

A CASE STUDY OF COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND  
TEACHERS IN AN URBAN MIDDLE SCHOOL

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## **Dedication**

This work is dedicated to the memory of my cousin, Stuart Jeffrey Charlip, who showed me it could be done. It is also dedicated to my family including my husband, Brian Barber, who has always supported me throughout my learning journey, and my mother, Myra Salmirs, who willing slogged through my work to make it better.

## ABSTRACT

Roberta Salmirs Barber

### A CASE STUDY OF COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND TEACHERS IN AN URBAN MIDDLE SCHOOL

The purpose of this study was to explore the communication information, methods, and effectiveness between school administrators and teachers at a single middle school.

Understanding communication is vitally important because every function taken by school administrators or teachers involves some form of direct or indirect communication. This researched focused on the following three questions: (1) What is communicated by school administrators?, (2) How is information communicated by the school administrators?, and (3) What do teachers and school administrators perceive as effective or not effective? A descriptive case study was done to understand how a single school manages their internal communication and how effective both teachers and administrators believe it to be. The research methods included interviews with the principal and an assistant principal and a survey of the teachers. The four emerging themes included the principal's reliance on his video newsletter, teacher separation within the building, the use of email, and the lack of formal feedback. This context was important to present because it helped contextualize what issues the school faced, how this influenced the communication plan, and what was valued by the staff. Recommendations include creating a communication plan, creating a specific crisis communication plan, formalizing a feedback mechanism, and recognition of teachers as partners in educations. Keywords: K-12 principals, teacher communication, school communication plan, school administrators, communication barriers, feedback

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## **A Case Study of Communications Between School Administrators and Teachers in an Urban Middle School**

Each day, the principal, as the acknowledged leader of the school (Waters et al., 2004), communicates with individual teachers while running his schoolhouse (Bakkenes et al., 1999). What does that mean exactly? Communication means that when people exchange information, there is a common understanding (Lunenburg, 2010). In a school, principals use that common understanding to coordinate with the teachers in the building and improve teacher collaboration (Ndidi & Alike, 2018; Sezgin & Er, 2016). But communication has hidden layers to reach that common understanding. When the principal announces a faculty meeting “this afternoon,” there is a great deal of explicitly missing information. If a teacher is familiar with the school and the meetings, then she automatically interprets additional information including location, time, and expectations. If one is new to the school, all of this information is left out leaving the new teacher to either ask more questions, shift through other materials to find it, interpret based on her own personal experience, or simply not attend. Communication success or failures hinge on the understanding of the desired results (Goslin, 2012).

What is communication? Weaver (1953/2017) defines communication as “all processes in which one mind may affect another” (p. 136). It is exchanging messages between people (Botez, 2018). Each person in the exchange interprets a message individually (Gudykunst, 2012). The communicator needs to recognize the needs of the person receiving the information (Kelley et al., 2005). In fact, effective communication means that two participants attach similar meanings to a message (Gudykunst, 2012; Kelley et al., 2005; Lunenburg, 2010). If the person receiving the message takes the action intended, then the message is successfully received

(Weaver, 1953/2017). Effective communicators work to differentiate information delivery based on the receiver's needs (Kelley et al., 2005). Part of the differentiated delivery is the ability to recognize others' perspectives, which is critical in successful communications (Botez, 2018; Gudykunst, 2012). For example, if one person is always checking email on their phone and another never checks email except when they are at their desk, then an urgent piece of information may not get successfully communicated using email.

### **How Important is Communication in a School?**

Communication is an essential skill but it is not clear that teachers or administrators are trained in this (Okoli, 2017). Understanding communication is vitally important because every function taken by school administrators or teachers involves some form of direct or indirect communication. Effective communication is considered a hallmark of a successful principal (Halawah, 2005; Lunenburg, 2010). In a school, the communication burden to recognize various teachers and their needs begins with the principal (Brockmeier et al., 2005). Sharing information for the desired result is an essential skill but it is not clear that either principals, assistant principals, or teachers receive any training (Okoli, 2017). The other side of effective communication has serious implications for a school. When principal-to-teachers communication is insufficient, it can create teacher attrition at a school (Roberge, 2013). Teachers' job satisfaction is closely related to their relationship with the principal (Sezgin & Er, 2016). Further, if there are not open communications systems, then teachers will not report potential or real problems to the principal (Rafferty, 2003). The entire school suffers in this situation (Rafferty, 2003).

Halawah (2005) studied how positive communication between school principals affect the school climate. In his 2005 study, he suggested that "creating a collaborative environment

and open communication is a critical factor for successful school improvement” (Halawah, 2005, p. 341). Motoi (2017) studied employees in private organizations and found that “...the internal communication has the primary role of promoting a common goal-building. It is a social dialogue tool that is used to organize and manage the flow of information within the company and to disseminate information clearly and efficiently” (p. 177). Creating that open communication environment requires planning on the part of the principal (Lunenburg, 2010). Communication has a direct effect on the working environment (Clampitt & Downs, 1993; Roberge, 2013).

Effective communication requires school administrators to be aware of the many viewpoints of the teachers (Gorton & Alston, 2009). In general, administrators are communicating to influence the behaviors of these teachers and make them more aware of information (Carr, 2007). “Effective, successful leaders must have a realistic view of communication and its direct and indirect effects” (Ärlestig, 2007, p. 265). Each message should be formed for the intended audience. For example, when the administrator needs to communicate about the start of an event, they have to consider that the teachers need to arrive earlier than students. Everyone needs to be aware of their role and their start time. Essentially, a school administrator needs to have communication objectives for each group they address (Gorton & Alston, 2009; Gunther, McGowan, & Donegan, 2011).

The effective communicator should take into account how each participant prefers to use communication along with the needed frequency (Shin & Shin, 2016). Frequency can help teachers with reminders (Shin & Shin, 2016). At the same time, frequency can overwhelm teachers by the sheer number of items communicated in a set time period (Shin & Shin, 2016). The principal needs to find the balance of methods and frequency to be an effective

communicator. This ability to share communications effectively and lead the school is tied to the ability to forge relationships with others (Porterfield & Carnes, 2014; Weng & Tang, 2013).

## **Barriers**

School principals also need to consider the barriers to successfully communicating with teachers. One potential barrier is the accessibility of an open feedback system (Adelman, 2012; Men, 2016). Creating a robust feedback system using available technology enhances the school climate (Kelly et al., 2005; Weng & Tang, 2014). Another possible barrier and its solution is the social connections between the teachers (Spillane et al., 2001). The more teachers who share communications in a school, the more the message travels around the building (Spillane et al., 2001). Principals should facilitate the connections between new teachers and the current staff (Whitaker et al., 2019). In fact, this is an opportunity for a principal to guide a new teacher to a positive group of people instead of allowing isolation and negative-minded staff to be the influence (Whitaker et al., 2019).

It is also important for the principal to recognize their own vulnerability to message fatigue (Shin & Shin, 2016). Too many messages, many of which are not immediate or not important, can cause people to simply not act on them (Shin & Shin, 2016).

Another issue is the congruency between the larger school district culture and the smaller school-based culture (Sanina et al., 2017). Are the expectations at the school district the same as the expectations at the school? What happens if the district expects direct communication in the form of email, but the school expects it in the form of face-to-face meetings? Last, the method of communication can create a barrier. As a school leader, the principal's personal view of technology will influence how the entire school uses technology (Brockmeier et al., 2005; Weng

& Tang, 2014). While the school district will mandate certain technologies, the principal will direct the use of his preferred methodology for communication (Sanina et al., 2017).

### **Research Problem and Purpose Statement**

I want to study information communicated between school administrators and teachers because I want to find out what and how information is communicated along with its effectiveness, in order to outline the creation of a communications guidelines that fits the school's needs, technology resources, and teaching requirements.

### **Research Questions**

To understand what information is shared between administrators and teachers, a descriptive case study will be made of a large, urban Title 1 middle school. This will involve the school principal, assistant principals, and teachers in order to identify types of information, how it is shared, and how effective it is. The three research questions that will guide this study are as follows:

1. What is communicated by school administrators?
2. How is information communicated by the school administrators?
3. What do teachers and school administrators perceive as effective or not effective?

### **Literature Review**

Principal-to-teacher communication is a work-in-progress. Teachers will connect with different people throughout a school day or week in an organic system of movement. Teachers connect with administrators of different categories such as discipline and instruction. They connect with teammates by location, by grade level, by subject matter, by personal interests, and by student connections. The theoretical framework to describe a school communication system

must take into account the organic nature of communication and their connections to each other while acknowledging the principal is the main authority in the school.

### **Principal as the School Leader**

The school principal is the main authority of the school and controls communication with the teachers (Waters et al., 2004). Further, he sets his style of communicating with the staff (Waters et al., 2004). This reality, that the principal has more authority in the school than a classroom teacher, is important in understanding teacher groups and their responsibilities (Johnson et al., 2014). The principal is free to use his authority “to deliberately promote, redirect, or restrict the exercise of leadership by teachers in their school” (Johnson et al., 2014, p. 8). If a teacher wants to share information about an upcoming field trip opportunity with other teachers, the school principal can control access to full school communication methods, the timing of announcements, and has the authority to make or prevent certain announcements. Often these controls are assumed and it is up to the principal to determine what changes are made in the controls (Okuntun, 2014). The principal must actively change the default assumptions when it comes to communication.

A school principal, as the sole arbiter within the building, can be compared to a company chief executive officer (CEO). The CEO prefers face-to-face and uses a variety of forms of communication to share her message (Men, 2016). Responsive CEOs, those who show care and concern to their employees, are more likely to be considered effective communicators (Men, 2016). While it is not practical for a CEO or a school principal to visit with everyone, one of the practices employed by successful CEOs is an easy, open feedback system (Adelman, 2012; Men, 2016). Adelman (2012) found that successful CEOs were open and available and encouraging employees to talk to them. Specifically, CEOs spoke openly about not only the positive things

but also things that had gone wrong (Adelman, 2012). The employees felt that this made them more open to the honest dialog (Adelman, 2012). Adelman's study (2012) found that employees felt they were supporting their leaders by informing them of problems. This implies that school communication cannot be limited to one direction between a principal to a teacher. In the Lambersky (2016) study, teachers who did not consider their principals to be very good also believed that the principal did not listen to them. Conversely, the same study found that teachers who labeled their principals as adept said that the principal always acknowledged and sincerely thanked teachers for what they told him. Lambersky (2016) found that principals directly affect the teachers' attitudes in terms of the "allowing teacher's voices to be heard" (p. 401).

Even though communication can be distributed to allow teacher voices, authority is not equally shared (Johnson et al., 2014). The principal retains his authority and assigns tasks to others (Johnson et al., 2014). In terms of a school, communication becomes a system that is handled, repeated, and initiated by different people through the building (Spillane et al., 2001). This can create a problem when it is unclear on who has responsibility for communication. If a faculty meeting in a school is set and announced by the assistant principal, but the principal requires a change in time, who is responsible for updating teachers about the meeting?

### ***Principal's Responsibility for School Culture***

Part of the principal's responsibility is to create a shared culture (Waters et al., 2004). Teachers in a school develop common understandings and draw on "cultural, social and historical norms in order to think and act" (Spillane et al., 2001, p. 23). Without being aware of these historic norms, a principal can actually increase misunderstandings and prejudices (Rovai, 2007). Table 1 shows a conflict example between these school-wide norms by teachers and a

new to the building principal. Each has a background and culture that feeds these personal understandings, but without sharing can create conflict (Spillane et al., 2001).

**Table 1**

*Examples of Cultural, Social, and Historical Norms that Create Conflict in a School*

Participants	Cultural	Social	Historical
Teachers	Shared access to group announcements for information about clubs, field trips, sports & other school-related information	Teachers wear jeans and school shirt on Fridays	Dressing up for Halloween
Principals	Controlled access to full group announcements. Must go through a person as a portal control.	Professional attire at all times.	No costumes allowed in the building.

The results of the conflicts in Table 1 can mean a change in the school climate. The school climate encompasses safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the environmental structure of the building (Cohen et al., 2009). Teachers may stop sharing with the entire faculty and only share with those in their friend working group. Resentment may build between the principal and the teachers because of the perceived loss of value or shared commitment (Cohen et al., 2009). More importantly, principals have the power to change the school climate but may not have the feedback to do so (Kelley et al., 2005; Rafferty, 2005).

***Principal's Role in the School's Social Network.***

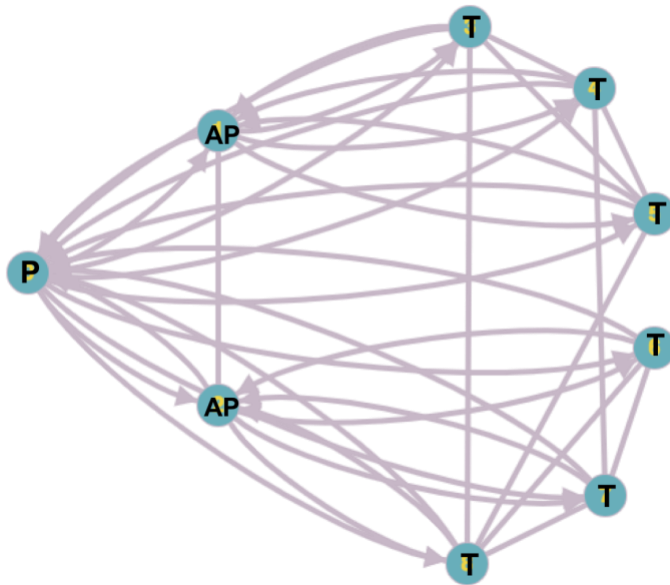
School administrators and teachers are part of a dynamic system that changes as their relationships change. Changes are constant at the school level as teachers become leaders, teachers leave the school, and new teachers are introduced into the school every year (Mital et al., 2014). In research by Gulyaev and Stonyer (2002), they state that the main focus is on the problem of communication between different systems. In a school, the different systems involve

both the teachers and school administrators, who move within the structure to play different roles and have various forms of communication in play (Gulyaev & Stonyer, 2002). A teacher may be a classroom math teacher and a member of the leadership team and a part of the personal learning community for eighth-grade math teachers. Each of those roles involves different communication relationships (Gulyaev & Stonyer, 2002). The school setting has many forms of communication systems ranging from face-to-face discussions to email blasts to the whole school. Focusing on individual teachers and their preferred forms of communication helps explain how communication works within the system.

Essentially, each person is viewed as interdependent, not independent, within the school structure (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). Between each person are connections or relational ties (Mital et al., 2014; Wasserman & Faust, 1994). Social network analysis identifies teachers, principals, and assistant principals as the nodes and their communication as the connectors between these nodes (Stepanyan et al., 2014). One aspect of principal leadership is where the principal facilitates teacher connections by assigning them to leadership positions or putting them in a specific personal learning communities (PLC) (Woodland & Mazur, 2019). Based on research from Mital et al. (2014) and Wasserman and Faust (1994), I created an image (Figure 1) to show the potential social network connections between principals (P), assistant principals (AP), and teachers (T) in a school. This shows that teachers engage with the principal and the assistant principals directly. It also highlights the connections teachers have with each other (Mital et al., 2014).

**Figure 1**

*Potential Social Network Connections in a School*



Connections between various nodes can be undirected (communication goes both ways) or directed (one-way communication) (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). Principals have directed communication with assistant principals and teachers. Assistant principals have directed communication with teachers within their subject or grade areas. Assistant principals have undirected communication with each other, as do teachers who communicate with others, not in their specific grade and subject area. Teachers tend towards relationships with those who teach the same subject, grade, or are housed on the same hallway (Mital et al., 2014). This tendency of teachers to make stronger connections with others who are like themselves is called homophily (Mital et al., 2014).

Mital et al. (2014) identified issues that affect communication in a school such as homophily and structural balance. In their framework for modeling a school, Mital and colleagues (2014) identified these key attributes involving support and relationships between

teachers. Homophily theory suggests that there are positive influences on communication if there is an existing relationship (Kale et al., 2011). For example, if one teacher hears about a change in a meeting, she is more likely to tell another teacher nearby than one across the school. The existing relationship, in this case, shown by proximity, helps promote better communication. Structural balance assumes that people will create relationships based on existing relationships (Mital et al., 2014). In structural balance, a teacher will create a relationship with a friend of a friend, while assuming that a friend's enemy is also an enemy (Mital et al., 2014). For communication purposes, this means that a teacher may go out of her way to share information with a friend or a friend of a friend. But the same teacher may pass by someone designated as the enemy and avoid letting them know of any changes. Typing back to social network analysis, these interdependent relationships among the different individuals change as their roles in a situation change (Wasserman & Faust, 1994).

