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Developing Positive Working Relationships in a Large Urban School District

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Developing Positive Working Relationships Within a Large Urban School District

by
June Justa Chennault

An Applied Dissertation Submitted to the
Abraham S. Fischler College of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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Approval Page

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I declare the following:

I have read the Code of Student Conduct and Academic Responsibility as described in the *Student Handbook* of Nova Southeastern University. This applied dissertation represents my original work, except where I have acknowledged the ideas, words, or material of other authors.

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Abstract

Developing Positive Working Relationships Within a Large Urban School District. June Justa Chennault, 2015: Applied Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, Abraham S. Fischler College of Education. ERIC Descriptors: Communication, Organizational Communication, Verbal Communication, Nonverbal Communication

This applied dissertation provides an overview of the working relationships among key leaders within a large urban school district in the Southeastern part of the United States. This study examined the communication methods and responsibilities of each key player within the decision-making process for the district at various levels of leadership. Results called for the exploration of (a) effective communication, (b) verbal and nonverbal techniques, (c) electronic means of communication, (d) informal styles of communication, (e) interpersonal communication, (f) communication styles, (g) leadership styles, and (h) conflict management, which delineated the theoretical framework and research questions for this study.

This study presents verbatim quotes that supported the data findings. Twenty-three stakeholders (school board members, school leaders, parents, business leaders, and community leaders) from the district were interviewed. The results revealed 10 themes related to the need for a transparent, honest, and collaborative working relationship. The findings revealed the need for an addendum to the Critical Communication theory, which analyzed the interworkings among individuals within organizations. The addendum supports the premise that positive working relationships are due to effective forms or modes of communication. Stakeholders preferred in-person communication to combat conflict within the organization among members within the district. Stakeholders also noted a need for leaders of the organization who are democratic, transformational, and nonbiased. Stakeholders continuously addressed the need for immediate and accessible forms of communication within the district to build positive working relationships.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The true purpose of effective communication within an organization is to provide a focal point that an organization wishes to attain so that the organization can thrive without fear of failure. Butt and Shafiq (2013) found that dialogue among humans is the foundation of words exchanged, where humans blend or communicate perceptions, sentiments, opinions, and theories. For an organization to thrive successfully, communication within the organization is a vital component for its success (Butt & Shafiq, 2013). Communication is important for bringing about change within an organization as well. Communication is the interchange of information among humans through channels of dialogue, written language, or the use of a shared scheme of symbols or conduct (Hulea, 2010). Leaders of organizations should communicate effectively with organization members so there is minimal room for error throughout the decision-making processes within the organization.

Furthermore, a litany of dilemmas can occur within organizations when lines of communication surround issues associated with opinionated viewpoints that strain the working relationships among the members of the organization. Specifically, within school districts, communication affects the working relationships among many stakeholders. Communication can take various forms, such as interpersonal interactions and e-mail, or through use of telecommunication. Within organizations, the choice of communication is very important to the relationship-building aspects of its members (Mills, 2009).

Additionally, communication carries distinct qualities (the delivery of the message, the tone, and the approach of the message) that affect employee motivation to be successful in the workplace. This will lead to the development of a positive working

relationship in the workplace. According to Golden, Lambert, Henly, and Wiens-Tuers (2011), effective communication promotes successful relationships in the workplace. Successful relationships are those that have clear lines of communication during the act of communicating. The initial communicator and the individual receiving and exchanging information from the initial communicator have to have a lucid understanding of the information shared within the conversation. The communication methods should be devoid of a negative tone or affect. It is vital for leaders within school districts to understand the immediacy of effective communication and working relationships within the organization. Leaders of school districts should model effective communication methods in order for members to build positive working relationships.

Communication can be broken down into interactions that are verbal or nonverbal; effective communication methods include both methods. Verbal communication interactions entail providing lucid communication that is significant, asking proper questions, and being optimistic (Engström, Hammar, Williams, & Götell, 2011). Nonverbal communication exchanges among persons include having an appearance of interest, positivity, and tranquility. On the other hand, verbal communication that is destructive or damaging to working relationships uses language that is incoherent or choppy and often includes offensive language, such as the use of profanity. Nonverbal negative exchanges include a lack of eye contact, lack of response to questions and often a rejection of important components of the conversation without a deeper thought or consideration of the matter (Engström et al., 2011). Clearly, nonverbal communication exchanges influence the act of communication. Nonverbal communication exchanges are vital to the working relationship among members of an organization, as are verbal communication exchanges. Hence, nonverbal and verbal

communication exchanges should be positive in nature in order for communication to be effective.

Furthermore, positive working relationships drive effective communication; therefore, effective communication is inevitably vital to the success of positive working relationships among members within an organization. Ineffective communication within an organization, such as a school district, can stifle work-related progress or organizational goals within the district and can lead to hasty decisions that lack analysis, development, or articulation among members (Goldsmith, 2010). In order to increase the effectiveness of working relationships within a large urban school district, the working relationships would benefit from sharing power and communication that is beneficial between all members of the organization, which will heighten organizational productivity, creativity, likeability, and cohesiveness among its members.

This qualitative study makes three contributions to the field of study. First, the findings of this study expand on an understanding of the relationship between positive working relationships and communication among a large urban school district's superintendent, school leaders, and stakeholders. The second contribution is a better understanding of the relationships between modes of communication and the shared responsibilities among the parties discussed within this qualitative study. Third, the study addressed gaps in the literature by directly investigating the variables of effective nonverbal and verbal communication techniques within working relationships with data from in-depth interviews.

Definition of Terms

Communication is shared collaboration through a common language and a system of messages (Butt & Shafiq, 2013).

Nonverbal communication denotes communication that is interpreted through alternative channels of message retrieval (signals through the use of eye, hand, and other body movements) without the use of words (DeKay, 2012; Gentry, 2010; Hulea, 2010).

Organizational communication is a network of channels or paths along which information flows between members or subunits (Spaho, 2010).

Positive working relationships are systems of relationships among leaders, workers or employees, and related parties (i.e., stakeholders, school leaders, and school board members) in which communication is shared through an even flow of positive verbal and nonverbal exchanges.

Verbal communication denotes communication that transmits messages through a network of channels for a specific task through written messages (Keyton et al., 2013; Hulea, 2010).

Working relationships are systems of relationships among leaders, workers or employees, and related parties (e.g., stakeholders, school leaders, and school board members) within an organization.

Statement of the Problem

Over the past several decades, school districts within the United States have seen breaks in communication that have resulted in ethical dilemmas and ethical concerns (McNally, 2012). Many school districts have dealt with cheating scandals and the misappropriation or misuse of federal funds (Title IV; United States Department of Education, 2009). If there had not been a break in communication, then these occurrences might have been low in number or might not have occurred. Keyton et al. (2013) discovered that communication is the most important skill that leaders of an organization seek in their employees. Furthermore, without organizational communication, the

completion of tasks within the organization would lack efficiency within the organization (Conrad, 2014).

Effective communication is a top priority for leaders of organizations such as school districts (Layton, 2013). Leaders play a vital role within organizations. Leaders should cultivate and show effective communication that promotes continual adherence to the policies and procedures of the school district so that unethical acts or decisions do not negatively influence working relationships (McNally, 2012). School leaders have to provide a framework for effective communication that will target identified problems within the school district. Effective communication gives validity and reliability to the vision and mission of the school district (Sroufe, 2013). Therefore, this study also examined the extent of positive working relationships and effective modes of communication among the superintendent, school leaders, and stakeholders within the district.

Furthermore, studies show that superintendents play an important role in the organization environment and the flow of communication within the organization (Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, & Ellerson, 2011). Many school districts across America have undergone continuous changes related to superintendents within the school district. The American School Superintendent: 2010 Decennial Study collected data from approximately 1,900 superintendents surveyed in the United States. The data revealed several findings. Since 1992, there have been an increasing number of female school district leaders. The average age of superintendents is 54.5 years. Six percent of superintendents are of non-White races (e.g., Hispanics and African-American). Sixty percent of school district leaders have postgraduate degrees, and the yearly rate of turnover for superintendents is , 15%. Last, approximately 51% of the school district

leaders revealed that they plan to continue as a superintendent until year 2015, which suggests the likelihood of a considerable turnover of school district leaders in the years to come (Kowalski et al., 2011).

Hentze, Seelman, and Zinkl (2011) discovered that the job description of the school superintendent has changed into a noticeable and dominant administrator who desires exposure and has the competence and awareness to be a leader in an innovative and multifaceted society. A superintendent should begin with the end in mind concerning the school district's change initiatives and new directions for the future. The superintendent will help develop an overall direction of the school district, thereby promoting a distinct atmosphere or environment within the district (Kowalski, 2013). The superintendent is the head leader within the school district. The superintendent provides a concise and consistent direction of the school district's success. Kowalski (2013) believed superintendents should perform school district environment tests to determine the nature of the district's culture. Thus, a superintendent should promote a lucid vision and mission for the school district. Finally, Kowalski noted that student output in learning, graduation rates, longer school days, and educator license reviews are now concerns of superintendents.

On Day 1 in the role of a superintendent, the individual should begin building relationships among the community, parents, and other stakeholders (e.g., school leaders, teachers, and business leaders) and the school district (Kowalski, 2013). The superintendent shares the overall vision, mission, and objectives of the school district with the stakeholders. Superintendents should be able to work with diverse populations. Superintendents should also be able to respond to issues and changes as they arise within the role of being a superintendent. Superintendents should convey messages filled with

hope, joy, and peace with stakeholders. Superintendents should be willing to lead with conviction that is ethical and just. Messages from superintendents should be reciprocal across the board with all stakeholders—business leaders, community leaders, school board members, parents, and school leaders. Stakeholders are important to the district, because these individuals will also influence graduation rates and student achievement. The superintendent should have a clear vision for the school district and the changes to take place within the school district. Overall, a superintendent should be level headed and impactful in a positive way.

Phenomenon of Interest

Communication researchers found that communication is the key to the structure of all organizations; however, more communication does not result in more efficient communication (Keyton et al., 2014; Bisel & Barge, 2011). Conrad (2014) added that communication is the lifeline of organizations; if effective communication is not present, then organizational members will not carry out significant tasks with fidelity. Moreover, effective communication will enhance and increase the efficiency of the organization (Goldsmith, 2010). The research site for this study is one of the largest urban school districts in the Southeast. This study addressed issues of communication among school leaders and other stakeholders within this district. According to a school board member, the district has had past experiences with ineffective communication among leaders and stakeholders, which has led to various breakdowns in communication within the district.

Conrad (2014) added that with the identification of obstacles, along with efficient communication, a more open and inviting organizational environment is created while acknowledging that personal beliefs, mental dispositions, and character qualities possibly affect the organizational environment. There is a need to identify the lack of

communication among leaders of organizations (Layton, 2013). Communication proficiency or increased effective communication plays an important role in organizational communication from leaders to members (Layton, 2013). The occurrence of organizational conflict can be reduced through positive working relationships combined with effective communication (Costello, Clarke, Gravely, D'Agostino-Rose, & Puopolo, 2011). More importantly, effective communication is the key to achievement in the organization (Emanoil, Ramona, & Lucia, 2013).

Background and Justification

Communication is significant to the organizational structure and dynamics. Emanoil et al. (2013) noted that communication is a vital component of organizational output. Emanoil et al. added that organizational leaders use over 70% of their time speaking, attending to conversations, and scripting and quoting information, thereby performing various forms of communication. Conrad (2014) found that leaders have the responsibility to ensure that communication is moving throughout the organizational environment. However, Emanoil et al. found that the communication among organizational leaders and subordinates is flawed, with a chance that subordinates may fail to clearly grasp the concept of who is in charge, which is the organizational leader. Thus, the absence of viewpoints from organizational leaders of employee job performance may lead to the lack of subordinates' enthusiasm within the organization and noncompletion of goals set forth by organization leaders.

Because of breaks in organizational communication among leaders and employees, this researcher has seen a need to examine this rising phenomenon, especially within a large urban school districts. Goldsmith (2010) found that the creation and maintenance of working relationships is a vital component to organizational climate.

Clearly, it is beneficial to leaders of organizations to acknowledge employees or members who are committed to the organization. Leaders should ensure that working relationships are beneficial and set the tone towards a positive culture and climate for the organization. Communication is visual in relationships, so whether the relationship is effective or ineffective is very important (Emanoil et al., 2013).

Meystre, Boourquin, Despland, Stiefel, and de Roten (2013) showed that positive working relationships are a key component of the employer-employee line of communication. Hence, effective communication enhances and promotes positive working relationships within the workplace. On the other hand, positive working relationships enhance the effectiveness of communication among members within the workplace (Meystre et al.). It is unimaginable to have social or workplace relationships without communication (Mirivel, 2012). Within an organization, communication affects its reputation (Hong & Yang, 2011). An employee within an organization is more likely to have greater fulfillment in communicating with colleagues when the colleagues have an understanding of his or her point of view (Park & Raile, 2010).

Pehrson, Panos, Larson, and Cox (2009) found that further research in effective communication could document the importance of communication components and the corresponding influence on organizational relationships. Dreeke (2009) revealed that not all individuals convey messages in a similar matter. Therefore, effective communication plays an important role in the working relationships among members within an organization. In school districts, it is important for educators to be knowledgeable about the structure and development of communication that can enhance the use of communication among diverse learners (Jackson & Back, 2011). Jackson and Back (2011) believed that maintaining a positive and balanced climate of effective

communication within organizations means that working relationships will improve drastically with the implementation of appropriate measures within the organization that promote meaningful and effective communication. According to Goldsmith (2010), Jackson and Back, and Offermann (2012), the appropriate measures for leaders to follow are to (a) recognize employees for successes within the workplace, (b) acknowledge all members of the organization for their positive inputs into the workplace, and (c) ensure that leaders model effective nonverbal and verbal communication skills and techniques.

The urban school district in this study is one of the largest in the area, with a population of over 50,000 students and 6,000 employees. The research site has experienced multiple issues with breaks in communication, which has led to a series of ethical violations on the part of organizational leaders within the district. Keyton et al. (2013) believed that the dimensions and layers of effective communication, particularly the use of positive nonverbal and verbal communication skills and techniques, function to build positive relationships. Washington (2009) believed that the ultimate purpose of success in an organization is attributed to positive working relationships.

Deficiencies in the Evidence

Present and past studies revealed gaps in empirical evidence of communication deficiencies, with implications for the field of communication and working relationships among key leaders within large urban school districts. Working relationships among the superintendent, school board members, and key stakeholders are vital to the success of any school district. It is important for the leaders of the district to maintain a positive working relationship with other members of the organizations (teachers, school board members, and school leaders). Layton (2013) found the value of providing and identifying a need for cooperative, considerate, and accountable leadership to be essential

to working relationships. Effective communication among key leaders within the school district leads to the building of relationships among students, parents, and other staff. There is a need for research to support the effectiveness of communication among leaders of organizations such as in school districts. Gorski (2014) supported the claim that leaders should have exceptional communication skills in order to deal with the day-to-day operations of an organization, such as deciding whether to decrease or increase the budget. Further research can establish whether continual adherence to policy and procedures by leaders are due to effective lines of communication. This researcher found that there is a lack of evidence to confirm the impact of how communication affects positive working relationships within organizations especially in large urban school districts.

Furthermore, the communication roles of individuals need examination to determine the extent of how the roles and communication modes enhance organizational success. Ineffective communication can lead to a plethora of organizational dilemmas (Conrad, 2014). Therefore, it is important to examine the importance of communication in building and maintaining positive relationships within organizations.

