school system. According to the Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, 29% of Robeson County residents live in poverty (United States Census Bureau, 2017). The students of Robeson County receive free lunch and breakfast daily. Based on the low socio-economics of the county, the district was awarded the National School Lunch Program grant, which is a federally assisted meal program that provides low-cost/ free lunch to children each day.

In March, 2018, Interim Superintendent, and former Assistant Superintendent of Administration and Auxiliary Services Dr. Shanita Wooten, was extended a three-year contract by members of the Public Schools of Robeson County School Board. With a student population of roughly 24,000, PSRC is dedicated to providing students with the foundational skills needed for higher education and the workplace upon graduation. As a former student, teacher, and school administrator, Dr. Wooten stresses the importance of schools working in conjunction with the communities they serve in order to have a greater impact on the student population (personal communication, September 13, 2017). According to the PSRC website, some of the goals that

have been established by Superintendent Wooten and other lead administrators include maintaining positive working relationships with all groups, involving people appropriately in the decision-making process, and engaging parents and communities in helping deliver a quality education.

Successful graduates are ones who are capable of competing with individuals from other school systems, states, and countries in post-secondary education settings and employment settings. In order for PSRC to progress toward producing students who are prepared to enter a global society, educators must begin to enlist the assistance of community members, local business leaders, parents, and other resourceful stakeholders who can contribute to the advancement of all students in an ambitious society.

Study Questions

The perceptions of district leaders, school administrators, faculty and staff, parents, and community members were researched in order to determine the effectiveness of social media in communicating with stakeholders and increasing public opinion. The following research questions guided this study:

1. Which social media outlets are district leaders currently using (Superintendent, Assistant Superintendents, Board Members, Public Relations Officer, Curriculum Supervisors)?

2. Which social media outlets are school administrators currently using (Principals, Assistant Principals, Webmasters)?

3. What type of information do district leaders communicate with their stakeholders through social media outlets?

4. What type of information do school administrators communicate with their stakeholders through social media outlets?

5. What forms of communication do stakeholders find most useful?

6. Does providing instantaneous information via social media have an impact on public opinion?

Overview of the Study

This problem of practice study examined the use of social media outlets by Public Schools of Robeson County district leaders and school administrators. Additionally, the effectiveness of using social media as a communication tool to improve the public perception of the local educational agency was analyzed. Chapter 2 provides a thorough review of literature related to the importance of communication, the effectiveness of traditional communication methods, effective use of social media by organizations, and a study of the most popular social media sites. Chapter 3 details the data collection methods for this study and outlines the demographics of the local school system. Chapters 4 and 5 reveal the findings from the study and provide recommendations for future research related to increasing the public perception of a local school system through the use of social media.

Definition of Terms

Communication refers to the process of exchanging information between individuals in oral or written forms through available methods (Nwogbaga, Nwankwo, & Onwa, 2015).

District leaders refer to the people who are responsible for all aspects of the local education agency. These people include members of the Board of Education, the superintendent, assistant superintendents, and all others who serve in lead roles at the district level.

Public perception is the opinion of the public that is formed based on the information that is readily available or withheld from them.

School administrators refer to school principals and assistant principals who have been designated by the superintendent to be responsible for a specific school.

School culture is the sustained quality of a school environment that is observed by its stakeholders and impacts their experiences, while being based on the perceptions that are conveyed in the school (Hoy & Miskel, 2007).

Social media are Web-based technologies used to transform one-way communication into an interactive online dialog (Dixon, 2012).

Stakeholders refer to a vast network of individuals who have a vested interest in a particular school or school system (Hollenczer & Schneider, 2006).

Transparency is the lack of hidden agendas coupled with the availability and openness of information used for collaboration, cooperation, and communication purposes (Farrell, 2016).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

As social media becomes more of a mainstream educational tool, relevant studies can be used to serve as a guide. Griffin (2014) stated, "Schools are at a critical crossroad in which changes and adaptations must be made in order to remain relevant" (p. 13). The literature on the use of social media in the public education setting is growing exponentially as researchers continue to investigate the effectiveness of using social media as a communication tool with stakeholders. This chapter reviews the literature as it relates to the impact of public perception and school culture, legislation concerning parental involvement, communication and relationship benefits, and social media studies and implementations across America.

Public Perception and School Culture

Local schools are subject to more satisfactory perceptions by the public compared to the education quality on a national level, which demonstrates the importance of effective communication. Creating positive public relations are essential to the survival of public entities. According to a poll conducted in 2016, only 30% of Americans have "a great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in their child's public education, which was only 36% when the survey was conducted in 2006 (Abrams, 2017). The 50th Annual PDK Poll of the Public's Attitude Toward the Public Schools (2018) reported the following, "Fifty-five percent of adults say today's students are receiving a worse education than they did when they were students. That's the most negative result on this question (by 5points) in the six times the PDK poll has asked it since 1973" (p.17). However, participants in the poll indicated that current students are receiving a better education in areas such as "college preparation, encouraging critical thinking, and providing a good education for all students" (p.4). As the perception of public education continues to decline, it is important for district leaders and school administrators to resemble

businesses and market their schools, while committing to taking ownership of the responsibility of introducing and implementing positive changes. Five ways that a school district can gain a negative public perception are (a) poor academic performance, (b) board members with their own agenda, (c) well connected vocal stakeholders, (d) leaders' fear of media, and (e) not gaining public input on controversial issues (Carr, 2009). The lack of communication or ineffective communication can lead to poor perceptions of public education as well.

Leaders are expected to be the key force in introducing positive changes, stressing the importance of the change, and assisting in shaping or reshaping the culture (Ediger, 1997). The actions, behaviors, and responses of leaders have an effect on everyone around them. In order to bring about change and the desired outcomes, they must receive buy-in from stakeholders by building trust through transparency in a society that can navigate the world through the tip of their figures. As explained by Mazza (2013), "by making public what would otherwise be private, social media tools have knocked down previously existing walls between home and school, allowing the culture of the school to become transparent to anyone with an Internet connection" (p. 85). According to Carr (2007), "at the core, transparency is as much about an organization's values and culture as it is about open meeting laws, cable-casting school board meetings, making public records easy to get or packing websites with information" (p. 44). Hampton (2016) suggests that effectively communicating with stakeholders can improve the public perception of an educational system.

Typically, parents' perceptions of the education of their children changes when they are specifically invited and welcomed to participate in school-related activities and support student learning and success (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005). In an article in *Education Update* (Varlas, 2008), Bill Bushaw, former

executive director of Phi Delta Kappa International and current executive director of the National Assessment Governing Board, explains public perception of schools tends to be higher if they have a positive relationship with the school. In other words, "People like the schools they know", says Mr. Bushaw. Furthermore, Ezarik (2002) explained that parents and community members expect to be informed and involved.

School leadership is considered to be a determining factor in the livelihood of school culture, and school culture is a hot topic in education as it is essential to the success or failure of a school (Shouppe & Pate, 2010). Effectively relaying the positive aspects of their schools can prove to be beneficial in shaping or redefining the culture. Consider the following statement from Whitaker (2012) concerning the importance of culture and change:

> A current watchword in education is "school culture", which is the collective beliefs and values that influence policies and practices within a school. Many experts regard the school culture as the driving force behind everything else. If a school's ingrained culture resists improvement, many people cannot see ways to overcome this barrier and move forward. (p. 57)

The 2016 National Education Technology Plan calls for public school leaders to create a culture and conditions for innovation and change in which all members of the community have a vested interested in the shared vision (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Technology, 2015).

Legislation and Parental Involvement

President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) into law in 1965 because he believed that as a nation, the goal should be that students are provided with a full educational opportunity (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). ESEA included the following section regarding parental involvement (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2004):

(d) SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES FOR HIGH STUDENT ACADEMIC
ACHEIVEMENT. As a component of the school-level parental involvement policy
developed under subsection (b), each school served under this part shall jointly develop
with parents for all children served under this part a school-parent compact that outlines
how parents, the entire school staff, and students will share the responsibility for
improved student academic achievement and the means by which the school and parents
will build and develop a partnership to help children achieve the State's high standards.
(Section 1118, p. 2)

ESEA was reauthorized in 2002 as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. The provisions of

NCLB mandated that school district personnel maintain constant communication with all parents

and families, engage them in activities that encourage student involvement, and establish special

programs with parental involvement as a key objective to close the achievement gap (Sadovnik,

O'Day, Bohrnstedt, & Borman, 2013).

In 2005, the North Carolina State Board of Education adopted the Parent/Involvement

Policy in an effort to align with state and federal law concerning parent leadership (Public

Schools of North Carolina, n.d.). This act requires local school districts to establish methods that

enhance parental involvement in order to positively impact the needs of students. The Public

Schools of North Carolina identified the following in a parent involvement guide as essential

elements of parental involvement that should be promoted:

- Communication. Facilitate regular, two-way, and meaningful communication
  between home and school. (Communication should be in a format that
  parents/guardians understand.)

- Parenting. Promote and support responsible parenting.

- Student Learning. Inform and involve parents and caregivers in children's learning
  activities so that they may play an integral role in assisting student learning.

- Volunteering. Ensure that parents/guardians are welcome in the school and seek their
  support and assistance in a variety of ways.

- Advocacy and Decision-Making. Include parents/guardians as partners in the decisions that affect children and families.

- Training. Assess the parents' informational needs and provide parent training based upon those needs.

- Community Collaboration. Collaborate with community agencies and other organizations to provide resources to strengthen school programs, families, and student learning.

- Student Health. Promote health awareness among parents/guardians by addressing the need for health programs and student health services, which are linked to student learning. (pp. 14-15)

The State Board of Education also required the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) to provide local school districts with professional development focused on implementing and understanding strategies to increase parental involvement while developing a plan that involves parents in a meaningful way in the education of their children.

Building Relationships with Stakeholders

Collaboration and partnerships among schools, parents, and communities provide the support that students need to be successful in their development of becoming productive citizens (Shu-Yuan, Isernhagen, Scherz, & Denner, 2014). Effective communication is a concern of stakeholders and has been so for some time, as explained by Nicholson (1972):

> The "right to know" complex is at an all-time high. Teachers, students and the public expect to have access to information that a principal uses in his deliberations about policies and procedures affecting them. Thus, it becomes an enormous task to communicate such information both accurately and adequately". (p. 103)

Principals are expected to establish clear goals for their schools and articulate these to the staff, students, parents, and community members. Local school districts must communicate effectively

with their constituents and commit to telling their story-the story they want to be told (Gordon, 2012).

Building relationships are significant for educational leaders and these skills should be utilized daily (Whitaker, 2003). Recent studies address the need to build relationships with students, develop trust with parents, and seek to make intentional connections with communities in order to increase parental involvement within schools (Edwards, 2016; Hoerr, 2017). Hoover-Demsey and Walker (2012) stated, "A strong and positive family-school communication enables all parties – teachers, parents and students – to gain a shared understanding of school goals, individual student learning needs and strengths, and effective home support strategies for students' achievement" (p. 6). Patrikakou (2016) encourages schools and districts to maximize parental involvement in order to enhance relationships. Educators must engage stakeholders in an effort to increase and sustain student achievement.

Communication and Student Achievement

Parent-teacher communication is vital in order to support student learning together and increase the success rate of students in our nation (Devgun, 2012; Jeynes, 2010; Lekli & Kaloti, 2015; Patrikakou, 2008; Swick, 2003). Research has shown that students whose parents are actively engaged in their education are more likely to earn higher grades and achieve higher test scores, attend school on a regular basis, graduate with a high school diploma, and enroll in higher-level learning institutions (Englund, Luckner, Whaley, & Egeland, 2004; Keith, Keith, Quirk, Cohen-Rosenthal, & Franzese, 1996; Turney & Kao, 2009). In other words, communication between parents, teachers, administrators, and other necessary personnel directly impacts the success of students (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Jennings & Wartella, 2004; Telem & Pinto, 2006).

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However, communication is important for more reasons than improving student achievement and can serve a variety purposes in a school system. It can eliminate, hide, or reveal problems (Hoy & Miskel, 2007). Diaktere (2009) suggests that communication can be used to analyze the ideologies of administrators while gaining insight into the culture of a school and/or system. Likewise, Burriss and Ring (2008) express the importance of communicating with stakeholders in order to determine the amount of support or resistance in implementing the mission of a school. Johnston (2004) wrote, "we must participate in collectively generating the most productive solutions to social problems, with the understanding that we will disagree, and that the disagreement can extend us to possibilities we could not have imagined" (p. 74). Engebriston (2011) explains that as a communicator, principals must establish clear goals for their schools and relay these to the staff, parents, and community members. Communicating with stakeholders is just as significant as serving as an accessible and knowledgeable resource for students, teachers, parents, and communities (Kinney, 2009).

Constant communication from district leaders and school administrators is essential to efforts aimed at increasing involvement from stakeholders. As district leaders and school administrators seek to improve the current status of Robeson County schools, it is imperative to engage in meaningful dialogue with individuals whose point of view may not be popular opinion. Currently, it is unknown if parents of PSRC students are aware of federal mandates, state regulations, district guidelines, and school policies. If their unknowing is presenting challenges in the education of their children, then it is the responsibility of all educators to enlighten them so that everyone can prevail as a cohesive unit. Joshua P. Starr, CEO of PDK International urges educators to be clear in their explanations; "and if you are transparent and forthright – especially when the results aren't positive, a strategy isn't working, or mistakes have

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been made – they will tend to believe you and trust your judgement" (PDK Poll, 2017). Therefore, PSRC must commit to transparently relaying information in a timely manner in order to experience increases in parental involvement, public perception, and student achievement.

Stakeholder Communication Methods

Effective school leaders are those who have established themselves as effective communicators and who use a variety of methods and styles to deliver their messages to stakeholders (Marzano, Walters, & McNulty, 2005). Often, parents are provided pertinent information via non-digital communication such as paper newsletters and flyers. Research concludes that the most typical forms of traditional communication with stakeholders include teacher notes, progress reports/report cards, school bulletins/newsletters, and parent-teacher conferences (Kosaretskii & Chernyshova, 2013; Mitchell, Foulger, & Wetzel, 2015). Although this method has served as the main form of communication throughout most public schools in America, these papers are often misplaced by the students, and sometimes the teachers. "Sending a parent newsletter home with your students? You might as well send it by carrier pigeon. Backpack mail is out, but email is in" (Siegenthaler & Hahn, 2011, p. 8). Communicating through paper copies can become both expensive and time consuming. Non-digital communications are in essence one directional: from the principal to the teacher, from the teacher to the student, or from the school to the community. Gruber (2016) suggests the traditional forms of communication are effective but not ideal because the parent who prefers to only communicate with schools and teachers through an occasional note via their child seldom exists. Zieger and Tan (2012) states, "current methods of printing paper copies and mailing each home (or sending it with the student and hoping that it reaches parents) is both expensive and

untimely because once the information reaches a parent, it is commonly two weeks old and no longer relevant" (p. 33).

In the current fast-paced technological society there are alternatives to this traditional method. In the article "Connecting with Parents is as Easy as Tweeting" (2013), The *Curriculum Review* suggests that schools take advantage of the technological nature of today's society and connect with parents using the simplest and most convenient channels. Technology is found to be effective in school stakeholder communication (Henry & Reidy, 2006). Digital communication allows all stakeholders instantaneous access to news, upcoming events, extracurricular activities, and other information that parents may deem relevant. It has the power to improve relationships by providing easy, effective, and efficient modes of transferring information among administrators, teachers, faculty, parents, and the community (Dixon, 2012). Some applications allow for information exchange from all parties as well as two-way communication (Tidwell & Walther, 2002). In an article by Dan Gordon (2012), Ann Flynn, the director of education technology and state association services for the National School Boards Association, was quoted as saying "districts should be using technology for communications much like they want schools to use technology for instruction – as a seamless part of their approach to doing business" (p. 59).

Mychael Dickerson, chief communications officer for Baltimore County Public Schools participated in an interview with *The Education Digest* (Sack-Min, 2015), in which he insisted that social media outlets are "game changers" for increasing engagement from students, parents, staff, internal and external stakeholders, and communities. Israel (2009) articulates the impact that marketing a district or school through social media channels can have:

> In a social media world, each resolution is played out in front of an audience. Every message has the potential to answer questions that others haven't asked. What's more,

every message is a tangible demonstration – a mini commercial, so to speak – of your commitment to service. That tangible demonstration builds confidence in every customer, not just those having their problems solved. (p. 184)

District leaders and school administrators must commit to integrating social media tools in their efforts to build meaningful relationships with stakeholders (Ferriter, 2010). "Educators can no longer rely on the use of static forms of communication only; plus, we can no longer assume that stakeholders will come to us. Twenty-first century stakeholders expect us to meet them where they are, which is on social media, and when it is convenient for them" (Filon, 2016, p. 43). In order to continuously communicate with parents, administrators can utilize six key school communication channels: district and school websites, mobile apps, notifications and alerts, email, social media, and video (Williams, 2015). Table 1 represents a matrix created by Williams, co-founder of Campus Suite, for the possible functions that each of these channels serve.

District leaders and schools within PSRC currently use a variety of methods to communicate with stakeholders. Such methods include websites, email, Blackboard Connect, mobile apps, flyers, and formal meetings for parents, principals, and aspiring leaders. A good public relations officer must understand what is important to their stakeholders when in reference to the school district (Pascopella, 2005). According to Carr (2009) their experience should include public opinion research, strategic planning, marketing, crisis communication, employee communication, parental involvement, and community and media relations.