### ***Principal's Understanding of Teacher Voice***

According to Ärlestig (2007), if a school is bureaucratic and run by a set of tight rules, then the communication of the school is mainly intended to share information efficiently. In this case, the school principal maintains control and the most important thing the principal can do is word the message clearly. The most important thing the teacher can do is to understand the message's meaning and act accordingly because "interpretations and the exchange of ideas and information are critical" (Ärlestig, 2007, p. 265). Employee or teacher voice allows teachers to offer suggestions for change and improvement (Ruck et al., 2017). This is important to principals because teachers can also withhold information if they feel marginalized (Ruck et al., 2017). For example, a teacher may have observed an issue between two teachers trying to get the same resource. Rather than share with the school administrators, the teacher may choose to

remain silent and let the conflict continue. Another example is where a teacher knows that a parent will demand to see the principal after a grade is posted but does not give the principal advance notice. In these examples, the importance of the teacher's voice to improve conditions in the school is important.

Does face-to-face communication provide the opportunity for teacher voice? One of the problems of face-to-face communication is that it is open to providing rumors, as well as facts (Motoi, 2017). A teacher with a problem may be unwilling to directly discuss this with the principal in person (Lunenburg, 2010). Even so, the face-to-face conversations, where the principal is open and honest about issues, creates a stronger trust scenario allowing the teacher an opportunity to also voice opinions (Adelman, 2012). According to one of the principals from Tyler's (2016) study, "Sometimes I have to start it and lead by 'this is how I'm going to share my problem,' take input, ask questions, and show them that it's okay to ask questions" (p. 7). A key facet of productive face-to-face meetings include open, honest dialog where both parties listen and participate (Adelman, 2012; Tyler, 2016).

The other side of encouraging teacher voice to be heard by the principal is having the principal be receptive to the voice (Ruck et al., 2017). If the teacher believes that the principal is not interested or will not act on their information than the teacher is probably unwilling to attempt to share (Ruck et al., 2017). The teacher may feel at risk by criticizing the principal if that individual does not handle criticisms well (Ruck et al., 2017). The principal needs to understand that "communication is an interpretative process of coordinating activities, creating understanding, and building acceptance of organizational goals" (Ärlestig, 2007). When principals provide opportunities for the teachers to give feedback, they feel more engaged and

empowered in the school (Ndidi & Alike, 2018). Feedback also provides an opportunity for the principal to clarify issues (Ndidi & Alike, 2018).

### **What Is Effective Communication?**

What makes communication effective? An effective communication system is where the goal for the communication is met (Sanina et al., 2017). For a successful faculty meeting, it is important to have the teachers attend. If the principal sends a message with the date of the next faculty meeting, then the message is effective if the teacher simply shows up for the meeting. Effective communication improves the school climate and increases teachers' satisfaction (Halawah, 2005).

### ***Admitting Mistakes in Communication***

In the study by Tyler (2016), she noted a reoccurring theme of trust and relationships shown in effective communications with Title 1 principals. The successful principals communicated information and changes in a transparent manner, allowing teachers to know what information the principal was working from (Tyler, 2016). Included in the principals' communications was an admittance of mistakes and sharing the spotlight with others in the building for their work (Tyler, 2016). "Effective two-way communication is an integral part of leadership" (Hoerr, 2018, p. 90). The principals create a culture of sharing that allows teachers to accept non-negotiable information (Tyler, 2016). Having communication that honors shared values is important to school leadership (Halawah, 2005).

### ***Understanding Cultural Biases in Communication***

Teachers and school administrators must first understand their own cultural biases (Izquierdo et al., 1998). People tend to interpret the message based on their own cultural and inclinations (Kuutti, 1996). Tying back to social network analysis, Kuutti (1996) says that

“activities are not isolated units but are more like nodes in crossing hierarchies and networks, they are influenced by other activities and other changes in their environment” (p. 16). If the principal consciously understands his own biases, then he will better understand the intent of the communication (Izquierdo et al., 1998).

One activity that carries value for teachers is the recognition from the principal (Marvel, 2017). If the principal provides the social recognition on achievements to particular teachers, the teachers respond positively (Marvel, 2017). The goal for the recognition is to bolster a teacher’s perspective about their job and it does work (Marvel, 2017).

### ***Optimizing Communications Based on Available Resources***

Another issue with effective communication is optimizing the communication system for the best solution based on the available resources (Sanina et al., 2017). Between school administrators and teachers, there are three communication needs involving technology which are to inform, clarify, and question (Okoli, 2017). People using technology to communicate may create their own culture with defined practices, like how often to check email (Markus & Rowe, 2018). Understanding the cultural implications in communication is absolutely vital to transmitting the message correctly and having it received and acted upon (Markus & Rowe, 2018). This understanding reinforces the need to consider how to create a communication plan that is inclusive and allows responses from the person receiving the message. If the school leadership operates within an organization’s culture (Ogawa & Bossert, 1995) and teachers naturally form up to create a culture within the school (Vygotsky, 1978), then the goal of school leadership is to communicate with the teachers within these overlapping cultures.

There is a positive association between teachers connections to each other and their job satisfaction (Veretennik & Kianto, 2019). Inter-teacher connections can include sharing emails

and phone numbers for calls and texts. Part of the job satisfaction comes from the teachers themselves sharing and creating these personal connections (Veretennik & Kianto, 2019). “The interschool community of practice serves not only as a source of information and expertise but also as a solution to forecasted dropout in teaching staff” (Veretennik & Kianto, 2019, p. 224). From the principal’s perspective, it is important to consider these personal connections when making changes in the school (Veretennik & Kianto, 2019).

### **Barriers to Effective Communication for Administrators**

Research shows that effective communication from school administrators leads to effective teaching in the school (Tyler, 2016). Looking at the connections from social network analysis, what are the things that interrupt or prevent the communication from occurring? At a high level, the barriers include cultural understandings, physical issues, and environmental issues that all administrators face (Netshitangani, 2016). Each barrier that is not addressed can create a brick wall between the school administrator and the teacher.

Examples of barriers provide some insight into these limitations. Environmental access barrier can be categorized in the limitations of the physical layout of the building. If two biology teachers are located on different floors, than it may be impossible for them to connect during the day except via electronic communication. Face-to-face meetings require planning and potentially after school time. The culture barrier can be found by not recognizing different cultures in the school building. One example is the principal who has a required faculty meeting but then provides food, even though some of attendees cannot eat due to religious restrictions. It can create discord from those teachers. Physical access barrier often deals with a school building’s computer network. Since many school systems also put their telephones on the same system, a comprised or nonfunctioning network means that teachers cannot access computers,

emails, or telephone calls for assistance. Language barrier can be found both in spoken word and written. If the principal sends information and uses the abbreviation C&P, how many teachers know that means “copy and paste”? Personal relationships can move communication through the school and block it. If the French teacher finds out about a change in the faculty meeting location, she may share it with her friend and neighbor, the Spanish teacher, but not a teacher she does not get along with well.

Okutan (2014) maintains that great school leadership skills include communication and recognizing that the key in leadership is relationships, not a process. Communication is a function of the quality of relationships in a school (Ärlestig, 2008). If the relationships are less than stellar than the communication can be interrupted or misinterpreted (Ärlestig, 2008). Cultural misunderstandings can also include issues with language (Netshitangani, 2016). A younger teacher may use different colloquialisms in her speech or emails that an older teacher may not understand (Lunenburg, 2010). If the principal is not transparent in his intentions, then teachers may not understand the importance or direct affect her communications have and may not act on it (Tyler, 2016). A principal must recognize their natural tendencies to share or not share information and adjust accordingly. For example, if a principal sets a meeting with some teachers and then receives information that changes that meeting, he must consciously tell the teachers of the change a provide some of the reasons for the change. Without the why the principal is treating the teacher like a low-level employee and not as a partner in education.

### ***Teachers’ Length of Service As a Barrier to Communication***

Teachers’ length of service has direct consequences on communication. Brekelmans, Holvast, and Van Tartwijk (1992) did a four-year longitudinal study looking at teacher communication styles that change over time. The study found that teachers changed their

dominant behavior during their first 10 years of teaching, but not their cooperative behavior (Brekelmans et al., 1992). This means that their leadership styles change over time (dominant behavior) but they do not generally get more friendly or more willing to share information (cooperative behavior) (Brekelmans et al., 1992). This has an effect on school communication because the teachers' length of service changes how they commit to others. Further, Bakkenes, De Brabander, and Imants (1999) research showed that teachers may isolate themselves from other teachers due to being overwhelmed with anything not immediately relatable to their classroom. This again tied directly to the amount of experience as a teacher (Bakkenes et al., 1999).

According to Will (2018), how principals engage with their teachers is a key indicator of teacher retention. In schools with high needs, only 78% of teachers stay, as compared to 87% of teachers in other schools (Will, 2018). The combination of professional development and social emotional support to teachers is important to teacher retention (Will, 2018). Reyes and Hoyle (1992) agreed that teachers' length of service correlates to teacher satisfaction with principal's communication. In their survey of 600 teachers, they found that as the teachers' gained experience in the field, they became more satisfied with communication (Reyes & Hoyle, 1992). Teachers' satisfaction with principal's communication ties directly into their job satisfaction and positive morale (Reyes & Hoyle, 1992).

### ***Physical & Environmental Barriers of Communication***

The barrier of access to information can come directly from the principal not providing it or it can be physical. Examples of physical barriers include a loss of computer network or nonworking computer, the inability to access a certain software, and interruptions like phone calls or messages (Lunenburg, 2010). Physical barriers to communication are generally viewed

as something to overcome (Lunenburg, 2010). The problem is that imposing limitations to minimize barriers can backfire. Limiting communication to one channel such as email can limit its audience and urgency (Netshitangani, 2016). The solution is to use a hybrid of communication options including face-to-face, email, and other options common to the environment (Netshitangani, 2016). Likewise, the constant interruptions that a school principal experienced every day can be mitigated by the intervention of his secretary (Lunenburg, 2010).

Pre-existing conditions within the school building can act as environmental barriers that need to be addressed (Lunenburg, 2010; Netshitangani, 2016). One example is the physical location of teachers in a building is generally limited to a specific room or hallway. Environment also takes into account the available resources (Lunenburg, 2010). Another issue is the personal relationships of teachers that may hamper or hinder communications (Netshitangani, 2016). Teachers who physically connect with another teacher in person generally create a more robust relationship. If a teacher does not feel she has the power to effect change, she may not inform administrators of a problem, leading administrators to misunderstand the situation (Lunenburg, 2010; Netshitangani, 2016). The administrator needs to overcome communication barriers by addressing the roles each person plays in the school (Lunenburg, 2010). Interpersonal barriers are real and require an active strategy to make communication effective (First & Carr, 1986; Sezgin & Er, 2016). “Like all living things, communication must be capable of adapting to its environment” (Lunenburg, 2010, p. 7). The principal’s role is to make sure that everyone in the building can overcome these barriers.

### ***Frequency As a Barrier in Communication***

One hidden barrier is the frequency of messaging. According to a study by Shin and Shin (2016), the frequency of messages can cause fatigue among people causing behaviors of

avoidance or delay in responding. In their study, Shin and Shin (2016) explored mobile communication users of a company in Seoul, Korea. The study found that, in contrast to popular belief, messages from friends and colleagues created more fatigue behaviors than from commercial promotions (Shin & Shin, 2016). Principals may feel that they are barraged with stacks of emails many of which may be unnecessary (Pollock, 2016). The steady stream of emails may act as a barrier to responding or handling the vast quantity (Pollock, 2016; Shin & Shin, 2016).

### **Administrator's Effective Communication Strategies**

An administrator defines his accountability to her teachers through a laid out communication plan (Porterfield & Carnes, 2014). By defining his short- and long-term objectives, the administrator uses his communication plan to advance the school's agenda (Porterfield & Carnes, 2014). Strategic communication plans are essential to creating a positive learning environment because it provides support for the school administrators and teachers, increases the administrations' understanding of the school climate, and allows both the administrators and the teachers to be heard (Halawah, 2005). According to Gunther et al. (2011), the plan should contain these steps:

1. Review current communications;
2. Determine the specific goals of communication;
3. Implement a method to achieve those goals; and
4. Review the progress and reassess the current communication to make changes as necessary.

Any effective communication plan is circular, requiring constant review and adjustments to be effective (Carr, 2007; Gunther et al., 2011; Porterfield & Carnes, 2014). The first step

requires the principal to understand how current communication operates (Gunther et al., 2011). Okuntun (2014) points out that there are existing assumptions that the principal controls certain aspects of communication including identifying goals and implementing a plan. The last step includes the instructions to reassess, which creates the circular checking of the plan.

Principals need to pause and consider if they can meet a specific communication objective rather than assume it is easy to do (Gorton & Alston, 2009). The implication is that the principal understands each of the teachers and their abilities. Further, principals need to consider what training may be necessary for teachers to achieve the communication objective (Zheng et al., 2016). Training may make a difference in the acceptance of communication technology processes (Zheng et al., 2016).

Equally important, school administrators must embrace technology as part of their effective strategic plans (Weng & Tang, 2014). The most effective strategy to get a message across to others is face-to-face communication (Gunther et al., 2011; Sanina et al., 2017). However, the sheer overwhelming concept of trying to speak individually to every teacher with an issue is not practical. Face-to-face communication can also be risky for misunderstandings (Motoi, 2017). Paper is traditionally used as a way of contacting teachers and sending home information to parents in the form of letters or newsletters (Gudykunst, 2012). In today's society, paper products are used rarely and in its place are electronic communication products (Gudykunst, 2012). The combination of face-to-face communication with social media creates a large array of tools for school administrators (Cox & McLeod, 2013). Some of the electronic tools include websites, videos, blogs, and texts (Thompson, 2014). Each tool serves different purposes, though they may overlap in use.

In creating a strategic communication plan, the school administrators should consider items like ownership and deadlines (Gunther et al., 2011). The message originator, or administrator, needs to take responsibility for the methods of sharing the message and handling the feedback. According to Gunther et al. (2011), a strategic communication plan must have these following features:

- Messages are sent in more than one method;
- Clear responsibility for what is communicated is indicated;
- Encourage cooperation in spreading a message;
- Enforce deadlines;
- Take advantage of any opportunity to communicate a message; and
- Have a crisis communication plan.

Research shows that students do not retain the information they have heard or seen once (Gunther et al., 2011). It follows that something communicated one time in one way will probably not be retained by its intended audience, the teachers. Thus, it is imperative to communicate in more than one way and repeat that communication in order for it to be effective (Gudykunst, 2012). Cooperation is another key to high-quality communication (Gunther et al., 2011). The messages spread faster and cover more ground with active cooperation between teachers. This means that those receiving messages are replying in a meaningful way or are automatically sharing communication with other teachers (Gunther et al., 2011). For example, asking the department chairs in a school to repeat instructions to other teachers for final exams reinforces communication that comes separately from the administrator. This creates repetition and reinforcement. Quality communication also recognizes audience expectations at gatherings (Gunther et al., 2011). Audiences expect to hear of future events during the one they are

attending (Gunther et al., 2011). When teachers attend a faculty meeting in August, they may also want to know what the schedule is for Homecoming week in September.

Last, every school should have a crisis plan (Cox, 2012; Gunther et al., 2011). This plan needs to be an integral part of the strategic communication plan. It should specifically lay out the steps to be taken and where information is located during an emergency (Cox, 2012). The principal needs to create a team with designated roles and responsibilities (Olinger Steeves et al., 2017). Like the rest of the communication plan, there should be repetition and review built into the plan (Gunter et al., 2012).

### **Methods**

This single-school case study, based on research by Gagnon (2010), was designed to understand internal communications that occurred between the school administrators, defined as the principal and assistant principals, and teachers. The goal was to answer the three research questions:

1. What is communicated by school administrators?
2. How is information communicated by the school administrators?
3. What do teachers and school administrators perceive as effective or not effective?

To meet this goal, the investigator used a descriptive case study of a single middle school that helped capture the fundamental communications between a school principal and teachers. The research structure involved interviewing the principal and at least one assistant principal. This was followed by a survey of the teachers to provide a full picture of the information communicated. By comparing the information from each group, the investigator provided a description of the communications between administrators and teachers.

A case study can “produce an in-depth analysis of phenomena in context, support the development of historical perspectives and guarantee high internal validity” (Gagnon, 2010, p. 2). According to Creswell (2013), this qualitative approach allowed exploration of individuals and groups in their social situations. The descriptive case study investigated phenomena that occur within the data (Zainal, 2007). Within this specific study, the data laid out the communication relationships between the principal, assistant principal, and teachers. The key to a successful single case study is in the details reported to allow others to identify the salient points (Mariotto, Zanni, & de Moraes, 2014). To conduct the descriptive case study, the researcher took a constructivist approach that individuals forge relationships with each other to create a complex social system (Gagnon, 2010; Wasserman & Faust, 1994). The school was an example of such a complex social system because of the constant change in structure and personnel, the nonlinearity in students, teachers and administrators, and self-organization of teachers (Mital et al., 2014). Using a descriptive case study, the researcher collected information on communications from the principal and assistant principal and then processed that data into a survey for the teachers. At this school, the researcher had an existing connection with the school, the principal, and several teachers which helped obtain the needed information (Gagnon, 2010). The descriptive case study method allowed the researcher to explore communications in-depth, specific to this school’s natural setting (Gagnon, 2010). According to Yin (2002), a case study worked in a complex social situation with a large number of variables. This case study investigated the communication phenomena in a real-life school situation where the specific information shared between administrators and teachers have not been identified.