Audience

Ineffective communication among the superintendent, school board members, school leaders, and other vital stakeholders within the district affects students, parents, and other key members of the district's community. This study investigated the elements of developing positive working relationships within a large urban school district and provided a basis for the defined role of each individual's responsibility in the lines of communication among various stakeholders. Additionally, students, parents, and other key members from the community will benefit from sound decisions that are developed

and implemented by the superintendent, school board members, and other stakeholders within the district. The audience for this study (members of the community within the district) will be able to gain a deeper perception of the working relationships among stakeholders within a large urban school district.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to evaluate working relationships in the district to identify effective lines of communication among the school superintendent, school board members, school leaders (principals and assistant principals), and stakeholders (business leaders, parents, and other community leaders). The study included a review of verbal and nonverbal communication techniques and methods that promote the sharing of responsibilities, working in a defined role, and partnership among the key players in a large urban school district. In addition, the data revealed issues that are vital to communication and building positive working relationships, which is critical to the daily operations within a large urban school district.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Theorists and researchers agree that effective communication and positive working relationships are essential to the success of private and public organizations. Leaders within an organization have to be able to communicate effectively in order to clearly establish the responsibilities and roles of subordinates. Hence, effective communication promotes meaning and depth to words used within the communication process (Butt & Shafiq, 2013). Breaks in communication between individuals could lead to unresolved dilemmas (Spaho, 2010). In the business world, effective and positive communication is key for the operation of that business or organization. Organizations have dealings with other organizations across the globe known as “external communication” (Spaho, 2010, p. 1372). Just as external communication is vital to organizational success, internal communication is also the key to the success of the organization. Internal communication is communication between workers within the organization. For organizational communication to be effective, seven components should exist: (a) evidence or facts, (b) trustworthiness or reliability among management and workers, (c) a safe and not overly stressed job environment, (d) reasonable compensation, (e) steadiness of job output minus struggle, (f) job satisfaction, and (g) organizational gratification along with faith and trust in its outlook futuristically (Spaho, 2010).

This section examines the vital components of effective communication within working relationships in an organization. It also investigates the importance of verbal and nonverbal techniques in communication, electronic means of communication, high performing organizations, and the role of communication within the organizations.

Finally, it delineates the theoretical framework and research questions for this study.

Overview of Communication (Verbal Versus Nonverbal)

In order for communication among members of organizations to be effective, the balance of verbal and nonverbal communication techniques is vital to the building of positive working relationships within the organization (Washington, 2009). Fewer than 33% of inferred and implied meanings of words from humans are through verbal exchanges (Hall & Knapp, 2013). Gentry (2010) discovered the significance of nonverbal exchanges among humans and found that nonverbal communication is at least 93% significant to the exchange of communication among humans. Nonverbal affirmations include bodily responses, ocular viewpoints, and length of conversation, bodily outerwear, and facial gestures (Hall & Knapp, 2013). The human face and eyes are the control centers of communication; the eyes are the most dependable component of nonverbal exchanges (Puce, 2014).

Kang and Hyun (2012) found five forms of communication styles that promote a constructive effect on individuals who are getting a service from an employee of an organization: (a) observant, (b) approachable, (c) extraordinary, (d) vulnerable, and (e) peaceful. Alternately, employee behaviors that are combative in nature have a negative effect on employee-customer relations. Snyder and Shwom (2011) suggested that the basis of the acronym ACE, which stands for analyzing, composing, and evaluating, supports an effective communication process for both oral and written communication techniques. Fujimoto (2011) described the impact of the progression of an individual's communication creation as closely identified with the distinctiveness surrounding their communication or linguistic behavior. Therefore, the outward display of communication behaviors sets the tone for one's patterns of oral communication. Waldherr and Muck

(2011) built their research on communication styles around two vital factors that are key to effective communication: confidence and openness. Kennedy-Lightsey and Dillow (2011) discovered that interpersonal gratification was a positive indicator of the beginning stages of effective communication within relationships. Lambrecht, Kreifelts, and Wildgruber (2012) concluded that the ability to recognize various emotions plays a vital role in the effectiveness of communication among individuals within any age group.

Electronic Modes of Communication

The examination of electronic means of communication was also vital to this study in order to identify the most effective means or modes of communication within an organization (Kiddie, 2014). Electronic means of communication are smart phones, tablets, iPhones, iPads, Internet, fax, and other methods that transmit information to a responder (or receiver) from a sender within seconds. Ultimately, electronic communication has changed the way individuals communicate around the world (Kiddie, 2014). Over the past 20 years, there has been widespread use of the Internet, which has resulted in communication being solely by computer (Michaeli, 2013). Communication by use of computer-based video has become a universal part of individuals' daily lives (Manstead, Lea, & Goh, 2011). However, efficient use of electronic modes of communication begins with being lucid about the aim of the communication (Bloom & Gundlack, 2013), especially given that cultural variances clearly affect e-mail communication (Holtbrugge, Weldon, & Rogers, 2013).

Holtbrugge et al. (2013) used Hall's classic idea that a culture is based on context, time and space orientation to clarify how different cultures communicate by e-mail. E-mail communication includes the predilections for formality, punctuality, care, task similarities, and relationship bonding. This 21st century means of communication has

transformed the way individuals communicate with others. For instance, CareerBuilder (2012) surveyed employees and organizational leaders about differences in communication preferences and found considerable differences based on age. Sixty percent of employees and organizational leaders who were 55 years or older preferred to communicate in person. In comparison, only 55% of employees and organizational leaders who were 25-34 years old preferred to communicate in person. Twenty-eight percent of employees and organizational leaders who were 55 years or older stated that their preference was an e-mail or text message for communication in the workplace, compared to 35% of employees and organizational leaders aged 25-34 years old. Voice communication by phone yielded 12% percent for employees and organizational leaders aged 55 years and older compared to only 10% for employees and organizational leaders aged 25-34.

In addition to age, gender is another determinant of communication preferences. Durant, McCray, and Safran (2012) reported that women's choice of words and process of building dialogue differed from men when interpersonal communication occurred via computer. Therefore, male and female communication preferences affect the individual's choice of communication setting. Durant et al. also revealed that men favor socialization in large, unified groups but whose members are not very well acquainted or familiar; on the other hand, women prefer smaller groups composed of individuals with whom they are more acquainted. According to Jin and Park (2013), poor interpersonal skills were associated with low levels of in-person communication and cell phone use, which promoted higher levels of solitude among individuals.

Internet communication does not enhance the essence of individual lives on a daily basis, but in-person communication through direct dialogue promotes a greater

sense of satisfaction among individuals (Lee, Leung, Lo, Xiong, & Wu, 2011).

Communication exchanges can be broken down into three categories: associates, a faintly close connection, and an extremely close connection (Durant et al., 2012). An extremely close connection is two individuals sharing communication with each other, whether in person or via the computer.

Individuals are not the only ones who use the Internet to promote communication. Companies have utilized the social world of networking, which has increased in frequency throughout the years, and this trend will intensify (Khan & Khan, 2011). Ford Motor Company, the second largest car company in the United States, uses electronic modes of communication to increase dialogue and promote contact among investors as often as possible (Khan & Khan, 2011).

High-Performing Organizations and the Role of Communication

The method that a leader uses to communicate plays an important role in how the workers perceive and follow the leader's directives; this was another important component of the study. Butts (2010) found that a leader's communication style plays an important role in how members or employees of the organization gain gratification from being associated with the organization. Offermann's (2012) examination of the challenges of working relationships among individuals within an organization emphasized the work ethic of individuals, as well as their personality differences; these two components were also integral to the current study. Further, Offermann focused on diversity among members within an organization as one of the leading causes of effective or ineffective working relationships within an organization. African-American and Asian-American members of organizations had different perspectives on work-related issues than did their White American counterparts. Specifically, the African- and Asian-

American members felt that lack of communication about cultural differences barred effective communication within the workplace. Issues within the workplace are lessened if success is at the first stage of effective communication, which is the introduction or the introductory point of communication (Adler & Proctor, 2011).

There are direct correlations between a positive relationship, a compassionate communication environment, and an assimilating style of dealing with relational conflict within an organization (Hassan, Maqsood, & Muhammad, 2011). Kim, Rosen, and Lee (2009) analyzed the impact of employee attitudes and individual communication styles on the manager's response to employee opposition to an organizational policy. Kim et al. reported that managers were inclined to publicly discourage workers who displayed pessimistic rather than faithful attitudes towards an organizational policy, that is, managers may shun employees who have an antagonistic attitude.

Davis and Lundstrom (2011) found that employee-improvement or self-help groups greatly influenced working relationships within an organization. Davis and Lundstrom also found that employee-improvement groups such as self-help groups were beneficial to organizations. Leaders of high-performing organizations, such some urban school districts, can benefit from viewing their employees, stakeholders, and parents as customers. When leaders focus on the way they interact with those customers, then those individuals will feel well served and will accomplish organizational goals (Floris & Dessi, 2011). Spaho (2010) found that providing recommendations for employee group exercises and incentives for workers who contributed to the organization promoted worker and management assurance within the organization.

Furthermore, leaders of organizations can also interpret their relationship with their customers as a doctor-patient relationship. Lim, Moriarty, and Huthwaite (2011)

found that communicating compassion is key in doctor-patient relationships. For instance, if leaders of a high-performing organization show compassion to customers during their time of need (i.e., if a family member is deceased or an unexpected illness takes over the customer's life), then the climate of the organization can become an organization that is known for empathy toward its workers or members.

Conventional organizations' style of communication. The evolution of the modes of communication is rising at an incredible rate and organizations should begin to change their modes of communication because of that evolution (Khan & Khan, 2011). Chin (2013) added that efficient, accurate, and unrestricted communication is key to accomplishing goals within an organization. In conventional organizations, the order of communication from workers to management transpires within the following levels of communication: Workers communicate an issue, concern, or suggestion to a lower-level manager; the mid-lower-level manager communicates the situation or suggestion to the mid-range manager, who will most likely release the information to an upper-level manager (Khan & Khan, 2011). This customary or traditional organization of communication characterizes governmental agencies, (nongovernment organizations, populous organizations, and primary, secondary, and collegiate institutions of learning. A traditional organization of communication is typically an organization of communication that is stern in nature, but is efficient. A traditional organization of communication promotes a steadier flow of reliable or steady decision making within the organization, discipline among employees, employee loyalty, a clear view of perceptions from employees, a decrease in arguments among employees, a positive rapport and friendliness among employees, and a decrease in intentional disturbance and disruption from employees (Khan & Khan, 2011).

Flexible vs. open organizations. Unlike conventional organizations, organizations whose environment is characterized by a sense of flexibility give workers the “green light” to communicate their concerns about their lower or middle managers to higher management individuals or board members within the organization (Khan & Khan, 2011). According to Khan and Khan (2011), this particular style of communication inhibits lower and middle management individuals from mistreating the workers or other staff members, while encouraging them to support higher levels of work output and workplace connectivity as well as a sense of belongingness among employees. This communication tactic additionally dismantles the formation of in-groups within the workplace, reduces personal gain, and minimizes the intensification of destructive workplace political agendas.

In organizations that portray an atmosphere and culture of openness, workers within the organization can bypass punishment for violating communication procedures if it will promote better service to clients and enhanced business output for the workplace (Khan & Khan, 2011). Workers within the organization can break communication procedures if it is due to evading incompetent middle management. This style of communication will boost collaboration, lucidity, dependability, and contribution of ideas among workers and management. Upper-level management will also develop a mindset with a focus on better work output, knowing that employees have the power to communicate their ideas but also their concerns (Khan & Khan, 2011).

McDonald’s and Ford’s informal styles of communication. Khan and Khan (2011) discussed the informal modes of communication used by industry giants McDonald’s Hamburgers and the Ford Motor Company, which enhanced customer satisfaction and company output. Characteristics of an informal style of communication

within an organization revealed an organization in which management has an open-door policy, meaning that employees are not afraid to approach or communicate with management. This style develops work-motivated employees who are ambitious, loyal, and content with their jobs (Khan & Khan, 2011). McDonald's and the Ford Motor Company focus on a high-quality commitment to client service.

According to Khan and Khan (2011), McDonald's has 32,000 restaurants in 117 nations that serve over 60 million clients daily. McDonald's pays more than 1.7 million employees within the chain from lower to upper-level management. McDonald's promotes communication that is free and open with the workers. To promote this style of communication, McDonald's has created a phone line that is explicitly for workers and is monitored by an outside company as well as an Internet communal connection website called *StationM* to help elevate the levels of worker and manager interaction. The extensive downside to this form of communication is that when workers move on to other companies, some workers share delicate materials or data about McDonald's that could cause damage to the company (Khan & Khan, 2011). McDonald's has also discovered that it was sometimes difficult to screen communication because of the informal culture of communication within the company.

Similarly, like McDonald's, the Ford Motor Company also uses informal styles of communication within its organization. The Ford Motor Company is ranked fifth in the world for annual auto sales (Khan & Khan, 2011). The Ford Motor Company has created a program called *One Ford* to promote an open system of communication. The Ford Motor Company also uses communal Internet networks so that workers can better communicate as a whole and with clients to promote continual support of the organization. The main objective for the Ford Motor Company was the push to be the

leading vehicle company by constructing durable associations among its workers, managers, and clients by using a variety of Internet sites for advertisement (Khan & Khan, 2011).

Specifically, an area of concern for the Ford Motor Company with this style of communication was about the nature of the communication. For instance, the shared messages were not necessarily truthful or up to date, the source of the messages became difficult to track, and workers used the open communication program as a means to an end to communicate concerns with other workers or management (Khan & Khan, 2011). In spite of these dilemmas, other companies are starting to change, or consider change, from conventional, inflexible communication structures to communication methods that are open and flexible.

Communication Among Managers and Employees Within Organizations

Ineffective communication is the leading reason for a collapse in management within organizations (Anant, 2010). Therefore, management should be decisive, confident, and receptive in order to sustain an organization's atmosphere (Kittelberger, 2009). Pipas and Jaradat (2012) defined communication from managers as a style of relational communication, which is an apparatus used by managers to execute the following precise tasks within an organization: predicting, teaching, association, harmonization, governor, and appraisal.

Second, methods of communication used by managers include organizational meetings, in-person exchanges, and information typed via e-mail or written on paper (Spaho, 2010). Managerial communication aims to convey messages and to transform the attitudes and thinking of employees to further organizational goals (Pipas & Jaradat, 2012). Cullen (2010) addressed the question of "How does the organization expect

managers to communicate?” Cullen found that managers were expected to follow a model of how they will communicate: persuasively, freely, orderly, and compassionately. The exchange of messages among managers and workers makes the required facts available, which gives way to managers gaining competent and proficient work output by workers within the organization (Pipas & Jaradat, 2012).

In order for management to gain the greatest amount of job output from workers, t effective communication must be used (Spaho, 2010). Devoid of employees, the organization would obviously not exist (Sakiru, D’ Silva, Othman, DaudSilong, & Busayo, 2013). Today’s managers also face the added challenge of managing individuals from several generations: “Traditionalists (born before 1945), Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964), Generation X (born 1965-1979), and Generation Y (born 1980-2000)” (Saver, 2013, p. 15). Younger workers have optimistic group connectivity with mature (over the age of 40) workers (Wok & Hashim, 2013). Thus, the preference of group formations within various generations represents a significant and original characteristic or description of organizational conformity.

Additionally, managers’ style of communication plays an important role in organizations to ensure that information concerning decisions made within the organization is readily available to employees. Managers make certain that employees are in agreement with organizational objectives and planning, which equates to effective results for the organization (Pipas & Jaradat, 2012). However, in order for employees to be in agreement with the objectives, they have to be satisfied with their role within the organization so that organizational success is evident (Sakiru et al., 2013).