Ms. Tasha Oxendine is the Public Relations Officer for PSRC. She stresses the importance of updating all stakeholders of necessary information in order to create and maintain a positive relationship between the district and all community entities (personal communication,

Table 1

Functions for Communication Channels

Type of Information	Website	Mobile App	Notifications & Alerts	Email	Social Media	Video
Emergency Alerts	√	√	√	√	√	
Public Relations	√				√	√
Event Promotions	√	√		√	√	
Special Announcements	√	√		√	√	√
Important Reminders	√	√	√	√	√	
Forms/Documents	√			√		
Campaigns	√			√	√	√
PTO Information	√			√	√	

September 22, 2017). Ms. Oxendine is responsible for creating district-wide parent nights and student events that empower parents and students to becoming active participants in the learning student events that empower parents and students to becoming active participants in the learning process. Another important task for which Ms. Oxendine is responsible for is operating the district's social media accounts. Through Facebook and Twitter, she constantly posts positive images from each of the schools within the county.

Although there are numerous channels available for the system and the 42 schools therein, little certainty is known concerning the preferences of administrators, parents, and teachers. Superintendent Wooten believes that as a collective group, PSRC is failing to appropriately utilize the technological opportunities that are readily available, such as the lack of continuous updates to teacher websites (personal communication, November 3, 2017).

Movement Toward Social Media Use

Social media use has grown more representative of today's population with more and more adults being subscribers to at least one social media site (Wilkerson, 2018). Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, and Silvestre (2011) designed a framework for social media to include seven building blocks: (a) identity, (b) conversations, (c) sharing, (d) presence, (e) relationships, (f) reputation, and (g) groups. These components have the potential to impact a public entities' ability to communicate with stakeholders and increase public perception of transparency and decision-making abilities. There are numerous social media tools that district administrators, school administrators, teachers, and other employees can utilize to communicate with their stakeholders. Many professionals have embraced the social media movement and are thriving in their efforts to connect with others on a large scale. Employees in school districts have created

accounts that allow them to share the teaching and learning activities that are taking place with students.

The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) is an organization that began when Oregon educators realized the need to integrate technology in the educational setting as a learning tool. Their goal is to help educators around the world use technology in an attempt to solve some of the problems that are current in today's educational setting (Retrieved from www.ISTE.org). ISTE Administrator Standards include visionary leadership, digital age culture, excellence in professional practice, systematic improvement, and digital citizenship. Specific standards address the need for administrators to creatively collaborate and communicate with stakeholders (see Table 2). In an attempt to move more toward a technology-rich learning environment, ISTE has also developed standards for educators, instructional coaches, and students.

The next section provides a history of four of the most common social media tools: blogs, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Each section details a history of the origin of these communication channels as well as how they are currently being used in public education to provide two-way communication with stakeholders.

Blogs

The term blog, acronym for web log, was first coined in 1997 by Jorn Barger as a reference to an online journal of thoughts and ideas (Harbison & Fisher, 2010). Technorati (2008) refers to blogs as a global phenomenon that are here for the long haul. They can be easily constructed and maintained, all with one click. Blogs have the capacity to be updated on a frequent basis and can be interactive or read-only, depending upon the preference of the owner. Blogs have quickly become a popular tool for teachers, principals, and superintendents (Cox,

Table 2

ISTE Standards – Administrators (Specific Standards Related to Stakeholder Involvement

Standard	Description
Visionary Leadership	• Inspire and facilitate among all stakeholders a shared vision of purposeful change that maximizes use of digital-age resources to meet and exceed learning goals, support effective instructional practices, and maximize performance of district and school leaders • Engage in an ongoing process to develop, implement, and communicate technology-infused strategic plans aligned with a shared vision
Digital Age Learning Culture	• Promote and participate in local, national, and global learning communities that stimulate innovation, creativity, and digital age collaboration
Excellence in Professional Practice	• Facilitate and participate in learning communities that stimulate, nurture and support administrators, faculty, and staff in the study and use of technology • Promote and model effective communication and collaboration among stakeholders using digital age tools
Systematic Improvement	• Establish and leverage strategic partnerships to support systematic improvements
Digital Citizenship	• Promote and model responsible social interactions related to the use of technology and information • Model and facilitate the development of a shared cultural understanding and involvement in global issues through the use of contemporary communication and collaboration tools

2012). Blogs have the ability to be easily incorporated into school and district websites with personalized messages from district and school leaders.

Engebriston (2011) encourages administrators to use blogs to assist in their role as instructional leaders, create a space for ongoing dialogue about district and school priorities, and support communicating their vision and goals. One advantage of having a superintendent or school administrator write a blog is that the school controls the message relayed, which eliminates the chance of misquotes occurring. Another advantage is that blogs archive earlier posts, which would allow stakeholders a holistic view of the priorities of district and school administrators.

Facebook

Mark Zuckerberg, a Harvard University student at that time, created Facebook in 2004. The original site allowed students at Harvard University to communicate with one another through the Internet. In 2006, Facebook extended the membership opportunities to any individual who possessed an e-mail address (Phillip, 2007). McGarry (2014) found that over 1 billion subscribers access the social network on a daily basis.

According to Whitaker and Fiore (2016), Facebook has become a necessary, invaluable tool that today's teachers use to communicate with parents individually, to discuss issues concerning their child, and in groups, to share homework assignments or upcoming events. Parents are also using Facebook as a preferential communication tool with teachers (Olmstead, 2013). School districts also use Facebook to communicate with faculty, staff, and the wider community (Freidman & Freidman, 2013).

Instagram

Instagram was launched by Stanford University graduates Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger in 2010 (Griffin, 2014). It was purchased by Facebook in 2012, with the intentions of attracting a younger audience who are interested in a more visual form of social networking (Jenkins, 2013). With an estimated 200 million plus active users, this photo-sharing platform allows users to share pictures or videos that are shorter than 15 seconds with members of Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter (Al-Bahrani & Patel, 2015).

University professors are embedding Instagram into their college courses by offer extra credit for students who upload photos at university events and relate them to material learned in class (Al-Bahrani & Patel, 2015).

Twitter

Twitter was originally launched in 2006 and designated to be a prominent news source to follow athletes and celebrities (Gruber, 2016). It permits a maximum of 140 characters for each post (also known as "tweet") and gives the option of sharing information publicly or privately that has been created by other people (Ferriter, Ramsden, & Sheninger, 2011; Handley & Chapman, 2011; Jenkins, 2014; Scott; 2011).

Twitter forces educators to become better communicators (Jenkins, 2014). Currently, educators use twitter to send assignments to parents and students, provide websites intended to supplement lessons, inform parents of the progress and achievement of their child, and notify stakeholders of upcoming school events and activities (Kurtz, 2009; Sheninger & Larkin, 2012). Cox (2012) provides the following suggestions for the use of Twitter,

> School administrators could use Twitter to get feedback on issues affecting the school, such as changes to the curriculum, improving traffic flow as parents drop off or pick up their students, etc. School district officials also could solicit feedback from stakeholders

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who cannot traditionally make it to school-sponsored parent engagement activities due to their work schedules, a lack of transportation, or other barriers. (p. 39)

Relevant Social Media Research Studies

Many state education agencies and local education agencies are finding modern and innovative ways to incorporate social media in their efforts to increase parental involvement. State education agencies are using their superintendents or commissioners as the lead storytellers. The *Education Digest* (2014) reported that the Georgia Department of Education, the Minnesota Department of Education, the New York State Education Department, the Ohio Department of Education, and the Rhode Island Department of Education are using their chief officers to manage social media platforms intended to attract, entertain, and inform key audiences.

District leaders are getting involved in the push to actively and effectively communicate with stakeholders. For example, the Carrollton-Farmers (TX) Independent School District, the East Baton Rouge Parish (LA) School District, the Los Angeles (CA) Unified School District, the Klein (TX) Independent School District, the Peoria (IL) Public Schools District, and the Solon (IA) Community School District have hired consultants to establish interactive websites and have taken their showcase of outreach efforts, programs, and schools to social media in order to invite open dialogue with members of the community (Cox, 2012; Gordon, 2012; Hampton, 2016). Table 3 represents the social media channels that Hampton (2016) found various school districts to be using in order to earn the trust of their stakeholders, inform communities of district events, and overall enhance communication with their key audiences.

Wright and Hinson (2008, 2009, & 2010) have consistently studied the impact social media platforms have on public relations through the use of surveys. Their initial results have indicated that most major news stories are first generated to the public via social media outlets.

Table 3

School Districts' Use of Social Media Channels

Name of School District (State)	Blogs	Facebook	Twitter
Anoka-Hennepin District 11 (Minnesota)		√	
Bellevue School District (Washington)		√	√
Burlington Public Schools (Massachusetts)	√	√	√
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (North Carolina)	√		
Fayette County Public Schools (Kentucky)		√	√
Houston Independent School District (Texas)			√
Marshall County School District (Kentucky)			√
Palm Beach County School District (Florida)		√	√
Palo Alto Unified School District (California)		√	
Salt Lake City School District (Utah)		√	√
Washoe County School District (Nevada)	√	√	√
York County School Division (Virginia)			√

Through later research, they determined that social media has empowered the public to communicate in forms other than traditional communication methods.

The National School Public Relations Association (2011) conducted a study comprised of 50 districts throughout 22 states. Of the 43,410 participants in the study, 99% preferred to receive information from their child's school through electronic channels. These channels consisted of email, e-newsletters, school websites, and other online parent portals. Parents expressed their concerns related to curriculum and school updates, extracurricular activities, and student safety incidents and precautions.

Cox and McLeod (2014) found six themes in their study of why public school superintendents should include social media tools in their comprehensive communication plan:

1. Social media tools allow for more immediate and more frequent interactions between school superintendents and their stakeholders.

2. Social media tools provide for greater transparency regarding decision-making and budgeting processes.

3. Social media use can have a significant impact on a school superintendent's personal and professional growth.

4. Social media tools provide stronger connections to local stakeholders, to fellow educators, and to the world.

5. Social media use is an expectation; it is no longer optional.

6. Social media tools allow stakeholders to access information from the superintendent in a multi-modal way.

The Reform Support Network (RSN) conducted a nationwide survey to study the impact of the effort to embrace social media tactics as a communication tool across various states and

district (*Education Digest,* 2014). It was reported that 95% of state and local education agencies use or plan to use Facebook or Twitter. Additionally, half of the same agencies polled revealed they currently blog or plan to incorporate this channel in the future. In an attempt to remain relevant, RSN concluded that these agencies are seeking innovative ideas to use social media to inform, inspire, and involve their key audiences.

Natale and Lubniewski (2018) administered an anonymous survey to parents of elementary students because they were interested in understanding the use of technology by educators as a communication tool with parents. The majority of the responses indicated that they preferred technology versus traditional forms of communication due to current advances in technology and the elimination of space and time constraints. The researchers urged educators to consider the communication preferences of parents as technology has changed communication expectations.

A study conducted by Smith and Anderson (2018) of Pew Research Center showed a significant increase in the percentage of Americans who use social media sites online or on their cellphone since the study first began in 2012. In regard to the use of some form of social media, use by age is as follows: 88% among those ages 18-29, 78% among those ages 30-49, 64% among those ages 50-64, and 37% among those who were 65 and older. Additionally, they found that 68% of U.S. adults are members of Facebook. According to the data, the two most popular social media sites accessed by adults are YouTube and Facebook (see Figure 1). A majority of the respondents indicated that they use at least three of the above seven on a daily basis.

Mobile Devices for Internet Connection

Web-based communication operates under the assumption that families have access to technological devices. However, leaders must ensure that technology use will not alienate

Percentage of U.S. Adults who Access Popular Social Media Sites
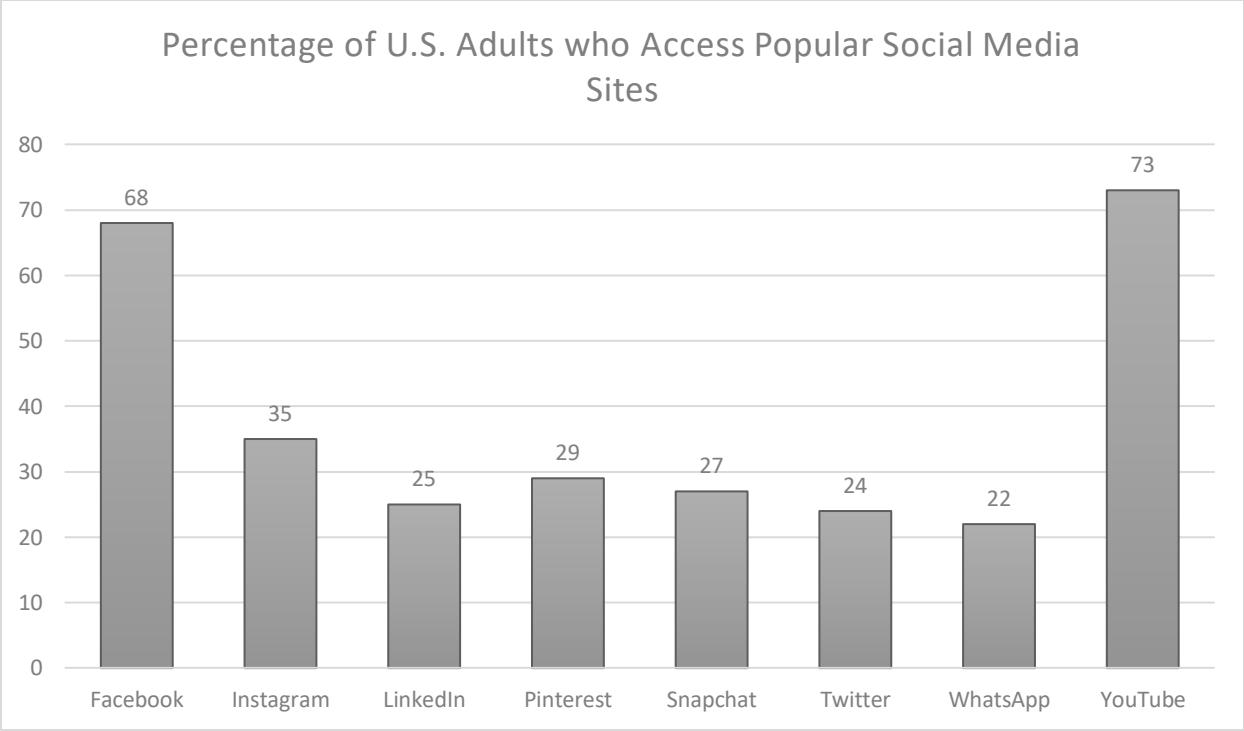
Figure 1. Most popular social media sites by U.S. adults.

families who do not have access to these channels. Current research suggests that more and more families are equipped with some type of access to the Internet (File & Camille, 2014; Partrikakou, 2016; Perrin & Duggan, 2015). Perrin and Duggin (2015) found that households making less than $30,000 annually used the Internet at 74% in 2015, which is an increase from only 34% in 2000.

The good news is that smartphones have dramatically increased the number of people who are able to access social media sites and has revolutionized the way people communicate with one another (Rainie & Wellman, 2012). Librero, Ramos, Ranga, Trinona, and Lambert (2007) conducted a study in which they determined that 1.5 billion people were equipped a cellular device. Rideout (2014) determined that low-income families are using smartphones as their main access point to the Internet and that this trend is bridging the technology gap between wealthy and poor households. With the rapid rise in the number of Americans who own mobile devices, the most popular social media platforms are accessed via smartphones (Filon, 2016). Thompson, Mazer, and Flood-Grady (2015) revealed parents are using smartphones as a communication tool with teachers. Therefore, the declining cost of mobile technology has the ability to increase parental involvement and communication between teachers and parents at a substantial rate.

Conclusion

The ever-expanding social media landscape has increased the opportunities for people to communicate with one another at any time and in any location. Organizational leaders have little control over the image they want conveyed to their stakeholders. Ultimately, social media allows students, parents, and staff members the opportunity to share their success, failures, and stories

on a frequent basis with others in the manner that they prefer. This immediate feedback has its

own responsibility in shaping the image of a school or school system.

Social media does not have to take the place of traditional forms of communications that

leaders have used, such as newsletters, phone calls, and face-to-face meetings. However, finding

a balance between traditional forms of communication with stakeholders and the emergence of

available social media tools will provide educational leaders with the ability to increase

transparency, navigate relationships, and showcase their schools or school systems (Cox, 2012).

Burnett, Lamb, Lucas, and Walters (2009) stated "social networking sites can be an

effective way to reach stakeholder groups if organizations understand how their stakeholders use

the sites" (p. 106). Douglas W. Huntley, the superintendent of Queensbury Union Free School

District in New York, discussed the benefits of incorporating social media as a communication

tool in an *Education Week* blog (Berkowicz & Meyers, 2013),

> One of the most urgent issues facing educational leaders today is their communities'
> expectations for quick, accurate and timely information, provided instantly. Newsletters,
> brochures, fliers, letters, and backpack stuffers are slow, inefficient, costly and
> increasingly obsolete by today's communication standards. Even school leaders who also
> use email and school websites are failing to fully satisfy public expectations for fast, open
> and interactive communication. Strong community engagement can be reached in a
> number of different ways, but none is more instantly effective than adding the use of
> social media to a school district's communication plan. (para. 2)

Although fear may be a driving force in the decision to integrate social media into

communication plans, "schools can no longer afford the option of not including these platforms

because social media has become the one-stop shopping for news in the 21st Century" (Filon,

2016, p. 21).