This study examined what information was shared between school principal, assistant principals, and teachers. The goal was to layout the communications between the groups and

their effectiveness to suggest ideas for a future communication guidelines document that fit their needs, technology resources, and complimented the school's purpose of teaching students. The relationships investigated also recognized connections between people at different levels and on the same level. While this case study is unique to the specific school studied, it provided a process that other schools could follow to identify their own communications needs.

### **Case Study Site Selection**

Within the public school arena, schools with the federal designation of Title I have more requirements than other public schools. Title I designation, by definition, referred to the Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act that allows local education agencies to provide financial assistance to low-income students (U.S. Department of Education, 2018b). Schools that are majority low-income are known to have higher drop-out rates, additional discipline issues, higher retention rates, and reduced or non-existent home support (Tyler, 2016). According to Donnelly (2012), successful Title I schools are characterized by having open, two-way communication between school principals and teachers. This made focusing on Title I schools ideal for considering all of the additional complications in communications.

The study site, Golden Middle School, had a 100% economically disadvantaged population and fully qualifies as Title I (The Governor's Office of Student Achievement, 2019a). The majority ethnicity was Black/African American at 92%, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (U.S. Department of Education, 2018a). Golden Middle School snapshot (Table 2) shows four school years, from 2015-2019, with a 100% economically disadvantaged population and additional breakdowns (The Governor's Office of Student Achievement, 2019a). Mobility rate or the percent of enrollments/withdrawals in one school year was a major disruption to the teachers and students in a school (Fowler-Finn, 2001). The school's mobility

rate for 2018-19 was a very high 42.7% (The Governor's Office of Student Achievement, 2019b). This indicated that the school began and ended the school year with approximately half of its student population.

**Table 2**

*Golden Middle School's subgroup breakdown over three years.*

<b>Subgroups</b>	<b>2015-16</b>	<b>2016-17</b>	<b>2017-18</b>	<b>2018-19</b>
Limited English Proficient (LEP)	3%	4%	5%	6%
Economically Disadvantaged	100%	100%	100%	100%
Students with Disabilities (SWD)	12.9%	11.8%	13.6%	14%
English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)	2.2%	2.4%	2.7%	2.7%
Special Education	12.9%	11.8%	13.6%	14%
Gifted	10.3%	7.1%	5.2%	4.5%
Asian	0%	1%	1%	1%
Black	92%	92%	92%	91%
Hispanic	6%	7%	6%	7%
Native American / Alaskan Native	0%	0%	0%	0%
White	0%	0%	0%	0%
Multiracial	1%	1%	1%	1%
Mobility Rate	47.1%	48.8%	48.9%	42.7%

In studying the communication options within this urban middle school, there was a high presumption of technology saturation. Urban is defined as a densely developed area that has a population of over 50,000 people (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). In the urban area studied, many of the school districts including Golden Middle School's, had a one-to-one device program in their schools, which increased the expectation of technology use in the school by administrators

and teachers. This tied into creating a communication plan using the available technology (Weng & Tang, 2014). This school district mandates the use of technology for certain communication areas including, but not limited to, e-mail, mass notification systems (MNS), and the school website (County website, 2019).

Golden Middle School served sixth, seventh, and eighth-grade students. The school operated on a block schedule, alternating A and B days (Principal interview, July 11, 2019). English language arts and mathematics were taught every day, science and social studies were alternated on A and B days. Within the building, students were separated by grade level to different hallways. Because of the structure of the building, the sixth grade was on a separate floor, set in the farthest position from the front of the school and the administrative offices. Because of this separation, it was possible for teachers to have limited contact with other teachers outside their grade level or content area (Principal interview, July 11, 2019).

According to the school's website, over the past three years (2016-2019), the school times were extended by 30 minutes each day due to a district remedial requirement. Students received one Friday a month off. On the students' Friday off, teachers attended mandatory professional development for four hours in the morning and received one half-day off each month to make up for the extra daily time. In the 2019-2020 school year, the hours were adjusted back to their original times, with an additional five teacher workdays in the calendar. The principal mentioned that due to previous years of extended days, the culture of the school was to not hold monthly after school faculty meetings (Principal interview, July 11, 2019). In 2019-2020 school year, the school district reverted hours back to the traditional school of 8:55 a.m. to 4:05 p.m. The principal worried about trying to shift that culture and began holding monthly mandatory faculty meetings.

The principal reported that he had a large leadership team (15 members) and was planning to add a principal's advisory council modeled on the district's superintendent's advisory council. The intent with the principal's advisory council was to have representatives from different grade levels and different contents, who were not department chairs, to help review school-wide decisions (Principal interview, July 11, 2019). The concept was to discuss things that are coming in advance to understand its impact on teachers and classrooms and make adjustments as necessary (Principal interview, July 11, 2019).

### **Participants Selected**

The school's communication plan needed to engage with a number of issues that occur in a school. Title 1 schools had an additional layer of complication and requirements that may not occur in a non-Title 1 school, in terms of their responsibilities for managing money and materials (GaDOE, 2019). Title 1 schools were required to have monitoring of each and every expenditure at the state level and the local school district level (GaDOE, 2019). They required an annual inventory of all equipment purchased with Title 1 funds (GaDOE, 2019). Since the goal was to accurately describe the current school communications, then adding these complications enhanced the study. Studying a smaller teachers' group, found in smaller schools, would not have had the same issues that occur in the large teacher schools.

The school's administrative team was made of a principal and three assistant principals. Each of the assistant principals have different areas of responsibility (see Appendix C for breakdown of responsibilities). Each was responsible for a grade level along with different subject responsibilities. Prior to this principal, Golden Middle School had had at least two principals who were new to the position, stayed two years, and left. Matching the school's student population, all four of the administrators are African American. The principal was male

and the three assistant principals were female. The principal began his sixth year as a principal at this school at the beginning of this study. This was his second principal position. Prior to this, his experiences were as a teacher, department chair, and assistant principal at the high school level. Two of the three assistant principals were also in their first position as an assistant principal at this school. One was an experienced assistant principal transferred in from another school.

The teaching staff was made up of experienced and novice teachers. A third of the teachers are in their first teaching position with 0-3 years of teaching experience. A third of the teachers have been at the school for over 15 years. In the teacher survey, the average number of years at this school was 4.1. In previous years, Golden Middle School has had Teach for America positions on staff, made up of newly graduated college students without teaching degrees.

The two interviews were recorded on a Sony XCU handheld audio recorder. The individual interviews took place in private offices located in the school. The researcher and the interviewee sat face-to-face with the recorder in the middle and the researcher also took handwritten notes during the interviews. The audio recordings were transcribed by Rev.com. The audio portion of the video newsletters was also transcribed by Rev.com.

An interview with the principal was conducted to understand his approach to communications within the school. It was also intended to create communication objectives and listing. This was followed by an individual interview with an assistant principal to gather their understanding of communications objectives and listing. Finally, a survey was done with the school teachers to gather their list of what, how and the effectiveness of existing communications occur.

## **Procedure and Data Sources**

The data sources included interviews, documentation, and surveys. This descriptive case study performed purposeful sampling by choosing participants who were interested and knowledgeable (Palinkas et al., 2015). The order of data collection was first an initial interview with the principal. Following the interview, the principal provided documentation including examples of his video newsletter, an AP Weekly Update Template (Appendix C), and an AP Weekly PLC Agenda (Appendix D). Next, there was an individual interview with an assistant principal. Last, a survey of the classroom teachers was conducted.

The initial interview was with the principal to explore and quantify his list of communication information and what he believes is important in this communication (Appendix A). Part of the list was to identify which kind of communication might be best for a particular situation. The principal then volunteered to send documentation he mentioned in the interview including examples of his video newsletter and templates used with the assistant principals (Appendices C and D). The same interview was given to the assistant principal. Following the interviews with the principal and assistant principal, the survey for the teachers was populated issues from the interviews (Appendix B). This allowed the teachers to respond to an existing list and provided space for them to add their additional information and insights (Palinkas et al., 2015).

The teacher survey was designed to elicit information on communications based on the school leadership opinions and their own. The survey was designed with consideration for the amount of time to complete, providing starting points that need addressing and allowing teachers space to voice their own communications issues. The survey was offered both on paper and online allowing teachers to choose their comfort level. Each survey done on paper was entered

into the online database. Teachers were also informed to write “do not count” on paper surveys if they did not want to participate and did not want others to know. The three surveys marked with “do not count” were immediately shredded.

The survey took place during a faculty meeting set by the principal after school. The survey was the last thing on the agenda which meant the teachers were free to leave following the survey. Also, the agenda for the faculty meeting was positive information that created an upbeat atmosphere. Because of the limitations in time and recognizing the priorities of the teachers to leave at the end of the day, the teachers were given a brief explanation of the survey and offered homemade baked goods in return for participation, though there was no boundary preventing teachers from enjoying the baked goods without participating. Due to the incentive and the faculty’s relationship with the researcher, higher than normal surveys were returned (92%).

In order to fully describe this school’s situation, limited demographics were taken in the teachers’ survey. One of the survey questions asked the respondent’s gender. According to De Lange (1995), men and women use different behaviors to listen for different things from the same person speaking. As one of the main communication forms at the school is a video newsletter, being able to capture the gender with the respondent’s opinions on the survey was important. Years of teaching experience also changes how teachers receive and deliver communications (Brekelmans et al., 1992). This survey item was captured to see if there was a change in the acceptance of certain communications based on teaching experience. The last demographic question asks how many years a teacher has been at this particular school. When teachers are new to the building, “it is more difficult to be effective at complex tasks when the task or context is unfamiliar” (Atteberry, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2017, p.22). This includes

understanding the existing communication systems within a school. Several of the survey questions ask for frequency and preferences on receiving communication from various administrators and other teachers. The frequency may show an imbalance of communication artifacts that prevent everyone from sharing equally (Rovai, 2007). High communication frequency by some people can act to silence others (Rovai, 2007). Since learning is a social activity, according to Vygotsky (1978), then teachers may not learn or improve due to being silenced (Rovai, 2007).

### **Data Analysis**

To begin, a coding system was created from the data identifying various types of communications (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The interview transcripts and video newsletters are then coded according to this system. The challenge was to identify groups and patterns (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The goal was to discover the types and depth of information shared in school communications but also the causal relationships (Gagnon, 2010). To do this, all of the communications gathered from both administrators were initially identified in a matrix of identifying information via its communication channels (Table 3). Ultimately, the goal was to have school administration specify expected communication channels for differing types of information (Roman & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2016).

An important criterion in analyzing data was to create a set of categories while not weighing one over the other in importance due to the number of events (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This means that if there were a large number of communiques labeled as announcements, it does not necessarily follow that announcements were more important than emergency procedures. Survey data from the teachers produced both numerical data that shows the effectiveness of a certain communication and also potential barriers with existing communications.

The transcription of the interviews and the videos were reviewed to provide common coding trends (Creswell, 2013). The transcripts were reviewed for thematic information, frequency, delivery methods, or effectiveness (Creswell, 2013). The first tier of coding was created from the method of communication (RQ2). The coding shown in Table 3 describes the breakdown by communication method with examples from the data collected.

**Table 3**

*Initial Coding Levels with Examples*

<b>Delivery Method</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Example</b>
Principal Newsletter Video with attachment	PN	[The Golden Weekly] That's considered our faculty meeting, and any updates, everything that's coming up, testing coming up, we have a fire drill this week, just want to remind you all. So we put out a schedule in the beginning of the year with all the fire drills, but people don't refer back to it all the time (Principal interview, July 11, 2019).
Email	EM	If I send an email, which I do if something comes up ... For instance, we had a GAPS visit, which is one of the things that the state, they do. They did it a week and a half before the last day of school (Principal interview, July 11, 2019).
Face-to-Face individual	F2F	Specifically, I like to visit our new teachers because I have to try to keep them encouraged (Principal interview, July 11, 2019).
PA System Announcements	PA	Oh yeah, so I do announcements, and I know that people get tired of this, or they think I'm being condescending, but I'm really not, like doing the 10 day counts. I get over the PA system and give them specific instructions on the count procedures, and somebody always still messes it up, so I guess it's really not condescending because, "Okay, look at your roster, look at everyone in your classroom. When you see that face, then check here, or absent, or whatever." And I say, "Do you do that?" (Principal interview, July 11, 2019).
Meetings including PLC meetings, faculty meetings	MTG	"Give me an update on the instructional coach. How are these PLCs working? What are the issues with PLCs? Do we need to revisit some of our forms, some of our documents?" (Principal interview, July 11, 2019).
Printed Material	DOC	[AP weekly responsibility document] Oh yeah, in the past we've talked about that, the creation of the document for feedback, and then every week we have to respond with updates related to the matrix. (Principal interview, July 11, 2019).
Text	TXT	I think that's why I do the cell phone thing. I know, people text, "I'm sorry you're so late. I was never late or early. If you got a problem, I want to deal with it before I get to work." I don't like distractions, and you're going to be distracted anyway, but I would like a bunch of stuff that I can avoid (Principal interview, July 11, 2019).

Delivery Method	Code	Example
Phone calls	CALL	So looking at the faculty side as well, teachers, there's things that the ... This is a community, and you know, in a community, things just innately don't go as planned all the time. Sometimes they want to say something that's, "Hey, this is confidential, it's about my family. It has nothing to do with school." And to me, that's part of my job. So this person is going through this and they want to keep it private (Principal interview, July 11, 2019).
Survey	SV	It depends on the topic that I'm attempting to assess. Then typically, at the beginning of the school year, the surveys are a little bit more lengthy, because I'm trying to gauge what PDs would meet the needs of, whether it's the grade level or the department. Then from there, we scale back (Assistant principal interview, July 25, 2019).
Beliefs	OTHER	I've also learned that you can never communicate too much, and you will definitely have to present various methods of communication. It shouldn't just always be a face to face, at times people tune out, they're not connected to what you're saying. You may have to follow up by repeating yourself, so definitely tapping into various methods of communication. (Assistant principal interview, July 25, 2019).

A secondary coding level (Table 4) marked key indicators of what information was communicated (RQ1). This coding level was developed by reviewing the communication documents and interviews and creating a priority list of what was communicated.

**Table 4**

*Secondary Coding Level of Interviews and Video Newsletters*

Content Covered	Definition	Example
Student Data / Analysis	Any reference to student information or overall student test scores.	I'll communicate with achievement data, in terms of students. What students do we need to kind of hone in on? What are some trends that we're seeing in the data, particularly because we do so many benchmark assessments? (Principal interview, July 11, 2019)
Curriculum & Instruction	Specific information about what teachers need to improve curriculum and instruction.	Also with that, we're looking at data, whether it's work samples, whether it's written responses, whether it's an assessment, and then we're determining from that point, okay, how much time do we need to now introduce or re-teach whatever the concept is? (Assistant Principal interview, July 25, 2019)
Teacher Accountability /	Includes motivational or positive statements to teachers, individual staff	specifically, I like to visit our new teachers because I have to try to keep them encouraged. (Principal interview, July 11, 2019)

Content Covered	Definition	Example
Issues/ Motivation	requirements or issues	
Policies & Procedures	Expected policies and procedures for teachers including what to do with students.	Please remember to take down all the bus numbers of students. If you have new students that come into your classroom, take down their bus numbers. Things have been better at dismissal but they are not perfect. We're still having students that come out on the wrong loads. (Video newsletter 10-8-18)
Hot Issues	Information dealing with emergencies	We deal with so many issues at this school, and it's gotten progressively worse, just neighborhood stuff, to the tune of probably this year we had, god, about three or four major community fights. I'm talking about huge, 30, 40 people fighting in the neighborhoods, and it's inevitable, it's coming back to the school just because they go to school here, and they see each other here (Principal interview, July 11, 2019)
Calendar Items	Any information to do with scheduling.	As always our ELA benchmark testing, it will be a schoolwide test, we will have an adjusted bell schedule. That'll be on Wednesday, October 10th. Students will eat lunch in the classroom that day. (Video newsletter 10-8-18)
Advisory	Information about advising the principal.	So we'll definitely run it past the leadership team, maybe, but we can't ... We don't think of everything. (Principal interview, July 11, 2019)

The last research question addressed the effectiveness of the communique. Data from the teacher survey examined certain characteristics including the repetition for a specific piece of information (frequency), how many contacted in one message, and motivational messages (Creswell, 2013).