Along these lines, organizations tend to be more successful when workers are happy (Sakiru et al., 2013). Inherent enthusiasm has a connection to the amount of

management work involvement (Park & Rainey, 2012). Organizational communication is significant because this type of communication is multidimensional and multifaceted, which requires an in-depth analysis (Pipas & Jaradat, 2012). Communication flows in many different directions: descending (from lower manager to workers), ascending (from workers to upper management), parallel (from workers to various divisions within the organization), and transverse (communication among individuals from various divisions within the organization; Spaho, 2010).

Butts (2010) studied the influence of a manager's method of communication on an employee's anticipated work satisfaction. The manager's method of communication is proclaiming, persuading, advising, and connecting. Butts revealed that a manager's preference for communication was unrelated to workers' gratification (with their jobs) and that no particular managerial preference of communication promoted a consistently elevated work gratification level from workers. However, according to Spaho (2010), unfitting or defective communication between workers, between managers, or between managers and employees is the main reason for dilemmas and lower levels of optimism in organizations. Spaho revealed that in order for communication to be effective, the transference of messages between individuals must be explicit and lucid. Last, Spaho suggested that workers are ultimately the key stakeholders within organizations.

Interpersonal Communication

Studies show that interpersonal communication plays an important role in the research concerning organizational communication (Chin, 2013). The multiple intelligences theory, attributed to Gardner (1983), has origins beginning in the early eighties. Gardner developed eight intelligences, one of which is interpersonal intelligence. People with interpersonal intelligence are mainly sociable and observant and

can translate temperaments, inspirations, and emotional states of other individuals (Chin, 2013). Interpersonally intelligent people communicate more effectively than people with other types of intelligences. Consequently, interpersonally intelligent individuals build constructive relationships, settle dilemmas within various groups, understand others, intermingle with others, and influence transformations in others.

It is unlikely that respectable relationships among humans can exist without communication (Spaho, 2010). Thus, human relationships would be nonexistent without communication. It is possible that communication forces individuals to react, to entertain, and to interpret the expressions of other individuals (Harper, 2010). Communication that is adequate or sufficient is not solely for human relationships but is for competent and prosperous organizations as well (Spaho, 2010). Research has shown the benefits of interpersonal communication through an examination of various networks of communication: phone, letter writing, texts, or social media (Braun, 2013; Hwang, 2011; Petrič, Petrovčič, & Vehovar, 2011). Yuan, Rickard, Xia, and Scherer (2011) found that a widespread dilemma for workers within organizations was to decipher numerous means of communication for honest responses, whether through electronic modes or in-person communication. Communication via the Internet allows one to study interpersonal communication more easily (Berger, 2013). The individual is able to see the brevity and depth of the intended message.

However, because of increased electronic communication, the number of face to face interactions has declined steadily (Glomb, 2013; Michaeli, 2013). The more often a person uses the Internet for individual communication, the less often that person will engage in face to face communication (Michaeli, 2013). The dilemma is that interpersonal communication is a key component to being an effective leader (de Vries,

Bakker-Pieper, & Oostenveld, 2010). Last, organizational members prefer interpersonal modes of communication to other modes of communication (Men, 2013).

Behavioral communication provides an explanation of various behaviors in an organization concerning communication (Ivanov & Werner, 2010), which was another key component of the current study. Ivanov and Werner (2010) found that “behavioral communication is defined as an individual differences variable entailing indirect expression of feelings, needs, and thoughts as a substitute for more direct and open communication” (p. 19). In other words, behavioral communication clarifies and gives justifications for unplanned or unforeseen countenance of an emotional state, desire, and belief, which drives communication within human relationships that are candid and free (Ivanov & Werner, 2010). Thus, organizational leaders’ communication skills directly influence the interpersonal behaviors of the leader (DeKay, 2012). Leaders within organizations should show cognizance of the effects of behavioral communication on the working relationships among other colleagues within the organization. Dunbar and Abra (2010) added that within person-to-person interactions, influence and authority play a huge role as essential models as well.

Communication Styles

An examination of communication styles as advancing or hindering effective organizational communication is another key component of the current study. Jonasson and Luring (2012) pointed out that inconsistencies in communication could be a hindrance to relations. Hartman and McCambridge (2011) found that millennials are making important influences on today’s businesses. However, many millennials lack key communicational abilities, which is largely attributed to their greater reliance on and greater immediacy of electronic communication. Such individuals need to be privy to

customer inquiry, being attentive, managing dilemmas and mediation, and efficient group exercises that improve the cohesion of members within an organization (Hartman & McCambridge, 2011). Executives of organizations need to seek and build skills of perfected communication in spite of their preferred communication style (Health Research & Educational Trust, 2014). In the present day business arena, executives should have exceptional skills in communication (Gorski, 2014). Intentional communication from executives promotes a more positive organizational climate, which contributes to happy and healthy workers within the organization (Shah, 2014).

Even though executives endure many stressors within organizations, communication methods play a huge role in organizational outcomes. Gorski (2014) discovered four types of communication styles among organizational leaders: initiator, socialite, moderator, and evaluator. The initiator carries a persona of a chief executive officer. Initiators are ambitious, determined, aggressive, career-focused, and quick witted. However, initiators have shortcomings. Initiators tend to exceed role duties, taking over responsibilities given to other individuals on the belief that they are providing the best outcome of the task or project (Gorski, 2014; Hanke, 2009). Socialites are charming, eager, influential, dynamic, flamboyant, verbose, and approachable, love people, and are extremely sociable, imaginative, and perceptive. Socialites motivate others. Socialites work in the sales department (Gorski, 2014). Socialites' happiness revolves around being the focal point of the crowd. However, socialites also have shortcomings. Socialites are not punctual; they often fail to meet critical organizational goals and objectives on time (Gorski, 2014). Moderators are peaceful, calm, diligent, careful, and patient. Moderators' shortcomings include being unaggressive, too easygoing, or too laid back. Evaluators are thorough, timid, apprehensive, and rational (Gorski, 2014; Hanke, 2009). Evaluator

shortcomings include being too suspicious of others in the organization and too scrutinizing.

Leadership Styles

The notion of leadership is as old as humankind itself (Kosicek, Soni, Sandbothe & Slack, 2012). An examination of leadership styles will add to the understanding of an organizational leader's influence on the flow of communication within the organization, and is thus another important component of the current study. Northouse (2013) described leadership as a "process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (p. 5). Therefore, effectual leadership is crucial for organizational success (Kosicek et al., 2012). Efficient leaders inspire others to carry out their roles within an organization. Kosicek et al.'s (2012) research showed that leaders should utilize a worker-focused style of leadership. Cox, Hannif, and Rowley (2014) found that a leader's style of leadership is a critical area of concern for organizations because of the effects of leadership styles on an organization's culture and climate. Kieu (2010) added that leadership directly affects the success of the organization.

Organizations throughout the world expend considerable resources to obtain considerate, observant, and progressive leaders (Sakiru et al., 2013). All types of organizations understand that leaders play a significant role in building an efficient and fruitful organization. The important attribute needed for leadership is expectancy (Sakiru et al.). For instance, individuals in leadership roles should expect (and prepare for) growth and challenges within an organization. Nanjundeswaraswamy and Swamy (2014) described the efficient leadership styles associated with meeting the organization's objectives effectively and argued that different types of leadership affect worker output

and conduct within organizations. Limbare (2012) specifically pointed out the relationship between leadership styles and how well leaders manage conflict.

On the other hand, various leadership types can also influence the ability to achieve and productivity of organizations (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014). Torres (2009) suggested that superiors would benefit from using Bolman and Deal's four arrangements of governance: (a) organizational, (b) employee relations, (c) governmental, and (d) symbolic to apprehend their overall leadership ability. Dreeke (2009) added that a leader's capacity to guide is as exclusively and fundamentally effective as is his or her capability to communicate objectives. Transformative and concern-focused leadership styles establish constructive connections with secondary education pupils (Nell, 2012).

Transformational leadership is a well-established indicator of work gratification and fulfillment within organizations. The productivity of organizations is due to an ambitious and inventive practice of utilizing effective modes of communication (Dreeke, 2009). Different types of leadership affect the climate of the organization, and ultimately, the type of leadership influences the productivity of the organization. The role of a leader within an organization is a collective one; however, the role is motivated by the leader's pursuit of the unconstrained cooperation of organizational members in an attempt to accomplish the goals of the organization (Anant, 2010; Emanoil et al., 2013).

Nanjundeswaraswamy and Swamy (2014) described a person in a leadership role as an individual who appoints or persuades others to execute the goals of the organization. Presently, organizations benefit from efficient superiors or leaders who are able to decipher the challenges of the growing organizational environment. If leaders of organizations present the organizational objectives to workers in a detailed-manner

(based on the leader having a positive connection to the workers), then workers will be effective within the organization.

Additionally, there is a connection between a leader's style and organizational ethics (Raja & Palanichamy, 2011). A leader's conduct can affect the level of confidence and contentment of workers within an organization (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014). Northouse (2013) found that there are two types of leaders in organizations: transformational and transactional. Transactional leaders place emphasis on interactions that happen between organizational leaders and members. Transactional leadership is widespread and visible at various sectors within organizations. It is an engagement that promotes a relationship of elevated enthusiasm and morals in both the organizational leader and member. Transformational leadership does not replace transactional leadership and vice versa (Raja & Palanichamy, 2011).

Transformational leadership. The philosophy of leadership known as transformational seeks to better a worker's job output by changing the worker's motivations and beliefs. Transformational leaders are influential, provide ample praise, and motivate workers (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014; Raja & Palanichamy, 2011). These leaders frequently consider the ideas of others and build on them, thus, establishing an open climate within the organization; moreover, these leaders have confidence in the employees to achieve objectives, and they promote just reimbursement for employees' capabilities (Raja & Palanichamy, 2011; Sakiru et al., 2013; Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014).

Transformational leaders focus on staff improvement and progress within the organization (Sakiru et al., 2013). Transformational leaders change the thinking, feelings, and deeper idiosyncrasies of the organization's workers. This type of leader focuses on

the rightness of combining various teams into order to promote the objectives of the organization. Transformational leaders carry a sense of belief in others and promote ethics (Raja & Palanichamy, 2011). Moreover, this type of leader focuses on immediate goals but also the needs of upper-level management, such as resources, to advance organizational goals (Northouse, 2013). Transformational leaders deftly encourage employees to recognize the hopes and dreams of the leader. Efficient leaders will pair transformational leadership with transactional leadership in order to advance the organization (Raja & Palanichamy; Zabihi & Hashemzahi, 2012).

Transactional leadership. Transactional leadership does not focus on the organizational members' needs or members' self-growth (Northouse, 2013).

Transactional leaders are persuasive or powerful because it is in the utmost importance for organizational members or workers to complete tasks as the leader suggests to the organizational members (Northouse, 2013). This type of leadership focuses on workers' rewards because of their determination and job output within an organization. The basis of the connection between the leaders and members is the job agreement. Thus, transactional leaders seek to promote a stable work environment that balances out the rewards and job output of organizational members (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014). Transactional leaders seek to give acknowledgement to an employee for job output contingent upon the notion that the employee has contributed to the advancement of the organization in a positive matter (Northouse, 2013).

Therefore, this type of leader also has a focal point of workers completing duties and uses recognition or rewards to promote workers' job output within the organization (Raja & Palanichamy, 2011; Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014). Transactional superiors focus on achieving organizational goals (Raja & Palanichamy, 2011).

Transactional leaders are mediators; these leaders enhance staff cohesion in organizations (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014). Transactional leadership is a system of bartering. The leader provides the employees with a need for something that the leader desires.

Leadership Styles Among Women and Men

Emmerik et al. (2010) defined leadership as the capability of persons to persuade, inspire, and empower other individuals to improve efficiency and move more directly to achieve the goals of the organizations that employ them, and added that differences in leadership styles are evident among men and women. There is a preference for various leadership styles among men and women; however, research does not suggest that all women or all men use the same style of leadership (Northouse, 2013). Women and men may embrace or utilize certain styles of leadership. Research suggests that women use more of a transformational approach to leadership, whereas men acquire more of a laissez-faire style of leadership (Vinkenburg, van Engen, Eagly, & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2011). Emmerik et al. (2010) discovered that upper levels of management in the organization are composed mostly of males, with low numbers of women within that sector of management. Within organizations, males in leadership positions tend to be more influential; thus, men in leadership roles are determined to overcome the complexities of the organizational environment and are more prone to finalize the tougher decisions within organizations. On the other hand, females in leadership positions tend to be deliberative and, therefore, could possibly employ deliberation leadership conduct—putting more thought and analysis into making tougher decisions. Males in leadership positions will be sticklers for examining errors among their employees, whereas women tend to be more rewarding of tasks accomplished within organizations. Females endure

(and overcome) more obstacles to become leaders compared to men (Emmerik et al., 2010; Andersen & Hansson, 2011). Further research discussed whether male or female leadership styles affect the success or failure of organizations. However, it is clear that various leadership styles affect organizational climates (Emmerik et al., 2010). There has to be a balance between being controlling or more laid back as leaders. Men are usually the stronger leaders within organizations, but research also showed that women who are leaders in more male-dominated environments are stronger leaders.

Preferred management leadership styles. Upper-level management or executives tend to have a leadership style that prefers the open forum, is ultimately satisfied with a systematic organizational framework, and exercises an analytical style of management (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2007). On the other hand, lower-level management or managers within organizations favor a leadership style that functions in a closed forum with an unconventional organizational framework and exercise an unsystematic style of management. Upper-level management and lower-level management have to be of one accord about the goals of the organization in order to advance an organization, but the relationship has to be one that is interconnected to accomplish the tasks of the organization using a cooperative and rational approach—an approach that is free from biases and speculations. Val and Kemp (2012) added that the “dynamic” style of leadership works best to promote effective team cohesion. Transformational leadership promotes organizational successes while laissez-faire leadership has a negative impact on organizational successes (Kieu, 2010). Moreover, there is a weak correlation between a leader’s persona and choice of leadership style (de Vries, 2012).

Conflict Management

Just as leadership styles influence the organizational environment and the flow of communication, the management, handling, and styles of conflict management also adds to this current study of effective communication and building positive working relationship within an organization. Foundation Coalition (2013) described conflict as a skirmish or competition among individuals with contrasting desires, philosophies, views, principles, or aims. Conflict is a clash among at a minimum two mutually dependent groups with conflicting objectives, limited means and compensation, and impending intrusion from the group in accomplishing their objectives (Nguyen & Yang, 2012). Conflict occurs when one group of individuals observes that another group of individuals will destructively disturb a mission or initiative about which the first group is passionate within an organization (Robbins & Judge, 2010). Conflict is an obstacle if it impedes efficiency, lowers morale, promotes additional and constant quandaries, and promotes unsuitable conduct within an organization (Nwosu & Makinde, 2014). Nguyen and Yang claimed that the conflict is not the problem; mismanagement of the conflict is the dilemma.

The steps that an organization takes to handle dilemmas within the organization affect the climate of the organization (Di Pietro & Di Virgilio, 2013). Much research on climate and dilemmas within organizations has failed to explore the influence and repercussions of the organizational climate on the management of disagreements within organizations. Pazos (2012) proposed that the obligation to group objectives is an important forecaster of effective management of conflict.