CHAPTER 3: STUDY DESIGN

The context of this study centered on how the Public Schools of Robeson County can incorporate social media into current communication plans in order to increase the positive public perception of the school system, thereby hopefully improving effectiveness and increasing student achievement. Superintendent Wooten continues to stress the need for all employees to understand the impact that communication has on student achievement (personal communication, July 1, 2018). To accomplish this goal, a small scale proof of concept study was conducted in an attempt to gain an understanding of the current communication methods that are in place as well as stakeholder preferences concerning communication channels and the type of information received. The design behind a small school proof of concept is to determine how realistic implementation can be. Clarity Innovations (2014) considers a proof of concept as "the preliminary rollout of a specific program, process, method, principle, model, or idea to demonstrate its feasibility" (p. 1). This chapter outlines the research design, participants of the study, and the collection of the data to be analyzed.

Improvement Science

Educators are constantly creating theories of change. In order to truly bring about change, these theories must be tested, revisited, and potentially revised. Improvement science is relevant to public education because it focuses on challenges that can be found nationwide in classrooms and schools on a daily basis. The Carnegie Foundation explains that improvement science, organized around three main questions (see Figure 2), is designed for formal organizations to learn by doing in an effort to sustain continuous improvement (carnegiefoundation.org, n.d.). In a blog by Alicia Grunow (2015), she explains that each plan-do-study-act (PDSA) cycle represents an experiment to achieve predicted outcomes, although more PDSA cycles may need
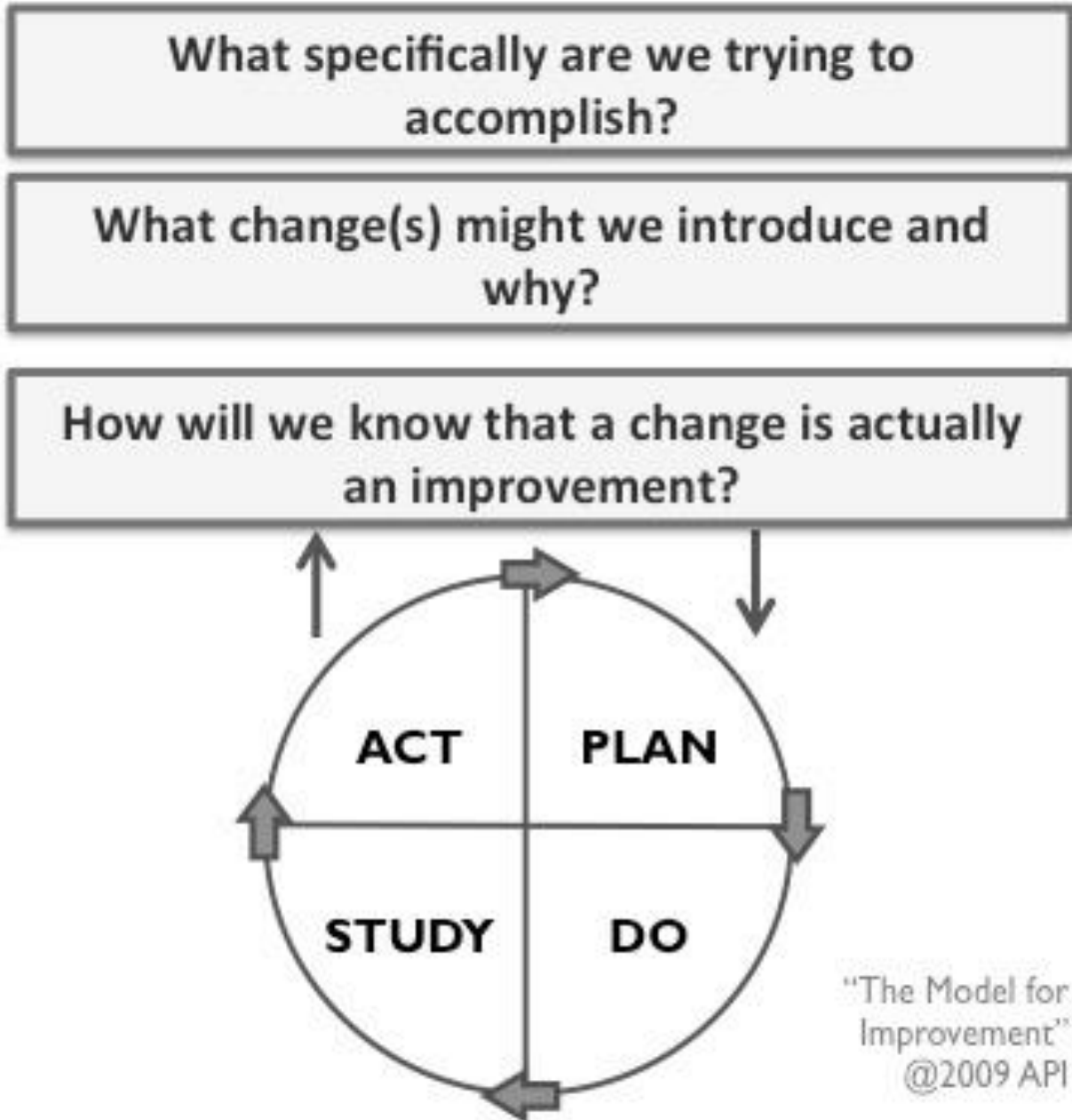
Figure 2. PDSA improvement science cycle.

to follow as failure often occurs in many instances. This methodology was used for this research project in an effort to continuously seeks solutions for the communication and public perception concerns that are evident within the Public Schools of Robeson County.

Study Method

Archbald (2014) explained that understanding how stakeholder groups who are relevant to an organization value a particular issue can be instrumental in decision making. In addition, the author suggested the following:

> Belief and attitude data can help decide (a) *whether* improvement is needed, because groups believe something is satisfactory or not, or (b) *how* to improve by providing improvement suggestions directly (advice-giving) or by helping you understand how groups think or behave so *you* can develop improvement ideas. (p. 70)

The GAPPSI Method (Gap Analysis for Problem-solving, Planning, and School Improvement) provides eight guidelines that should be followed in order to create and conduct better surveys (Archbald, 2014):

1. Know exactly what you want to find out and what the survey will prove.

2. Who is your target population?

3. Survey Everyone, or get a good cross-section.

4. Appropriate item format: The right format for the right question.

5. Clear questions: Concise, one-idea, familiar language

6. Constructing appropriate scales: Scale metrics reflect your purpose.

7. Explain your purpose.

8. Anonymous (p. 71-76)

After thoroughly reviewing available literature related to social media use in public education as a communication tool, it was determined that no current methods exist that could determine the impact of social media on public perception. Therefore, the instruments that were

used in this research study was three different questionnaires designed by the researcher. A panel

of seven educational professionals reviewed the questionnaires to determine the appropriateness,

simplicity, and validity of the questions. The panel, as well as their professional roles within an

educational setting, can be found in Appendix B.

<div align="center">**Participants**</div>

The target population for this study included district leaders, school administrators,

faculty and staff, parents, students, and community members affiliated with the Public Schools of

Robeson County. Participants were grouped in two categories: (1) district leaders and school

administrators or (2) all other stakeholders. In order to gain understanding of the channels that

are currently in place at all schools throughout the school system and the type of information that

is relayed to stakeholders, surveys were specific for each of the two groups for this study and

were conducted in three phases.

<div align="center">**Phase I**</div>

Group 1 Surveys

Group 1 participants included district leaders and school administrators. The purpose of

the survey for group 1 participants was to gain an understanding of the communication channels

that are currently being used at the district and school levels to communicate with stakeholders.

The questions administered for these participants were specific to their role in current

communication efforts (see Appendix C). Surveys for district leaders and school administrators

were generated as paper surveys in an effort to collect data to assist the researcher in answering

the research questions. These surveys were distributed to participants during the month of

December by Dr. Robert Locklear, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction and

Accountability. The surveys required participants to identify their role as either district

<div align="center">37</div>

administrator, school administrator, or curriculum supervisor/instructional coach. Furthermore, the surveys required school administrators to identify the school in which they are currently assigned. Surveys for group 1 participants were collected by Assistant Superintendent Locklear and delivered to the researcher on January 4, 2019.

Group 2 Surveys

Group 2 participants included all stakeholders within the Public Schools of Robeson County who are not district leaders or school administrators. Using Survey Monkey, surveys for these participants were available on the district website for the Public Schools of Robeson County (Retrieved from www.robeson.k12.nc.us) in an effort to collect data to assist the researcher in answering the research questions (see Appendix D). Assistance from Mr. Jared Cole Wilkins, District Technology Specialist for PSRC, was enlisted to generate the electronic survey for group two participants (see Appendix E). In an effort to receive ample responses from the diverse population that comprises Robeson County, the survey was available electronically beginning November 16, 2018 through December 15, 2018. The results from each survey were sent directly to the researcher instantaneously in order for the results to be analyzed.

Phase I Data Analysis

Surveys collected were analyzed in order to address the following study questions:

1. Which social media outlets are district leaders currently using (Superintendent, Assistant Superintendents, Board Members, Public Relations Officer, Curriculum Supervisors)?

2. Which social media outlets are school administrators currently using (Principals, Assistant Principals, Webmasters)?

3. What type of information do district leaders communicate with their stakeholders through social media outlets?

4. What type of information do school administrators communicate with their stakeholders through social media outlets?

5. What forms of communication do parents find most useful?

6. Does providing instantaneous information via social media have an impact on public opinion?

Phase II

Upon completion of Phase I, Group 1 participants received professional development on Wednesday, January 16, 2019 concerning social media as a communication tool (see Appendix F). District leaders and school administrators were instructed of relevant research that has determined the importance of effective communication. During the training, attendees had the opportunity to learn of the pertinent role social media plays in communicating with stakeholders and how other schools and districts throughout the country are incorporating social media as a communication method with stakeholders. The results from both survey groups were analyzed to determine the strengths and weaknesses throughout the school district and the researcher relayed the responses to Group 1 participants, highlighting the similarities and differences among each group of participants.

In order to engage participants during the professional development session, specific district leaders and school administrators were allowed to share with their colleagues communication strategies that they currently use to communicate and connect with stakeholders. Appendix G provides the email correspondence that represents the follow-up discussion with these individuals in preparation for the professional development training. Dr. Tara Bullard,

Principal of Rowland-Norment Elementary, shared with her colleagues the advantages of using the remind app to communicate with faculty, staff, and parents. She provided a tutorial of how administrators can create accounts and send information via text message to all stakeholders with the click of a button. Mr. Anthony Barton, Principal of Pembroke Middle, informed his colleagues of a web-based newsletter that he has implemented at his school to communicate with teachers and with parents. According to Mr. Barton, this interactive newsletter has eliminated the number of emails that he sends to staff. Mrs. Sandra Evans, K-8 Curriculum Supervisor, provided a sample of the Twitter account that she manages for the Public Schools of Robeson County. She explained the advantages of using the social media channel and also gave a lesson on sending a tweet and how to use hashtags. Mrs. Hawhana Locklear, Principal of Fairgrove Middle, explained to participants the reasons for linking the school calendar to the school homepage. She shared an estimate of the number of visits the calendar receives on a monthly basis and the decrease in telephone calls the school has received concerning questions about upcoming events.

District leaders who participated in the professional development session were challenged to increase communication with all stakeholders in an effort to become more transparent. Also, they were challenged to incorporate more forms of social media in their communication efforts in order to broaden their targeted audience. There were 44 participants in the professional development session and documentation of attendees was maintained to serve as an indicator of one of the processes implemented by Superintendent Wooten that aims to increase parental involvement and student achievement.

Phase III

Phase III occurred after the completion of the professional development that district leaders and school administrators participated in. Phase III consisted of a survey for Group 2 participants only (see Appendix G). Group 2 participants included all stakeholders within the Public Schools of Robeson County who are not district leaders or school administrators. The objective was to determine if communication was enhanced upon the completion of the professional development. Using Survey Monkey, surveys for these participants were available on the district website for the Public Schools of Robeson County (Retrieved from www.robeson.k12.nc.us) in an effort to collect data to assist the researcher in answering the research questions. Assistance from Mr. Jared Cole Wilkins, District Technology Specialist for PSRC, was enlisted to generate the electronic survey for group two participants (see Appendix H). In an effort to receive ample responses from the diverse population that comprises Robeson County, the survey was available electronically beginning January 24, 2019 through February 22, 2019. The results from each survey were sent directly to the researcher instantaneously in order for the results to be analyzed.

Phase III Data Analysis

Surveys were analyzed in order to address the following study questions:

1. Which social media outlets are district leaders currently using (Superintendent, Assistant Superintendents, Board Members, Public Relations Officer, Curriculum Supervisors)?

2. Which social media outlets are school administrators currently using (Principals, Assistant Principals, Webmasters)?

3. What type of information do district leaders communicate with their stakeholders through social media outlets?

4. What type of information do school administrators communicate with their stakeholders through social media outlets?

5. What forms of communication do parents find most useful?

6. Does providing instantaneous information via social media have an impact on public opinion?

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The primary purpose of this small scale proof of concept study was to examine the use of social media as a communication tool within a local school district. Another component of this study was to assess if using social media to communicate with stakeholders can increase transparency and impact positive public perception. This study used survey methodology to gather data from the intended respondents. The survey was designed to collect data to determine the types of information that district leaders and school administrators share, the types of information that stakeholders are interested in receiving, the communication tools district leaders and school administrators incorporate, the communication tools stakeholders prefer, and the impact current communication methods have on public perception. Presented first is descriptive information of the respondents who participated in the Group 1 surveys followed by an in-depth analysis of Group 1 results and Group 2 results for Phase I and Phase III. The results examined the emergent themes that were specific and common for each group. The chapter concludes by presenting the evidence that determines the impact of transparent and timely communication in relationship to public perception of the local school district, which provides the basis for the discussion and recommendations in Chapter 5.

Description of Group 1 Respondents

Participants in Group 1 surveys included district leaders and school administrators. For the purpose of analyzing the data, district leaders were divided into the following sub-groups: curriculum supervisors and instructional coaches, department supervisors and district administrators. All participants were employed by the Public Schools of Robeson County. In total, there were 78 surveys that were completed and returned to the researcher. Of the 78 surveys, 15 were completed by curriculum supervisors and instructional coaches, 10 were

completed by department supervisors, 15 were completed by district administrators, and 38 were completed by school administrators (see Figure 3). The participants' years of experience in their current position with the Public Schools of Robeson County is represented in Table 4. Of the 78 respondents who participated in Group 1 surveys, 49 had been in their current role 0-4 years, which represented 62.8% of the survey population.

<div align="center">

Analysis of Group 1 Responses

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Objectives one and two were to determine which social media outlets district leaders currently use to communicate with their stakeholders. The analysis for this objective was conducted using Question 6 and Question 7 of the survey.

Question 6: Which forms of communication have you used in the past to communicate with stakeholders (select all that apply)?

- *Paper Newsletters*

- *Email*

- *Facebook*

- *Twitter*

- *Instagram*

- *Blogs*

- *Websites*

- *Blackboard Connect (Telephone Call System)*

- *Smartphone Apps (Remind, Group Me, etc.)*

Figure 4 depicts the communication tools that district leaders use to communicate with their respective stakeholders. Of the 15 curriculum supervisor and instructional coach respondents, 12 identified email as a communication tool with their stakeholders. Websites and Facebook
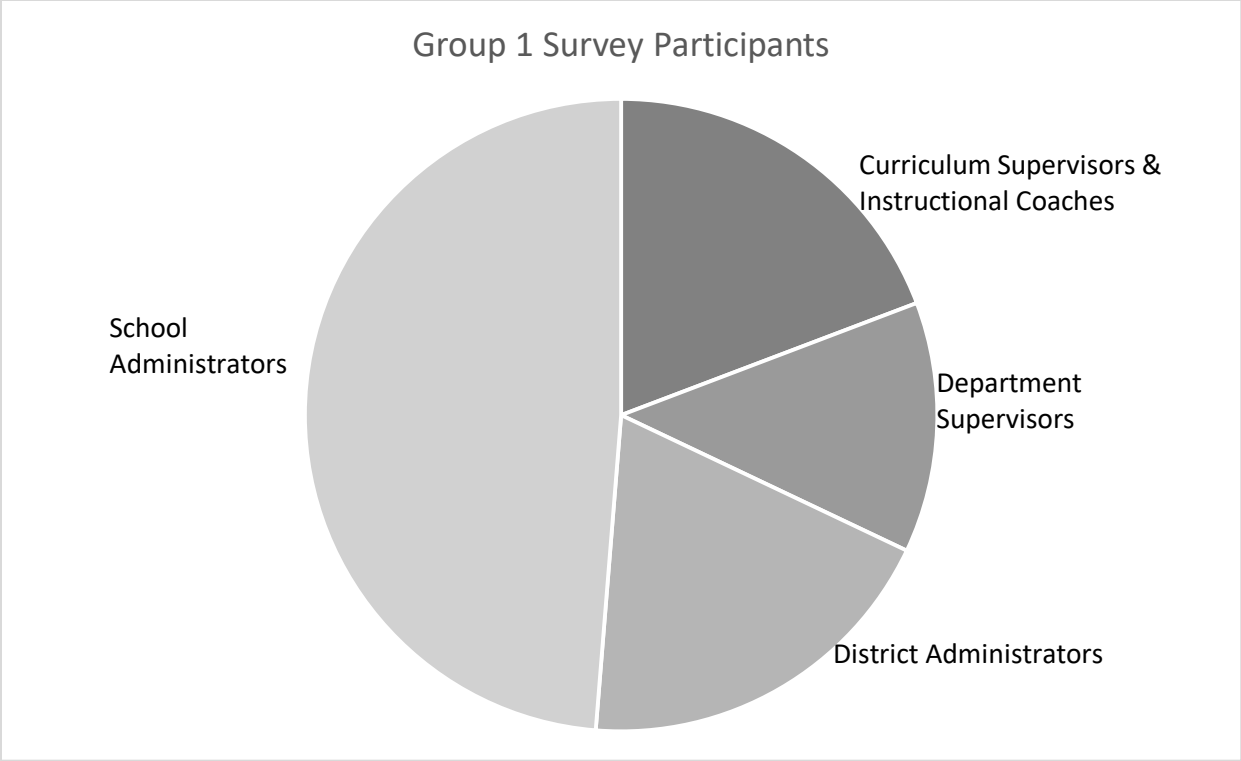
Figure 3. Number of survey responses for Phase I, Group 1 participants.