### **Role of the Researcher**

The researcher was a former employee of the school and district. As such, she had intimate knowledge of how the school operates and is familiar with both the principal and several other administrators and teachers. This proved to have advantages that allowed the researcher greater access to people while maintaining a necessary distance from the data collected. The researcher had a good relationship with the principal during her time at the school

built on mutual respect. But, as a school employee, the researcher was frustrated by certain lacks in communication. It is to the principal's credit that he was willing to undergo this study.

The researcher interviewed the assistant principal that she had minimal contact with when she was at the school, which reduced biases. She addressed the faculty at the meeting stressing the survey and not the past relationships. Nonetheless, the high response rate on the surveys was partially due to those past relationships.

The researcher and the school principal were at the school together for over three years. During that time, the principal sent out a weekly newsletter, which included an article for professional development, via email. From his interview, it is clear that the principal did not feel people were reading his email newsletter. This drove him to look for a different solution of a video newsletter. One major difference in the newsletters is that none of the video newsletters included professional development theories, such as the articles from the emailed versions. The choice of watching or not watching a video is a personal one and may have been reflected in both the principal's interview and the teacher survey.

To ensure the teacher survey was not biased, the researcher asked teachers at other schools to review the survey questions. To minimize the bias in the data analysis, the researcher included all of the open-ended responses, no matter how brief, to ensure full inclusion. The actual data was examined for means and standard deviations to point out exceptions. The 5-point Likert-scale was used to help limit the responses to specific ranges such as weekly and monthly (Lietz, 2010). The data was also collated to look at the top two of the Likert-scale, recognizing that some people do not want to commit to the highest level (Lietz, 2010).

## **Results**

The goal of the study was to understand what communications took place between school administrators and teachers, how the communication took place and what the two parties perceived as effective. This was investigated using three research questions:

1. What is communicated by school administrators?
2. How is information communicated by the school administrators?
3. What do teachers and school administrators perceive as effective or not effective?

Golden Middle School had a staff size of 52 classroom teachers and an additional 7 teachers acting as support staff to the classroom teachers for a total of 59. The principal was male and the three assistant principals were all female. The principal had just started his sixth year at the school, which was also his first principal position. The assistant principal who agreed to be interviewed had been at the school for four years, and again this was her first time in the position. Both were asked how effective their communication with teachers was. Both the principal and assistant principal choose the word “effective” from a four-point scale of highly effective, effective, average and not effective/below average.

A total of 48 teachers responded to the survey (41 females, 8 males, and 1 unidentified). In terms of years of teaching experience, 18 teachers (37.5%) reported teaching for over 15 years and 21 respondents (43.8%) reported teaching less than 6 years. Teachers, on average, had worked at the current school for 4.1 years, ranging from starting this year to over 30 years.

### **RQ1: What is communicated by school administrators?**

The “what” or content was the first step in understanding communication. This research question focused on information from school administrators, specifically the principal and assistant principals. This also included information shared from the assistant principal to the

principal. The teacher survey was created based on the interview information from the principal and assistant principal.

***Documents: The Golden Weekly Video Newsletters***

The original Golden Weekly newsletter was a written online newsletter with articles and information but it had limited readership. According to the principal, “It was written, [because] the readership, if you would, wasn't that great because even for informally, ‘Hey, I put that in the Wolverine Weekly,’ where people wouldn't take the time to kind of read the information in there.” The primary method of the principal’s communication for the last two years was the Golden Weekly video newsletter, which did not include any written articles. The three analyzed newsletters contained information about the week’s schedule, upcoming events, and policy and procedure reminders (Table 5).

**Table 5**

*Examples of Coded Information from the Golden Weekly Video Newsletter*

Content Covered	Examples
Curriculum & Instruction	Constructed response is so important. Our students first of all need to learn to strengthen their writing skills, strengthen their overall literacy skills and we'll have again, a heightened focus on that (Golden Weekly, October 18, 2018).
Teacher Accountability / Issues/ Motivation	Thank you Ms. B. and Ms. S. for an awesome mock trial. Our students are better through their exposure. Our students need exposure and they need exposure to things outside of their normal environment. Thank you again for those two teachers for exposing them to that. Continue to expose our students to great things, exciting things (Golden Weekly, October 18, 2018).
Policies & Procedures	So just this announcement goes for our sixth and seventh grade once we begin testing, but for our eighth grade, remember our device care during testing. Mr. G., Ms. H., and Ms. S. spent an inordinate amount of time preparing our devices, making sure that they're ready for testing. Please be sure to care for those devices. Each day after the testing session has ended, students need to shut down from the computers completely and they need to be placed back in the carts for charging for the next day (Golden Weekly, April 15, 2019).

Content Covered	Examples
Hot Issues	We will send out emails to make sure that we've hit every student and call home and make sure the students aren't missed during testing (Golden Weekly, April 15, 2019).
Calendar Items	October open enrollment, again is starting October the 15th through November the 2nd, it's starting a little early this year (Golden Weekly, October 18, 2018).

***Documents: AP Weekly PLC/Meeting Agenda Form***

The daily PLC meetings had a required form to be used with the specifications of time, the person responsible, and the specific data to be reviewed (Appendix D). This face-to-face meeting was the core method of sharing information about student data with teachers. Examples of coded information from the PLC forms is shown in Table 6.

**Table 6**

*Examples of Coded Information From the AP Weekly PLC/Meeting Agenda Form*

Content Covered	Examples
Student Data / Analysis	Data Meetings / PLCs; Weekly Data Digs; Culture data including attendance; Intervention Data & Benchmarks
Curriculum & Instruction	Learning Community Updates
Teacher Accountability / Issues/ Motivation	Glows & Grows; Culture data including attendance of teachers
Policies & Procedures	District Updates; School updates

***Teacher Survey Responses***

The teacher survey also collected teacher opinions on what information they need to get from administrators and what information they were unable to locate. Using the previously created coding of information, Table 7 shows examples of the open-ended question “What sort

of information do you want from your administrators?” The content covered in this issue included student data, professional development requirements including meetings, teacher accountability and motivation, policies and procedures for teachers, and calendar items. The calendar issues included not only dates set at the beginning of the year, but changes that occurred to the dates during a normal course of the school year.

**Table 7**

*Coded Responses to Teacher Survey Responses for What Content They Need*

Content Covered	Example Responses
Student Data / Analysis	“Student update, observations, deadlines, opportunities” “Data & any other pertinent info” “School info and info about students” “Updates on behavior”
Curriculum & Instruction	“Meetings” “Relevant /pertinent to my job” “Information regarding professional development in my content area that is available.”
Teacher Accountability / Issues/ Motivation	“Information with deadlines, motivators, etc. any and everything that uplifts, grows, or is important.” “Anything that is going to affect me directly or indirectly.” “What is expected from me” “Any info that will help me grow as an educator” “Updates on important information to keep my day at school safe and peaceful”
Policies & Procedures	“Simply key info that effects my daily procedures at the job or policies that will affect me directly”
Calendar Items	“Due dates” “Events” “Daily task and any schedule changes” “Important dates, changes/alerts to any procedures or important items, updates, and reminders” “calendar of important dates” “Deadlines / Expectations” “Testing dates, planning days, Holidays, and District information” “Schedules, other info pertaining to academic gains”

An open-end question asked the teachers to “describe an instance where you did *not* know where to find information or you did not have access (e.g., events, testing, meeting times/locations, etc)”. The responses were lists of what information they were looking for are shown in Table 8. Using the same coding as what teachers say they needed, this highlighted failures in the system to properly inform teachers of where to get information.

**Table 8***Coded Responses to Teachers Describing When They Could Not Find Information*

<b>Content Covered</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Student Data / Analysis	"Information about a student. How to locate parents. Updated info about how to contact parents."
Curriculum & Instruction	"iReady testing - only had the meeting but wasn't 100% positive on where to get materials/what to do beyond short meeting notes; had to ask other teachers" "SEL information. I have to go to other teachers and my department chair for help." "testing for iReady - I was not on the email list of names that had the information for when testing started."
Teacher Accountability / Issues/ Motivation	"Professional Developments & Parent / teacher conference" "duty locations, adjusted schedules for testing"
Policies & Procedures	"TESTING -> PROCEDURES WERE NOT EXPLAINED" "Materials time & location were not properly provided" "Testing"
Calendar Items	"I scheduled a feedback session a Friday not knowing we had a PL." "I have had many conferences where I was unaware the parent was late and there was no communication letting me know the meeting was pushed back." "Planning days last year. Rooms were not clearly stated" "Meetings times and location"

***Principal and Assistant Principal Interview Responses***

The principal met every Monday with the individual assistant principals to go over their AP Weekly Updates (Appendix C). Then he met in person with all of the assistant principals together. He used this as an opportunity to gather information. He asked them for information on curriculum issues, teacher issues, and student information. "I'll communicate with achievement data, in terms of students. What students do we need to kind of hone in on? What are some trends that we're seeing in the data, particularly because we do so many benchmark assessments?" (Principal interview, July 11, 2019). He also used the meetings as a way of checking on the PLCs and instructional coaches that the assistant principals oversee. The

principal also began creating a school-wide calendar for the school year and making it available to teachers.

**RQ2: How is information communicated by school administrators?**

The focus of this research question was identifying the methods that administrators used to communicate information. This included examining how school administrators communicated with each other. It also reviewed to discover if teachers shared information with other teachers. The crux of the question was to understand what methods were used to pass information to the teaching staff. All potential communication methods were identified and collected based on information gleaned from the interviews and surveys. In other words, during the survey, a teacher mentioned that they used the Golden Weekly video newsletter. Therefore, this data sources was collected to examine it for how it was distributed (RQ2) along with what information it contained (RQ1).

***Documents: Golden Weekly Video Newsletter***

The Golden Weekly video newsletter provided comprised of a video and attached PowerPoint slides for the assistant principals and the teachers to listen, watch, and / or read. This was distributed by the principal on Sunday evenings so that it could be accessed first thing Monday mornings. The newsletter was located in a common online space for teachers to access. These newsletter were typically 11 to 13 minutes long and contained between 8 and 19 slides.

***Documents: AP Weekly Update Meeting Agenda Form***

Based on the interviews with the principal and the assistant principals, they described using AP Weekly Update Meeting Agenda Forms (Appendix C) to keep track of their weekly progress on their responsibilities list. The matrix delineated the job duties for each of the

assistant principals. Each assistant principal had different items that they were responsible for in their job matrix. Within these duties, there was space to list current updates and next steps.

The form provided a method of review for the assistant principal but was limited to only the assigned duty stations. If two assistant principals work together on a project not listed or in the area of only one assistant principal, it was not reflected as a shared effort. There was no space to provide comments or information outside the list of duties. In the assistant principal's interview, she described having to fill out the matrix and turn it in each Friday for a one-on-one discussion with the principal on Monday. She also said that it was expected to email the form and also provide in the email specific information for the principal to include in the Golden Weekly video newsletter.

One point of conflict in the interviews is that the principal said the information on the sheets was shared between assistant principals but the assistant principal said it was not. The assistant principal also said they met each met privately with the principal on Mondays. When asked if he met the assistant principals individually or as a group, he responded "It's always a group. We meet as a group because I like ... One of the things that I've realized was kind of a flaw, and I still haven't really got this perfect yet, but when you communicate in isolation, they never, the person doesn't know what to do" (Principal interview, July 11, 2019).

### ***Teacher Survey Responses***

In the survey, teachers were asked about the frequency of how often they received communication. The frequency options were (1) never, (2) once a semester, (3) once a month, (4) twice a month, and (5) every week. Table 9 shows the mean response of the frequency of how often the teachers received communication from each method. The table also shows the percent of teachers who said they used this form of communication every week. There were

large differences in the methods that teachers reported using on a weekly basis ranging from text messages (18.8%) to emails from the assistant principals (97.9%).

**Table 9**

*Frequency of Method of Communication*

<b>Survey Statement</b>	<b>Mean Response</b>	<b>Percent of Teachers saying Every Week (5)</b>
I watch the Golden Weekly video	4.31	72.9%
I listen to the Golden Weekly video.	4.26	68.1%
I read the attached notes on the Golden Weekly.	3.87	57.4%
I tell other teachers about something important in the Golden Weekly.	3.52	39.6%
I read emails from the principal.	4.94	95.8%
I read emails from my assistant principal.	4.98	97.9%
I read emails from other teachers.	4.92	93.8%
I send work-related texts to the principal.	2.71	18.8%
I send work-related texts to my assistant principal.	3.15	18.8%
I send work-related texts to other teachers.	4.27	64.6%
I heard about something I needed to know from another teacher.	4.26	59.6%

An open-ended question on the survey asked the teacher to “describe an instance where you knew exactly where to find information you needed.” Five methods emerged from this question, identifying these as the methods of communication that contained specific information they needed: email, face-to-face, phone calls, newsletter video, and online (see Table 10).

**Table 10**

*Open-ended Teachers Describe an Instance When They Knew Where to Find Information*

Delivery Method	Example
Principal Newsletter Video with attachment	"For today's meeting - watched [Golden Weekly]" "Announcements by going to the [golden weekly]." "We have an exact location to find the weekly communication info from [Principal]; within microsoft teams"
Email	"When I was told directly or sent an email about it." "email"
Face-to-Face individual	"When I was told directly or sent an email about it." "When I went to the source of the information to clarify and ask."
Phone calls	"Call my "friend" ... (insider)"
Online	"Need information concerning the LIT LAB. Was able to go on the Teams site and get everything I needed." "We have an exact location to find the weekly communication info from [Principal]; within microsoft teams" "I knew there was a fire drill scheduled for the week, but not the day. I was able to locate it within the calendar." "I look for calendar events /dates on the school website" "I was looking for what the TKES learning Goals are and was able to find it in TEAMS"

### ***Principal and Assistant Principal Interview Responses***

As shown in the principal and assistant principal interviews, most communication was not conveyed through a single source. The principal and assistant principal described having different methods to conveying information. The principal explained that his video newsletter was the core method for his information communication. He described the Golden Weekly video newsletter as including all the important information: "[the newsletter is] considered our faculty meeting, and any updates, everything that's coming up, testing coming up, we have a fire drill this week, just want to remind you all." But he also described the importance of talking directly to his staff: "I'm a talker...I like to look people face-to-face and talk with them, and kind of get a pulse on things." This is reflected by his policy of minimizing emails. According to the principal, he described that too many emails can be ineffective as people stop paying attention to them: "If they get an email from me, that means something, I guess I should say special, or something important. One of the things that I started doing, or stopped doing, was emailing so

much, and I told my administrators to stop emailing so much because if you send so many emails people, they really stop reading them.”

Two-way communication meant that school administrators received feedback from the teachers. When asked about having teachers provide feedback, the principal said:

“...the unfortunate part about it because I guess it's not formalized, is people just, they'll talk to me, people call me, people text me. I mean, people, they see me in the hallway. I have a very, I guess, I have an open-door policy. And ... people know that they can say something to give me feedback.”

However, the principal did provide a feedback system to his new project Literacy Lab. At the suggestion of the literacy coach, the teachers provided feedback on a Padlet (an online bulletin board) to say what problems they were having with specifically with the Literacy Lab. The literacy coach and the administrators reviewed it every day to see what was working and what was not. Responses on the Padlet included “This is not working. This is something. The computers are costly, not charging. Or they said ‘This is great. We need more of these. We need to produce these’” (Principal interview, July 11, 2019).

The assistant principal believed that the two-prong approach is best. The first major form of communication from the assistant principal was email. This tied to data from the survey that almost 98% of teachers read emails from the assistant principal every week. She said in the interview “I typically send emails. Definitely, I've learned, especially over the past year, to also follow up with a verbal conversation as it relates to the email.” This is important because “I've learned again over the course of this past year that although people may understand what's being communicated in written format, they still may have lingering questions that they may be

hesitant or reluctant to asking because we have not had that face to face” (Assistant Principal interview, July 25, 2019).

**RQ3: What do teachers and school administrators perceive as effective or not effective?**

This research question explored the interpretation of how effective communication is from the teachers’ and the administrators’ perspectives. By definition, communication was effective when message brought the desired action (Sanina et al., 2017).

***Documents: AP Weekly PLC/Meeting Agenda***

The principal provided a form for the professional learning community (PLC) meetings. The PLCs are held every day for different subjects. In the form used in the meetings, there was a list of rules for behavior in the meeting (Appendix D). The printed rules were:

1. We will maintain a positive tone at our meetings.
2. We will begin and end our meetings on time and stay fully engaged throughout each meeting.
3. We will not complain about a problem unless we can offer a solution.
4. We will make decisions based on data and contribute equally to the workload of this team.
5. We will listen respectfully and consider matters from another’s perspective.

By defining these rules, the principal was anticipating issues that allow others to work together. In terms of effective communication, the rules were attempting to streamline this. The PLC document also laid out timing and assigned the position of timekeeper to the assistant principal to keep the meeting on schedule.