Handling conflict. Williams (2011) discovered that taking an efficient approach to conflict management could lead to competent cooperation among groups and

governance, greater optimism, improved efficiency, gratified clients, and employees that are more productive. Ineffectual conflict-managing methods in an organization may advance or promote lower altitudes of employment fulfillment, which result in higher levels of employee departures from the organization (McCall, 2014). Unsolved dilemmas produce an organizational climate that is unpleasant, demanding, or outright antagonistic (Charlton, 2010). Management devotes about one fourth of the day-to-day exchanges to handling and solving worker interpersonal dilemmas (McCall, 2014). A successful approach to conflict may promote an optimistic reaction, such as efficient group dynamics (Nwosu & Makinde, 2014).

Furthermore, workers who have confidence in the premise of being part of the appropriate group dynamic within the organization display a higher level of efficiency and work contentment (Nwosu & Makinde, 2014). Managing conflict influences work environments and the organizational stakeholders. The ability to combat or control conflict in the initial stages of managing conflict was significant in all forces at work (Charlton, 2010). Managers should place emphasis on relational confidence while handling the results of duty and association conflict, which means that managers should instill a confident relationship among members to resolve conflicts related to role or relationship issues within the organization (Parayitam, Olson, & Bao, 2010).

Conflict management styles. Baillien, Notelaers, De Witte, and Matthiesen (2011) summarized the five widespread methods of conflict management: obliging, cooperating, antagonizing, imposing, and eluding. The obliging method pleases or complies with the other party. The cooperating method of conflict management happens when each party involved in the dilemma comes to an agreement on some concerns. The antagonizing method of conflict management is when one party forces or strives for

authority through intimidation and, therefore, the other party surrenders. The incorporating or imposing method is used when workers work together to resolve a dilemma. The eluding style is preferred when an individual wants to evade a circumstance or an issue. Scholars discovered that upper-level management prefer the imposing or dictating method of conflict management, whereas lower-level workers favor the eluding, considerate, and cooperating styles (Hassan et al., 2011). The more a lower-level manager carries out the cooperating method of conflict management, the lower the work gratification. Work fulfillment surges for intermediate stage supervisors with the usage of the incorporating method of conflict management (McCall, 2014). The same individual in various capacities can use all different methods of management (Charlton, 2010; McCall, 2014; Nwosu & Makinde, 2014).

Organizational conflict. Morals, views, and philosophies are diverse; consequently, there has to be room for voicing differing views. However, the shared objective of the work environment is to guarantee a pleasant rapport among all persons within the organization (Nwosu & Makinde, 2014). In heading towards a comprehensive ideal of organizational and relational conflict, the extensive range of organizational and relational conflict has two sorts: correlational and duty (Williams, 2011). Correlational conflict happens among individuals through their defined roles, whereas duty conflict focuses largely on greater impartial responsibilities or concerns involved within the organization. Negatively recognized conflict occurrences can escalate rigidity and bitterness among persons and lead to a deficiency of emphasis on the essential duty. This type of correlational conflict can inhibit the compromise-making procedure as persons concentrate on the individual aspects of their role rather than the duty-correlated obligations—that is, persons will focus on their place in the conflict rather than focusing

on the solution that involves all persons within the conflict. Unsolved dilemmas can intensify into a bigger complication in the future. Efficiently solved dilemmas lead to greater worker job gratification, optimum worker organizational output, and productivity for the work environment.

Work environments or organizations could become problematic or become a hostile environment due to conflicting management goals and leadership goals among organizational leaders (McCall, 2014). Subsequently, different methods of conflict management assist with the coping of conflict (Havenga & Visagie, 2011). For instance, school leaders prefer the incorporating method of conflict management (Boucher, 2014). School leaders showed a connection among belief, paying attention, addressing conflict matters quickly and openly, and self-awareness to efficient processes of conflict management (Boucher, 2014). According to Havenga and Visagie (2011), a growing body of research extends beyond the documentation of conflict avoidance, conflict resolve, conflict governance, and harmony within an organization. Chang, Sanders, and Walia (2010) suggested that organizational conflict is unavoidable, ongoing, and typical within organizations. Vestal's (2012) findings suggested the importance and significance of in-school leader-training programs in the management of conflict. Defective or negative conduct in the workplace gives way to deficiency of time and funds and disturbs the accomplishment of workplace aims and intentions (Nwosu & Makinde, 2014). Consequently, a need exists to comprehend what conflict is and how to address or deal with conflict effectively to accomplish workplace objectives within the organization.

Managing conflict. There are five phases of conflict management: examine the conflict, decide the management approach, preconciliation, conciliation, and postconciliation (Nwosu & Makinde, 2014). Nwosu and Makinde (2014) added that

when an individual works on his or her conflict-management abilities, it gives way to a greater success of commitment to addressing and resolving the conflict with results of reprieve, consideration, and improved communication for both the person and the group. Essentially, unsolved dilemmas can give way to hostility. Many individuals do not seek out resolutions to conflicts because they either have a defective skill set or they do not know the workplace's guidelines on management of conflict.

Nwosu and Makinde (2014) revealed that when an individual avoids a conflict, the conflict essentially intensifies and the individual's views and state of mind develop into a state of negativity. Within an organization, all employees and leaders need to know the styles of conflict, conflict interference methods, and approaches for conflict skill development. There are elements that affect how individuals react to conflict in the workplace. These elements consist of, but are not restricted to, being male or female, self-perception, work ethic, mental state, the ability to influence others, training, message exchanges, and life experiences. It is important to understand how an individual copes with and manages conflict and discerns the worth of delving into conflict resolution with other individuals within organizations (Nwosu & Makinde, 2014). Organizational managers would benefit greatly from allowing their workers to partake in conflict exercises or group-building trainings in the beginning stages of a group's time together so that the workers can develop their conflict resolution skills efficiently. Furthermore, managers of organizations would benefit from identifying circumstances that are indicators of repressed judgments or principles that are prompting elements to organizational conflict.

Theoretical Framework

The emergence of communication research developed on the principles of societal

and governmental cataclysms (Hardt, 2008). With the emergence of new waves of communication came innovation information regarding the significance of communication. The rise of communication studies has added to the study of the usefulness or the functionality of communication. The functionality of communication is the transmittance of words or thoughts or the capability of persons or a group of persons to process knowledge (Hardt, 2008). The worthiness or capacity of information affects trust, which leads to candidness within the organization and greater worker participation (Thomas, Zolin, & Hartman, 2009).

Deetz (1982) developed a theoretical model for human interactions within organizations. The model depicts the focus of organizations that are political as well as economically based. Deetz applied the critical communication theory to examine the ill-advised decision making within organizations and found that organizations can be effective through proper avenues of communication. In addition, organizations promote a sense of importance and principles among its members, meaning that organizations ensure that members of the organization are in agreement with the mission and vision of the organization. Finally, Deetz thought that organizational leaders who were rigid used their rigidity as a control mechanism towards members of the organization.

Research Questions

Four research questions were established for this study:

1. How do leaders in a large urban school district in a Southeastern state interpret effective means of communication among stakeholders including school board members, superintendent, school leaders, parents, business leaders, and community leaders?
2. What are the underlying reasons that lead to barriers in communication among school leaders, school board members, parents, community leaders, business leaders, and

the superintendent within a large urban school district?

3. How does the working relationship among school board members, superintendent, school leaders, community leaders, business leaders, and parents of a large urban school district affect the working partnership among the parties?

4. How does working in a defined role affect the working relationships among school board members, school leaders, stakeholders (parents, community, and business leaders), and the superintendent of a large urban school district?

Chapter 3: Methodology

Overview of Methodology and Rationale

This qualitative study addressed understanding the relationship of positive working relationships and communication among a large urban school district's superintendent, school leaders, and other key stakeholders (i.e., parents, business leaders, and community leaders). The phenomenon examined within this study concerned positive working relationships and effective communication and revealed themes that prior studies, though similar to the current research, had not been addressed. This researcher utilized a qualitative method and conducted research using the conceptual framework of grounded theory as presented by Oktay (2012). The data-collection instruments included intensive or in-depth interviews. Data were from interviews from school board members (see Appendix A), school leaders (see Appendix B), parents of students from within the school district (see Appendix C), and business and community leaders (see Appendix D). The interviewees followed an interview protocol (see Appendix E) and were recruited (see Appendix F) when the researcher attended a school board meeting to gain a perspective on the working relationships between stakeholders from parents of students who attend the schools within the school district, as well as community leaders and business leaders. This visual insight was vital to the study, because it gave the researcher a first-hand look at the types of communication, both verbalized and not verbalized, during the school board meeting.

This study also highlighted the relationship between effective communication and working relationships within the school district. The study included an analysis of the importance of effective communication that would enhance the probability of an organization having positive working relationships among its members, which provided

the rationale for this qualitative study.

Participants

The study used purposeful sampling to select individuals so that pertinent information received was reflective of the study and responsive to the research questions. This sampling strategy is beneficial when working with explicit, predetermined groups established upon known measures (Creswell, 2014). Purposeful sampling allows the researcher to get candidates for interviews who have the capacity to give details about the developing ideas or perceptions and to respond to the inquiries proposed within this study (Oktay, 2012). Interviews provide a basis for a deeper analysis of critical components of the study. The researcher trained and appointed a research assistant (colleague) to conduct the interviews.

In a grounded theory study, the standard sample size for purposeful sampling is 20 to 30 participants (Creswell, 2014). Nevertheless, the exact sample size or the quantity of candidates for interviews was decided by findings from the research study or from the finalization of each section of the study (Creswell, 2014; Oktay, 2012). Nassiff (2012) reported that candidates for interviews can range anywhere from two to 159 candidates based on empirical studies.

The 23 participants who were interviewed within this study were (a) three school board members who ranged in age from 30 to 60 years (nine school board members are elected for a 4-year term, a new chair and vice chair are elected every 2 years); (b) 10 school leaders (two traditional high school principals, one traditional middle school principal, two traditional elementary school principals, one traditional elementary assistant principal, one single-gendered high school principal, and two nontraditional school principals (alternative high school principal and one charter school principal); (c)

parents (at least six parents of students from the large urban school district from various ethnicities); and (e) six community and business leaders (two key business leaders and four key community leaders within the district who are consistently in attendance at school board meetings and involved in school business relations).

Strategy of Inquiry

This chapter includes a synopsis of the underlying principles for qualitative research, a rationalization of grounded theory, and why the researcher chose this approach. It also introduces each of the 23 participants (parents, business leaders, community leaders, school board members and school leaders) and provides a comprehensive analysis of the data collection and analysis procedures. Creswell (2014) described qualitative methodology as

an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social science or human problem. The research builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants and conducts the study in a natural setting. (p. 15)

The basis of this qualitative study was grounded theory.

Grounded theory. Grounded theory involves data collection that promotes the development of a new theory (Creswell, 2014). This type of methodology is the reverse of most approaches whereby data are examined for a fit within an already established theory. The researcher felt limited by other theories; therefore, the grounded theory was the best choice for this study. The researcher gained valuable experiences throughout the years from working in a large urban school district. Therefore, the researcher constructed research questions that guided the strategies and process with reference to the grounded theory.

Within the constructs of grounded theory methodology, the researcher emerged as

the primary interpreter in gathering and decoding the results from the study; consequently, to be unbiased, it was essential that the researcher did not impose her perceptions over the persons interviewed for the study. The researcher trained a colleague to carry out the interviews. Additionally, the researcher should acknowledge that it is possible for complications to arise when trying to block out individual experiences during the interview process (Creswell, 2014). Essentially, it is imperative that the researcher interprets the world through the lenses of the interviewees, although the researcher possibly may not be in agreement with them (Oktay, 2012). Last, with the grounded theory approach, it is vital for the researcher to relinquish any theoretical concepts or philosophies so that the theory can become apparent from the findings (Creswell, 2014).

Rationale for Qualitative Methods

This study used qualitative methods by way of in-depth interviews. The focus of this study was to gain insightful dialogue with school board members, school leaders, parents, and other vital stakeholders within the subject district. The research assistant conducted interviews with the school board members, parents, community leaders, and business leaders who attend school board meetings, and school leaders (principals and assistant principals) within the district. The researcher examined the common themes found in these interviews. This study had the likelihood of providing an in-depth analysis of preferred modes of communication that will promote positive working relationships within a large urban school district.

Research Site

The district identified in this study is located in the Southeastern United States. This district has over 49,000 students, 7,000 employees, and 105 learning sites. There are 93 Title 1 schools within the district. The percentage of students who qualified for free

and reduced meal prices is 74.76%.

Data-Collection Procedures

The researcher gained review board approval before the start of the data-collection procedures. Data collected from interviews conducted by the research assistant from the identified interviewees within the district. The data presented solutions and clarified outcomes related to building positive working relationships and seeking effective modes of communication within the district.

First, the research assistant attended a school board meeting and gained a perspective from the working relationships among the parents or guardians of students, school board members, the superintendent, business leaders, and community leaders who attended the school board meeting. The researcher was also present at the board meeting to address the school board members and the superintendent so that the identified interviewees gained interest in the research study. The researcher gave a brief description of the study and the components needed to implement it with fidelity. The researcher communicated to the parents, community leaders, business leaders, school leaders, and school board members that they are vital components of this study and their perspective will enhance its validity. Then the research assistant asked any parents, community leaders, and business leaders to voluntarily agree to take part in the study by raising their hands; then the research assistant provided them with the research recruitment letter (see Appendix F). The researcher informed the volunteers that contact would be made via a scheduled telephone call at a future date in order to conduct the interview sessions. The research assistant wrote down the contact information (name, telephone number, and e-mail address) for each volunteer as they received the research recruitment letters. The researcher provided the volunteers with a letter of appreciation after the interview process

was completed.

The researcher contacted district school leaders via an electronic letter with the research recruitment letter attached to the email. The school leaders were asked to give verbal agreement to be interviewed by the research assistant. The interview took place at the school leaders' site in a secured location for a series of questions on their perspectives of working relationships and communication preferences within the district. After the researcher gained permission and approval, she provided school leaders with the consent forms and interview questions a week before the initial interview. The interview process took at least 45 minutes per participant. The research assistant met with each school leader at a time that was convenient for the interviewee.

The researcher also contacted the school board director to obtain permission to contact school board members for interviews. An electronic letter was sent detailing the specifics of this study, which included the purpose. Upon approval and permission, the researcher provided the school board members with the consent forms and interview questions a week before the initial interview dates. The interviews, conducted by the research assistant, took at least 45 minutes per participant. The researcher introduced the research assistant to the school board members. The research assistant met with each member at a time that was convenient for them. The researcher ensured that all parties involved in this study reviewed and signed all confidentiality agreements. The confidentiality agreement documents will be kept in a locked cabinet in a secure location.

Eliminating Potential Bias

Because the researcher is an employee of the subject district, she consulted with a colleague and elected to use a colleague research assistant to carry out the interviews to limit any biases that the researcher may have concerning the study. By appointing a

colleague to conduct the face to face interviews with the school leaders, school board members, parent volunteers, business leaders, and community leaders, the researcher's beliefs and views did not influence the data collected for this study.

Ethical Considerations

Initially, the researcher gave each participant a consent form to sign signifying the participant's intentional agreement to participate in the interview process. Each consent form specified that anonymity and confidentiality were assured through a process of keeping the consent forms in a secure area after the interview participants signed the consent forms. The researcher made follow-up calls to remind the participants of the interview times and locations that were agreed upon.

Before the interview process began, the research assistant read a prompt to the participants that instructed them to read all parts of the consent form carefully. The participants addressed any ambiguity with the interview questions before the interview proceeded. The research assistant provided materials each interviewee, which included pen, paper, copy of interview questions, and consent forms. The research assistant wrote the responses to each question as the appointment colleague read aloud each question for the interviewees to answer.