Table 4

Years of Experience in Current Role

Title	Years of Experience	Number of Respondents	Percent
Curriculum Supervisor & Instructional Coach	0-4 Years	11	73.30%
	5-10 Years	1	6.67%
	11-15 Years	1	6.67%
	16-20 Years	0	0%
	> 20 Years	2	13.33%
			100%
Department Supervisor	0-4 Years	8	80%
	5-10 Years	0	0%
	11-15 Years	1	10%
	16-20 Years	1	10%
	> 20 Years	0	0%
			100%
District Administrator	0-4 Years	10	66.67%
	5-10 Years	1	6.67%
	11-15 Years	2	13.33%
	16-20 Years	1	6.67%
	> 20 Years	1	6.67%
			100%
School Administrator	0-4 Years	20	52.63%
	5-10 Years	10	26.32%
	11-15 Years	6	15.79%
	16-20 Years	0	0%
	> 20 Years	2	5.26%
			100%

received a high number of selections as well, with 9 respondents and 8 respondents, respectively. Instagram and blogs were not selected by any curriculum supervisors and instructional coaches. Of the 10 department supervisor respondents, both paper newsletters and email were chosen as the most used forms of communication with stakeholders. Selections for Twitter, Instagram, blogs, and websites were not made by any department supervisors. Of the 15 district administrator respondents, 14 identified email as a communication tool with their stakeholders. Websites and paper newsletters received a high number of selections as well, with 8 respondents and 9 respondents, respectively. Twitter, Instagram, and blogs were not selected by any district administrators. Of the 38 school administrator respondents, 35 identified Blackboard Connect as a communication tool with their stakeholders and 34 incorporate websites as a tool as well. Instagram and blogs are not used by school administrators who participated in this survey.

Question 7: Please rank the following forms of communication using numbers 1 through 9 (1=Most Effective – 9=Least Effective).

- *Paper Newsletters*

- *Email*

- *Facebook*

- *Twitter*

- *Instagram*

- *Blogs*

- *Websites*

- *Blackboard Connect (Telephone Call System)*

- *Smartphone Apps (Remind, Group Me, etc.)*
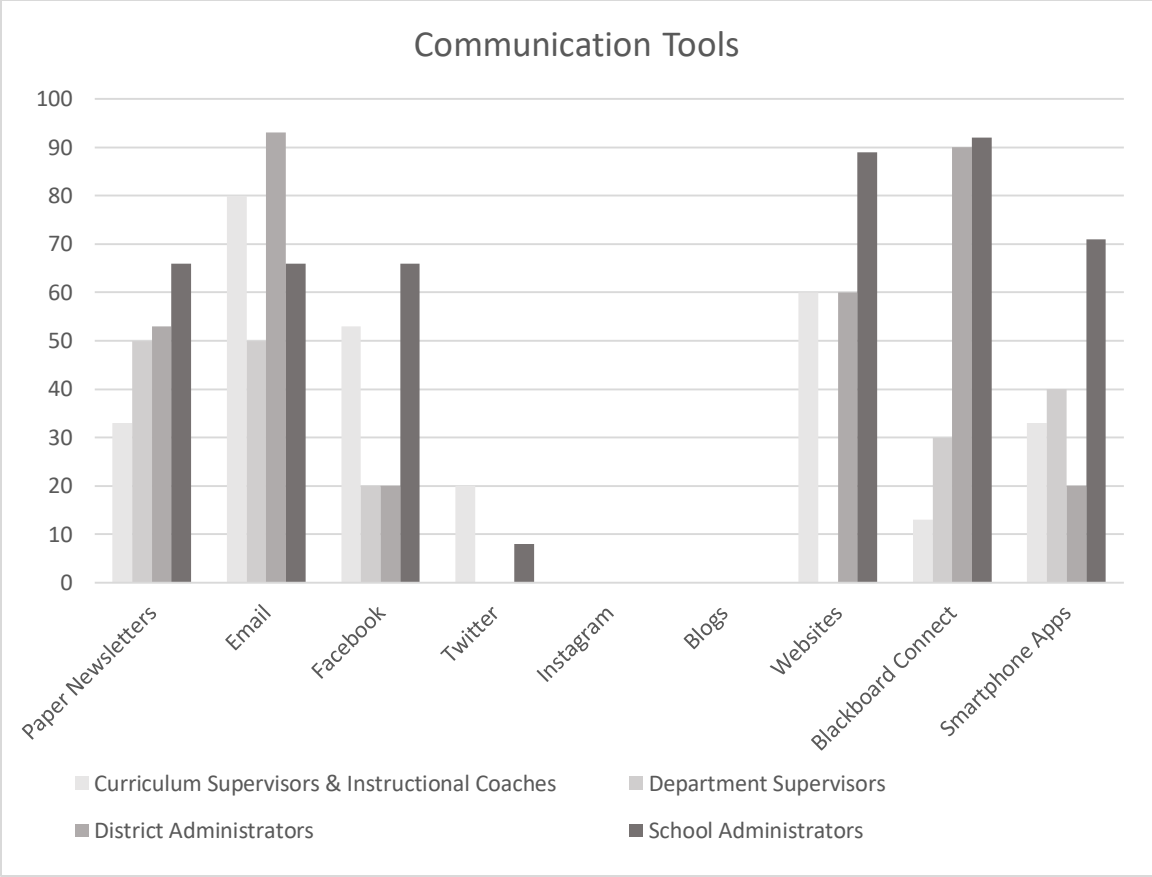
Figure 4. Forms of communication used by district leaders.

Curriculum supervisors and instructional coaches ranked Facebook, blackboard connect, and smartphone apps as the most effective communication tool with an average score of 3.1. Blogs were ranked the least effective communication tool by this group with an average score of 6.3. Department supervisors ranked email as the most effective communication tool with an average score of 2.0. Instagram was ranked the least effective communication tool by this group with an average score of 8.0. District administrators ranked email as the most effective communication tool with an average score of 1.7. Instagram and blogs were ranked the least effective communication tool by this group with an average score of 7.3. School administrators ranked Blackboard Connect as the most effective communication tool with an average score of 2.5. Blogs were ranked the least effective communication tool by this group with an average score of 7.5. Table 5 represents the effectiveness of each communication tool as ranked by each sub-group.

Objectives three and four were to determine the type of information district leaders communicate to their stakeholders. The analysis for this objective was conducted using Question 4 of the survey.

Question 4: What type of information do you send to stakeholders (select all that apply)?

- *Information concerning academic performance and student expectations*

- *Information concerning sporting events, concerts, and student award programs*

- *Information concerning PTO and other parent meetings*

- *Information concerning upcoming exams and tests*

- *Information concerning school fundraisers*

- *Information concerning district-sponsored events*

Table 5

Average Effectiveness of Communication Tools

Communication Tool	Curriculum Supervisors & Instructional Coaches	Department Supervisors	District Administrators	School Administrators
Paper Newsletters	6.0	2.6	3.1	4.4
Email	3.2	2.0	1.7	5.0
Facebook	3.1	4.1	4.1	2.7
Twitter	5.3	7.3	7.1	5.8
Instagram	5.7	8.0	7.3	6.5
Blogs	6.3	7.5	7.3	7.5
Websites	3.8	4.2	3.3	3.9
Blackboard Connect	3.1	3.4	4.0	2.5
Smartphone Apps	3.1	3.6	4.5	3.3

Tables 6 through 9 identify the percentages for each sub-group in response to Question 4. As expected, school administrators relay more information to their stakeholders compared to the other three sub-groups. District administrators were the only sub-group to identify district-sponsored events as the type of information shared the most. All other sub-groups selected academic performance and student expectations as the type of information most widely shared with stakeholders. All sub-groups acknowledged school fundraisers at a lower percentage than the other types of information commonly shared.

Description of Group 2 Phases I Respondents

There were 100 respondents who participated in the Stakeholder Communication Survey that was available on the PSRC website from November 16 through December 15 of 2018. This electronic survey allowed for anonymous responses, as information that could identify participants was not tracked. The survey was available to all individuals who visited the PSRC website and chose to voluntarily participate. Respondents were not solicited for the survey.

Analysis of Group 2 Phase I Responses

Objective two was to determine the social media outlets school administrators use to communicate with stakeholders. The analysis for this objective was conducted using Question 6 of the survey.

Question 6: Which forms of communication are used at your school(s) of interest to communicate with parents and community members (select all that apply)?

- *Paper Newsletters*

- *Email*

- *Facebook*

- *Twitter*

Table 6

Information Curriculum Supervisors and Instructional Coaches Share

Question	Percentage of Respondents
Information concerning academic performance and student expectations	53.3%
Information concerning sporting events, concerts, and student award programs	33.3%
Information concerning PTO and other parent meetings	0.0%
Information concerning upcoming exams and tests	20.0%
Information concerning school fundraisers	0.0%
Information concerning district-sponsored events	40.0%

Table 7

Information Department Supervisors Share

Question	Percentage of Respondents
Information concerning academic performance and student expectations	60.0%
Information concerning sporting events, concerts, and student award programs	40.0%
Information concerning PTO and other parent meetings	30.0%
Information concerning upcoming exams and tests	30.0%
Information concerning school fundraisers	30.0%
Information concerning district-sponsored events	30.0%

Table 8

Information District Administrators Share

Question	Percentage of Respondents
Information concerning academic performance and student expectations	60.0%
Information concerning sporting events, concerts, and student award programs	20.0%
Information concerning PTO and other parent meetings	26.7%
Information concerning upcoming exams and tests	40.0%
Information concerning school fundraisers	6.7%
Information concerning district-sponsored events	66.7%

Table 9

Information School Administrators Share

Question	Percentage of Respondents
Information concerning academic performance and student expectations	94.7%
Information concerning sporting events, concerts, and student award programs	89.5%
Information concerning PTO and other parent meetings	94.7%
Information concerning upcoming exams and tests	89.5%
Information concerning school fundraisers	76.3%
Information concerning district-sponsored events	73.7%

- *Instagram*

- *Blogs*

- *Websites*

- *Blackboard Connect (Telephone Call System)*

- *Smartphone Apps (Remind, Group Me, etc)*

There were 95 participants who responded to this question. Blackboard Connect and smartphone apps were selected by a majority of the respondents, with websites and paper newsletters following closely behind. As represented in Figure 5, Twitter and Instagram were both selected by 3 respondents and with blogs being selected by only 2 respondents.

Objective four was to determine the type of information school administrators communicate with their stakeholders through social media. The analysis for this objective was conducted using Question 4 of the survey.

Question 4: What type of information do you normally receive (select all that apply)?

- *Information concerning academic performance and student expectations*

- *Information concerning sporting events, concerts, and student award programs*

- *Information concerning PTO and other parent meetings*

- *Information concerning upcoming exams and tests*

- *Information concerning school fundraisers*

- *Information concerning district-sponsored events*

Of the 100 participants, 94 responded to the question. PTO and other parent meetings was selected by more than seventy percent of the respondents (see Table 10). Less than 40% of the respondents indicated that they receive information concerning district-sponsored events.
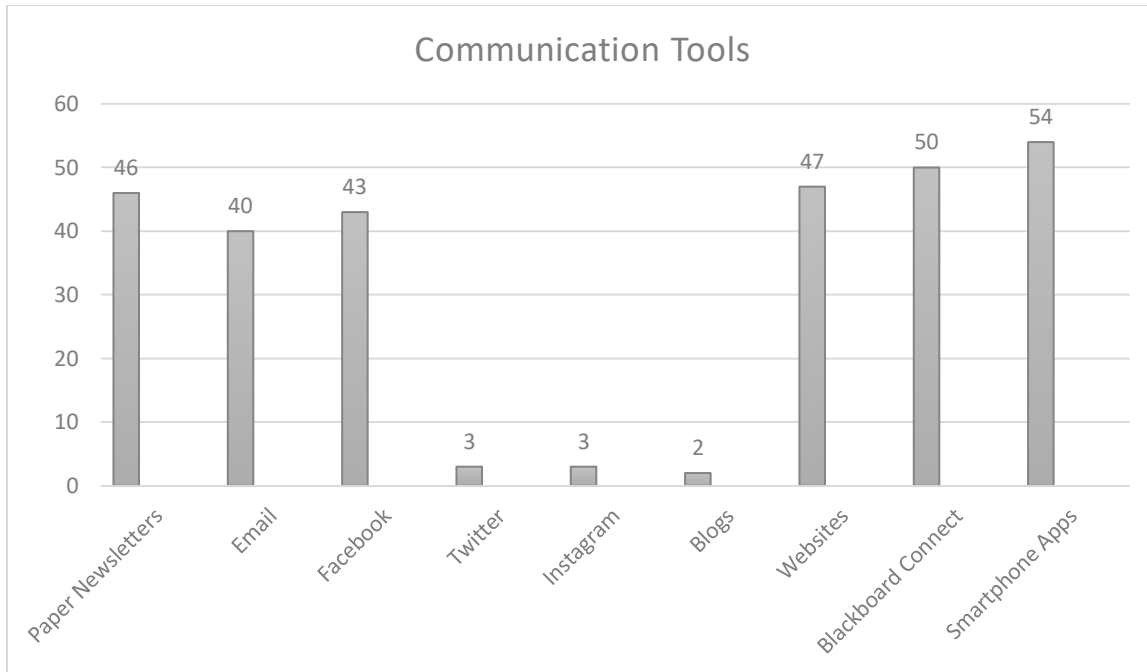
Figure 5. Forms of communication as identified by stakeholders.

Table 10

Information Stakeholders Receive

Question	Percentage of Respondents
Information concerning academic performance and student expectations	55.3%
Information concerning sporting events, concerts, and student award programs	56.4%
Information concerning PTO and other parent meetings	75.6%
Information concerning upcoming exams and tests	59.6%
Information concerning school fundraisers	59.6%
Information concerning district-sponsored events	36.2%

Also, all other categories of types of information shared by school administrators to stakeholders were selected by less than sixty percent of the respondents.

Objective five was to determine the forms of communication that stakeholders find most useful. The analysis for this objective was conducted using Question 7 and Question 8 of the survey.

Question 7: Which form of communication do you prefer the most (select ONLY one)?

- *Paper Newsletters*

- *Email*

- *Facebook*

- *Twitter*

- *Instagram*

- *Blogs*

- *Websites*

- *Blackboard Connect (Telephone Call System)*

- *Smartphone Apps (Remind, Group Me, etc)*

There were 97 participants who responded to this question. Email, smartphone apps, and Blackboard Connect generated the most selections from stakeholders with email receiving 33 selections, Blackboard Connect receiving 19 selections, and smartphone apps receiving 22 selections. Surprisingly, Facebook was only selected by 3 participants. Also, as represented in Figure 6, Twitter, Instagram, and blogs were not chosen by any participants.

Question 8: Which form of communication do you prefer the least (select ONLY one)?

- *Paper Newsletters*

- *Email*

- *Facebook*

- *Twitter*

- *Instagram*

- *Blogs*

- *Websites*

- *Blackboard Connect (Telephone Call System)*

- *Smartphone Apps (Remind, Group Me, etc)*

There were 98 participants who responded to this question. As represented in Figure 7, newsletters, Facebook, Twitter, and blogs were the least popular communication channels for stakeholders. Paper newsletters received 24 votes, Facebook received 14 votes, Twitter received 15 votes, and blogs received 16 votes. Instagram and smartphone apps received the least amount of votes from stakeholders, indicating that these methods are most preferred versus the other options available.

Appendix I provides the responses to the open-ended question that allowed for suggestions concerning improving communication efforts between district administrators and school administrators. Appendix J provides the responses to the open-ended question that allowed for suggestions concerning improving communication between administrators, faculty, staff, students, parents, and community members of the Public Schools of Robeson County.