***Teacher Survey Responses***

The survey asked teachers to rank the effectiveness of different forms of communication. The ranking was a five-point Likert-scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The mean results along with the percentage of teachers who chose “Somewhat Agree” or “Strongly Agree” are shown in Table 11. This showed a strong usage of the Golden Weekly video newsletter but it also indicated a preference for email.

**Table 11**

*Effectiveness Rating of Communication Items Provided by Interviews*

<b>Survey Statement</b>	<b>Mean Response (from Likert 1-5)</b>	<b>Percent of Teachers choosing “Somewhat Agree” (4) or “Strongly Agree” (5)</b>
The Golden Weekly is an effective way for me to receive the information I need each week.	4.50	87.5%
The principal's PA announcements are an effective way for teachers to receive important information.	3.77	68.8%
Emails from the principal are an effective way for teachers to receive important information.	4.40	89.6%
Emails from the assistant principal are an effective way for teachers to receive important information.	4.46	91.7%
Texts to and from the principal provide me with important information.	3.67	54.2%
Texts to and from the assistant principal provide me with important information.	3.88	60.4%
Word of mouth or face-to-face discussions are an effective way for teachers to receive important information.	4.00	75.0%
Meeting notes are an effective way for teachers to receive important information.	3.79	62.5%

The teacher survey asked an open-ended question of ‘what is the most effective way to communicate with you’. Because the response was completely open, several people (17%) listed more than one method. The overwhelming response was e-mail (51.9%) followed by in-person discussions or meetings (27.8%). Six respondents wanted text messages. Five respondents said the weekly video newsletter was the most effective way.

Another measurement of effectiveness was gauged by the open-ended question “Your administrator believes in using repetition to get information across. Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?” Thirty-six teachers said they agreed with the statement. Seven teachers disagreed and two were vague in their response. The sample responses are listed below in Table 12.

**Table 12**

*Example Responses to the Question of Repetition in Communication*

Agree	Disagree
Yes because with the way things move here at [Golden], it’s easy to miss something or forget	Disagree- I feel like I’m only told things one times or two while trying to keep track of so many deadlines.
Yes, because not matter what median of information I prefer eventually I'll get the info	Disagree. Too many (cc's)
Agree. The more you hear something the greater the chance to remember.	Disagree. After learning it more than a few times people tune out and become disinterested.
Yes I agree, because with repetition habits are formed	I disagree. We're usually pretty good at getting info the first time.
Agree. The day is so busy and hectic you Forget about deadlines.	once or twice is okay. But I am not a child...it's not necessary.
Agree, repetition in various forms, I will get it eventually.	

The last open-ended question allowed teachers to make any other comment about communication that they wished to add. The list of responses is listed below.

- Keep the [Golden] weekly - especially the shout-outs.
- Streamline
- I prefer information to be given in an email or handout.
- The administration needs to be on the same page.
- Needs to be stressed that email is the district's preferred method of communication.
- Direct / face-to-face is best...at least monthly.

This list represented comments from teachers that they felt were important enough to write it out on the survey. These written comments show four themes: (1) positive communication matters to some teachers, (2) email is important to some teachers, (3) there may be issues with communication between administrators, and (4) face-to-face communication also matters to some teachers.

### ***Principal & Assistant Principal Interviews Responses***

When asked what the principal deemed most effective communication, he responded, “I really think the [Golden] Weekly is probably the most effective method because I can measure it.” He explained that because he saw a change of 30 views of the video going up to 45 views, he felt it was effective. He also explained that he added the file with the slides to the video link (Appendix E) at the request of one assistant principal who told him that was her preferred method of getting communication. He went on to say that it did not change his usage numbers when he added the file, either positively or negatively. The principal showed frustration at finding the best way to communicate with the entire staff. He said “I know everyone has their way that likes to be communicated with and likes to be kept abreast of things” but “people

wouldn't take the time to kind of read the information in there [Golden Weekly written format].” The principal was not alone in feeling the video was the best communication method. According to a principal in Houston, Texas school district, the video email was the best method of communicating because teachers could multitask while watching the video (Tell me about, 2015).

The issue of being the boss over teachers is also an issue in trying to help them. According to the principal, “I'll go in her classroom. And I'm like, I'm just here-. She said, ‘I know, but you're still an administrator...You're still going to make a judgment.’ I said, ‘I'm not. I'm just here to walk in the class. I'm not doing an observation. I'm here to help.’”

In terms of email, the principal said he does not know how many people actually read it. There was no current data available. On the other side, the school district decided that the principals received too many emails and forbid most departments to email principals directly. Instead, the school district insists the principals use a special portal to receive information. “I want the emails so I could just read through this, get it over with. I don't want to log in to the principal portal, because then it's another task you got to do” (Principal interview, July 11, 2019). This statement was the opposite of how the principal felt about emails to teachers.

A big issue that the principal identified in communication effectiveness is the trust of the person receiving the communication. He said that sometimes the teacher or administrator needed to recognize the attitude that “I'm going to do this because I trust this is the right thing to do, I trust this person” (Principal interview, July 11, 2019). He also gave an example of someone who communicated with him in excruciating detailed emails of exactly what was said. The principal said that this person did not trust who they were dealing with, thus spending an inordinate

amount of time documenting every move. According to the principal, the problem with “that type of communication [is] you could be doing something else productive.”

The assistant principal believed that email should be followed up with face-to-face communication. When asked what she thought was a characteristic of effective communication, she said “The receiving party's perception of what's being communicated. At times, empathy or some form of consideration of the receiving party, depending on the message. Always thinking through what's being communicated or how it's being delivered with a lens to ensure that nothing is left out on the table, or nothing is assumed.” She went on to say that effective communication meant that you should repeat yourself using multiple types of communication. From the assistant principal’s interview, she said:

“I've also learned that you can never communicate too much, and you will definitely have to present various methods of communication. It shouldn't just always be a face to face, at times people tune out, they're not connected to what you're saying. You may have to follow up by repeating yourself, so definitely tapping into various methods of communication.”

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

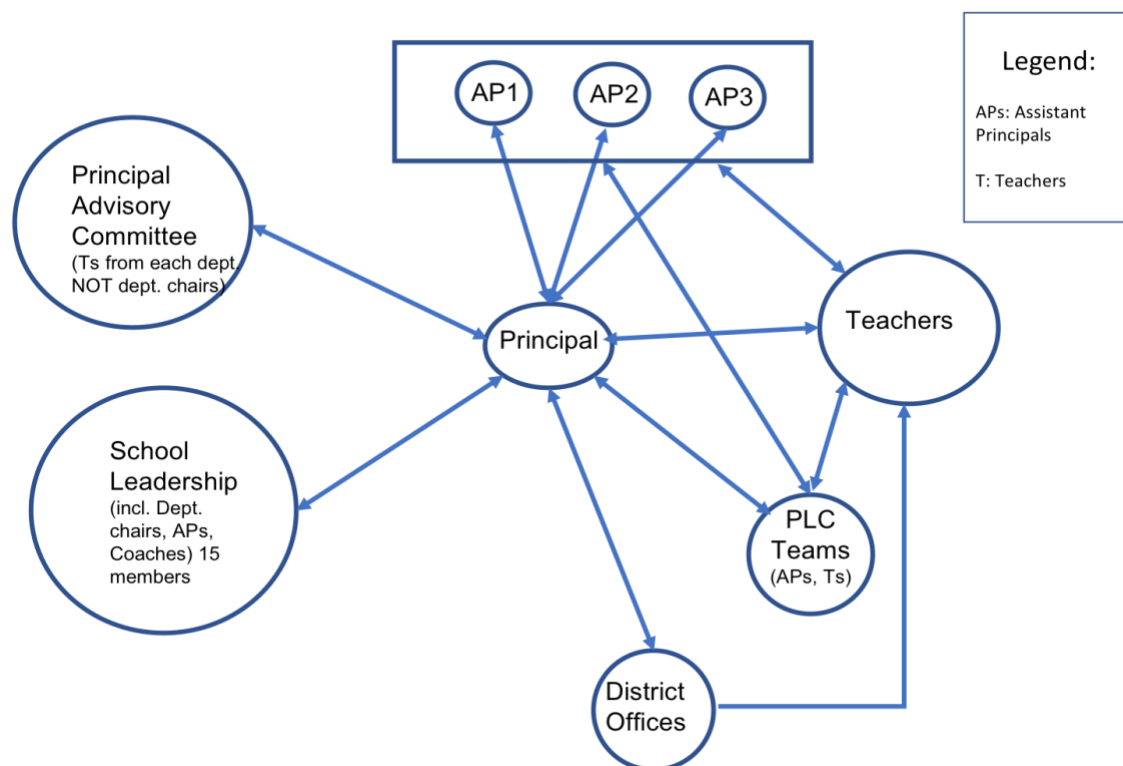
Throughout the data collection, some of the emerging themes illustrated challenges with communication in this school. These primary challenges were (1) the principal’s reliance on his video newsletter, (2) teacher separation in the building, (3) the use and lack of email, and (4) lack of formal feedback from teachers. This was found in the principal interview, the assistant principal interview, and the teacher surveys. These themes are important to present because it contextualizes what issues the school faced, how this influenced the communication plans, and what was valued by the staff.

## Communication Impediments at Golden Middle School

According to Waters and colleagues (2004), the principal was typically viewed as the main authority in the school and controls the overall communication systems. This study found this was consistent in the school's communication system. The principal was the center of the communication system and established how PLCs work, the School Leadership Team, the Principal's Advisory Committee, and the interconnected communications between these entities (Figure 2). In Figure 2, AP1, AP2, and AP3 represented the three assistant principals. The figure's two-headed arrows indicated that the information was in both directions. The principal described that he put teachers in certain groups to facilitate his understanding of the school and allow more connections to other teachers (Stepanyan et al., 2014). In addition to Figure 2, Table 13 provided additional descriptive information about the school's communication organization.

**Figure 2**

*Organizational Chart of Golden Middle School's Communication*



**Table 13***Communication Groups, Composition, and Purpose at Golden Middle School*

<b>Group Label</b>	<b>Composition of Members</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
School Leadership	Department chairs (teachers), assistant principals, coaches. Total of 15 members	To go over policies and procedures provided by the district or the principal for implementation.
Principal Advisory Committee	Classroom teachers, no department chairs. Representing one per grade level and one per subject level. Total of 8-9 members.	Advise the principal by answering "how this this affect the school?" and "what's your opinion on this?"
PLC Teams (Professional Learning Communities)	All teachers for a grade level subject. Headed by the assistant principal for that subject.	Go over student data, including literacy labs, and district requirements.

As pointed out in the principal's interview, one issue with this communication organizational structure was the establishment of both the principal advisory committee and the school leadership committee. According to the principal, the principal advisory committee was newly created this year. It was comprised of grade and subject teachers and was created to connect better with the teachers and their opinions. He believed that the teachers who are members of the school leadership team had a tendency to look at things from a leadership position instead of from the classroom teacher's point of view and possibly what they thought was wanted. The disconnected issue was the fact that neither school leadership nor the principal's advisory committee had a direct communications connection back to the staff as a whole. This situation was contingent solely upon the positions and experiences of its members. The recommendation from Spillane et al. (2001) was that these representatives must communicate with other teachers and not rely solely on the prescribed communication lines.

This situation highlights the inconsistency of hearing from teachers. In the researcher's opinion, the leadership team should be connecting back to teachers, getting opinions and concerns, and bringing it back to the leadership team. Isolating groups without an expectation of back and forth discussion is more like a rubber stamp approval than an advisement team.

Communication changed with the school year's change in the structure of the school day from going from the remedial extended hours schedule to a normal middle school schedule. When identifying the shared culture of the school, the change from one structure to another affected this organic system (Gulyaev & Stonyer, 2002). The shared teacher norms were different because of previous extended day schedule precluded regular whole faculty meetings. According to the principal, the teachers' attitude towards faculty meetings during the extended hours schedule was along the lines of "Ugh, we got a faculty meeting. I don't want to come. It's so late." It was this elongated day issue that increased the principal's reliance on his video newsletter. He said, "[The Golden Weekly] is considered our faculty meeting."

What is the purpose of the faculty meeting? Many principals, who run the faculty meeting, view it as a necessary waste of time (Hoerr, 2005). According to Ärlestig (2008), principals need a place to "inform, share reflections, challenge, support, and motivate the personnel" (p. 10). Without such a meeting, the principal can only affect teachers by using rewards and punishments (Ärlestig, 2008). If it is only sharing by the principal, then Golden Middle School's principal is correct that his video takes the place. However, according to the teacher survey, only 72.9% of teachers watch the Golden Weekly video every week, leaving almost 27% of the teachers unaware of the information directly. And, only 70% of the teachers considered it effective communication. If the purpose of a faculty meeting is to connect and share experiences (Ärlestig, 2008), then where are the faces and voices of teachers? School

principals do not work directly with the students, instead they provide tools and structures to allow others to do their job (Spillane et al., 2001). The faculty meeting can become an opportunity for teachers to share their learning and innovations with other teachers. This can also build cooperation between teachers.

Cooperative behavior between classroom teachers is seen as equally important to teaching as content knowledge (Okoli, 2017). Teachers take on more and more responsibilities as their experience expanded during their first ten years of teaching (Brekelmans et al., 1992). At Golden Middle School, there is a significant number of teachers with limited experience. Over 43% of teacher respondents had less than six years of teaching experience. In terms of communication, Brekelmans et al. (1992) study implies that teachers with limited experiences will not initiate communication with other teachers. This ties back to the lack of teacher voice in the leadership team and even the video newsletter. Teachers' length of service directly affects their satisfaction with the principal's communications (Reyes & Hoyle, 1992). Bakkenes et al. (1999) said that teachers who held lower status tended to be more isolated. Even teachers who naturally work with others found themselves isolated in the early years of teaching (Bakkenes et al., 1999). The isolation prevented a teacher with limited years of experience from sharing information with another teacher (Bakkenes et al., 1999). The teacher survey found the average years of experience at this specific school was only 4.1 years. Brekelmans and colleagues (1992) lower status is seen as having less years of experience both in teaching and at this specific school.

### **RQ1: What is communicated by school administrators?**

Based on the survey, the teachers reported wanting to be informed about five specific areas: (1) Student data, (2) curriculum and instruction, (3) teacher accountability and motivation,

(4) policies and procedures, and (5) calendar items. Within these areas, teachers described wanting to know exactly what were the principal's expectations, when things would occur, and when things were due. Student data referred to the information about a student's progress including updates by others like discipline or testing. Curriculum and instruction desired information ranged from testing information to requirements in the classroom. Teacher accountability and motivation involved duty locations, meetings with parents, professional development, and positive reinforcements that came specifically from the principal. Policies and procedures referred to the rules governing actions in the classroom and daily requirements. Calendar items were simply described as any date or time requiring a teacher's involvement and their location. Often, teachers felt uncertain on where to go for certain meetings and wanted this to be explicitly described. They also expressed their frustration by describing that they felt uncertain about where meetings were being held or if there was a delay in the meeting for any reason. Tyler (2016) warns that teachers who are frustrated by the lack of communication from the principal tend to view the principal with distrust and may limit their actions accordingly.

### ***Principal's Positive Recognition***

Teachers liked having the positive, personal congratulations in the principal's video newsletter. This recognition of teachers helped build a positive school culture and relationships (Marvel, 2017; Tyler 2016; Will, 2018). The teachers valued having their names said aloud and shown on the video newsletter. The emotional support from being recognized is stronger than most realize. It was one of the best sections of the weekly newsletter than faculty anticipated. The video newsletter also provided calendar information which is vital in maintaining expectations (Gunther et al., 2011). Upon reviewing the Golden Weekly video newsletter, the newsletter did not address specifics like where the meetings were being held or detailed small

group information. Therefore, other forms of communication were required to share details (Tyler, 2016). The teachers indicated a desire for these missing details.

### ***Feedback Limitations at the School***

Missing in the general communication at Golden Middle School was the information about failures in the procedures. This included providing avenues for feedback from teachers. According to Adelman (2012), CEOs or principals who admitted and explored failures was every bit as important as exploring successes. Plus, teachers felt like they are part of the group more when addressing areas of failure (Adelman, 2012; Tyler, 2016). The principal admitted in his interview that he does not have a formal method of feedback other than being present in the building and allowing teachers to approach him directly. This, according to the principal, has limitations in that he does not keep records of his hallway encounters (Principal interview, July 11, 2019). According to the Weekly PLC Agenda (Appendix D), there were areas of “grows” and “concerns” that address failures in those specific meetings only.