Data-Analysis Procedures

This qualitative study called for the researcher to use interviews to address the research questions. Upon conclusion of the data-collection process, the narrative data from the interviews were transcribed and analyzed. After the researcher analyzed the data gained full dissertation approval by the university, she shared and reported the findings with the school district.

The responses from each interviewee underwent analysis by finding common

phrases or terms used throughout each transcript. The common phrases and terms used among the interviewees created the themes, which supported and upheld the findings of this study. The themes developed from this study provided an understanding and description of the interviewees' personal experiences of the phenomena revealed throughout the study. The qualitative method of grounded theory was used to create inductively a descriptive theory about an occurrence or occurrences within the study.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness supported the findings of this research study. The researcher did not alter any of the data obtained from the interview sessions. The data came from the interviewees' own categories of meaning. The researcher deidentified the names of interviewees for data retrieval and for confidentiality purposes. Neither the researcher nor the research assistant shared any confidential or vital information from the individuals interviewed in this study with a third party or any outside organization. The research assistant explained meanings and verified understanding of the interview questions during all interview sessions. The research assistant wrote the interview responses from each interviewee precisely during the interviews, and the researcher transcribed the responses verbatim.

Chapter 4: Findings

The research assistant conducted in-depth interviews individually with eight school leaders, three school board members, four key community leaders, two key business leader, and six parents. The research assistant completed 23 interviews within 46 days. The participant demographics of age and gender were not relevant to this study; however, the longevity of the connection or relationship to the large urban school district in this study was relevant in order to enhance understanding of the dynamics of the relationships.

The interviewees were numbered and identified by role to safeguard confidentiality of the interviewees. For example, the researcher used Interviewee 1 (traditional, high school principal) for the first individual interviewed (see Table 1). The interviews are in order by date of interview over the period of 46 days. Excerpts from the interview transcripts documented and justified the 10 themes and several subthemes under an overarching theme of effective modes of communication and developing positive working relationships. These describe the essence of communication from the perspective of stakeholders within a large urban school district.

Overview of Themes

The researcher reviewed the interview transcripts for common words or phrases found within the interviewee responses. The analysis of terms assists with building themes that emerge from qualitative studies (Creswell, 2014). The themes developed through the process of finding a commonality of words or phrases from the interview transcripts. The words or phrases showed a commonality words that were geared toward the beginning stages of relationships. Several components were found that show the commonality of words and phrases.

Table 1

Interview Participants by Interview Order and Role

No.	Participants
1	School leader (Traditional, high school principal)
2	School leader (Traditional, elementary school principal)
3	Parent (Charter school)
4	School leader (Traditional, elementary school principal)
5	School leader (Traditional, high school principal)
6	Community leader (Pastor)
7	Parent (traditional elementary, middle, and high schools)
8	Community leader (Youth minister & mental health professional)
9	School leader (Traditional elementary school assistant principal)
10	Community leader (Lobbyist)
11	Business leader (Director of nonprofit organization)
12	School leader (Nontraditional, alternative high school)
13	School leader (Nontraditional, single-gender middle school)
14	Community leader (Minister, educational support coordinator for K-12 students)
15	Parent (traditional elementary school)
16	School board member
17	School board member
18	Parent (traditional high school)
19	School board member
20	Parent (traditional elementary school)
21	Parent (traditional, elementary school)
22	Business leader (nonprofit organization)
23	Principal (charter school, Grades 9-12)

Findings by Theme

Ten themes emerged from analysis of words and phrases from interviewees'

responses:

1. Being in an explicit and supportive role to promote shared collaborations among all stakeholders.
2. Using effective modes of communication that are accessible and attainable for the intended stakeholder.
3. The need for dependent, collaborative working relationships among all stakeholders.
4. Reliance of electronic means of communication for everyday use.
5. Reliance upon face to face or in-person communication to solve conflicts.
6. Preference for a democratic, inclusive, motivating, and collaborative style of leadership to build a positive working relationship through effective decision-making.
7. Building a transparent, equally beneficial relationship that is representative of all community stakeholders.
8. Need for a lucid, responsive, and accessible line of communication.
9. Connecting the positive factors and eliminating the negatives to build an accurate, flexible, and consistent working relationship.
10. Promoting an inclusive, technological method of communication that will enhance partnerships among all stakeholders.

Theme 1: Being in an explicit and supportive role to promote shared collaborations among all stakeholders. The first interview question concerned defining their role within the district. There was a range of questions on this topic, one for each type of stakeholder, as several types of stakeholders were interviewed (see Tables 2-6). The first question promoted the identification of the themes and subthemes through the interviewees' responses. Tables 2-6 present the interviewees' responses along with the years of relationship or connection to this urban school district. The average number was

13.4 years of connection or relationship with the subject district. The interviewee responses are shown by categories of stakeholders from this district: school board members, school leaders, parents, business leaders, and community leaders.

Table 2

School Board Members' Interview Responses to Question 1, Describe Your Role as School Board Member

School board member	Response	Years of experience in district
Interviewee 16	School board member	>10
Interviewee 17	District...representative	>20
Interviewee 19	Currently an elected member of the board. I was a parent-leader in school organizations and cluster organizations.	>20

Table 3

School Leaders' Interview Responses to Question 1, Describe Your Role as a School Leader in the District

School leader	Responses	Years
Interviewee 1	Education leader within the school and I work as a liaison between parents, school, community and district.	<5
Interviewee 2	My role as a school leader is to make sure I am an inclusive leader as they say it takes a village. So many wrap around services are needed to help parents and students with student achievement.	>20
Interviewee 4	Principal...I lead the instructional role in the school. I make sure our school is operational from the...to instruction. Operations of the school safety...It is important for me to have an effective school.	>15<20
Interviewee 5	My role in[the] district is one where I am the chief learner, cheerleader, and advocate. When things go well, it is because of the team. When things do not go well it is because of me. We are a compliance and policy driven district. We are not kid centered...constant change every time something new comes in there is a new way of doing things. As a result, we are not always able to have	<5 but > 20 years in urban education
Interviewee 9	My primary role is to find a way and make a way...providing a safe environment and make sure teaching and learning is happening at my school.	>40
Interviewee 12	My role is to advance the system consistency on implementation. I think my role also means being a teacher leader. By that, I mean supporting teachers in making them effective teachers; sometimes that is directly on my team. Roles are a teacher leader, learner, resource provider, barrier breaker...critical for an urban school, and utilizing data. and vision for our students as well as creating a community that is committed to genuine teaching and learning as well as stakeholder accountability as it relates to making a difference in the lives of our students.	20
Interviewee 13	As a principal I have to solve every issue . . . within our organization . . . with parents, students and teachers . . . to help my 9th- grade students be competitive and ready for 9th grade. I work on one thing at a time with them...let's get them to 9th grade then focus on college...	<15
Interviewee 23	Charter school principal...operations and academics for the school management of my team including finances and school.	10

Table 4

Parent Responses to Question 1, Describe Your Role as a Parent in the District

Parent	Response	Years
Interviewee 3	Mother	5
Interviewee 7	I am an active parent in volunteering in my child's class to stay informed of his learning skills as well as his teachers' curriculum.	24
Interviewee 15	Caring for my kid and to make sure my kid has the resources and opportunities that he needs and to support the teachers and the district.	4
Interviewee 18	A firm role...I try to stand firm as a single parent dealing with the issues have been very political	>35
Interviewee 20	To be supportive of the school and to support my student to make sure that they actively participate in their learning and to make sure I am in the know about what is happening in my child's school. To be an active participant in my kid's education. To try to figure out this stuff we call love.	10
Interviewee21	Active parent of the PTA and at the school. I am a room parent. Active, very involved.	3

Table 5

Business Leaders' Responses to Question 1, Describe Your Role as a Stakeholder in an Urban School District

Business leader	Responses	Years
Interviewee 11	A parent and director of a nonprofit organization that supports urban students after school, during summer camp and youth leadership development.	5
Interviewee 22	Social entrepreneur or civic innovator...an obligation to support administration, parents, students for the well-being of our students. I also worked for the district as program developer and for the African-American males in our district. Social entrepreneur and civic innovator specializing in strategic planning...building community collaborative and to help identify best practices and tools or develop innovative solutions and strategic to engage or reengage all stakeholders in the planning of the decision making process.	8

Table 6

Community Leaders' Responses to Question 1, Describe Your Role as a Stakeholder in an Urban School District

Leaders	Responses	Years
Interviewee 6	Stakeholder...parent of kids in an urban school district, community leader as a pastor, property holder...my property value is directly affected by the urban school district.	10.5
Interviewee 8	Both a minister and mental health professional in this neighborhood. Which means, I am invested in the development of the children and families in this neighborhood. For me this means both making sure educational needs are met but also empowering families outside of the classroom to take care of themselves. I met frequently with local kids at afterschool programs, providing play therapy counseling, working alongside families seeking faith development through my church.	5
Interviewee 10	As a lobbyist, I am certified to lobby on behalf of the...district to effect change on behalf of the district.	<5
Interviewee 14	I am a minister in church in the community...part of my role is educational support for children in the community Grades K-12.	4

Theme 2: Using effective modes of communication that are accessible and attainable for the intended stakeholder. The second interview question asked stakeholders to describe their preferred method or methods of communication among stakeholders. The question also asked each interviewee to delineate their ideal communication method(s) with other stakeholders. The interviewee responses are listed in Tables 7-11 by categories of stakeholders from this urban school district: school board members, school leaders, parents, business leaders, and community leaders.

Table 7

School Board Member Responses to Question 2, Describe Your Preferred Method or Methods of Communication Among the Superintendent, Parents, School Leaders, Business Leaders, and Community Leaders

Member	Responses	Years
Interviewee 16	90% email and 10% text	>10
Interviewee 17	email, texting, phone, and face to face	>20
Interviewee 19	Superintendent--immediacy of text and phone are important. When I need to talk to the superintendent, I need to talk to her right then. I need immediacy. I love her one on one meetings that she is having with each board member every month. Parents--I use as many different means as possible to reach the broadest amount of Parents...email, newsletter...also individual email, phone, face to face, Facebook, Twitter...go to a lot of community meetings. School leaders--email, phone, personal meeting. Business and community leaders--phone and personal meeting with some texting.	>20

Table 8

School Leader Responses to Question 2, Describe Your Preferred Method or Methods of Communication Among the Superintendent, Parents, School Leaders, Business Leaders, and Community Leaders

School leader	Responses	Years
Interviewee 1	in person and in writing.	<5
Interviewee 2	Most part fact to face, meetings at the school level and outside of the school. Email. Primarily email.	>20
Interviewee 4	Because of the vast amount of communication . . . , I have to use email. Phone, email, newsletters, flyers, school mail...my preferred method is email and newsletters. I don't how we did it 20 years ago.	>15<20
Interviewee 5	Superintendent...email and face to face, also text. She is the first one I ever sent text to. Parents--face to face or robo calls, face to face whether PTSA meets or Local School Council. I do some flyers. . . periodically. . . news and updates to parents. And group text, parent liaison does this. . . . Administration team--two-way radio, text, weekly leadership council meetings, morning debriefs and email. Business leaders--face to face and email. Community leaders- text, face to face and email. My boss . . . is primarily email and text so I can have a record.	<5 but over 20 years in urban education
Interviewee 9	Written is preferred, because I am so busy during the day and when I have time to slow down I can read it as well as refer back to it.	>40
Interviewee 12	intimate...one on one not via email; it is face to face.	20
Interviewee 13	Superintendent--email and occasional face to face...preferred method is email. Parents--robo call, social media, newsletter. My second level...face to face with school leaders...second email. Business, community leaders...I do not have much contact with them...I usually delegate. I am usually around my school.	<15
Interviewee 23	Superintendent--one on one...meets us quarterly with charter schools...school email. Superintendent advisory--the superintendent does not have a direct role more advisory. Parents--face to face...email more effective. I reach out for both good and bad so that I can get feedback. School leader--principals' meeting and phone. Business leaders--fundraisers...sponsored events . . . no direct relationships. Executive director--biweekly meetings and month to month.	10

Table 9

Parents' Responses to Question 2, Describe Your Preferred Method or Methods of Communication

Parent	Responses	Years
Interviewee 3	Email...I never talked to the superintendent. But I have emailed and supported a board member. But I do not like that the board member voted for bigger class sizes.	5
Interviewee 7	I email and or call the appropriate person(s) when and or if there is an issue.	24
Interviewee 15	We get information sent home from my son . . . an email update is best for me . . . I do not use the Twitter although I know they have it. District meetings . . . I just wish there was a little more transparency. I hear things on the news such as the news about The Rotary Club. This is fragmenting the way news gets out . . . like news shows, newspaper etc . . . I just wish I got it from the horse's mouth such as a direct newsletter from the district. I would rather hear about the district news from the district and not outside sources.	4
Interviewee 18	It has been hard communicating with the superintendent. I try to speak to her when I see her and she does not understand that I am a parent of a student in the district and her attitude plays a big role in how it affects the system. I just wonder how she would treat me if she knew I was a parent and not just an employee . . .	>35
Interviewee 20	Electronic communications anything but paper, phone calls, Robo calls, emails.	10
Interviewee 21	Social media...I like that the superintendent has a blog and Facebook.	3

Table 10

Business Leaders' Responses to Question 2, Describe Your Preferred Method or Methods of Communication

Business leader	Responses	Years
Interviewee 11	...email (initial communication, more in-depth communication in person or over the phone	5
Interviewee 22	I prefer an open forum, town hall, small group, effective use of technology to communicate, important information and immediate follow up with community to address concerns beyond the school walls.	8

Table 11

Community Leader Responses to Question 2, Describe Your Preferred Method or Methods of Communication

Leader	Responses	Years
Interviewee 6	I prefer communication through email and letters. I feel that email has become for more of an effective exchange.	10.5
Interviewee 8	Email, individual meetings, phone, and conversations are effective methods of communication with stakeholders.	5.0
Interviewee 10	Face to face	<5.0
Interviewee 14	I find that most of the time face to face provides the most effective communication because our support of students is a single cluster of schools. We are able to have more face to face communication.	4.0

Theme 3: The need for dependent, collaborative working relationships

among all stakeholders. The interviewees also addressed Question 3, “Describe the working relationship between yourself and the stakeholders.” This question helped to add leverage and revelations to Research Question 4, “How does working in a defined role affect the working relationships among school board members, school leaders, stakeholders (parents, community and business leaders), and the superintendent of an urban school district?”

A school board member who had over 10 years of experience with the subject district gave a candid and direct response regarding the working relationships with other stakeholders: “Superintendent--evaluation management . . . parents--representative constituency, school leaders, community and business leaders—indirect. . . . We should be building relationships with them . . . mutual.”

A school board member with just under 20 years of experience or connection to the subject school district responded as follows:

Superintendent and I have a really strong working relationship and friendship. We have really taken the time to get to know each other. I have spent the time to answer all of my parents' emails and whenever they have tried to reach me and the same is true for business and community leaders. We are allowed to have a relationship with school leaders, but there is a clear line that board members are not supposed to cross. I walk a fine line as a previous student, teacher, and now board member. I think I have a good relationship with all board members some better than others. We are always working to build trust. That is how I try to handle my relationships with my coworkers.