Description of Group 2 Phase III Respondents

There were 63 respondents who participated in the Stakeholder Communication Follow-Up Survey that was available on the PSRC website from January 24 through February 22 of 2019. This electronic survey allowed for anonymous responses, as information that could identify participants was not tracked. The survey was available to all individuals who visited the

Most Preferred Communiction Channels

Channel	Value
Smartphone Apps	22
Blackboard Connect	19
Websites	6
Blogs	0
Instagram	0
Twitter	0
Facebook	6
Email	33
Paper Newsletters	11
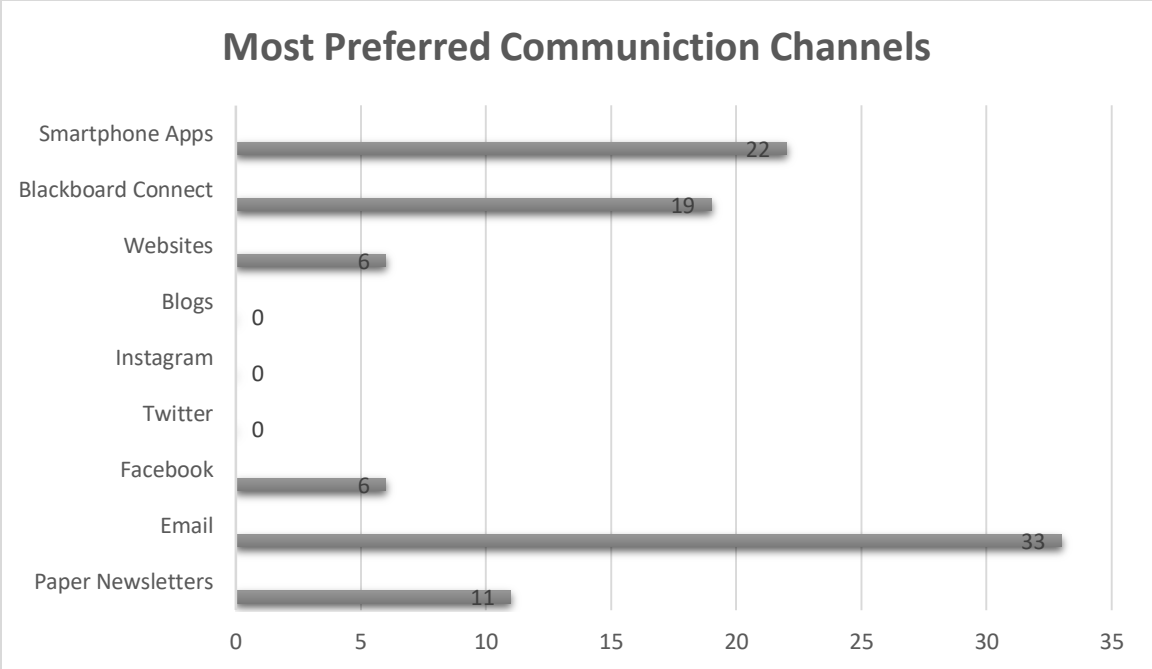
Figure 6. Most preferred communication channels as chosen by stakeholders.
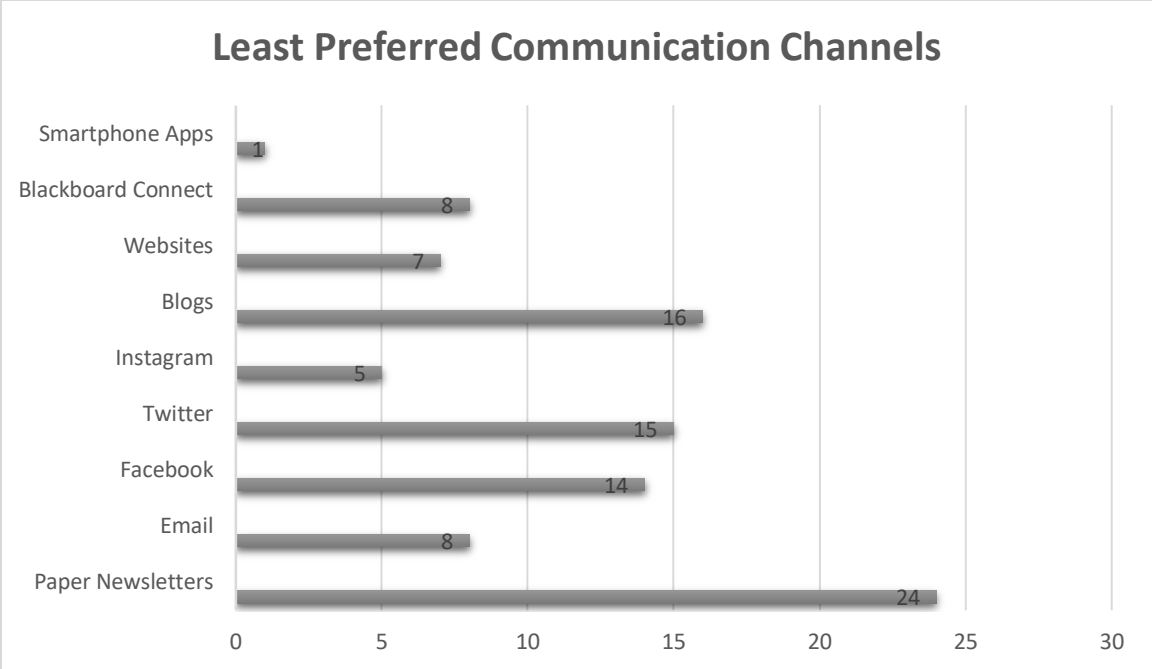
Figure 7. Least preferred communication channels as chosen by stakeholders.

PSRC website and chose to voluntarily participate. Respondents were not solicited for the survey.

Analysis of Group 2 Phase III Responses

Objective six was to determine if providing instantaneous information via social media has an impact on public opinion. The analysis for this objective was conducted using Question 6 of the survey, which allowed for an open-ended response.

Question 6: How does receiving information in a timely manner from your school(s) of interest impact your opinion of the Public Schools of Robeson County?
There were 51 participants who responded to this question. Each response was categorized using one of the following labels; Builds Trust with Stakeholders, Decreases Stakeholders' Frustration, Increases Stakeholders' Awareness, Makes Stakeholders Feel Valued, No Change/Negative Stakeholder Opinion (see Table 11).

Based on the responses of the participants, the majority indicated that providing stakeholders with information in a timely manner has a positive impact on their opinion of the local school district. This is compared to a small percentage of the participants who provided negative comments concerning the district and/or specific schools. Furthermore, most participants gave specific indications of how transparency within the district or local schools can better prepare them to participate in the educational needs of children. The unfiltered responses to Question 6 are located in Appendix K.

Table 11

Categorized Responses to Stakeholder Communication Follow-Up Survey: Question 6

Category	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Builds Trust with Stakeholders	8	15.7%
Decreases Stakeholders' Frustration	5	9.8%
Increases Stakeholders' Awareness	17	33.3%
Makes Stakeholders Feel Valued	14	27.5%
No Change/Negative Stakeholder Opinion	7	13.7%

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

This chapter is organized into four sections that include the summary of findings, comparison of results, professional development implications, and recommendations for improvement. The summary of findings section provides an overview of what this study discovered. The comparison of results section details the results as it relates to each phase and participant groups. The implications section examines the affect the professional development session with district leaders and school administrators had on communication with stakeholders. The recommendations for future improvement section provides a formidable plan for improving communication within the local school district.

The purpose of this small scale proof of concept study was to determine the role social media plays in communicating with stakeholders within a local school district. As social media use becomes more widespread among adults, educational leaders must develop effective and tactful methods to utilize this tool. This study targeted district leaders, school administrators, teachers, parents, and community members within Robeson County, a rural county located in southeastern North Carolina. The study addressed the following questions:

1. Which social media outlets are district leaders currently using (Superintendent, Assistant Superintendents, Board Members, Public Relations Officer, Curriculum Supervisors)?

2. Which social media outlets are school administrators currently using (Principals, Assistant Principals, Webmasters)?

3. What type of information do district leaders communicate with their stakeholders through social media outlets?

4. What type of information do school administrators communicate with their stakeholders through social media outlets?

5. What forms of communication do parents find most useful?

6. Does providing instantaneous information via social media have an impact on public opinion?

Nationally recognized school public relations specialist Nora Carr (2001, 2006a, 2006b, 2010, 2011a, 2011b) has provided extensive written research concerning the use of social media as a communication tool within educational settings. Although previous studies have been conducted to determine how school superintendents and school principals view the importance of social media and incorporate it into their comprehensive communication plans (Cox, 2012; Engebritson, 2011; Griffin, 2014; Hampton, 2009; Tienhaara, 2016), little research exists that examines the ideologies of all stakeholders in regards to the use of social media as a communication tool. Therefore, the researcher developed the survey instrument to be used to collect and analyze data for this study. District leaders and school administrators were administered a paper version of the survey through the office of Superintendent, Dr. Shanita Wooten. All other stakeholders voluntarily participated in an online survey.

Summary of Findings

In a study conducted by the National Association of Elementary School Principals and the National School Public Relations Association (2000), it was revealed that school secretaries, custodians, bus drivers, and cafeteria workers typically provide more information to the general public than teachers and school building administrations. It is essential that educational leaders provide stakeholders with information on a consistent basis. Likewise, educators must ensure

that the information provided is timely and of importance to those with whom we are communicating.

During the Phase I – Group 2 survey, 95 of the 100 participants answered Question 2, which helped determine the frequency of communication between schools and home. There were 28 respondents who indicated that they receive information a few times a week and 61.1% of the respondents indicated that they receive information on a weekly basis. Adversely, there were 17 respondents who indicated that they receive information less than once a month (see Figure 8). As determined by Question 9 of the Phase I – Group 2 survey, 86.6% of the 97 respondents indicated that the information they receive from their school of interest is extremely or very important. This is compared to only 5.2% who indicated that the information they receive is not so important or not important at all (see Figure 9). The purpose of Question 3 of the Phase I – Group 2 survey was to determine the satisfaction of stakeholders concerning the information they typically receive. Of the 97 respondents, 34 indicated that they were very satisfied with the type of information they receive and 42 indicated that they were satisfied with the type of information they receive. Of the remaining responses, 15 indicated they were neither satisfied or dissatisfied, 4 indicated they were dissatisfied, and 2 indicated they were very dissatisfied (see Figure 10).

Based on the analysis of results, it can be determined that communication efforts and transparency within the local school district are evident, although improvements are necessary in order to strive to positively impact public opinion.
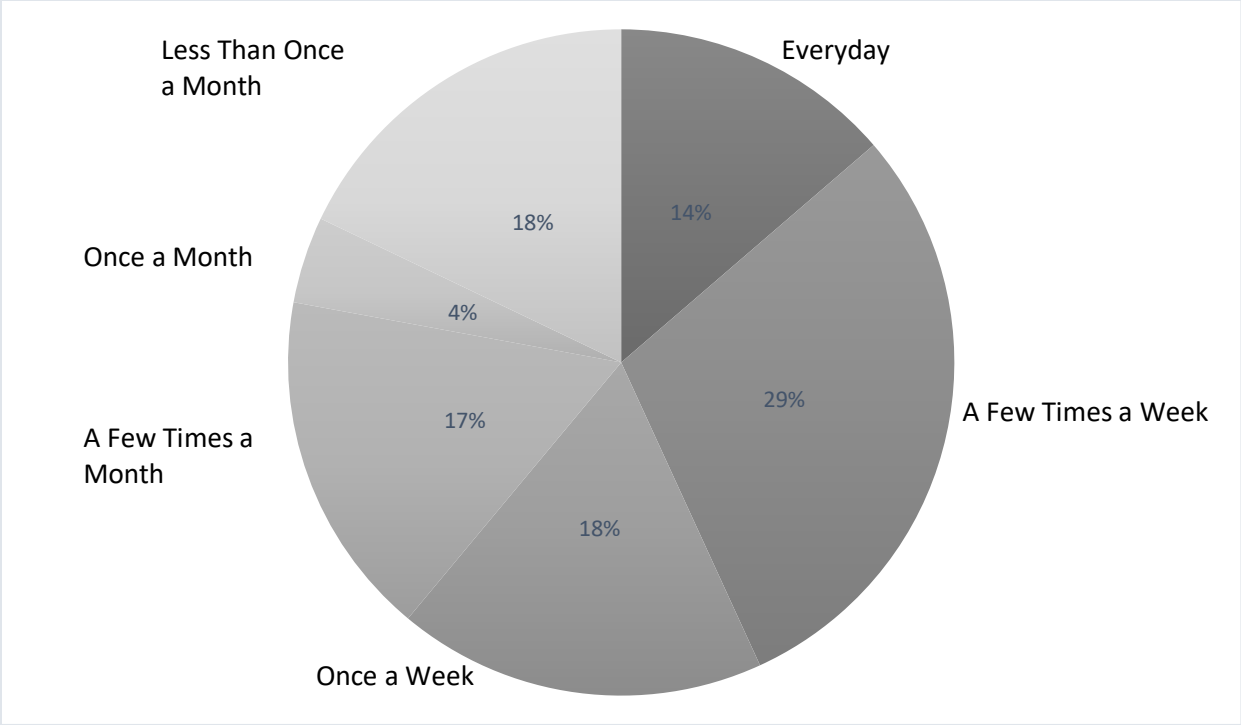
Figure 8. Stakeholder information frequency.
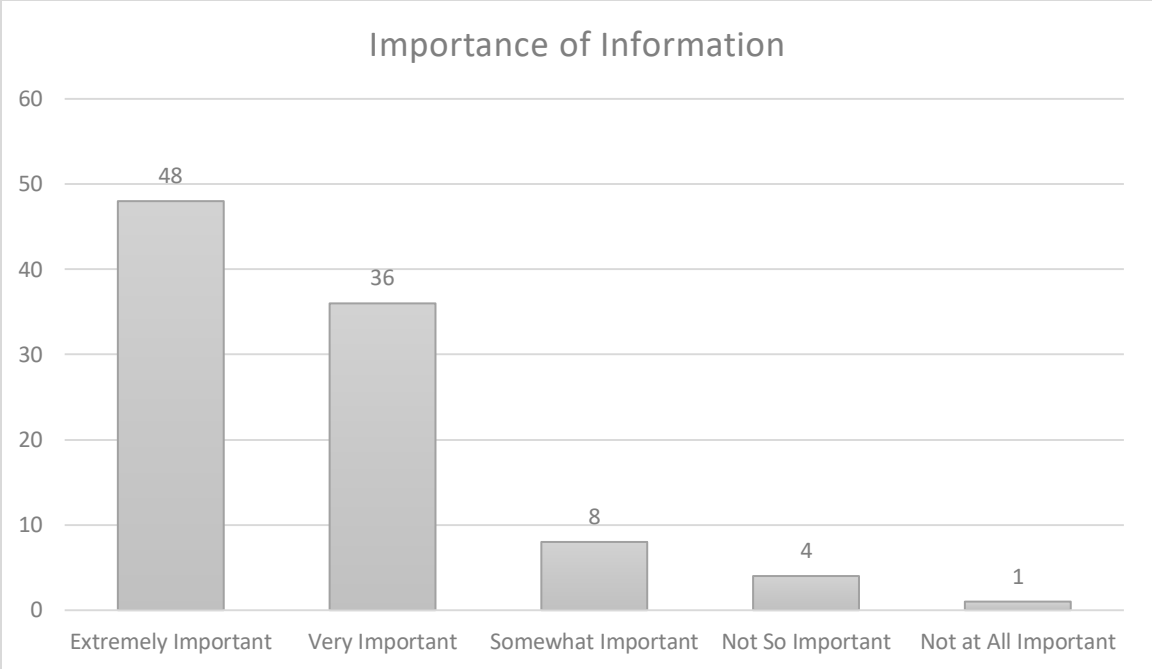
Figure 9. Importance of communication as ranked by stakeholders.
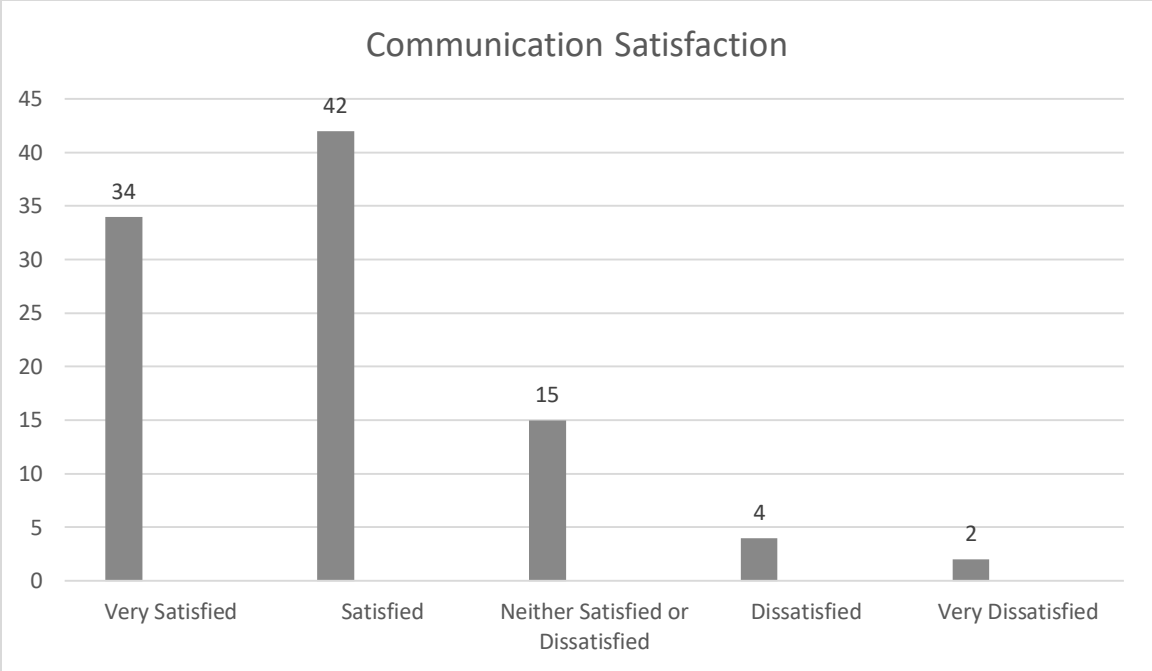
Figure 10. Stakeholder satisfaction with communication efforts.

Comparison of Results

School administrators and stakeholders were asked to identify the information that they deemed most important. School administrators were allowed to choose the top three types of information that they believed stakeholders are most interested in receiving. Stakeholders were allowed to choose all types of information that they are interested in receiving. The three most widely sought types of information by stakeholders as ranked by school administrators were as follows:

1. Information concerning sporting events, concerts, and student awards

2. Information concerning academic performance and student expectations

3. Information concerning upcoming exams and tests

Stakeholders indicated that they are most interested in receiving the following types of information:

1. Information concerning academic performance and student expectations

2. Information concerning upcoming exams and tests

3. Information concerning PTO and other parent meetings

Both groups indicated that information concerning school fundraisers and district-sponsored events are less of a priority than the other types of information available (see Figure 11).