### **RQ2: How is information communicated by school administrators?**

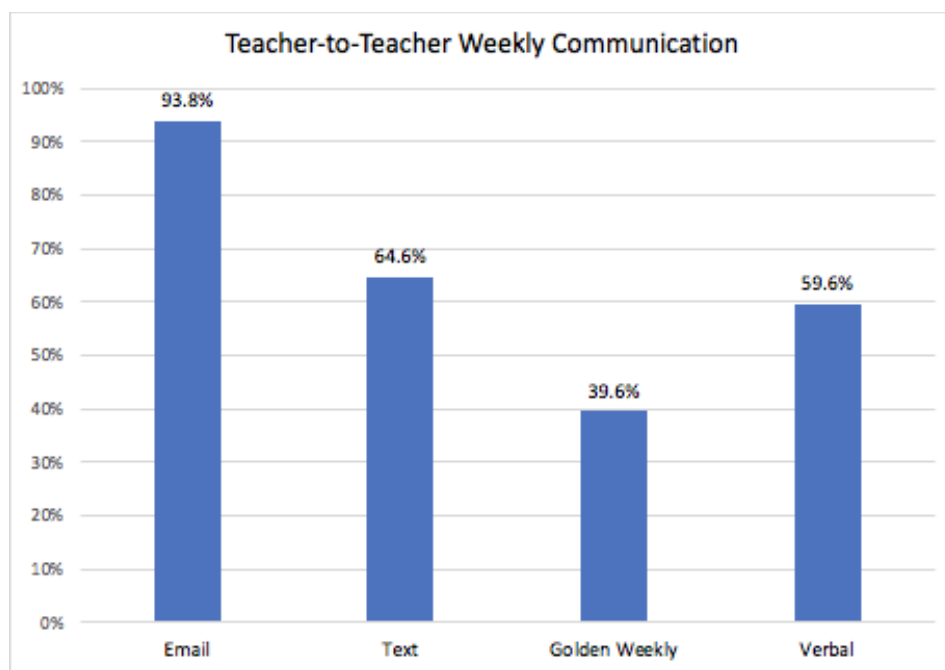
According to the teacher survey, the majority of teachers watch the Golden Weekly video newsletter at least twice a month (86.2%). However, the emails sent by the principal, the assistant principals, and other teachers are read at the higher rate of 98.8%, 99.6%, and 98.4% respectively. Netshitangani (2016) emphasizes the necessity of using a hybrid of communication. Since the open-end question on communication preference yielded responses that both preferred and did not prefer the video newsletter, it is important to share with teachers in different mediums. As one teacher said “it needs to be stressed that email is the district’s preferred method of communication” (Teacher survey, 2019). The survey shines a light on the disconnect between teachers expectations and the desires of the principal.

### *Teacher-to-Teacher Communications*

The connections between teachers were significant to the communication process (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). From the teacher survey, the teacher-to-teacher weekly communication frequency and method shown below emphasized a strong preference for using email (Figure 3). This also shows the preference for verbal, face-to-face interactions between teachers along with the personal familiarity of sharing texts, as found in Cox and McLeod's (2013) research. Texts in particular carried importance because it required the sharing of personal information for this to take place. Veretennik and Kianto's study (2019) found that isolated teachers relied on phone calls and messages more, particularly in schools with a higher number of teachers.

**Figure 3**

*Teacher-to-Teacher Communication Frequency Based on Survey Results*



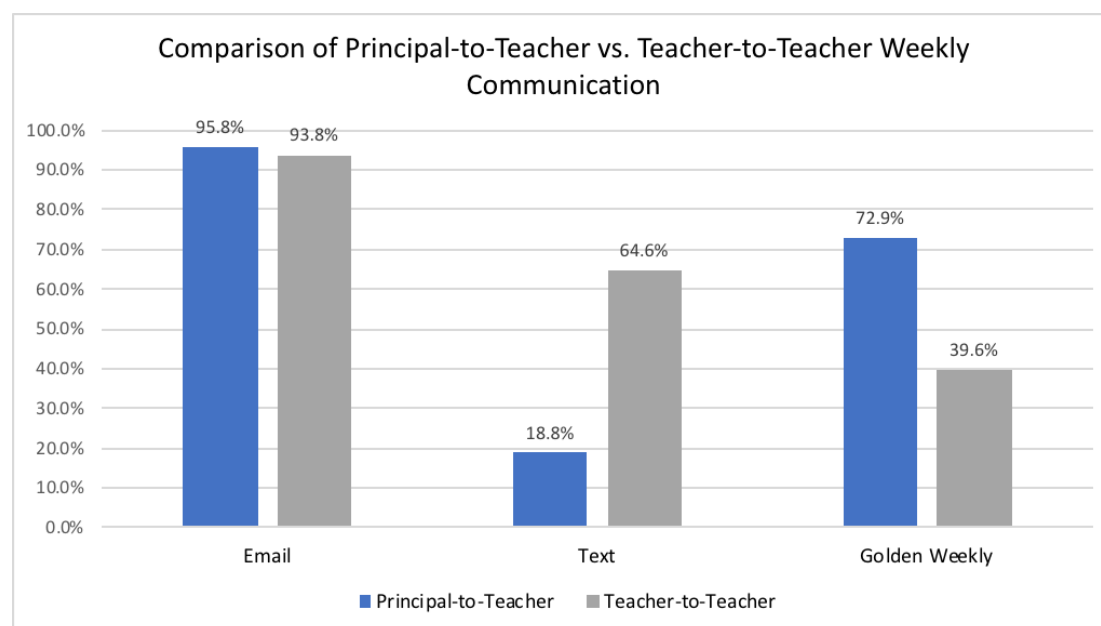
Many teachers share their personal phone number on school forms at the beginning of the year. And, they may find it natural to share their number with those on their hallways or teams. But, teachers do not generally publish their personal phone numbers within the school. Therefore, personal text messages between teachers imply a closer relationship that directly affects communication with the building.

### ***Principal-to-Teacher Communications***

Comparing principal-to-teacher weekly communication versus teacher-to-teacher weekly communication showed a similar use of email above all other forms of communication (Figure 4). According to the principal, the Golden Weekly video newsletter was the principal-to-teacher major form of communication. This figure also showed how frequently teachers share information they found in the Golden Weekly and their other forms of communication.

**Figure 4**

*Comparison of Principal-to-Teacher Versus Teacher-to-Teacher Weekly Communication*



*Note.* Verbal or face-to-face communications were considered 47.9% effective.

The principal provided his school phone number to all employees and even potential employees. Thompson (2014) emphasized the importance of using technology, including texting, to communicate with staff. “Because anyone I interview and I extend the offer to, I give my cell phone. You call me, text me, do anything you need to. Any questions that you may have” (Principal interview, July 11, 2019). According to the teacher survey, 54.2% of the teachers send work-related texts to the principal at least once a semester (18.8% every week). Looking at the importance of personal relationships however, teachers sent work-related texts to other teachers at a rate of 85.4% at least once a semester (64.6% every week). An existing relationship between teachers, where they are comfortable sharing personal information like cell phone numbers, suggested a positive influence on communication (Kale et al., 2011; Veretennik & Kianto, 2019).

One possible solution to a texting at a large school is to use an application like Remind. Rather than rely on teachers being able or willing to share phone numbers across the school, the Remind application allows teachers to join separate groups and provides the ability to send directed messages to groups (Rogowski, 2018). The Remind application is designed as a one-way communication tool, but it allows the administrator to choose to allow replies making this a more robust solution (Rogowski, 2018). This is also a tool used by a large number of teachers with their students, making it more familiar to those teachers than other solutions (Rogowski, 2018).

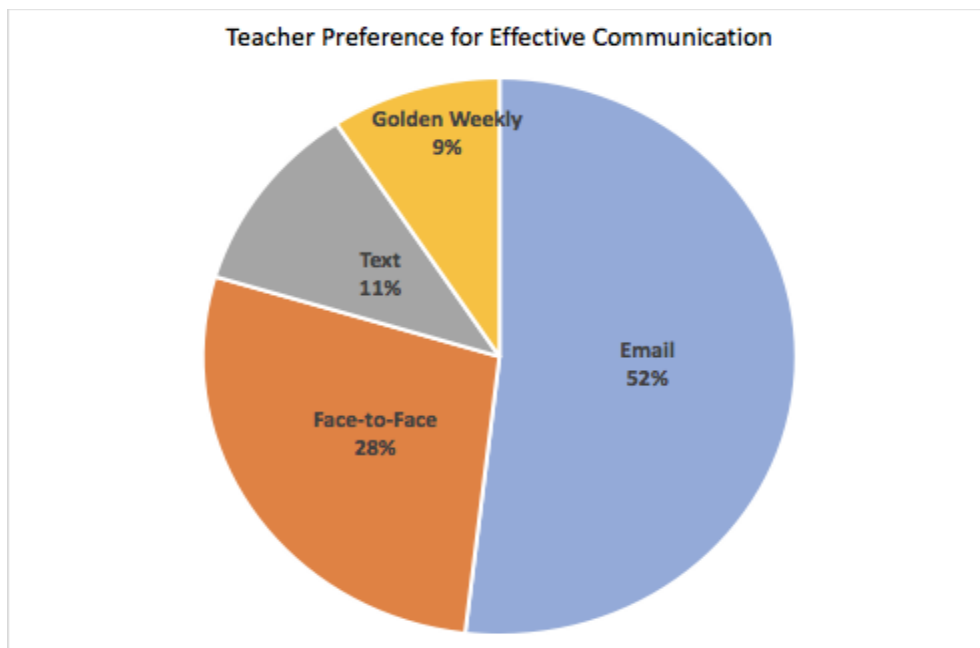
### **RQ3: What do teachers and school administrators perceive as effective or not effective?**

According to the teacher evaluation of effectiveness, a lot of information is limited to one channel, the video newsletter. The strong teacher preference for receiving information was email, as shown in Figure 5. The second preference was for a face-to-face conversation. The fact that information was viewed on the newsletter weekly by 72.9% of the teachers but that

58.3% said they preferred email was a disconnect in principal-to-teacher communication. The chart in Figure 5 showed teacher responses when asked for the most effective way an administrator can communicate.

### Figure 5

*Teacher Preference for Effective Communication*



The face-to-face preference, while important to note, did not always become reliable (Motoi, 2017). Face-to-face carried a risk of rumors or shared false information (Motoi, 2017). And, just because teachers viewed the newsletter or state a preference did not mean that the communication resulted in the desired action. Netshitangani (2016) suggested that communication was much more effective when it used multiple methods. A caution to the multiple methods was that message repetition can cause a teacher to become too tired of it and ignore the communication (Shin & Shin, 2016). Serious consideration needed to be made for balancing communication. Teacher attendance and completing instructions acts as one

measurement of successful communication. However, the principal should not fully rely on this as it becomes more of a reward measurement than a teamwork process.

### ***Reviewing Written Rules***

In the PLC meeting form, there were five rules listed (Appendix D). Overall, the rules were an attempt to provide effective communication by organizing behaviors. Okoli (2017) explained that the purpose of the communication was to inform, clarify, and question. The third rule stated that “We will not complain about a problem unless we can offer a solution.” This rule was preventing open communication by not allowing clarification or questioning (Okoli, 2017). In this case, if a teacher saw a problem and not have a solution, the rules implied that the teacher should not offer or explain the problem. This emphasizes the importance of reviewing written rules to verify that they are working as intended or revise them (Gunther et al., 2011). Just as classroom rules are often established with input from the students, teacher meeting rules should also receive input from teachers.

### ***Principal Communication Conflict***

Interestingly, the principal had a personal conflict in his own communication styles. He was upset at the school district for requiring use of a principal portal instead of sending an email.

“I want the emails so I could just read through this, get it over with. I don’t want to log in to the principal portal, because then it’s another task you got to do. Then, you’ll be like ... So in every email, they was like, ‘Check the principal portal weekly to make sure there’s no updates in there.’ I was like, ‘Can it at least be that it sends an email when something new goes in the principal portal?’”

(Principal interview, July 11, 2019).

Despite his own stated preference for the email, the principal felt that teachers should access his online video for information in the school, instead of receiving an email. The conflict may have reduced the quality of communication at the school allowing for more misunderstandings (Ärlestig, 2008 ).

### **Implications**

Teachers connected with one another to share and enhance communications. Wasserman and Faust (1994) pointed out that relationship ties between people become channels for communication. In response to describing an instance when a teacher knew where to find information, one teacher clearly identified a colleague as the person to ask. One of the important points Gunther et al. (2011) made is the importance of encouraging teachers to spread the information to others. Communications traveled with repetition by teachers (Spillane et al., 2001).

Rather than expand and use these social connections, the official school communication was more restrictive. The past three years at Golden Middle School have included extended hours imposed by the school district in the building which minimized face-to-face large group meetings. Teachers were naturally separated by physical hallways and grade levels. The principal's insistence of using the video newsletter as the primary source information put up barriers that even the principal is aware of as he stated in his interview: "He's probably going to say it's in the [Golden] Weekly. I ain't listen [to it]." The fact the principal is aware it impedes information flow but still insists on it is alarming.

The Brekelmans et al. (1992) study showed that teachers do not change their information sharing behaviors over time. It required an active change by the teacher or principal (Netshitangani, 2016). At Golden Middle School, the principal's devotion to his weekly video

newsletter created a disconnect between the value the principal puts on it and the teachers put on it. Rather than create a communication conduit, it may prevent communication. According to the principal:

So I don't know, because I can't track how many people read it instead of listening, so I don't know if that worked or not. But I know I was still asked, "You know ..." What? It's in the ... It's gotten to the point now where people don't even ask me because they're like, "He's probably going to say it's in the [Golden] Weekly. I ain't listen [to it]." But it's bad because it's even administrators..."

The principal acknowledged that teachers, and other administrators, are not coming to him with questions because they felt his response will be to watch his video. Part of the school administrator's job was to not only know the difference in communication styles and tools but know how different groups of teachers handled different styles and tools (Gunther et al., 2011; Tyler 2016). Principal appeared to be holding to one communication form and ignoring actual data from teachers that showed it is not a hundred percent effective. This also reflected the more traditional organization that has the principal pushing information in one direction and expecting teachers to clearly understand the message (Ärlestig, 2007).

The principal clearly enjoyed recording and speaking in his video newsletter, but he had confined all others to that form of communication. One of the potential changes may be to reorganize the information from the Golden Weekly's attached slides (Appendix E). Rather than provide everything in a set of slides, the principal could provide information in different formats, like a calendar or other organizing arrangement.

### ***Limited Feedback***

According to Okoli (2017), a teacher in the classroom communicated with students to inform, clarify, question, and expect feedback in return. If this concept expanded to include school administrators, one of the areas missed in this communication arc was feedback. Men (2016) and Adelman (2012) both discussed the importance of an easy, open feedback system. The principal did not provide a formal feedback system with a notable exception of literacy labs. Instead, he relied on teachers knowing that “they’ll talk to me, people call me, people text me” to provide feedback. Men (2016) said that successful CEOs agreed that face-to-face communication is best for feedback because it provides informal, immediate information. CEOs had to be transparent with problems to promote the culture of providing feedback (Adelman, 2012). However, in the school situation with teachers limited in their physical contacts tied to a hall and grade level, a more formal method of feedback may be a solution to providing upward, critical communication. Successful CEOs used feedback to understand their community and refine their ideas (Men, 2016).

The literacy labs, at the suggestion of the literacy coach, did provide feedback that allowed for immediate changes and long-term adjustments. The coach created a Padlet for anonymous shared suggestions. For example, one suggestion was the idea to provide dummy or cheat sheets for the lessons. “So we spent this summer producing, I call them dummy sheets, but not to be insulting, but they’re like the teachers just picks it up and a lesson is there. So they have access to the full-blown lesson for literacy lab, but it’s like a cheat sheet” (Principal interview, July 11, 2019). This example of working feedback and improvement should provide a model for feedback.

Weng and Tang (2014) showed that the most effective principals used technology, like the Padlet example in the literacy labs. Further, their study showed that a balanced feedback

dynamic between leadership and teachers created a more effective school as a whole (Weng & Tang, 2014). The next step should be to incorporate this model into general school feedback to make sure that teachers are providing information about the school and the administrators are receiving it. “Principals have the power, authority, and position to impact the climate of the school, but many lack the feedback to improve” (Kelley et al., 2005). Providing the feedback mechanism is an administrative job. The lack of feedback at this school may have prevented positive changes to the school climate (Rafferty, 2005).

### ***Crisis Communication Plans***

There is limited awareness of an internal crisis communication plan from both the teachers and the school administrators within the school. The school district outlines a plan for students, teachers, and parents (County website, 2019). Understanding where to go and how to communicate among teachers is less clear, but vitally important. Teachers responsibilities vary widely based on the crisis at hand. To the extent possible, outlining potential roles and responsibilities and communicating those is critical to handling the crisis. Alikhan (2016), a senior communications director for the Association of California School Administrators, points out that different people gather information in different methods and therefore, the interpretations can also be different. The solution for clearer communication is to provide specific facts (Alikhan, 2016). The school crisis plan needs to clear on where to get information, how often it is updated, and who is in charge of what aspect. The principal is the school leader, but scenarios can have the principal unable to initiate a plan or unable to handle the entire structure. While some crises cannot be imagined, if there is a structure and plan in place, then it can generally be modified to handle most situations. A crisis plan is, by definition, only handled in an emergency situation, but some emergencies can last a very long time.