A school board member with more than 20 years in the district responded as follows:

Superintendent—excellent, very close, very direct, very honest. I think we think a lot alike so we understand each other. Parents—excellent. I started in the district as a parent/volunteer; that is still my perspective. School leaders—generally excellent. I am the boss now, and it has changed their willingness to talk openly and I miss that. Business leaders—my relationship is very mixed. I have never been a high-powered business leader, and it has been difficult for me to break into some of those circles. I am also extremely careful about not getting into situations where some might feel as if I owe them something, so therefore it is harder for those relationships to develop. Community leaders—I have to say it is in a good place when politics don't get in the way.

A school leader responded, “Definitely has to be important, a good working relationship because with so many stakeholders that include parents, community leaders as well as district leaders” An elementary school leader added, “My working relationship is very close, very engaged. I consider it a dependent relationship. I depend on them to help staff and students.” A school leader of an elementary school for over 15 years stated,

You have to have a good working relationship that makes sure all voices are heard and using that to make the best decisions for children. I don't know the superintendent personally, but I have a very close working relationship with the Assistant Superintendent.

A traditional high school principal with fewer than 3 years of experience in the school district gave this response:

Since I have been at this school, the superintendent or my boss have not been here yet to visit while students are in class learning. Parents—most I work with. . . . What I don't work well with is parents who lie. I hate when parents create a lie when the truth is due. I am reminded that people will just lie. My philosophy is complaints are gifts. It just like going to a restaurant and having a complaint with

them and taking that complaint to the restaurant instead just talking about it to everyone else. It means there is something you like about them or you would have just talked about it with everyone else. Alumni majority respond well. I have invited back. This work is too important to do along. I have 80 alumni that come all the time. . . . I have a weekly newsletter that goes out to stakeholders including alums, and they appreciate that.

An assistant principal with the district with over 40 years of experience with the urban school district, stated, “I would like to think I have an excellent relationship with them. The ones I engage with the most are teachers and parents. I think we have an excellent relationship.”

The nontraditional/alternative school principal with 20 years of experience within the district provided this information:

Work closely with parents on collaboration that involves creating students success plans. School leaders-embedded in principle, cluster meeting planning, and grade bands. Commonalities support the language and the work that is proposed on the elementary, middle and high school levels. Business leaders—It is part of vision, and they are stakeholders as far as underlying resources whether that be human or capital to help our students.

A nontraditional single-gender school’s assistant principal put it this way:

Not really an in-depth relationship with the superintendent. I usually deal with my supervisor-associate superintendent for the most part. . . . It is better now he is more about accountability versus support. Associate superintendent has gotten better and is moving toward that direction. I would like more support versus accountability. Parents—I wish we had more parent involvement. . . . We have an open door policy with those we do have. We address issues as they come up . . . not as much as I would like. One-on-one with school leaders we meet twice a week and one on one once a week . . . community meetings setting goals such as making sure one person sees their family more often . . . business leaders meeting helping meet career goals we do have one consistent business leader . . . and the most consistent.

The charter school principal stated, “Superintendent advisory—the superintendent does not have a direct role more advisory. Parents—I reach out for both good and bad so that I can get feedback. Business leaders and community leaders—no direct relationships.

The charter school parents focused more on their relationship with a school board

member. One parent responded as follows:

I supported a board member financially and I got to share how I feel about that. I am happy that they live in my community. It is one of the reasons I voted for her over others who did not have any kids in school. The board member's kids are in the district.

A parent in the district for 24 years indicated no relation to any particular stakeholder. "It's always been to whom it may concern." The parent of an elementary school student stated, "I have a dual relationship as parent and community leader but not much of a relationship with the superintendent. I know a lot of the business and most of the community leaders due to my job as a community leader."

A student's parent who is an employee of the district with a strong connection for 35 years with the district stated the following:

It has been an experience and I have been trying to be a part of the program like within the district. I have had to transfer my son due to political aspects of the district. I had to take him out of his zone school to make sure he had the best options available to him. That has taken away the finances in my home.

A parent in the district for 10 years stated, "Our relationship is communicative. We keep in touch to make sure the needs of my kids and the overall needs of class are met." A parent in the district for 3 years reported,

I see myself as a stakeholder . . . working with these different goals and positions. Sometimes I feel within the district there is a sort of family that I was just born to . . . like if you are in the club you do not discuss the club.

A business leader who is also a community leader with an 8-year connection to district responded as follows:

I am the executive director and cofounder of a community collaborative focused on youth success and community development. One child, one family, one community at a time, working with a range of students and lifelong learners. I ask what the community wants not tell them what they want. I work with the elementary all the way through college. Communicate with each stakeholder using the win-win-win model . . . (students, parents, schools, cooperatives-communities) opportunities for all stakeholders. I have 20-plus years in youth and

community throughout US, Europe and Africa. Learning and teaching helps me to understand how we all learn and I have incorporated the Brain-smart principles and strategies in academic and enrichment cross-curricular activities to increase student success and community engagement. The working relationship has been developed over a use of this to start the dialog.

Community leaders' responses were also sought. The pastor of the urban school district for 10½ years stated, "I have an engaged relationships because of my role as pastor with business leaders and other stakeholders." The minister and mental health professional of the urban school district for 5 years added, "I have frequent communications with school counselors if I am seeing a child in that district under their care." The community leader with 3 years of experience stated, "I am a lobbyist, so I affect local and state policy in legislation. I work with elected officials." The community leader with 5 years of experience with the urban school district responded as follows:

Superintendent—none. Parents—after-school parents, regular communication. Where we communicate regularly through a variety of methods (i.e. face to face, text, and email). School leaders—we support three schools . . . local schools . . . elementary . . . some principles. . . . I have direct, pretty close relationships and some of the others I just have spoken with and I think they might know who I am but usually speak to other staff members more so . . . and other schools, the relationship is nonexistent. Business leaders—really good relationships but it varies from leader to leader. Community leaders—our district city council person has been very responsive as well as some of the other members of our district.

A community leader reported the following:

Superintendent—no relationship. I think I have a pretty strong relationship with the parents we service directly, but I also try to make connections with parents beyond our program's vanity. School leaders—It is above average for the elementary, average for high school, below average for middle school, charter school (nontraditional) below average. Business leaders—We know a fair amount and have connected with them for support for our students. Community leaders—we have made the effort to connect with those who directly affect issues related to students.

Theme 4: Reliance on electronic means of communication for everyday use.

Interview Question 4 about reliance on electronic communication provided an analysis of

the types or modes of communication that the interviewees rely on or use most.

Interviewee responses are shown in Tables 12 and 13. The data revealed that 19 of 23 interviewees, or a little over 80%, preferred to use or rely on communication via email.

Seven interviewees relied upon the use of phone calls and face to face or in-person communication, the second most relied upon or used form of communication. Five interviewees used texting (22% of the interviewees). Less than 1% preferred the use of Robo calls, and social media is relied upon with two interviewees who are parents of students within the urban school district.

Table 12

Preferred Modes of Communication

Participants	Mode
School leader (traditional, elementary school principal)	Email
Parent (charter school)	Email
Community leader (pastor)	Email
Parent (traditional-elementary, middle and high)	Email
Community leader (youth minister & mental health professional)	Email
Community leader (lobbyist)	Email
School board member	Email
Parent (traditional, high school)	Email
School board member	Email and text
Parent (traditional, elementary school)	Email, Facebook, phone calls
School leader (nontraditional, alternative high school)	Email, face to face
Community leader (minister, educational support coordinator for K-12 students)	Email, face to face
Principal (charter school, Grades 9-12)	Email, face to face, phone calls
Parent (traditional, elementary school and business leader (director of nonprofit organization)	Email, phone calls
School leader (nontraditional, single-gendered, middle school)	Email, text, phone calls
School leader (traditional, high school principal)	Email, text, Robo calls
School leader (traditional, high school principal)	Face to face
Business leader (nonprofit organization)	Face to face
School leader (traditional, elementary school assistant principal)	Face to face, phone calls
School leader (traditional, elementary school principal)	Phone calls, email
School board member	Phone calls, email, text, face to face
Parent (traditional, elementary school)	Social media
Parent (traditional, elementary school)	Text, email

Table 13

Tallied Responses for Preferred Modes of Communication

Preferred communication for everyday use	School board members	School leaders	Parents	Business leaders	Community leaders
Face to face	1	3	0	1	1
Email	3	5	5	1	4
Phone calls(includes Robo calling)	1	4	2	1	0
Text messaging	0	0	0	0	0
Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest etc.)	0	0	2	0	0

Theme 5: Reliance upon face-to-face or in-person communication to solve conflicts. Interview Question 5 asked the interviewees to explain the process of resolving conflict with various stakeholders in the district (superintendent, parents, school board members, school leaders, business leaders, and community leaders). As noted by Di Pietro and Di Virgilio (2013), problems among members or stakeholders within an organization directly affect the climate of the organization. It is vital to the organization to understand that the conflict or dilemma is not the sole issue, but it is the mishandling of the conflict that can result in problems for the organization (Nguyen & Yang, 2012).

Question 5 was, What are the steps that you take to resolve a conflict when dealing with stakeholders within an urban school district (superintendent, parents, school leaders, business leaders, and community leaders)? A school board member with over 10 years of experience with the district stated, “I think there is a real need for individual conversation . . . one-on-one when conflict arises.” A school board member with more than 20 years of experience stated, “I try to find areas of agreement and cooperation and try to bring people together towards common goals.” A school board member with more than 20 years of experience with the district stated,

I try to make sure that everyone has the same accurate information and that they understand the context . . . how we got there. . . try to focus on the resolution itself and the facts and not the various personalities involved. I try patience and request it from others. . . I try to create an environment where people are calm and rational.

School leaders were presented with the same question. The school leader of a traditional high school with less than three years of experience in the district stated,

Just an open line of communication. I give whoever that is the opportunity to come in that is best. I like it this way because I get to see how a person's sincerity and passion in that conversation.

A traditional elementary school principal with 20 plus years in the district replied, "I do not have conflict with the superintendent. I do not see it as conflict and I consider myself a listener. We can agree to disagree." An elementary school principal with just under 20 years of experience reported, "Varies to the situation . . . face to face, phone, conference, peer mediation (adult), using protocols to ensure all persons' sides can be taken into account." A traditional high school principal with fewer than 3 years of experience in the subject district gave an extensive example of a situation as validation of the effects and outcomes of conflict management, whether positive or negative:

A parent came to the school . . . the parent's daughter was the person who initiated a fight. I was trying to sort it out. This parent said I did not speak to [him/her]. The parent said I was rude and had never had this happen and sent this message to the superintendent and a board member. The board member thanked the parent and celebrated the parent for improving the school. And this board member copied me in the email. I was then directed to write a response in the voice of the superintendent. . . . This is nothing unusual . . . that happens. But I was offended. I was offended because the parent outright lied. The parent said things that were not true and was verified by the cameras. I just did not see the parent. This parent just a few weeks before came to me with concerns and we had that matter dealt with favorable results. I had to remind her . . . didn't I help take care of this before? I then wrote all the steps we had taken with the parent's student . . . the response was so thorough that it unraveled each of the claims that the parent made. We investigated every part of the situation and they were resolved according to the parent. So the parent was complaining about something already resolved and making another story up. I believe in teaching people the anatomy of a complaint.

An assistant principal with over 40 years of experience within the urban school district stated the following:

Parents—listen, then we go back to address concerns. If it is policy, I try to make sure that they understand how the districts handle certain situations. If conflict arises from teacher and parents—three-way conference when there are teacher-parent conflicts. I try to reach a solution that is acceptable to both. I want the parents to leave feeling like they have been heard. Make sure I listen to concerns and we are seeking a resolution to the problem but if what is being asked of me is a conflict with our district, I have to go with school board policy. No conflict with others.

A nontraditional (alternative school) principal with 20 years of experience within the district offered this comment:

Conflict is best resolved when procedures and protocols are followed. Parents compact with parents. Parents are held accountable. Business and community leaders taking them back to our agreed upon mission and vision. I find that conflicts come from when assumptions are made without clarification.

A middle school principal of a single-gender school commented as follows:

Initial conversation . . . investigates every aspect of the issue. If it is for me to handle, I handle it but if it is brought to assistant principal, then they handle it but if need be more of an investigation, Office of Internal Resolution. With superintendent . . . I have not really had one . . . but when I did I talk about it with my cabinet . . . it did not materialize into anything further. . . . I will address it to some degree . . . those issues are very political so I just address with our cabinet and then I make and manage those decisions.

A charter school principal with 10 years of experience in the district stated, “Information gathering . . . look for root of conflict . . . what is the story of all parties. Asking questions . . . get clarity from others and get answers based on this.”

The same question was asked of parents. A charter school parent with 5 years of connection to the district stated, “I have not dealt with any of the superintendents, but we did have a conflict that was dealt with by our principal.” A parent within the district for 24 years reported, “I will go by the chain of command first and if nothing gets resolved, then I move a little higher with phone calls and emails.” A parent of an elementary school

student who has been in the district for 4 years replied:

Talk to each individual when I can. I have had to go to the district and state level to get services for my kid. I really do not talk with the others about conflict unless it directly affects my kid or me.

The parent of a traditional high school student who also had 35 years of experience in the district and was currently an employee in the district, stated, “I try to use face to face if I have a problem but I am also willing to go over their head if I need to get more help.” An elementary school parent with 10 years of experience with the district stated their steps:

Reach via email and explain the situation, follow up with a phone call, face to face meeting and if after that we still cannot get any kind of resolution, we go above, but so far so good, we have been able to resolve many conflicts via email.

A parent with 3 years of experience with the district replied, “Email . . . I try to start at the beginning of the conflict and then if more is needed I go above that. Then try to offer a solution to not just complain . . . actually try to work toward a solution.”

This question was also presented to business leaders. A business leader of 5 years, who was also a parent of students in the subject district, stated, “I set up an in-person meeting although I like email. I feel that an in-person meeting is best because you can never really tell a person's intent or tone unless you are in person. You don't get that through email.”

A business leader who has had a connection to the district for 8 years stated, “My steps . . . Is the vision clearly defined? Are missions and objectives clearly defined? Are roles and responsibilities clearly defined? Are processes and procedures clearly defined? Has winning been clearly defined?”

Community leaders also responded to this question. A community leader with 10½ years of experience, a pastor within the district, responded, “We have tried to

resolve things by email when a conflict has occurred and in turn usually calls if need be for a face-to-face meeting.” The minister and mental health professional with a 5-year connection to the urban school district reported this process:

Parents often come to me with concerns with teachers and schools, especially when their child is having behavior concerns. I have permission from stakeholders to talk to teachers and school counselors. When necessary, advocacy for the child may involve additional conversation with the higher ups within the district.

The lobbyist simply responded that this was “Not within the scope of my job.”

A community leader who has been in the subject district for 4 years provided this response:

Ultimately, I like to bring the issues to the table. I like to have honest dialogue. That has happened on several occasions. Usually only resolves with a face-to-face meeting. I have never had an issue resolved through email and ones we have had we have created a space for open dialog. I like to listen to what each stakeholder experiences within the conflict and decide together how to move forward.

Theme 6: Preference for a democratic, inclusive, motivating, and collaborative style of leadership to build a positive working relationship through effective decision making. Interview Question 6 asked the interviewees to describe their leadership styles. Tables 14-17 display the findings.