School administrators ranked Facebook, Blackboard Connect, and smartphone apps as the three most effective forms of communication. Similarly, stakeholders identified email, Blackboard Connect, and smartphone apps as the forms of communication they prefer most when receiving information from their schools (see Figure 12). The least effective forms, as chosen by school administrators, were Twitter, Instagram, and blogs. In similar fashion,
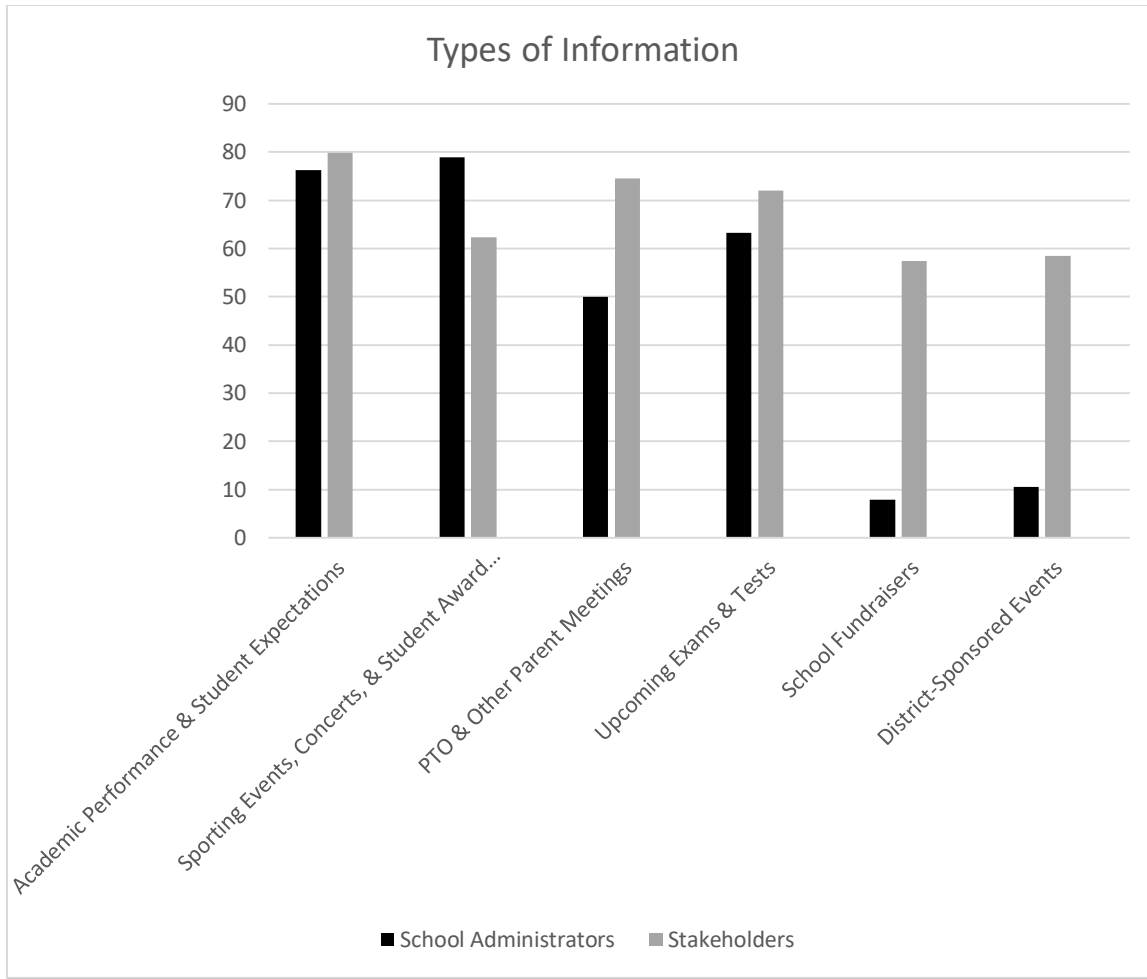
Figure 11. Information stakeholders are most interested in receiving.
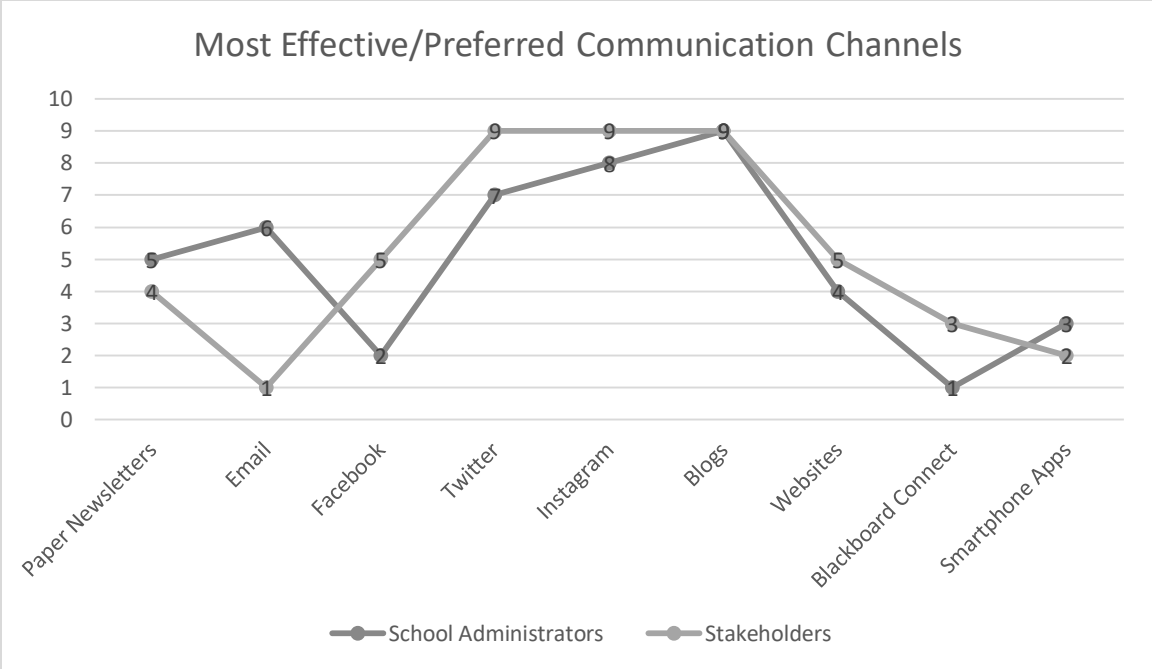
Figure 12. Most effective/preferred communication channels.

stakeholders identified paper newsletters, blogs, and Twitter as the least preferred communication channels (see Figure 13).

Based on the comparison of the most preferred and least preferred communication channels, stakeholders are interested in receiving information from their local schools through email, Instagram, school and teacher websites, Blackboard Connect, and smartphone apps.

Professional Development Implications

Previous research has identified educational leaders as the ones responsible for implementing and sustaining technology-related initiatives in schools (Felix, 2007; McLeod, 2007; Riedl, Smith, Ware, Wark, & Yount, 1998; Yee, 2000). Halawah (2005) determined that effective communication between principals and teachers can assist in creating positive school climate, which is a factor for successful school improvement. As explained by Ethridge (1989), "The best decisions made by principals are those reached through open and frequent communications with central office administrators, teachers, parents, and citizens" (p. 39).

The U.S. Department of Education (2010) previously identified social media outlets, specifically Twitter, as part of its *National Education Technology Plan* because of its accessibility, efficiency, and popularity. Few administrators receive technology training through the courses required to obtain a degree in administration (McLeod, 2007). Therefore, it is essential to understand the needs of district leaders and ensure that appropriate professional development occurs in an effort to increase communication skills. During Phase I – Group 1 of the methodology, district leaders were asked to identify their confidence in the use of various social media channels. Their responses (see Table 12) were tallied and used as the basis of the professional development session that occurred during Phase II of the study.
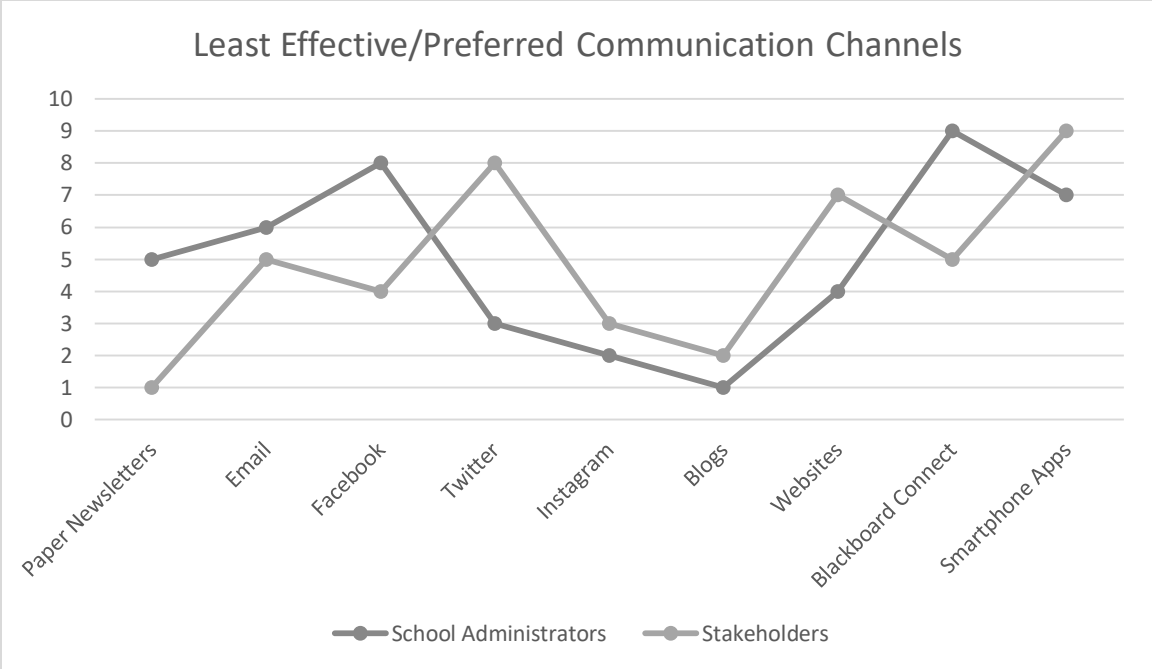
Figure 13. Least effective/preferred communication channels.

Table 12

District Leaders' Confidence in Using Social Media Outlets

Communication Channel	Very Confident	Confident	Somewhat Confident	Unconfident	Very Unconfident
Email	64	11	3	0	0
Facebook	39	12	8	11	8
Twitter	17	11	17	14	19
Instagram	14	7	16	20	21
Blogs	5	12	19	18	24
Blackboard Connect	37	16	11	8	6
Smartphone Apps	36	23	9	4	6

Results from Question 9 of the Phase I – Group 1 survey was also used for the district leaders' professional development session.

Question 9: Which social media outlets would you prefer to receive training on in order to begin implementation in your communication efforts (select all that apply)?

- *Email*

- *Facebook*

- *Twitter*

- *Instagram*

- *Blogs*

- *Websites*

- *Blackboard Connect (Telephone Call System)*

- *Smartphone Apps (Remind, Group Me, etc)*

District leaders identified Twitter, smartphone apps, Instagram, and blogs as the social media outlets they are most interested in receiving training on. Districts leaders were least interested in receiving training on Blackboard Connect, school/teacher websites, and Facebook (see Figure 14).

During the Phase III – Group 2 survey, participants were asked to identify the impact the professional development with district leaders had on communication efforts. The analysis for this objective was conducted using Question 2 and Question 3 of the Stakeholder Communication Follow-Up Survey.

Question 2: How has communication from your school(s) of interest changed during 2019 (select only one)?
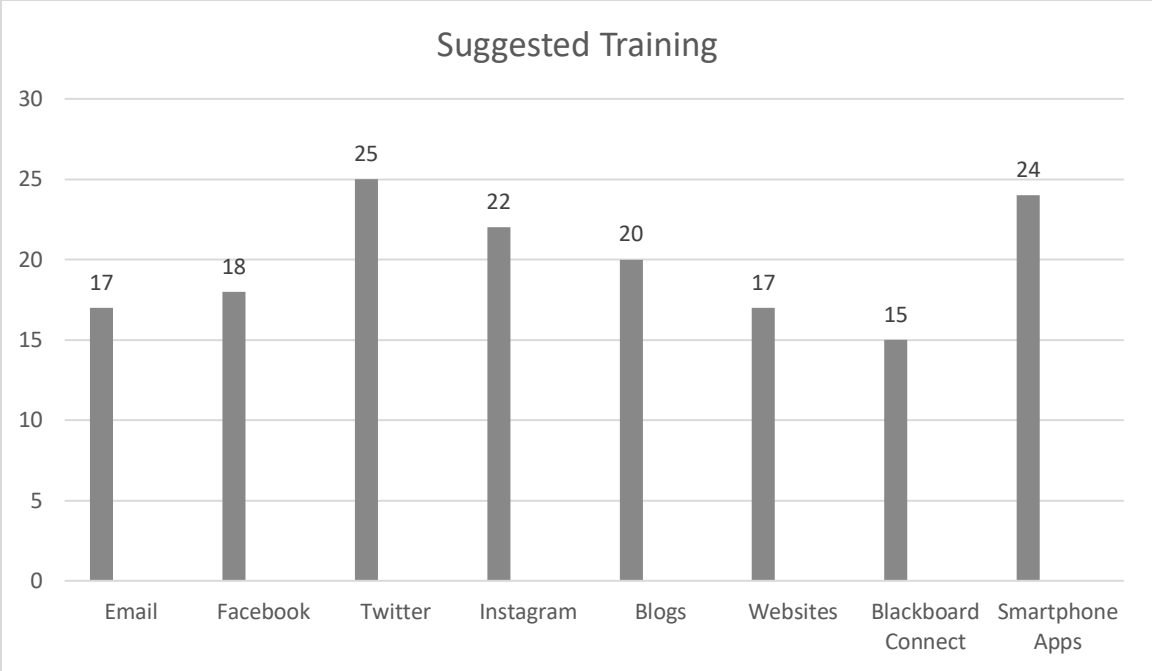
Figure 14. Suggested training as identified by district leaders.

- *Communication has remained the same (stakeholders are still receiving relevant information)*

- *Communication has remained the same (stakeholders are not receiving relevant information)*

- *Communication has increased*

- *Communication has decreased*

Of the 63 participants, 52 responded to this question. As represented in Figure 15, 42.3% of the respondents indicated that communication remained the same at their school, yet they are still receiving relevant information. Additionally, 15.4% of the respondents indicated that communication remained the same at their school, and relevant information is still not being provided to stakeholders. Finally, 30.8% of the respondents indicated that communication increased while 11.5% indicated that communication decreased.

Question 3: What type of information are you receiving that you were not receiving before (select all that apply)?

- *Information concerning academic performance and student expectations*

- *Information concerning sporting events, concerts, and student award programs*

- *Information concerning PTO and other parent meetings*

- *Information concerning upcoming exams and tests*

- *Information concerning school fundraisers*

- *Information concerning district-sponsored events*

Of the 63 participants, 55 responded to this question. Information concerning academic performance and student expectations was selected by 47.3% of the respondents and information concerning PTO and other parent meetings was selected by 41.8% of the respondents.

Change in Communication

Remained the Same
(Still Not Receiving Info)

Increase in
Communication

Remained the
Same (Still
Receiving Info

Decrease in
Communication
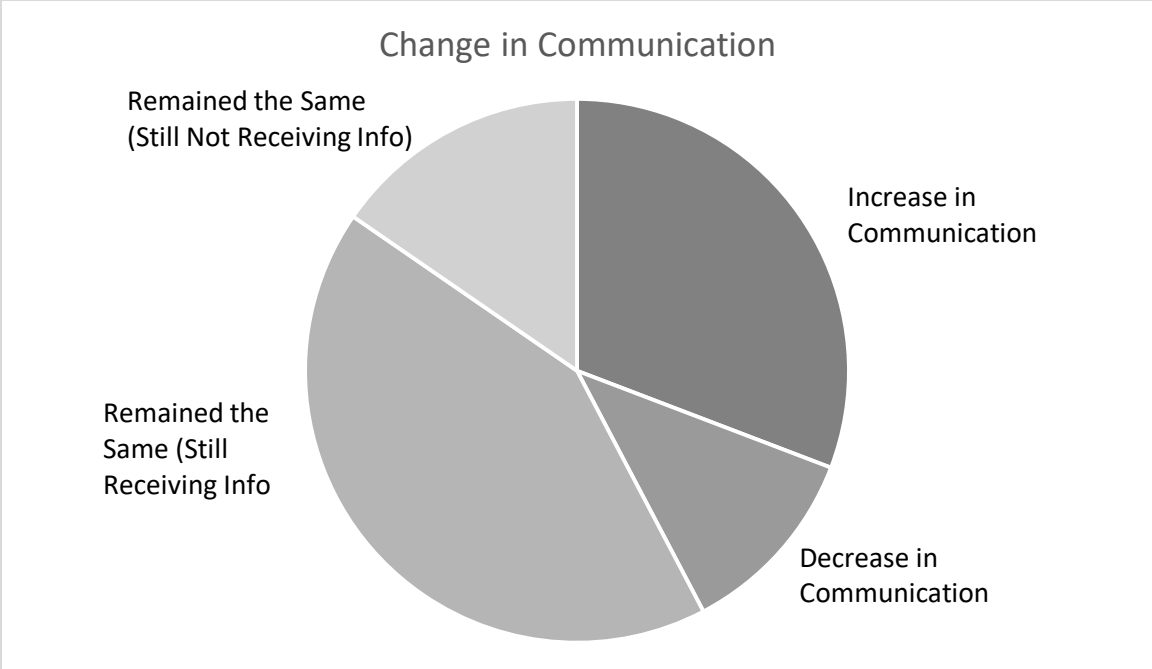
Figure 15. Communication change as rated by stakeholders.