## **Future Research Recommendations**

The principal at Golden Middle School felt strongly that his video newsletter is the solution to communication. It would provide a comparison to have an understanding of a week's worth of the principal's emails, texts, meetings, and face-to-face discussions. The goal is to gain a more detailed understanding of the communications initiated by the principal's office.

One of the positive communication initiatives at Golden Middle School was the fact that the principal shared his school-issued cell phone number with everyone, including potential hires (Principal interview, July 11, 2019). But the surprisingly high number of teachers who said they texted another teacher weekly (64.6%) may be an indicator of school climate. This opens a field of research in understanding how internal communications move within a school from teacher to teacher. It may be that a certain set of teachers stand out as linchpin to moving information internally among teachers. The fact that teachers consider email more effective than face-to-face should also be explored and broken down. Do teachers prefer email because they have specifics in writing? Some teachers may want this to feel protected that the rules or expectations did not change suddenly (Hu et al., 2009). Some teachers may want it in writing to refer back to. According to Hu et al. (2009), teachers felt that "email provided black-and-white evidence of what was confirmed, discussed or agreed upon" (p. 625). Or is there a time constraint that limits the amount of work that can be done face-to-face? The exploration of connections between teachers is vitally important to understanding how communications move internally to a school.

In order to minimize the teacher survey, the missing area in this study is social media. While the school specialists, including the principal, have Twitter accounts, these are mainly used to focus communication out of the school. How teachers use social media to communicate with each other is another area of exploration. Anecdotally, during the researcher's time at the

school, Facebook was used by a number of teachers where some had the attitude of connecting with any teacher from the school, some only connected with their “real” friends, and some would not connect on social media at all. Finding out how teachers view social media connections would help illustrate the communication connections of teachers.

Golden Middle School had a disparity of communication between genders. Another interesting line of research is looking at how the different genders handle communication in a school. This would require a larger research group than one school but could provide insight into gender-specific habits.

Crisis planning is difficult and time-consuming. But laying out a plan can make a difference in school climate. Comparing and contrasting crisis plans from different schools within the same school district could provide even more information about a school’s communication culture. Because school districts tend to have a crisis plan in some form, the study across districts might not allow the same comparisons as taking all the middle schools in a single district.

## **Conclusion**

Why is communication between a principal and a teacher within a school so important? “First, the communication that occurs within schools is crucial in shaping the social reality that teachers experience. Second, teachers’ perceptions about their schools heavily influence their attitudes and, in turn, their behaviors.” (Rafferty, 2003, p. 66). Highly successful principals can affect the school climate (Kelley et al., 2005) and also improve efficiency in operations (Adelman, 2012).

Effective communication strategies can mark the success or failure of an organization (Caspi & Blau, 2011). The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) standards

are a framework to engage in technology in the school system from students to educational leadership. According to the ISTE Standards for Education Leadership (2018), school administrators will “communicate effectively with stakeholders to gather input on the plan, celebrate successes and engage in a continuous improvement cycle.” This means that the plan is not a one-way set of announcements, but allows for discussion and development of ideas. “The ability of principals to make use of the right choice of words in communicating to staff, giving listening ears to them and providing a constructive feedback gives them a sense of belonging and motivates them towards higher performance” (Ndidi & Alike, 2018, p. 235). The administrator needs to create a communication plan that consistently reviews and adjusts to ensure clear communication.

### ***Importance of Feedback***

The school climate is directly affected by the engagement or lack of a feedback system (Kelly et al., 2005). The principal should provide a loop of feedback where the teacher can make a comment and receive back information on that comment (Men, 2016). This can take the form of a locked suggestion box or an electronic form. But it should not rely solely on the physical face-to-face contact with the principal. Even the principal admits that he had issues with agreeing to things in the hallway but not having funds available or other people aware of the agreement (Principal’s interview, July 19, 2019). This also ties in to who is responsible for the communication and who addresses the feedback (Spillane et al., 2001).

### ***Using Technology to Advance Communication***

Technology provides a unique opportunity to communicate even while it may require duplicate messaging (Blau & Shamir-Inbal, 2017). The study by Weng and Tang (2014) shows that the most effective school administrators use a strong technology communications plan.

School administrators need to be flexible in using different technologies (Brockmeier et al., 2005; Thompson, 2014). They also need to be willing to make changes to their plans as new technologies become available (Thompson, 2014). However, Lindl (2017) cautions that if a school administrator uses too many new tools at the same time, the effectiveness of the message is greatly reduced. Everyone including administrators, teachers, students, and parents requires some training to understand the plan and the tools being used (Lindl, 2017).

### ***Creating a Communication Plan***

The first step in creating a communication plan is to identify the different categories for information. Table 14 shows the lists of categories provided by the principal and teachers. One area not included by either group is the crisis communication plan.

**Table 14**

#### *Categories for Communicated Information*

<b>Issues</b>	<b>Principal Requirements</b>	<b>Teacher Requirements</b>
Student Data and Analysis	✓	✓
Curriculum and Instruction	✓	✓
Teacher Accountability, Issues, and Motivation	✓	✓
Policies and Procedures	✓	✓
Hot Issues	✓	
Calendar Items	✓	✓
Advisory to the Principal	✓	

Breaking down these areas to specific issues of communication allows the creation an initial communications plan. For example, there are county-wide policies on appropriate dress codes for teachers. The communications plan needs to specify that the plan is from the county

and link to the appropriate site. If the school modifies the county program to allow for t-shirt and jeans on certain days, then the communications plan needs to layout those days or where to find out which days are allowed. The teachers need to know where to go to get information. Both the administrators and teachers need to know who is in charge of the information. Appendix F provides a simple example of a partial communication plan for the school. The goal is a guide that scaffolds the creation of a communications plan for the school that fits their needs, technology resources, and compliments the school's purpose of teaching students. It is the responsibility of the school administrator to choose the right tool to get the message appropriately shared.

### ***Recommendations for Principals***

The final practical outcome of this study is recognizing the need for four key components in communications between school administrators and teachers. The first is a communications plan that includes day-to-day operations. Teachers need to know where to find information (Porterfield & Carnes, 2014). The second component is a crisis communication plan. While this is an integral part of the communications plan, the specific emergency information location needs to be planned (Cox, 2012; Gunther et al., 2011). The third component is a formal method of feedback. This should be a formalized method of getting feedback and providing responses back (Tyler, 2016). The fourth communication component is the recognition of teachers as partners in education by encouraging their participation at every level (Whitaker et al., 2019). This last component weaves through the entire communications process. The principal can involve teachers from the beginning of the school year by consciously delegating responsibilities.

**Communication Plan.** Lack of intentionality in the communication system means that opportunities for collaboration are haphazard (Harrell, 2018). A communication plan requires planning and deadlines that allow ownership not just from the leadership but from the teachers. This ownership changes the dynamic relationship of the principal and teacher from leader-follower to teammate. Each teammate has their unique responsibilities, but teammates learn to trust each other to their own job, learn about other jobs, ask for help, and be part of the decision-making process (Woodland & Mazur, 2019). Instead of guessing about policies, calendar changes, and even school-wide celebrations, providing a plan that lays out the where to find information and who owns it is vital to engaging teachers as teammates. Effective communication leads to effective collaboration among teachers that, in turn, focus their energy on student learning (Harrell, 2018).

In the Suggested Outline of School Communication Plan (Appendix F), the key features of the communication plan are the item name, the location of the message, the frequency of the message, who is the owner or responsible person, and a review schedule to determine effectiveness. In the examples provided, it can be seen that most items have more than one location for the message. It may be on the calendar and in the principal's newsletter too. Then the frequency of the message can be separated depending on its location or delivery mechanism. Because repeating a message too frequently can have an adverse effect intended audience, separating delivery mechanisms and frequency helps control the amount of information (Shin & Shin, 2016).

The best method of verifying the effectiveness of the frequency is to ask the teachers. Auditing the effectiveness of the different types of communiques is essential to ensuring a

productive communication plan (Gunther et al., 2011). Auditing can include tracking how often the website is viewed or how often a shared document is used (Gunther et al., 2011).

**Crisis Communication Plan.** The COVID-19 pandemic situation brings to light this necessity as schools closed with little to no warning. The flood of information from districts, school principals, department chairs, and other groups was overwhelming. A crisis plan can provide a website to check daily, a specific subject email to read, or a hierarchy of who to contact. In this situation, has every teacher in every department checked in? Knowing the individual teacher status must be clear before you can focus on students situation. Not all answers to the situation are available immediately, but having contact on a scheduled basis allow teachers to feel they have some control over their situation. It reminds teachers that someone cares about them as a person, and not just an interchangeable piece.

Part of organizing a crisis plan is to recognize the issues that occur during a crisis. Again, COVID-19 pandemic has provided some specific issues. One problem is that communicating online is exhausting (Sklar, 2020). All parties in an online video call are trying to gather information without the use of body signals. The focus is intently on the words being said and depending on the video view it can also be distracting (Sklar, 2020). Shortening online meetings, compared to face-to-face meetings, is vital. Therefore, a great deal of planning for a crisis must happen in advance, since actual meetings need to be minimized and spaced to prevent the overwhelming video fatigue (Sklar, 2020).

All staff are effected in some way during a crisis event (Olinger Steeves et al., 2017). If the principal includes the staff in the planning for a crisis and everyone knows where the information is kept, it changes the situation and accompanying panic to a manageable process (Olinger Steeves et al., 2017). While the individual teachers hold responsibility for knowing the

crisis plan, it is the principal's job to make sure that teachers know how to access the crisis plan along with having appropriate training (Olinger Steeves et al., 2017).

To create a crisis plan, a school should consider creating a checklist that meets the needs of their school population (Aspiranti et al., 2011). Aspiranti et al. (2011) recommends general areas for the checklist including general prevention information, violence prevention, accident prevention, suicide prevention, and other prevention. They also recommend that plan include handling situations after the crisis is over. Appendix G provides an example of a crisis plan considerations to start a plan. School crisis plans start with a review of the district plans to create a subset of items specific to the particular school (Olinger Steeves et al., 2017). Ownership of individual items in a crisis plan and communicating that ownership are vital to effective operations (Olinger Steeves et al., 2017).

**Formal Feedback Process.** While teacher retention was not the focus of this study, communication relationships play an important role in job satisfaction (Veretennik & Kianto, 2019). Teacher turnover is expensive and affects administrators and other teachers negatively (Bukko, 2019). Formalizing feedback is a simple tool that reaches out to many different emotions (Bukko, 2019). For example, if a principal enacts a policy, and the teachers questions it, creating feedback, how does the principal feel about being challenged? Yet, the teachers receive written feedback on their teaching skills at any given time, when the administrator walks in to their room for unscheduled observations. The feedback administrators provide is usually in a proscribed format required by the school district. This formalizes a review process so that a teacher knows where the information and is located and how to respond.

Extending this formality of a feedback procedure helps control personal feelings (Bukko, 2019). And, the more anonymous the process is, the more honest the feedback will be.

Suggestions for feedback systems include anonymous online forms, locked suggestion boxes, and anonymous surveys. “However, if the feedback is not followed up or appears to be ignored, it can absolutely destroy a professional working culture” (Harrell, 2018, p. 39). Therefore, any feedback procedure must include a method of response. If the feedback is not personal, then adding feedback and responses to the weekly principal’s newsletter is an easy way to provide feedback and allow teachers to see that they absolutely get a response. For personal feedback, the principal should make it part of his routine to address that individually at least once a week.

**Teachers as Partners.** Last, teachers need to be recognized as the team members they are. The principal in this study felt that he should go into new teachers’ classrooms to help, but at the same time, heard that they were uncomfortable with his presence. According to Whitaker et al. (2019), principals often thought they should wait three or four weeks for a new teacher to establish their classroom before visiting. However, the study found that principals should be in the new teachers’ classroom from the first week of school (Whitaker et al., 2019). By establishing a baseline of assistance, the principal can provide guidance and create a relationship right at the beginning.

Plus, this provides the principal an opportunity to bring new teachers to the front of other teachers to display something they did in their classrooms or learned in their classes (Whitaker, et al., 2019). Making the newest teachers in the building part of the professional development for everyone allows them to shine, incorporates their ideas, and provides new direction for experienced teachers. Why are faculty meetings and leadership meetings run by the principal? “Too many principals fall into the trap of using faculty meetings to inefficiently convey information” (Hoerr, 2005, p. 87). A more efficient faculty meeting can have a teacher responsible for the agenda, another teacher keeping time, and another teacher keeping meeting

notes to be shared faculty-wide. Incorporating teacher ownership into the standard meetings change the meetings and make their more solution-driven (Hoerr, 2005).

In the end, communication is all about relationship building. Whether the principal has a weekly newsletter or prefers to convey summary information in a different way, the information must be shared. Providing information and encouraging teachers to repeat and share the information are both keys to effectively communicating (Mital et al., 2014). According to Tyler (2016), “without strong communication skills, relationships could be difficult to establish” (p. 13). Co-creating communications systems can create a trusting relationships between administrators and teachers (Harrell, 2018). Building relationships and trust is a cornerstone of a successful school leadership (Tyler, 2016).

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## Appendix A

### Interview Questions for the Principal and Assistant Principal

*Introduction: Thank you for allowing me to do research at your school. I will be asking the principal and the assistant principals a series of questions. I will then survey the teachers. An audio recording will be made of the interviews and transcribed. The goal is to understand what communication is used in the school to improve your communication plan.*

#### Demographics

- Male/Female
- Years of experience in your current position: (0-3, 4-6, 7-9, 10-15, 15+)
- Years at this school: \_\_\_\_\_

How effective is the way you presently communicate with your teachers in your school?

- A. Highly effective
- B. Effective
- C. Average
- D. Not effective/below average

Principal's Interview Questions	Research Question	Literature
What information do you communicate with your staff?	RQ 1	Halawah (2005), Porterfield & Carnes (2014), Weng & Tang (2013)
What information does your staff communicate with you?	RQ 1	Halawah (2005), Porterfield & Carnes (2014), Weng & Tang (2013)
What method(s) do you use to communicate with your teachers? What tools do you use? Or what is	RQ2	

<b>Principal's Interview Questions</b>	<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Literature</b>
the method of communication?		
How often do you use this method to communicate with your teachers?	RQ2	
How do teachers provide feedback on the information they receive?	RQ2	
What feedback have you received from teachers on something you communicated?	RQ2	
What do you think of as effective characteristics of communication methods?	RQ 3	Botez (2018), Kelley et al. (2005), Gunther et al., 2011, Gudykunst (2012)
Do you share your phone number with teachers?	RQ2	

**Appendix B**  
**Teacher Survey**

Q1 Gender

- Female
- Male
- Do not want to answer

Q2 Years of Experience as a Teacher (completed)

- 0-3 years
- 4-6 years
- 7-9 years
- 10-15 years
- 15+ years

Q3 Years at THIS School (completed): \_\_\_\_\_

Q4 What subject do you teach this year? (Choose all that apply)

- Math
- English Language Arts
- Science
- Social Studies
- Connections incl. World Languages / Art / Music / AVID / PE / Health / Reading / Other
- Non-classroom Teacher including Instructional coach, academic dean, counselors, other
- Support Personnel: Paraprofessionals, Secretaries, Custodians, Cafeteria, other

Q5 Please indicate the FREQUENCY of each item.

Items	Never	Once a Semester	Once a Month	Twice a month	Every Week
<b>I watch the Golden Weekly video</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>I listen to the Golden Weekly video.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>I read the attached notes on the Golden Weekly.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>I tell other teachers about something important in the Golden Weekly.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>I read emails from the principal.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>I read emails from my assistant principal.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>I read emails from other teachers.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>I send work-related texts to the principal.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>I send work-related texts to my assistant principal.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>I send work-related texts to other teachers.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>I heard about something I needed to know from another teacher.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q6 Please indicate how EFFECTIVE each item is.

Items	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
<b>The Golden Weekly is an effective way for me to receive the information I need each week.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>The principal's PA announcements are an effective way for teachers to receive important information.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Emails from the principal are an effective way for teachers to receive important information.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Emails from the assistant principal are an effective way for teachers to receive important information.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Texts to and from the principal provide me with important information.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Texts to and from the assistant principal provide me with important information.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Word of mouth or face-to-face discussions are an effective way for teachers to receive important information.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Meeting notes are an effective way for teachers to receive important information.</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q7 What is the most effective way that your administrator could communicate with you?

Q8 What sort of information do you want from your administrators?

Q9 Describe an instance where you knew exactly where to find information you needed.

Q10 Describe an instance where you did not know where to find information or you did not have access (e.g., events, testing, meeting times/locations, etc.)

Q11 Your administrator believes in using repetition to get information across. Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Q12 Any other comments on communications?