Table 14

School Board Members’ Responses to Question 6, “Describe Your Leadership Style”

Members	Responses	Years
Interviewee 16	I try to be very honest and sometimes that is good thing and sometimes not so much.	>10
Interviewee 17	I try to make others feel valued and included...give everyone the chance to be heard...try to find common ground among people to build consensus. I bring facts so that even if they disagree on what I am saying they will understand how I got to my conclusion.	>20
Interviewee 19	Inclusive, collaborative, focusing on unity rather than division and common goals rather than differences. I build communities.	>20

Table 15

School Leaders' Responses to Question 6, "Describe Your Leadership Style"

School leaders	Responses	Years
Interviewee 1	Personable...I try to connect with my parents and students. I will not accept anything but success and excellence.	<5
Interviewee 2	Inclusive and collaborative.	>20
Interviewee 4	Reflective, very reflective and open.	>15<20
Interviewee 5	It is really simple. My style is that of servant leadership with a touch of situational leadership. At the end of the day, my role is to be a supportive leader and servant that takes a collaborative process that engages them. Situational leadership is adjusting my style to the current reality and sometimes that means being direct and sometimes collaborative.	<5 but over 20 years in urban education
Interviewee 9	Democratic... I value input from those I supervise but I do have an eclectic style it just depends on the teacher.	>40
Interviewee 12	Democratic. I believe in including everyone at the table. Everyone has value and adds to the culture and climate. Democratic leaders support the theme of hope. Everyone gets to support the vision, the mission, and their beliefs.	20
Interviewee 13	Authoritative and service, not dictatorial at all.	<15
Interviewee 23	Motivating and collaborative. I am not the leader that says it's my way or the highway.	10

Table 16

Parent Responses to Question 6, "Describe Your Leadership Style"

Parents	Responses	Years
Interviewee 3	Within the school, I volunteer but I do not take any leadership roles. I do not take any leadership roles because it is expected that you are not working. No leadership roles have been made for the working parent and it is usually moms. It creates a culture of cliques where only certain moms work together.	5
Interviewee 7	I've been very active as a parent since 1992 within the school system not only volunteering in the school but with Habitat for Humanity as well. I also give back to the homeless by donating clothes as well.	24
Interviewee 15	With our kid, supportive not authoritative...I try not to be that...I try to be servant based . . . service engaged, you know looking out for others.	4
Interviewee 18	To help be more involved with the kids and people in my neighborhood to be more healthy and productive.	>35
Interviewee 20	Democratic style...I tend to take all the opinions before making decisions.	10
Interviewee 21	By example...coach guiding. It can be confrontation if need be. But I want to talk about it...let's get a solution.	3

Table 17

Business Leaders' Responses to Question 6, "Describe Your Leadership Style"

Business Leader	Responses	Years
Interviewee 11	...trust building through relationships key word relationships. Motivational and inspirational...I am not dictatorial or authoritarian.	5
Interviewee 22	...shared leadership style we are all responsible for the students' success...	8

Table 18

Community Leaders' Responses to Question 6, "Describe Your Leadership Style"

Leaders	Responses	Years
Interviewee 6	A leader that values team participation. Also I am usually the one who takes the lead in a team situation.	10.5
Interviewee 8	I am a passionate and gentle spirited leader who listens intently to the needs of others. When I see a problem, I am going to stand for my clients and advocate for them.	5
Interviewee 10	Consolatory...I tend to allow all viewpoints and perspectives but we have to find the point of convergence...that is where we start. Then you are not fighting. Let's get as close to the middle as we can...that is when we can.	<5
Interviewee 14	I am a collaborative leader meaning I value all the voices in the room and seek to honor each experience in making a leadership decision. I am usually capable of making decisions to benefit the majority of folks involved but like to let the answers bubble up from the conversation so that everyone feels a part of the decisions...	4

Theme 7: Building a transparent, equally beneficial relationship that is representative of all community stakeholders. Theme 7 also revealed several subthemes from the stakeholders interviewed, which were derived from the transcripts shown in Tables 19-23. The school leaders used terms or phrases such as “maintain and keep pushing forward,” “value the community,” “increasing parent involvement,” “overcommunicate,” “more parent team workshops,” “creating opportunities,” “go out into the community,” and “strategic planning around the community and district as a whole.”

Table 19

School Board Members' Responses to Question 7, "What Are Some Suggestions to Improve School-Community Relations Within This District?"

Board members	Responses	Years
Interviewee 16	We have to have more consistent, correct, and advanced notice with our communication.....the availability of information and transparency and the accuracy of information is very important (e.g., websites etc.).	>10
Interviewee 17	I think it is important for our district to be candid and transparent when discussing issues and being realistic when it comes to issues. I think the community can be specific and focused on the concerns that they bring and understanding that things take time especially when we are talking about long term solutions especially when we are talking about long-term problems.	>20
Interviewee 19	Attend every possible community and school meeting. I life and try to be present during the first run. I would like to see local businesses more involved not just the big businesses but local. I like the cluster planning we are doing bringing the schools together strengthens the whole school foundation. It allows the schools and the community to see the bigger picture.	>20

Table 20

School Leaders' Responses to Question 7, "What Are Some Suggestions to Improve School-Community Relations Within This District?"

School leader	Responses	Years
Interviewee 1	I think we are leading in the right direction with more communication in all the varied ways that we do. I think we just need to continue this way. I don't think we should change anything, maintain and keep pushing forward.	<5
Interviewee 2	Value the community and let them know you value them . . . to build trust.	>20
Interviewee 4	Increasing parent involvement, convincing parents to be very active in their children's education.	Between 15-20
Interviewee 5	Avoid any surprises for community members. Over communicate so no one can say they were left out. Be creative and that is broad. If you are communicating with community members and they are not showing up you need to take the meeting to them—churches, leasing offices, community centers.	<5 but over 20 years in urban education
Interviewee 9	I think that if we had more parent team workshops. We could greatly improve not only home school community relations but also academically and behavior. Workshops that resonate that would help parents help their children...workforce...math...strategies to help them get homework done. Workshops for parents guiding high school kids to navigate after graduation.	>40
Interviewee 12	Allow the community to share in the students' journey looking at their neighborhood creating opportunities where leaders can hear the students' voices as well as sharing our data in order to understand our need for resources.	20
Interviewee 13	Make it so that we go out into the community. It should be a requirement. Literally, knock on doors.	<15
Interviewee 23	Strategic planning around the community and district as a whole. You have to meet who you talk to...you have to listen. Deal with one thing at a time and make sure to get that done.	10

Table 21

Parents' Responses to Question 7, "What Are Some Suggestions to Improve School-Community Relations Within This District?"

Parents	Responses	Years
Interviewee 3	Participate more in the meetings with the other schools in the area. Become a force with the local elementary, middle and high schools to demand the changes they want.	5
Interviewee 7	To actually communicate more with parents besides just having a PTA meeting in schools. Most parents won't make it to...keep us informed.	24
Interviewee 15	Make sure to show full representation. Being representative of all kids. I think there should not be a PTA or there should be an independent counsel with teacher and parents. There should be parents from every demographic within your local school and also allow your community and business leaders to be a part of it. So that every voice in the school demographic is heard. PTA just does not fit that bill. More transportation in the school-community...not letting one person be on the council no more than a year.	4
Interviewee 18	I suggest we offer our students more leadership roles and healthier ways for us to stay strong in our culture.	>35
Interviewee 20	More communication, outreach involving all stakeholders in our local school...fund-raising. Word of mouth, more parent communication. Less children being moved from public to private. One issue I have had was the principal but we never really got a response from her and it just kind of worked out.	10
Interviewee 21	Promote an inclusive culture no matter what. I hate exclusivity of any kind. I do not like it at all.	3

Table 22

Business Leaders' Responses to Question 7, "What Are Some Suggestions to Improve School-Community Relations Within This District?"

Business leader	Responses	Years
Interviewee 11	A way to improve school community relations...what if there is a council of community leaders asked by school district to serve such as pastors, police officers, business owners for the specific school in that local district to help relay what the school needs from the district or local community leaders to help meet the needs of the school as well as the school supporting the local businesses such as a tasting night. So it is a mutually beneficial relationship that helps both community and school.	5
Interviewee 22	...buy in from all organizations in our districts.	8

Table 23

Community Leaders' Responses to Question 7, "What Are Some Suggestions to Improve School-Community Relations Within This Urban School District?"

Leaders	Responses	Years
Interviewee 6	Education...educate stakeholders on what the school systems means for them. When a school does well then your business does well...also if you are a non-parent in this urban or any urban school district you still are beneficiary of this success. In education, we are all the stakeholders. The being intentional with connecting all stakeholders such as the success of our school. Fall Festive that allowed them to personally connect to the school...therefore, you care more.	10.5
Interviewee 8	Recognizing the demographics of the community and making sure the school is meeting the diverse needs of their students. For example, if there is a high population of students on free or reduced lunch the school would benefit from looking at what this looks like outside of the school building. Also developing programs that are equally accessible (financially, transportation...etc.) for all students! Often times school counselors have their hands full and are unable; to fully meet the individual mental health needs of their students therefore it would also be beneficial for school districts to develop a list of professional counselors in the area for case-by-case referrals.	5.0
Interviewee 10	Parents have to be involved; all stakeholders from students to policy makers.	<5.0
Interviewee 14	I would say a wider representation of the community represented on things like local school counsels...decision boards things like that. Specifically those who are typically under represented due to socioeconomic education and sometimes-even language barriers. Also, schools can open up the doors to the community more often to hold meetings, community events, farmers' markets etc...during out of school times. Also utilizing talent and leadership in the community who have no ties to school. I think there should be an inventive for teachers and principals to live in the community that they teacher and they often do not know the community dynamics because they do not live in the community and those dynamics tend to play in the schools with parents and children.	4.0

Next, the parents in the district provided detailed and explicit suggestions to improve school-community relations. The parents' responses included "Become a force," "community more with parents," "show full representation," "offer our students more leadership roles," "communication outreach involving all stakeholders in our local school," and "promote an inclusive culture."

Community leaders gave an overview of suggestions to improve the dynamics

between the school district and the community. The community leaders used terms or phrases such as “educate stakeholders,” “be intentional,” “recognize the demographics of the community,” “develop programs that are equally accessible,” “parents have to be involved,” “all stakeholders,” and “a wider representation of the community.”

The business leaders added “buy in from all organizations in our district,” “council of community leaders,” and “a mutually beneficial relationship.” The school board members showed consistency in their responses as other stakeholders revealed in their statements. The school board members addressed the need for more consistent, correct, and advanced notice with our communication, transparency, candid, and local businesses more involved.

The findings for Theme 7 confirmed Chin’s (2013) conclusion that competent, precise, and unobstructed communication is vital to achieving aims within an organization. Chin’s findings echoes previous studies, such as Anant’s (2010), that revealed that unproductive or ineffectual communication is the primary cause for a breakdown in organizational control. As observed by Emanoil et al. (2013), efficient communication is crucial to success in the organization. Theme 7 emphasized the sentiments of needing a culture of inclusion for all stakeholders within the district.

Theme 8: The need for a lucid, responsive, and accessible line of communication. The subthemes that emerged in Theme 8 revealed an outcry for an effective line of communication among some of the stakeholders, but not all. Specifics responses are shown in Tables 24-27. The school leaders responded as follows:

I have not encountered this problem, lack of transparency . . . hidden agendas, communication going out but not really going back to the school, being unaware of things happening in the school, lack of responsiveness or lack of courtesy that sets off an emotional response, miscommunication, and there is not an alignment,

and much better.

One parent in the subject school district commented, “I have not encountered any issues with communication, not being informed more, the school level has been good but the district not so much, everyone seems to make the effort, challenge, and never really got a response.

Third, the community leaders revealed similar sentiments just as the school leaders and parents. The community leaders used terms and phrases such as mixed messages, some lack communication and follow through on planning, bureaucracy, resistance to change, and a lack of consistency.

Finally, the business leaders responded, “Frequent changes in leadership and chain of command.” In addition, the school board members expressed their issues with communication in the urban school district. The school board members stated, “Not communicating these concerns and preconceptions and relationships has to be discussed.”

Table 24

School Board Members’ Responses to Question 8, “What Are Some Issues That You Have Encountered Concerning Communication With the Superintendent, Parents, School Leaders, Business Leaders, and Community Leaders Within This Urban School District?”

Board members	Responses	Years
Interviewee 16	Preconceptions and relationships have to be discussed...honestly we all come to the table with preconceptions and we have to know that and be prepared to put that in the right context.	>10
Interviewee 17	Sometimes board members surprise their colleagues and administration by not communicating these concerns before a meeting. The superintendent or board leadership don’t ask about specific concerns and so miscommunication happens because people are not asking or telling their concerns. We have issues about people getting incomplete information or later information or different information than others.	>20
Interviewee 19	People who think that because they scream the loudest, they get what they want. That has been the past but not now. Refer back to interview question number three for school leaders. Business and community leader—people who are not willing to engage with me because of beliefs they think I hold. Parents—communicate with stakeholders when they don’t focus on communicating respectfully and professionally. Name calling will get you nowhere with me.	>20

Table 25

School Leaders' Responses to Question 8, "What Are Some Issues That You Have Encountered Concerning Communication With the Superintendent, Parents, School Leaders, Business Leaders, and Community Leaders Within This School District?"

School leader	Responses	Years
Interviewee 1	I have not encountered this problem. I have been able to get in contact with someone who has been able to address my concerns.	<5
Interviewee 2	Issues I encounter depend...usually involves certain people being left out of the chain who should be involved. Lack of transparency...hidden agendas.	>20
Interviewee 4	When a problem with communication comes up...is usually due to a lack of it...Stakeholders reciprocal communication...communication going out but not really getting back to the school. Like sending, a letter home and not hearing anything back.	>15<20
Interviewee 5	First issue is around. Seeking to understand versus seeking to be understood. Hyperbole and exaggeration. Satisfaction and the status quo. Plain old miscommunication. Well intentional, but incorrect.	<5 but over 20 years in urban education
Interviewee 9	Parents...we have made some strides, but they say I did not know that. They have said they have been unaware of things happening in the school such as chorus, field days...and things like that.	>40
Interviewee 12	Biggest concern with communication with stakeholders is when we do not understand their vision or mission, there is not an alignment, or we do not understand their motives or clash philosophies.	20
Interviewee 13	Too many emails, much more centralized. It has gotten much better. One year was good, much better. Not enough parent contact information.	<15
Interviewee 23	Lack of responsiveness or lack of courtesy that sets off an emotional response and it causes things to get shut down. Make sure to pay attention to the early signs. It becomes more about the politics versus the kids. This is very emotional work.	10

Table 26

Parents' Responses to Question 8, "What Are Some Issues That You Have Encountered Concerning Communication With the Superintendent, Parents, School Leaders, Business Leaders, and Community Leaders Within This Urban School District?"

Parents	Responses	Years
Interviewee 3	I have not encountered any issues with communication. I can pretty much get in touch with whomever I have tried. I have never tried to get in touch with the superintendent. But I have tried to get in touch with the mayor but have been unable to. He does not have a group of people to get back with you. But when I tried to get in touch with a state representative. I was able to. The state representative's people respond all the time. No issues with leaders.	5
Interviewee 7	Not being informed more about our kids in school and how they are being taught, treated, and fed. I receive a letter every week or once a week about activities within the class but nothing about if, my child is safe or why my child is not being giving the proper work to do to pass his class or the work he needs to study to pass.	24
Interviewee 15	With my kid, special education and IEP within my local school at the school level has been good but the district not so much. We had to call the state due to a lack of help from the district. I have the ability to do this when some other parents just slip through cracks. I can be the squeaky wheel that gets the stuff my kids needs but not all parents can.	4
Interviewee 18	I have never worked with them on a one on one basis but working with the superintendent, it has been a challenge.	>35
Interviewee 20	One issue I have had was with the principal but we never really got a response from the principal and it just kind of worked out.	10
Interviewee 21	Superintendent—none. She is amazing. I feel that I can count on her to handle stuff. Parents—different across the board. Most are interested in giving their kids better lines. I have been in situations where the parents did give respect to the leadership. But the leadership seemed to be working against the parents. At my kid's school, everyone seems to make the effort. School leaders at our school are awesome. The community and business leaders, I appreciate all that they do.	3

Table 27

Business Leaders' Responses to Question 8, "What Are Some Issues That You Have Encountered Concerning Communication With the Superintendent, Parents, School Leaders, Business Leaders, and Community Leaders Within This Urban School District?"