Information concerning district-sponsored events, as well as information concerning school fundraisers were selected by a lower percentage of respondents than any other categories (see Table 13).

Bolman and Deal (2013) described part of their leadership framework as having a symbolic component, where leaders implement symbolic elements that give meaning and purpose to work and help build a positive culture. With the popularity of social media in today's society, the implementation of social media in education presents school administrators with concerns such as privacy issues, cyber bullying, and the replication and manipulation of content posted on social media (Huffman, 2013). Therefore, it is acceptable to require district leaders to participate in effective, efficient, and proper social media use when communicating with stakeholders. Use of social media for parent-teacher communication involves parents and teachers. Schools might also want to consider professional development opportunities that include parents and teachers, as well as ensuring faculty and staff review school responsible use policies regarding privacy and safety concerns of using social media to communicate with parents.

Recommendations for Improvement

Love it or hate it, social media is a tool that must be acknowledged and utilized by school districts if they wish to keep pace with their potentially technology savvy neighbors. Social media outlets provide educators with the ability to share successes on a frequent and immediate basis. According to Mrs. Karen Brooks-Floyd, Assistant Superintendent of Administration, Community Engagement and Auxiliary Services, the Public Schools of Robeson County does not have a comprehensive communication plan in place (personal communication, March 7, 2019). In order for the local school system to move forward and intentionally capture the interest

Table 13

Information Stakeholders Receive Since District Leader Professional Development

Question	Percentage of Respondents
Information concerning academic performance and student expectations	47.3%
Information concerning sporting events, concerts, and student award programs	31.0%
Information concerning PTO and other parent meetings	41.8%
Information concerning upcoming exams and tests	38.2%
Information concerning school fundraisers	21.8%
Information concerning district-sponsored events	20.0%

of its stakeholders, it is essential to create a comprehensive communication plan and include

social media as a necessary aspect. Additionally, a policy outlining the use of social media must

be incorporated to govern acceptable social media use.

Several school districts within North Carolina have created such policies to serve as a

guideline to provide direction for instructional employees, students, and the school district when

participating in online social media activities. Many systems have included *Employee Use of

Social Media* as a division of their Board Policy Manual in an effort to remind school employees

that they are responsible for their public conduct even when not acting in their capacities as

school system employees. Table 14 provides a list of schools throughout the state who have

established guidelines for social media use in recognition of the importance of employees,

students, and parents collaborating, engaging, learning, and sharing in digital environments as

part of the 21st Century learning. Various school systems throughout the country have also

incorporated social media policies as the foundation of the framework to facilitate the timely

dissemination of information (see Table 15). Likewise, higher-education facilities have

acknowledged the normalcy of social media and the influence these channels have on

communication for university communities (see Table 16). Therefore, university administrators

have outlined regulations in an attempt to ensure the institutions and employees are properly

portrayed, promoted, and protected. Additionally, the policies serve as guidelines to coach

university personnel on how to balance their affiliation with personal conversation.

Study Summary

Using social media as a communication tool has become a day-to-day operation that

humans incorporate into their personal and professional lives. As social media outlets become

more acceptable, prominent, and user-friendly, the frequency in which it is used will grow

Table 14

NC School Systems with Employee Use of Social Media Policies

School System	Number of Schools
Carteret County Public Schools	18
Catawba County Schools	28
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	170
Dare County Schools	11
Duplin County Schools	16
Guilford County Schools	126
Johnston County Public Schools	46
Mooresville Graded School District	8
Onslow County Schools	38
Scotland County Schools	12

Table 15

U.S. School Systems with Employee Use of Social Media Policies

School System	State
Chappaqua Central School District	New York
Fairfax County Public Schools	Virginia
Jackson Public Schools	Mississippi
Las Virgenes Unified School District	California
Madison Metropolitan School District	Wisconsin
Marysville School District	Washington
Sarasota County Schools	Florida

Table 16

Universities with Employee Use of Social Media Policies

Universities	State
Arizona State University	Arizona
Campbell University	North Carolina
Colorado State University	Colorado
North Carolina State University	North Carolina
Stanford University	California
University of Houston	Texas
University of Michigan	Michigan

exponentially. Educational leaders must capitalize on the advantages of available communication tools in an effort to prosper in the current educational climate. The challenge for public schools to remain relevant against other competitors, such as charter schools and private schools, requires the utilization of every available tool, which includes social media, to showcase the innovative learning that occurs on a daily basis.

District leaders must be forward-thinking and understand that resistance from school administrators and teachers will be encountered. However, through implementation of a comprehensive communication plan, the desired outcome of incorporating social media as a communication tool will provide transparency throughout the school system. In an effort to increase student achievement and positive public perception through increased communication with stakeholders, educational leaders must begin to "think outside the box" and implement strategies that meet the needs of today's students, parents, and society.

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APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board
4N-64 Brody Medical Sciences Building· Mail Stop 682
600 Moye Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834
Office **252-744-2914** · Fax **252-744-2284** · **www.ecu.edu/ORIC/irb**

Notification of Exempt Certification

From: Social/Behavioral IRB

To: Joshua Locklear

CC: Art Rouse

Date: 1/8/2019

Re: UMCIRB 18-000873
Social Media as a Communication Tool

I am pleased to inform you that your research submission has been certified as
exempt on 1/8/2019. This study is eligible for Exempt Certification under category #2.
It is your responsibility to ensure that this research is conducted in the manner reported in your
application and/or protocol, as well as being consistent with the ethical principles of the
Belmont Report and your profession.

This research study does not require any additional interaction with the UMCIRB unless there
are proposed changes to this study. Any change, prior to implementing that change, must be
submitted to the UMCIRB for review and approval. The UMCIRB will determine if the change
impacts the eligibility of the research for exempt status. If more substantive review is required,
you will be notified within five business days.

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

APPENDIX B: PANEL OF EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS

REVIEW OF SURVEYS

Name	Organization	Job Title	School/Department
Mrs. Denita Grimsley	Public Schools of Robeson County	Science Teacher	Magnolia Elementary
Mrs. Tina Hammonds	Public Schools of Robeson County	Data Manager	Magnolia Elementary
Dr. Robert Locklear	Public Schools of Robeson County	Assistant Superintendent	Curriculum, Instruction and Accountability
Mrs. Amber Maynor	Public Schools of Robeson County	Science Teacher	Purnell Swett High
Dr. James McDowelle	East Carolina University	Professor	Educational Leadership
Dr. William Rouse	East Carolina University	Professor	Educational Leadership
Mr. Antonio Wilkins	Public Schools of Robeson County	Principal	Union Chapel Elementary
Dr. Shanita Wooten	Public Schools of Robeson County	Superintendent	All Schools

APPENDIX C: DISTRICT LEADER/SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR SURVEY

(PHASE I – GROUP 1 SURVEY)

Thank you for taking time to complete this short survey. We appreciate your honesty and willingness to help improve PSRC communication efforts with all stakeholders.

1. What is your current position within PSRC?
   - ☐ School Administrator
   - ☐ District Administrator
   - ☐ District Curriculum Supervisor/Instructional Coach
2. How long have you held your current position within PSRC?
   - ☐ 0-4 years
   - ☐ 5-10 years
   - ☐ 11-15 years
   - ☐ 16-20 years
   - ☐ more than 20 years
3. If a School Administrator, which school are you currently based at?
   - ☐ Deep Branch Elementary
   - ☐ East Robeson Elementary
   - ☐ Green Grove Elementary
   - ☐ J.C. Hargrave Elementary
   - ☐ Long Branch Elementary
   - ☐ Magnolia Elementary
   - ☐ Oxendine Elementary
   - ☐ Parkton Elementary
   - ☐ Pembroke Elementary
   - ☐ Peterson Elementary
   - ☐ Piney Grove Elementary
   - ☐ Prospect Elementary
   - ☐ R.B. Dean Elementary
   - ☐ Rex-Rennert Elementary
   - ☐ Rosenwald Elementary
   - ☐ Rowland Norment Elementary
   - ☐ St. Pauls Elementary
   - ☐ Tanglewood Elementary
   - ☐ Union Chapel Elementary
   - ☐ Union Elementary
   - ☐ W.H. Knuckles Elementary
   - ☐ Fairgrove Middle
   - ☐ Fairmont Middle
   - ☐ L. Gilbert Carroll Middle
   - ☐ Littlefield Middle
   - ☐ Lumberton Jr. High

- ☐ Orrum Middle
- ☐ Pembroke Middle
- ☐ Red Springs Middle
- ☐ Rowland Middle
- ☐ St. Pauls Middle
- ☐ Townsend Middle
- ☐ Early College
- ☐ Fairmont High
- ☐ Lumberton Sr. High
- ☐ Purnell Swett High
- ☐ Red Springs High
- ☐ South Robeson High
- ☐ St. Pauls High

4. What type of information do you send to stakeholders (select all that apply)?
   - ☐ Information concerning academic performance and student expectations
   - ☐ Information concerning sporting events, concerts, and student award programs
   - ☐ Information concerning PTO and other parent meetings
   - ☐ Information concerning upcoming exams and tests
   - ☐ Information concerning school fundraisers
   - ☐ Information concerning district sponsored events

5. What type of information do you feel stakeholders are most interested in receiving (choose ONLY 3)?
   - ☐ Information concerning academic performance and student expectations
   - ☐ Information concerning sporting events, concerts, and student award programs
   - ☐ Information concerning PTO and other parent meetings
   - ☐ Information concerning upcoming exams and tests
   - ☐ Information concerning school fundraisers
   - ☐ Information concerning district sponsored events

6. Which forms of communication have you used in the past to communicate with stakeholders (select all that apply)?
   - ☐ Paper Newsletters
   - ☐ Email
   - ☐ Facebook
   - ☐ Twitter
   - ☐ Instagram
   - ☐ Blogs
   - ☐ Websites
   - ☐ Blackboard Connect (Telephone Call System)
   - ☐ Smartphone Apps (Remind, Group Me, etc)

7. Please rank the following forms of communication using numbers 1 through 9 (1=Most Effective – 9=Least Effective).
   - ☐ Paper Newsletters
   - ☐ Email
   - ☐ Facebook

☐ Twitter
☐ Instagram
☐ Blogs
☐ Websites
☐ Blackboard Connect (Telephone Call System)
☐ Smartphone Apps (Remind, Group Me, etc)

8. How confident are you in using the following social media outlets to communicate with stakeholders;

	Very Confident	Confident	Somewhat Confident	Unconfident	Very Unconfident
Email					
Facebook					
Twitter					
Instagram					
Blogs					
Blackboard Connect					
Smartphone Apps					

9. Which social media outlets would you prefer to receive training on in order to begin implementation in your communication efforts (select all that apply)?
☐ Email
☐ Facebook
☐ Twitter
☐ Instagram
☐ Blogs
☐ Websites
☐ Blackboard Connect
☐ Smartphone Apps

10. What suggestions can you offer to District Administrators that can improve communication efforts with School Administrators?

APPENDIX D: STAKEHODLER COMMUNICATION SURVEY

(PHASE I – GROUP 2 SURVEY)

Thank you for taking time to complete this short survey. We appreciate your honesty and willingness to help PSRC improve communication efforts with all stakeholders.

1. Which school(s) are you interested in receiving information from (select all that apply)?
   - ☐ Deep Branch Elementary
   - ☐ East Robeson Elementary
   - ☐ Green Grove Elementary
   - ☐ J.C. Hargrave Elementary
   - ☐ Long Branch Elementary
   - ☐ Magnolia Elementary
   - ☐ Oxendine Elementary
   - ☐ Parkton Elementary
   - ☐ Pembroke Elementary
   - ☐ Peterson Elementary
   - ☐ Piney Grove Elementary
   - ☐ Prospect Elementary
   - ☐ R.B. Dean Elementary
   - ☐ Rex-Rennert Elementary
   - ☐ Rosenwald Elementary
   - ☐ Rowland Norment Elementary
   - ☐ St. Pauls Elementary
   - ☐ Tanglewood Elementary
   - ☐ Union Chapel Elementary
   - ☐ Union Elementary
   - ☐ W.H. Knuckles Elementary
   - ☐ Fairgrove Middle
   - ☐ Fairmont Middle
   - ☐ L. Gilbert Carroll Middle
   - ☐ Littlefield Middle
   - ☐ Lumberton Jr. High
   - ☐ Orrum Middle
   - ☐ Pembroke Middle
   - ☐ Red Springs Middle
   - ☐ St. Pauls Middle
   - ☐ Townsend Middle
   - ☐ Early College
   - ☐ Fairmont High
   - ☐ Lumberton Sr. High
   - ☐ Purnell Swett High
   - ☐ Red Springs High

☐ South Robeson High
☐ St. Pauls High
2. How often do you receive information from your school(s) of interest?
    ☐ Every day
    ☐ A few times a week
    ☐ About once a week
    ☐ A few times a month
    ☐ Once a month
    ☐ Less than once a month
3. How satisfied are you with the information you receive from your school(s) of interest?
    ☐ Very satisfied
    ☐ Satisfied
    ☐ Neither satisfied or dissatisfied
    ☐ Dissatisfied
    ☐ Very dissatisfied
4. What type of information do you normally receive (select all that apply)?
    ☐ Information concerning academic performance and student expectations
    ☐ Information concerning sporting events, concerts, and student award programs
    ☐ Information concerning PTO and other parent meetings
    ☐ Information concerning upcoming exams and tests
    ☐ Information concerning school fundraisers
    ☐ Information concerning district sponsored events
5. What type of information are you interested in receiving (select all that apply)?
    ☐ Information concerning academic performance and student expectations
    ☐ Information concerning sporting events, concerts, and student award programs
    ☐ Information concerning PTO and other parent meetings
    ☐ Information concerning upcoming exams and tests
    ☐ Information concerning school fundraisers
    ☐ Information concerning district sponsored events
6. Which forms of communication are used at your school(s) of interest to communicate with parents and community members (select all that apply)?
    ☐ Paper Newsletters
    ☐ Email
    ☐ Facebook
    ☐ Twitter
    ☐ Instagram
    ☐ Blogs
    ☐ Websites
    ☐ Blackboard Connect (Telephone Call System)
    ☐ Smartphone Apps (Remind, Group Me, etc)

7. Which form of communication do you prefer the most (select ONLY one)?
    ☐ Paper Newsletters

- ☐ Email
- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Twitter
- ☐ Instagram
- ☐ Blogs
- ☐ Websites
- ☐ Blackboard Connect (Telephone Call System)
- ☐ Smartphone Apps (Remind, Group Me, etc)

8. Which form of communication do you prefer the least (select ONLY one)?
   - ☐ Paper Newsletters
   - ☐ Email
   - ☐ Facebook
   - ☐ Twitter
   - ☐ Instagram
   - ☐ Blogs
   - ☐ Websites
   - ☐ Blackboard Connect (Telephone Call System)
   - ☐ Smartphone Apps (Remind, Group Me, etc)

9. How important is the information you receive from your school(s) of interest?
   - ☐ Extremely important
   - ☐ Very important
   - ☐ Somewhat important
   - ☐ Not so important
   - ☐ Not at all important

10. What suggestions can you offer to help the Public Schools of Robeson County improve communication with faculty and staff, students, parents, and community members?

APPENDIX E: EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE WITH JARED COLE WILKINS

Survey for District Website

Joshua Locklear <joshua.locklear@robeson.k12.nc.us>   Fri, Nov 16, 2018, 9:16 AM
to Jared, Shanita, Robert

Mr. Cole,

The following link is for a survey that needs to be accessible through the district website. The title for the survey is; **Stakeholder Communication Survey** and it needs to be available on the website for approximately 30 days. I met with Dr. Wooten and Dr. Locklear last night to discuss this and have included them in the email so they can verify this.

Thank you so much and please let me know if you have any questions.

Jared Cole Wilkins <jared.wilkins@robeson.k12.nc.us>   Fri, Nov 16, 2018, 10:43 AM
to me, Shanita, Robert

I need the direct URL web address for the survey. What you have provided is an HTML widget script. I also need a desired start and end date. Should this be displayed on a slide in the Media Rotator or just a link under Announcements on the homepage?

Cole Wilkins
District Technology Specialist
Public Schools of Robeson County
jared.wilkins@robeson.k12.nc.us
O: 910 272-5006

Joshua Locklear <joshua.locklear@robeson.k12.nc.us>   Fri, Nov 16, 2018, 10:58 AM
to Jared, Shanita, Robert

This should be the appropriate link

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2L9WBKT

Also, if possible, begin the survey today and let it be available through December 15 and displayed in the Media Rotator.