## Appendix C

### AP Weekly Updates

#### Golden Middle School

#### AP Weekly Update Meeting

Date \_\_\_\_\_

AP1:

<b>Area of Responsibility</b>	<b>Update</b>	<b>Next Steps</b>
<b>Math</b>		
<b>Science</b>		
<b>Remediation / Recovery</b>		
<b>School-Wide Data</b>		
<b>Master Schedule</b>		
<b>Student Information</b>		
<b>Opportunity Culture</b>		
<b>Title I</b>		
<b>Equipment / Supplies</b>		
<b>Technology</b>		
<b>School Safety</b>		
<b>Athletics</b>		
<b>Front Office</b>		
<b>Dean</b>		
<b>Other</b>		



AP2:

<b>Area of Responsibility</b>	<b>Update</b>	<b>Next Steps</b>
<b>Social Studies</b>		
<b>World Lang</b>		
<b>Health/P.E.</b>		
<b>Career Tech</b>		
<b>Fine Arts</b>		
<b>New Teachers</b>		
<b>Testing</b>		
<b>Professional Learning</b>		
<b>School-Wide Discipline (OSS/ISS/ALC)</b>		
<b>PBIS</b>		
<b>Textbooks</b>		
<b>Clinic</b>		
<b>Facilities</b>		
<b>School Calendar/Field Trips</b>		
<b>Dean</b>		
<b>Other</b>		

AP3:

<b>Area of Responsibility</b>	<b>Update</b>	<b>Next Steps</b>
<b>Special Ed</b>		
<b>ELA</b>		
<b>Reading</b>		
<b>ELL</b>		
<b>AVID</b>		
<b>School-Wide Literacy</b>		
<b>SMF</b>		
<b>Dispro/RTI/SST</b>		
<b>Personalized Learning</b>		
<b>Student Services</b>		
<b>CIS</b>		
<b>Media Center</b>		
<b>Teacher Attendance</b>		
<b>Student Attendance</b>		
<b>Grants/Partnerships</b>		
<b>Dean</b>		
<b>Other</b>		

## Appendix D

### AP Weekly PLC / Meeting Agenda

Golden Middle School

AP Weekly PLC/Meeting Agenda

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <span style="color: red;">Principal</span></li> <li>▪ <span style="color: red;">Secretary</span></li> <li>▪ <span style="color: red;">Assigned AP</span></li> </ul>		
another's perspective.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Culture Data (Attendance (staff-student), discipline, PBIS)</li> <li>– Intervention Data (iReady ELA, iReady Math, FastBridge, Dispro Caseload Data, etc)</li> <li>– Observation Data (calibration walks, videos, eWalk)</li> <li>– Interim Benchmark Data</li> </ul>		
–		
	<b>Principal's Report</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓ School</li> <li>✓</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ AP1</li> <li>▪ AP2</li> <li>▪ AP3</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ AP1</li> <li>▪ AP2</li> <li>▪ AP3</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> <li>✓</li> </ul>
		✓
		✓
		✓
		✓

## Appendix E

### Example of Documentation for Video Newsletter

#### 10-8-18 Golden Middle School Video Newsletter

<p>Week of October 8, 2018 • Volume 4, Issue 9 • The Golden Weekly</p> <p>Pictures of the school, principal, and teachers</p>	<p><b>Upcoming Events/Important Dates</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Walkthroughs Tuesday and Thursday, October 9 &amp; 11, 2018</li> <li>▪ ELA Benchmark Testing (school-wide) Adjusted Bell/Lunch Schedule Wednesday, October 10, 2018</li> <li>▪ Breast Cancer Awareness Shirts Payment Due by Wednesday, October 10, 2018</li> <li>▪ Leadership Cohort Application Thursday, October 11, 2018</li> <li>▪ Grade Export Friday, October 12, 2018</li> <li>▪ AZ Release Day Friday, October 19, 2018 Middle School @ 8:00am</li> <li>▪</li> </ul>
<p><b>General Announcements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Required Raptor Sign-In</li> <li>▪ Itservicedesk@fultonschools.org</li> <li>▪ PTSA – Membership Wall of Fame</li> <li>▪ (PTSA Benefits ALL) AVID Krispy</li> <li>▪ Kreme Pre-Sales (delivered Friday @ lunch) Taking Down Student Bus Numbers (4<sup>th</sup> Period Teachers) October – Period of Peace</li> <li>▪ Open Enrollment is starting a week sooner this year, running October 15<sup>th</sup> through November 2<sup>nd</sup></li> <li>▪ RISE Staff Survey</li> <li>▪ PLC Audit</li> <li>▪ Maximize Instructional and Planning Time/ZERO Minutes to Waste</li> </ul> <p><b>Rtl Walkthroughs</b></p> <p>Weekly Communications from Deans</p> <p><i>“Professionals need to continuously improve; if not, they are acting unprofessionally.”</i> – Jim Knight, Focus on Teaching</p>	<p><b>This Week’s Rtl Lessons</b></p> <p><b>Monday:</b> N/A</p> <p><b>Tuesday:</b> Social-Emotional/NNN</p> <p><b>Wednesday:</b> School-Wide ELA Assessments</p> <p><b>Thursday:</b> Student Culture Survey ( Deans will email link)/Digital Citizenship Task (Simply project the lesson on the LCD for the whole group discussion)</p> <p><b>Friday:</b> AVID article with constructed response</p>



## General Shout-Outs

- Welcome new SEC
- Ms. A on yet another top-notch Immunization Assessment
- Ms. B and Ms. C for an awesome mock trial. Our students are better through exposure.
- Congratulations to Mrs. D, Ms. E and Ms. F for being selected as County Special Team Members.
- Shout out to Ms. G, Ms. H, Mr. I and Mrs. J for the most PBIS transactions for September...WE HAVE TO CELEBRATE OUR STUDENTS.

## Celebrations



Happy birthday to our Golden Family Members who are those celebrating birthdays:

Ms. K	October 11 <sup>th</sup>
Ms. L	October 11 <sup>th</sup>
Mr. M	October 11 <sup>th</sup>

**“How good can we expect to be if our best player is not our best teammate.”**

— Brad Stevens

## Appendix F

### Suggested Outline of School Communication Plan

Item	Location	Frequency	Responsible Person	Review Schedule to Determine Effectiveness
Teacher dress down days	Principal's Newsletter	1 per week	Principal	Weekly
	Master calendar	1 per semester	Principal's secretary	1 per semester
Testing Days	Principal's Newsletter	1 per week	Principal	Weekly
	Overhead announcements	Daily during testing	Asst. Principal	1 per semester
	Master calendar	1 per semester	Principal's secretary	
Parent / Teacher Conference	E-mail	As needed	Asst. Principal	As needed
Student Data	PLC Meeting	2 per week	Asst. Principal	1 per semester
Teacher Feedback	Google form (located on shared drive)	As needed	Principal	1 per semester

**Item:** The specific communication needed. This should not be too general in description.

**Location:** Places where the teacher can find the information. List all locations that apply.

**Frequency:** How often is the information shared?

**Responsible Person:** Who is responsible for updating this information?

**Review Schedule:** How often does the school review this line of communication to make sure it is working?

## Appendix G

### Suggested Outline of School Crisis Communication Plan

Item	Location	Responsible Person
Crisis Team Identified  Members listed – including admin. team and other teachers and staff Members' responsibilities Media Liaison identified	Principal's Newsletter	Principal
	Shared drive	Principal's secretary
	Notebook at the front desk	Front desk secretary
Crisis drills schedules  Including who conducts them When are they occur How are they evaluated	Master calendar	Principal & Team member
	Notebook at the front desk	Principal's secretary
Map of school  Marked for fire/ emergency exits including emergency relocation sites Marked for lockdown (what to do with trailers or other outliers)	Notebook at the front desk	Team member in charge of maps
	Shared drive	
Procedure to inform district, teachers and staff, students, parents, community members	Notebook at the front desk	Team members in charge of notifications
	Shared drive	
Procedures to provide counseling  For Faculty/ staff For Students and families	Notebook at the front desk	School psychologist and/or school social worker
	Shared drive	

Notes:

- Start with the school district plan. Then identify school specific items and clearly label these.
- Include a team that mixes responsibility across the building.

# **Roberta Salmirs Barber**

## *Curriculum Vitae*

### **Education**

**EDD** Indiana University, Instructional Systems Technology May 2020  
Dissertation: *“A Case Study of Communications Between School Administrators and Teachers in an Urban Middle School”*

Committee: Dr. Anne Leftwich (chair), Dr. Thomas Brush, & Dr. Barbara Erwin

**MS** Florida State University December 2008  
Master of Science in Library and Information Studies with Completed NCATE/State Approved Program in Educational Media Specialist

**MS** Georgia State University March 1990  
Master of Science in Decision Sciences

**BS** Georgia Institute of Technology December 1983  
Bachelor in Electrical Engineering

### **Honors & Awards**

DeKalb County School District Library Media Specialist of the Year 2019

Phi Theta Lambda Honor Society 2017

Fulton County Schools Library Media Specialist of the Year 2016

Woodland Middle School Professional Employee of the Year 2014

Beta Phi Mu Honor Society 2008

## Grants

**Tift Innovation Fund (co-Primary Investigator)** 2020  
*Collaborative and Accountable Community Based Research for Adolescent Language Learners*

**Tift College of Education School-University Partnership Grant** 2019  
*Supporting Technology and Disciplinary Literacy Professional Development.*

**DonorsChoose Projects** 2015-2019  
*Various*

**Dollar General Youth Award** 2016  
*\$2500 for audio books*

**Federal Striving Reader Grant** 2016  
*Woodland Middle School Project Manager*

**Captain Planet Foundation** 2016  
*Woodland Middle School Project Learning Garden*

## Publications

***Rethinking School-University Partnerships: A New Way Forward*** 2020  
**Chandler & Barron, Information Age Publishers**  
*Chapter: Community Accountability in School University Partnerships*

***Inquire by Lori Donovan*** 2019  
**American Library Association, ALA Publishing, contributor**

## **Certifications**

Certified in GA / FL: P-12 Media Specialist (S-5) #422849; Certified in FL: Technology Education 6-12

Microsoft Innovative Educator Trainer 2019

Google Educator Level I & II Certifications 2018

## **Teaching Experience**

2017-Present Teacher-Librarian. Tucker High School, DeKalb County School District.

*Accolades: 2019 DeKalb County School District Library Media Specialist of the Year*

- Manage all library operations
- Member School Leadership Team
- Member DeKalb Teacher-Librarian Advisory Committee
- Member DeKalb County Schools FUSE Advisory Committee
- Grant Writer
- #TicklingTech teaching technology to teachers
- Editor / Originator of the weekly newsletter Tiger's Tissue Tabloid
- Helen Ruffin Reading Bowl Competition Team Coach
- Webmaster

2012-2017 Media & Educational Technology Instructor, Certified. Woodland Middle School. Fulton County Schools.

*Accolades: 2013-14 Professional Employee of the Year for Woodland MS;*

*2015-16 Fulton County Schools Library Media Specialist of the Year*

2010-2012 Teacher-Librarian, Creative Writing Teacher. Henderson Middle School, DeKalb County School District.

2009-2010 Volunteer / Substitute. Carlyle Fraser Library, The Westminster Schools. Henderson Middle School Library. Oak Grove Elementary School Library. Hawthorne Elementary School Library.

Fall 2008 Student Intern at Henderson Middle School, DeKalb County, GA.

2007-2009 Volunteer Reference Librarian for the Internet Public Library.

2002-2008 Oak Grove PTA Book Fair Chair.

2006-2009 George Woodruff Library (Jr. High), The Westminster Schools. Volunteer.  
2007-2008 Carlyle Fraser Library (High School), The Westminster Schools. Volunteer.  
2005-2007 Kittredge Magnet School for High Achievers. Volunteer.  
1995-1995 Emory University. Adjunct professor /Assistant Director of Computing.

## **IT Experience**

2007-2010 Student / Intern/ Volunteer/ Substitute. Responsible for library services including  
Macs and PC support.

1999 – 2007 Consultant. Self-employed. Provided office management services & basic  
bookkeeping, trained clients on computer use, created & updated web sites.

1998-1999 Project Manager. TEN Network Operations, Turner Broadcasting Systems. Managed  
Year 2000 effort for all Network Operations. Introduced structure for completing cross-  
functional projects. Received award.

1995-1998 Business Analyst. ITD-Administrative Services, Emory University.

1990-1995 Asst. Director, Computer Systems. Business School, Emory University.

1988-1990 Senior Systems Engineer, Computer Support Services. Chromatics, Inc. Helpdesk,  
software testing, trainer.

## **Presentations & Invited Lectures**

Instruct with Infographics	GLMA Summer Institute (2020)
Signs of Our Times	GLMA Summer Institute (2020)
Welcome to the Media Center!	DCSD Systems Media Committee (Dec. 2019)
Media Bias	DCSD Teacher-Librarian Professional Development (Nov. 2019)
Sketchnoting with Students	Georgia Educational Technology Conference (GaETC) (2019)
Fake? Or Alternative Facts?	Georgia Educational Technology Conference (GaETC) (2019)

Advocacy in One Sentence	DCSD 2019 TL Professional Dev.
Literacy in Every Classroom: Developing University- School Partnerships to Support Faculty's Literacy Instruction	Georgia DOE Summer Literacy Conference (2019)
Famous Fails	ISTE Librarians Playground (2019)
Poster: Tissue Tabloid	ISTE EdTech Coaches (2019)
Fake? Or Alternative Facts?	ISTE (2019)
Sketchnotes for People Who Cannot Draw	GLMA Summer Institute (2019)
Connecting Your Media Center to the AASL Standards	GaETC (2018)
30-Second Elevator Speech	American Library Association (2018)
30-Second Elevator Speech	GLMA Summer Institute (2018)
Fake? Or Alternative Facts?	GaETC (2017)
Communication Skills	GaETC (2017)
Fake? Or Alternative Facts?	GLMA Summer Institute (2017)
Librarian: Secret Agent of Change	GaETC (2016)
Green Screen: Quick & Dirty	American Library Association (2016)
Marketing Your Library	American Library Association (2016)
Genre-fying Your Library	GLMA Summer Institute (2016)
Fair Use	VanCon (2016)
Math Minutes: Student Created Videos	Explorer's Guild Poster Session (2016)
Tips to Teach Teachers Tech	Redefining Learning Conf. (2016)
Let's (Twitter) Chat	Redefining Learning Conf. (2016)
Flipping the Classroom	Redefining Learning Conf. (2016)
Marketing Your Library.	GaETC (2015)
Tips to Teach Teachers Tech	GaETC (2015)
Taking Note: Terrific Tips on Taking Notes	Explorer's Guild Workshop (2015)

Let's (Twitter) Chat.	GaETC (2014)
Tips to Teach Teachers Tech	GaETC (2014)
Shaking Up the Morning News	GaETC (2014)
Using an iPad for the Morning Broadcast	Media Specialist Summer Class (2013)
Shaking Up the Morning News (twice on request)	GaETC (2013)
Teacher-Librarian as a Project Manager	DCSS Media Specialists Conf. (2008)

### **Professional Workshops**

#### ***Tickling Tech: Teaching Teachers to Use Technology in Under 5 Minutes***

International Society for Technology in Education November 2020

*Description:* The majority of teachers are generally too overwhelmed with school-specific requirements to spend time discovering and engaging with technology. Discover how to create a routine and playground space to allow teachers time to try something new without overwhelming them.

#### ***Every SMART Goal Tells a Story***

DeKalb County Professional Development September 2018

*Description:* Workshop for teacher-librarians to get an overview of AASL Standards and to create SMART goals that relate to the standards.

#### ***It All Fits Together: Building a Successful Library Media Program***

DeKalb County Professional Development Course June 2018

*Description:* Workshop for teacher-librarians and paraprofessionals on understanding the AASL Standards and how they relate to their Media Center.

### **Professional Affiliations**

American Library Association (ALA)	2006-Present
Georgia Library Association (GLA)	2017-Present
Georgia Library Media Association (GLMA)	2010-Present
International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE)	2014-Present

## **Professional & Community Service**

### ***International Society for Technology in Education***

- Reviewer for Research proposals for ISTE 2020
- Reviewer for Educational Technology Coaches for the ISTE Coaching Standards 2019

### ***Georgia Library Media Association***

- Professional Development Liaison 2019-Present
- Webmaster / Executive Committee 2017-2019

### ***Summer Institute Conference Team Member***

- Georgia Library Media Association's Summer Institute, 2018-Present

### ***DeKalb Teacher-Librarian Advisory (DTLA) Board Member***

- Representing high school teachers 2018-Present
- Test new electronic products for use in the school system.

### ***American Association of School Librarians (AASL)***

- Reviewer for the AASL 2019 National Conference & Exhibition in Louisville, KY

### ***Peer-Reviewed Book for:***

- Journal of New Librarianship (January 2019)