Thank You

Public Schools of Robeson County
District Leader and Principal Meeting
Wednesday, January 16, 2019
3:30 pm – 4:30 pm
Central Office Conference Room

Professional Development – Communication Strategies

Welcome/Introduction   Dr. Robert Locklear

Importance of Communication   Mr. Joshua Locklear

Push for Social Media   Mr. Joshua Locklear

Principal Survey Results   Mr. Joshua Locklear

Stakeholder Survey Results   Mr. Joshua Locklear

Communication Strategies…

    Remind App   Dr. Tara Bullard (Rowland-Norment Elementary)

    Smore.com   Mr. Anthony Barton (Pembroke Middle)

    Twitter   Mrs. Sandra Evans (K-8 Curriculum Supervisor)

    Webpage Design   Mrs. Hawhana Locklear (Fairgrove Middle)

Conclusion   Mr. Joshua Locklear

Closing   Dr. Robert Locklear

APPENDIX G: EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE WITH DR. BULLARD

Principal Meeting Wednesday, 1/16/2019
Inbox   x

Joshua Locklear <joshua.locklear@robeson.k12.nc.us>   Fri, Jan 11, 10:29
                                                                                                                                        AM

Dr. Bullard

On Wednesday at 3:30 pm, I will be meeting with principals at the Central Office to discuss the results from the communication survey.

I am asking that you share your experience with using Remind as a communication outlet. Specifically, inform principals of the simplicity of Remind, how you use it for your school, and why you think it is an effective form of communication.

As discussed, this does not have to be a drawn out discussion but just sharing communication strategies with colleagues who are interested in receiving more information about social media tools.

Thank you so much for your willingness to participate in this professional development session.

--
Joshua D Locklear
Assistant Principal
Magnolia Elementary
(910) 671-6070

*"If you can't fly, then run, if you can't run, then walk, if you can't walk, then crawl, but whatever you do, you have to keep moving forward." - **Martin Luther King Jr.***

"Support each child in becoming a literate, accomplished, responsible, and compassionate citizen."

APPENDIX H: STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATION SURVEY (PHASE III)

Principal Meeting Wednesday, 1/16/2019

Joshua Locklear <joshua.locklear@robeson.k12.nc.us>   Fri, Jan 11, 11:00 AM

Mr. Barton

On Wednesday at 3:30 pm, I will be meeting with principals at the Central Office to discuss the results from the communication survey.

I am asking that you share your experience with using Smore.com as a communication outlet. Specifically, inform principals of the simplicity of Smore.com, how you use it for your school, and why you think it is an effective form of communication.

As discussed, this does not have to be a drawn out discussion but just sharing communication strategies with colleagues who are interested in receiving more information about social media tools.

Thank you so much for your willingness to participate in this professional development session.

--
Joshua D Locklear
Assistant Principal
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APPENDIX I: EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE WITH MS EVANS

Principal Meeting Wednesday 1/16/2019

Joshua Locklear <joshua.locklear@robeson.k12.nc.us>   Fri, Jan 11, 10:28 AM

Ms. Evans

On Wednesday at 3:30 pm, I will be meeting with principals at the Central Office to discuss the results from the communication survey.

I am asking that you share your experience with using Twitter as a communication outlet. Specifically, inform principals of the simplicity of Twitter, how you use it for your department, and why you think it is an effective form of communication.

As discussed, this does not have to be a drawn out discussion but just sharing communication strategies with colleagues who are interested in receiving more information about social media tools.

Thank you so much for your willingness to participate in this professional development session.

--
Joshua D Locklear
Assistant Principal
Magnolia Elementary
(910) 671-6070

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APPENDIX J: EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE WITH MS HAWHANA

Principal Meeting Wednesday, 1/16/2019

Joshua Locklear <joshua.locklear@robeson.k12.nc.us>　　　　　Fri, Jan 11, 11:13 AM

Ms. Hawhana,

On Wednesday at 3:30 pm, I will be meeting with principals at the Central Office to discuss the results from the communication survey.

I am asking that you share your experience with linking your calendar to your webpage as a communication outlet. Specifically, inform principals of the simplicity of having the calendar visible on the webpage, how you use it for your school, and why you think it is an effective form of communication.

As discussed, this does not have to be a drawn out discussion but just sharing communication strategies with colleagues who are interested in receiving more information about social media tools.

Thank you so much for your willingness to participate in this professional development session.

--
Joshua D Locklear
Assistant Principal
Magnolia Elementary
(910) 671-6070

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APPENDIX K: STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATION FOLLOW-UP SURVEY

(PHASE III – GROUP 2 SURVEY)

Thank you for taking time to complete this short survey. We appreciate your honesty and willingness to help improve PSRC communication efforts with all stakeholders.

1. Which school(s) are you interested in receiving information from (select all that apply)?
   - ☐ Deep Branch Elementary
   - ☐ East Robeson Elementary
   - ☐ Green Grove Elementary
   - ☐ J.C. Hargrave Elementary
   - ☐ Long Branch Elementary
   - ☐ Magnolia Elementary
   - ☐ Oxendine Elementary
   - ☐ Parkton Elementary
   - ☐ Pembroke Elementary
   - ☐ Peterson Elementary
   - ☐ Piney Grove Elementary
   - ☐ Prospect Elementary
   - ☐ R.B. Dean Elementary
   - ☐ Rex-Rennert Elementary
   - ☐ Rosenwald Elementary
   - ☐ Rowland Norment Elementary
   - ☐ St. Pauls Elementary
   - ☐ Tanglewood Elementary
   - ☐ Union Chapel Elementary
   - ☐ Union Elementary
   - ☐ W.H. Knuckles Elementary
   - ☐ Fairgrove Middle
   - ☐ Fairmont Middle
   - ☐ L. Gilbert Carroll Middle
   - ☐ Littlefield Middle
   - ☐ Lumberton Jr. High
   - ☐ Orrum Middle
   - ☐ Pembroke Middle
   - ☐ Red Springs Middle
   - ☐ Rowland Middle
   - ☐ St. Pauls Middle
   - ☐ Townsend Middle
   - ☐ Early College
   - ☐ Fairmont High
   - ☐ Lumberton Sr. High
   - ☐ Purnell Swett High

- ☐ Red Springs High
- ☐ South Robeson High
- ☐ St. Pauls High

2. How has communication from your school(s) of interest changed within the past month (select ONLY one)?
   - ☐ Communication has remained the same *(stakeholders are still receiving relevant information)*
   - ☐ Communication has remained the same *(stakeholders are not receiving relevant information)*
   - ☐ Communication has increased
   - ☐ Communication has decreased

3. What type of information are you receiving that you were not receiving before (select all that apply)?
   - ☐ Information concerning academic performance and student expectations
   - ☐ Information concerning sporting events, concerts, and student award programs
   - ☐ Information concerning PTO and other parent meetings
   - ☐ Information concerning upcoming exams and tests
   - ☐ Information concerning school fundraisers
   - ☐ Information concerning district sponsored events
   - ☐ We are still receiving the same type of information

4. Which form of communication do you prefer the most (select ONLY one)?
   - ☐ Paper Newsletters
   - ☐ Email
   - ☐ Facebook
   - ☐ Twitter
   - ☐ Instagram
   - ☐ Blogs
   - ☐ Websites
   - ☐ Blackboard Connect (Telephone Call System)
   - ☐ Smartphone Apps (Remind, Group Me, etc)

5. Which form of communication do you prefer the least (select ONLY one)?
   - ☐ Paper Newsletters
   - ☐ Email
   - ☐ Facebook
   - ☐ Twitter
   - ☐ Instagram
   - ☐ Blogs
   - ☐ Websites
   - ☐ Blackboard Connect (Telephone Call System)
   - ☐ Smartphone Apps (Remind, Group Me, etc)

6. How does receiving information in a timely manner from your school(s) of interest impact your opinion of the Public Schools of Robeson County?

Follow-Up Communication Survey
Inbox   x

Joshua Locklear <joshua.locklear@robeson.k12.nc.us>   Wed, Jan 23, 11:15 AM

to Jared, Shanita, Robert

Mr. Cole,

The following link is for a Follow-Up Survey that needs to be displayed in the Media Rotator on the PSRC Webpage. Please make it accessible beginning Thursday (January 24) through Friday (February 22). The title for the survey is Stakeholder Communication Follow-Up Survey. I have included Dr. Wooten and Dr. Locklear in the email to confirm.

Thanks for all your help!

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/9TLLPXB

--
Joshua D Locklear
Assistant Principal
Magnolia Elementary
(910) 671-6070

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"Support each child in becoming a literate, accomplished, responsible, and compassionate citizen."

APPENDIX M: DISTRICT LEADER RESPONSES TO OPEN-ENDED QUESTION

(PHASE I – GROUP 1 SURVEY)

What suggestions can you offer to District Administrators that can improve communication

efforts with school administrators?

Curriculum Supervisors/Instructional Coaches

- Increase communication through smartphone apps

- Create school social media pages and provide daily updates

- Provide consistent communication

- Incorporate various media outlets

- Provide communication through a variety of platforms at the same time

- Ensure tactful and relevant communication occurs

- Use more forms of social media as well as email

- Provide more frequent and consistent communication

- Poll administrators to see what forms of communication they prefer

- Update parent information on a frequent basis

Department Supervisors

- Attack with many forms of communication, not just one or two

- Poll administrators to understand needs and survey suggestions

- Always provide up-to-date training and provide constant emails

- Increase face-to-face meetings and poll the needs of school administrators

- Email administrators on a daily or weekly basis

- Provide administrators with trainings on a monthly or quarterly basis

District Administrators

- Increase the use of Remind app because the updates are fast and effective

- Train all staff on protocols of using social media

- Increase face-to-face meetings and communication through email

- Increase focus on effective communication with all stakeholders

- Ensure that principals read emails and hold them accountable for time sensitive information

- Weekly updates provided by PSRC in order to achieve effective communication

School Administrators

- Increase communication through email

- Provide staff development on various social media outlets

- Please text or communicate with school administrators before posting information on social media or sending to all PSRC employees

- Visit schools to see what administrators and staff are doing on a daily basis

- Text administrators concerning time sensitive information

- Acknowledge when emails from school administrators have been received by district administrators

- Contact administrators directly to ensure we have the correct information to share with our staff

- Provide communication in a variety of ways – I don't use Facebook so if information is only available through that outlet, staff and parents notify me of information before I receive it from Central Office

- The district does a very good job with open communication

- Communicate through email or another source that allows school administrators to receive information directly

- Incorporate the local newspaper and radio station as a communication strategy

- Communication is fine within PSRC

- Provide weekly updates with information about what is going on in the district

- Continue doing what you are doing

- Increase communication with school administrators through the use of text messages, remind app, email, and monthly meetings

- Ensure school administrators receive information before it is released to the general public

- Use apps that allow school administrators to communicate directly with superintendent and assistant superintendents

- Please contact administrators with important information before it becomes available to the public via social media

- Visit schools more often

- Discontinue the use of No-Caller ID on district administrator cellular devices

- More visibility from superintendent and assistant superintendents in local schools

- Communication efforts are good for the most part

- Notify school administrators more often, through the use of email, concerning meetings that are taking place within the district

- Increase face-to-face communication

- Call or text administrators directly before releasing information to the general public

- Improve on communication, collaboration, and trust between district administrators and school administrators

- Determine a simpler method for parents to update their telephone numbers

- Provide school administrators with frequent reminders

- Inform administrators through text messages on issues such as weather delays and school cancellations

- Provide school administrators with direct telephone calls concerning two hour delays, school cancelations, and similar emergencies

APPENDIX N: STAKEHOLDER RESPONSES TO OPEN-ENDED QUESTION

(PHASE I – GROUP 2 SURVEY)

What suggestions can you offer to help the Public Schools of Robeson County improve communication with faculty and staff, students, parents, and community members?

- Promote the Career Center for what it is because it receives little publicity

- Use all forms of communication at all schools, except blogs, to ensure that everyone is informed

- End of the year report cards and testing results for middle and high school students should be mailed since they are not given to the students

- I believe communication is better than what it has been in the past

- So far the phone system (Blackboard Connect) works best

- Use local television stations for announce school closings

- I receive too many calls during the same week from my child's elementary school concerning unimportant information

- Increase activities that allow parental and community involvement in order to bring awareness to parents

- Enlist the advice, help, and presence of parents in school functions

- Hold students and parents more accountable for their school behaviors

- Provide more communication from teachers and administration of what is going on in the classroom and school

- Use the remind app more

- Increase communication between teachers and parents

- Inform parents about events that occur in schools and communities

- Teachers and staff should be made aware of information before it becomes available on social media

- Continue offering information on social media for parents

- Provide parent with information one week in advance

- Be willing to work with other agencies for the mutual benefit of all children

- Make sure staff are aware of events taking place at schools

- Update teacher webpages to show what students are learning in class

- Scheduled parent/teacher conferences to discuss the educational needs of students

- Please continue the lines of communication currently used to keep parents informed

- Increase transparency throughout the district with updated websites and student expectations

- Make staff aware of events taking place on campus and within the district

- Notify parents more often concerning student academic needs

- Thanks for the information you send parents

- Send more information pertaining to testing and student expectations so parents can become educated of what is acceptable

- Provide more communication from principals

- Provide follow-up communication about awards, programs, and testing

- All schools should have updated web pages with current pictures of activities students are participating in at school

- Remove the politics from the school system

- Update marquee signs at school and make sure they are functioning properly

- Make sure all information and announcements are sent in a timely manner so parents can plan for/make arrangements if needed

- I love the remind app

- Ask staff members the forms of communication they prefer the most

- Send information to parents using a variety of communication channels

- Current communication is great

- Establish a teacher workday that is only dedicated to parent conferences

- Texts through the remind app is wonderful

- Provide information at least 2 weeks prior

- Faculty and staff should receive emails from the district and from administrators in order to help them answer questions from students and parents

- Remind is a great tool that is implemented with a majority of teachers

- Updated school websites more often and continue to use the telephone call system

- Schools need to update their websites on a consistent basis

- Continue to use newsletters to communicate with parents who may not have access to technology

- Use a variety of communication methods

- Current forms of communication are great but the timing of information to parents is somewhat last minute

APPENDIX O: STAKEHOLDER RESPONSES TO OPEN-ENDED QUESTION

(PHASE III – GROUP 2 SURVEY)

How does receiving information in a timely manner from your school(s) of interest impact your

opinion of the Public Schools of Robeson County?

- I feel I am more aware of various topics, events, and issues at school

- I like it when I know my opinion is heard and appreciated

- Knowing when events are taking place help parents plan to be in attendance and support their children

- Communicating with parents decreases the amount of frustration parents experience when they are unaware of student expectations, upcoming events, and details concerning the education of students

- I am not satisfied with the education my child has received so far

- Helps me to feel important

- Provides parents with adequate time to prepare for the best interest and safety of students

- Increases positive opinion of schools and the school system because sharing information concerning schools helps me feel like an important part of the PSRC

- Allows the parents to trust the schools that their children attend

- Increases involvement of parents concerning the education of their children

- Changes my opinion of the schools for the better and allows me to understand what is happening in the Public Schools of Robeson County

- We need to continue to work toward increasing communication in order to decrease the amount of negative press the system receives

- It is important that teachers are able to trust the decisions that school administrators and Central Office make and changes they implement

- Receiving information as soon as possible helps parents adequately prepare

- It allows a positive mindset when everyone is on the same accord and information is shared with all

- Student achievement is positively affected and technology gives us the opportunity to stay abreast of events happening on a daily basis

- It makes me feel valued when I know what is going on

- Communication within the school system is still horrible

- It allows me, as a teacher, to be prepared and knowledgeable of what is expected of me from the principal and Central Office staff

- Communication has the power to build trust between administrators, teachers, parents, and community members and our school is working to increase communication efforts

- Timely communication keeps me informed of any upcoming events happening

- Receiving information in a timely manner helps me plan and organize my personal activities based on what is occurring at my child's school

- Teachers feel valued when information if relayed to them directly from their supervisors

- As a parent, my frustration is decreased and I am less likely to be upset with the system when I am able to prepare for school functions

- When parents know what is going on, we feel connected to the Public Schools of Robeson County

- It is important that I am made aware of school events in a timely manner such as award programs, open house, athletic competitions, and fundraisers so I can prepare my work schedule in order to attend and support my child

- I am very frustrated with our school system and feel that no one is concerned about moving forward

- Communication allows me to trust that leaders are making the decisions that are best for our students

- It allows for preparation on my part as a parent as well as staying up to date on my child's educational life

- Allows me to be an advocate and the voice for the educational needs of my child

- Receiving correct information is important so that parents can make informed decisions

- More communication with staff will continue to increase the opinion of the school system we are employed by and help us feel that we play an important role in the decision making process

- It helps me to have a better opinion of the school system and trust the people who are responsible for educating my child

- It lets me know that my school cares enough about me and my service to keep me informed about important information that pertains to me

- Administration is trying to change the atmosphere of the system in a negative way

- Communication positively affects my opinion a lot because it makes me feel wanted as an educator

- Teacher opinions matter and communicating with us is the best way to show it

- Makes stakeholders feel valuable

- Increases my opinion and decreases the frustration I have experienced in the past when I received information at the last minute or did not receive it at all

- Teachers and parents are not receiving information in a timely manner

- It makes me more favorable and trusting of the school system

- It increases my awareness about important events related to my children so I can plan ahead to support them in their endeavors in a timely manner

- I can always trust my child's teacher to inform me of upcoming events through text message and I love it

- Information is power and my frustrations have been decreased by the remind app

- Teachers and staff are still underappreciated because we do not receive any information in a timely manner

- As an educator, I expect my principal to value my opinion and communicate with me concerning decisions that can impact student achievement, working relationships, and the overall efficiency of the school

- The more information I receive continues to improve my opinion of the school system and allows me to help my children prepare for their education

- It allows me as a parent to better prepare my child for upcoming events for which you as educators have expectations

- Open lines of communication allow me to trust those who are responsible for making decisions

- Most times I receive information but it is at the last minute, which needs to change

- Knowing what occurs at schools provides parents with opportunities to make preparations and have discussions with their children