Business leader	Responses	Years
Interviewee 11	With the school system is the frequent changes in leadership, makes that difficult. I mean when we have someone that is not good remove them. But when we get someone good, let's keep them. Stop all that switching up leadership. As soon as I develop a relationship it is gone...turnover is a major hurdle.	5
Interviewee 22	Chain of command...make sure you know who the contact person is...there should not be a 4 month wait for resolutions for our kids. Let's keep our students on track...Effectively using the technology we have...we need to find better ways to engage parents and make sure that they are plugged in what is more important...	8

Table 28

Community Leaders' Responses to Question 8, "What Are Some Issues That You Have Encountered Concerning Communication With the Superintendent, Parents, School Leaders, Business Leaders, and Community Leaders Within This Urban School District?"

Leaders	Responses	Years
Interviewee 6	Often we have mixed messages. There are sometimes different messages coming from the district to our local school including the media such as how the...scandal was handled. One thing the district is not utilizing is participation. They were invited to our local meetings...and no one has participated in this.	10.5
Interviewee 8	Some lack of communication and follow through on planning. I have been asked to provide group counseling for community organizations with dates and times, set months in advance only to be informed the day of the event that it was canceled . . . was not effectively communicated to parents. A failure to follow through on creative and intentional planning does not benefit the families.	5
Interviewee 10	Bureaucracy, culture and the resistance to change.	<5
Interviewee 14	Unfortunately, some people's questions and concerns are taken seriously and addressed in a timely manner and others are dismissed or not addressed in a timely manner. There is a lack of consistency. As a person in leadership, I have seen parents ask for a concern to be dealt with from the administration and they are told that their concern was not valid. When I approached the same administration with the same concern, the very day it was dealt with immediately. The privilege of one voice who happens to be the voice of privilege over another's voice is a major issue of concern.	4

Theme 9: Connecting the positive factors and eliminating the negatives to build an accurate, flexible, and consistent working relationship. Interview Question 9 was, "What are some factors that affect your working relationship among other stakeholders positively and negatively within this urban school district?" Tables 29-33

illustrate the findings for Interview Question 9.

Table 29

School Board Members' Responses to Question 9, "What Are Some Factors That Affect Your Working Relationship Among Other Stakeholders Positively and Negatively Within This Urban School District?"

Members	Responses	Years
Interviewee 16	...The working relationship is negatively impacted when we are not correct and consistent. Can be positively effective if we are honest about our faults.	>10
Interviewee 17	Lack of trust or trust. The history of the board's relationships on the system's relationship with the public. I think my background as both student and teacher positively affects my relationship with stakeholders, but at the same time people are frustrated by how long problems have went on so long...impatient and skeptical of results.	>20
Interviewee 19	...I would add people who judge me based on perceptions about who I am...race, socio economic status and geographical location. Our job as board member is to represent every child...not just some no matter what.	>20

Table 30

School Leaders' Responses to Question 9, "What Are Some Factors That Affect Your Working Relationship Among Other Stakeholders Positively and Negatively Within This Urban School District?"

School leader	Responses	Years
Interviewee 1	Positive—stakeholders are supportive I am going to be here. Negative—sometimes the issue faced...is not the same way we do in the school. Getting parents to understand that street rules do not apply.	<5
Interviewee 2	Hidden agendas...politics. Not keeping children at the forefront.	>20
Interviewee 4	Some factors either way. First thing is motives, people's motives. Some are genuinely for kids but some are for themselves.	>15<20
Interviewee 5	Positive—openness, willing to learn and willing to listen, flexible. Negatives—determined, opinionated, strategic intense.	<5 but >20 in urban ed
Interviewee 9	Negatives—Community meeting times. My hours start at 7 AM and if a meeting is at 7 PM I am at home getting ready for my next work day. Positives—email, website. We are communicating information about what is going on in our district...I like getting things from downtown and the district.	>40
Interviewee 12	Positively...having true collaboration seeing outcomes of positive and productive...academic, behavior, graduation increase, self-advocacy. When someone sits at the table and can share your schools improvement plans. Negative—allocation of resources, not understanding the need for students in dire poverty and turning about faces when students need support from our judicial systems.	20
Interviewee 13	Politics in the district, the district is accountability focused, but not enough support focused should have a contract with the person that is signed to be my mentor. This is the person my boss hired to be my mentor, there needs to be trust.	<15
Interviewee 23	Positively—touch points connectedness, all my parents can reach me consistently in meeting with my boss, staff and parents. Negatives—lack of time and prep when I receive things late that make things difficult. I try to make sure to have every aspect together. I cannot do my job to the best of my ability when I am looking down checking emails when I should focus on kids.	10

Table 31

Parents' Responses to Question 9, "What Are Some Factors That Affect Your Working Relationship Among Other Stakeholders Positively and Negatively Within This Urban School District?"

Parents	Responses	Years
Interviewee 3	Time. The system is set up for stay at home parents. The meeting times, everything is set up for parents who stay at home. Even in the city where over 50% of the moms are working outside of the home.	5
Interviewee 7	My positive is that I'm ok with most leaders within our community, but my negative is if the leaders are not treating all of our kids as an equal, then they shouldn't be a leader in our community because we all work together.	24
Interviewee 15	Our son's special needs. That means I want the best for my kid and want to have the same experiences as every other kid has because I want that for my kid. I want that for all kids. I do not think everybody can be honest...in our meetings for our kids it is clear that someone has told them to say something that they themselves might not agree with. I expect all stakeholders to value the collective versus the good of the individual.	4
Interviewee 18	Hopefully when I start my nonprofit I will be able to work with them more often and share some of my ideas with all stakeholders to help kids and people within our school system and community.	>35
Interviewee 20	Positively—when we as parents talk in schools. There are parents that feel that our schools are something to be afraid of but we let them know otherwise. Negative—preconceived notions about what is a public school. Negative views about public schools in general.	10
Interviewee 21	Positively—they make a good effort to have meetings that I can get to like not at noon. Negative—the whole in-crowd thing, the cliques.	3

Table 32

Business Leaders' Responses to Question 9, "What Are Some Factors That Affect Your Working Relationship Among Other Stakeholders Positively and Negatively Within This Urban School District?"

Business leader	Responses	Years
Interviewee 11	Diverse backgrounds are a major factor. It can produce wonderful results. It also can be a handle or struggle to appreciate different perspectives sometimes. Poverty.	5
Interviewee 22	Defining what is winning for the school district. Aligning the vision and mission to accomplish the overall objectives.	8

Table 33

Community Leaders' Responses to Question 9, "What Are Some Factors That Affect Your Working Relationship Among Other Stakeholders Positively and Negatively Within This Urban School District?"

Leaders	Responses	Years
Interviewee 6	Positives—a school board member sharing about the cluster, because of this I have a better understanding of how important it is. I like the way things are shared on Facebook, because it gives me an outlet for me to get information on the things I might otherwise look over. Negatives--My only complaint is the sense of competition from different schools...such as one school being better than the other.	10.5
Interviewee 8	My dual role in the community as minister and counselor will be received with either affirmation or concern that I might bring religion to the counseling room. I am very comfortable in those dual roles but it can sometimes make others uncomfortable.	5.0
Interviewee 10	Positive—I connect well with stakeholders who are intimidated by the policies or policy maker. I am not scared of them. When my philosophies do not align with theirs such as sex education . . . pushing abstinence agenda . . . what for your soulmate?	<5.0
Interviewee 14	Perception is a big factor because we serve a majority of students who are under resourced and often other stakeholders have very different perceptions of these families and students. Another factor is the widening gap of finances in our community....	4.0

Theme 10: Promote an inclusive, technological method of communication

that will enhance partnerships among all stakeholders. The stakeholders used various phrases to reveal some important components that add to a vision of improved communication methods within the urban school district. The common terms and phrases show how Theme 10 was developed through the perceptions of the stakeholders who were involved in this research study. Tables 34-38 present specific responses of the stakeholders.

Table 34

Community Leaders' Responses to Question 10, "What is Your Vision for the Future in Terms of Improving Communication Methods for the Subject School District?"

Leaders	Responses	Years
Interviewee 16	I think that again we have to get our website done, reworked. Many families have access to smart phones . . . , and that is one area we use to improve communication. I want to do community coffees. I want to get consistent time and place so as to get it set in the stakeholders (parents) minds. Where they can come to get to know each other. Consistency it just hard to hit a moving target cause we are always moving.	>10
Interviewee 17	It is for my colleagues to be informed on issues and to come to our meetings with an open mind for discussing solutions and that the superintendent is able to build a relationship with each board member based on trust and respect mutually and that all board members can do this as well.	>20
Interviewee 19	I want a timely master calendar of every event in the district. . . . I know that is a big job. . . . We are doing a good job by using multiple methods of communication; not only do I get robo calls, I get an email and a text; that is good. I want to see us expand into multiple languages. Among parents and communities in the district, the new neighborhood collaborative group is doing a great job. That has been for communication. More partnerships between parent leaders in our schools. Working together on helping each other to learn about what works to support our schools.	>20

Table 35

School Leaders' Responses to Question 10, "What is Your Vision for the Future in Terms of Improving Communication Methods for the Subject School District?"

School leader	Responses	Years
Interviewee 1	Continue on the path we are on . . . improve the school district's website and make it more interactive and teach parents how to navigate the site better for the success of their child.	<5
Interviewee 2	Say what you say and mean what you say. Be transparent and not just for those who have money or a squeaky wheel. . . . think about everybody.	>20
Interviewee 4	Online, translation office. Where can we get our communication translated in other languages so communication is good in our district?	>15<20
Interviewee 5	The old saying, there is no I in team. We have to practice effective communication in order to improve the use of communication and the use of communication tools.	>15<20 years in urban education
Interviewee 9	I can see our district utilizing local T.V. to broadcast to our community about what is going on in our school district. I say local advertising about day on T.V. I thought that was neat.	>40
Interviewee 12	Allow students to become human billboards. Telling their story, creating hope in others. It is important they are awesome. They do not always get kudos for being the survivors that they are when we can support them. We can catch everyone else because they are at the bottom of the ladder.	20
Interviewee 13	Continue the centralized email, the one newsletter is awesome. When we do get together we need to do less sitting and get going. . . . If it is going to be a lot of announcements, we can do through video conferencing.	<15
Interviewee 23	Planning. Getting ahead of the cure on things like right now it's clean up time. We know you are trying to put out fires and things but you do not let other things fall by the wayside. If I am lacking in my communication, we have a break down and mistrust so I have to stay on top of these things. Right now this is a time when people are very forgiving of the things that happened in the past in our district so we to focus on doing right by them.	10

Table 36

Parents' Responses to Question 10, "What is Your Vision for the Future in Terms of Improving Communication Methods for the School District?"

Parents	Responses	Years
Interviewee 3	Having the school district work closely with the schools in the district, such as having meetings in the actual school.	5
Interviewee 7	To have better leaders who actually communicate not only with the parents, so to speak, but with our kids as well and treat us all as an equal.	24
Interviewee 15	Straight understandable talk...I do not think town hall is going to do it. Simple, direct communication. Explain it, translate it. Tell what, when, and why. Tell what the positives and the negatives are.	4
Interviewee 18	More involvement and letting my voice be heard.	>35
Interviewee 20	Earth friendly ways of communication, no paper correspondence... all kids having access to internet and a computer. Everything electronic from homework to books to communication with my child's teacher.	10
Interviewee 21	All the kids, there is a need...free internet, free laptops or iPad...it would help kids that would not otherwise be able to afford this. Could have access to it and it would help the parents who want to be involved get involved everyone is on the playing field. The access to technology should be standard for the kids.	3

Table 37

Business Leaders' Responses to Question 10, "What is your Vision for the Future in Terms of Improving Communication Methods for the District?"

Business Leader	Responses	Years
Interviewee 11	I think our district will be improved if more of our school leadership lived and or resided in the district they teach or work...	5
Interviewee 22	Identify tools that are available that have shown to improve communication methods and data collection in our district.	8

Table 38

Community Leaders' Responses to Question 10, "What is your Vision for the Future in Terms of Improving Communication Methods for the District?"

Leader	Responses	Years
Interviewee 6	I would love for the local school to do an e-newsletter with our cluster...because I think it is easy and cheap. So that we can see what is going on in our cluster and an e-newsletter would be more effective.	10.5
Interviewee 8	For me if I am going to host mental health groups within the community, I hope to communicate this information more effectively through flyers, conversations, earlier scheduling.	5.0
Interviewee 10	To have more inter-stakeholder dialogue.	<5.0

Community Leader Interviewee 14 went into great detail about her vision for the future in terms of improving communication methods for the urban school district:

The school has a unique place in the community to create open dialog for families living life together in the same community but they must value the voices of all parents no matter what socio economic background or they lose the trust of that population and nothing can be accomplished. My vision would be a more inclusive community on all levels focusing on communication, face to face, our district doesn't do parent-teacher conferences the way other districts do. . . . So many of our parents don't engage on a one on one level with their child's teacher due to lack of transportation or childcare for younger siblings' meetings at the school are not always an option for all parents. Teachers and administration need to be creative and meet the parents in their homes, churches, and community centers. Administration (i.e., principals) need to identify places within the community who are engaging those parents and ask to partner or share best practices. Also administration and teachers need to use less industry jargon and abbreviations that further isolate parents and stakeholders who do not understand the educational lingo. Also...schools need to take more advantage of social media to engage parents such as allowing students to live tweet their math classes and places for parents to Instagram their students during homework in creative ways. Many folks access the internet and media more than notes in a kid's backpack.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The literature on communication methods or modes, effective communication, and working relationships was explored, which facilitated the development of the conceptual model for this study. The principles of this model are that stakeholders and organizational members within an urban school district sought a form or forms of communication that would be fluid and accessible for all members of the urban community. The findings from the current research formed a basis for a consistent and transparent relationship among stakeholders and organizational members from within the district. The results of this study revealed a need for an inclusive and collaborative relationship among all stakeholders to advance the mission and vision of the district. As noted by Mansell (2014), communication is vital to the relationship-building process within organizations. This researcher sought to determine the importance for urban school districts to acknowledge the effectiveness of communication on working relationships among various stakeholders within the district: superintendent, school board members, parents, school leaders, business leaders, and community leaders.

In order for organizations to be successful, effective communication needs to be present within the organization (Butt & Shafiq, 2013). Furthermore, Golden et al. (2011) reported that thorough communication stimulates effective relationships within organizations. Thus, the aims of this study were to broaden an understanding of the relationship between positive working relationships and communication among the subject district's superintendent, school board members, parents, school leaders, business leaders, and community leaders. This researcher also sought to understand the relationship between modes of communication and the shared responsibilities among the stakeholders within this study. The study also addressed gaps in the literature by directly

investigating the variables of effective communication techniques, both nonverbal and verbal, within working relationships while using data from interviews and observations during school board meetings.

Meanings and Understandings

Interview questions answered by stakeholders—school board members, parents, school leaders, business leaders, and community leaders—led to the 10 themes in Appendix G. The subthemes helped add meaning and analysis to the themes that developed from this study. Four research questions guided this study. They are addressed individually.

Research Question 1

How do leaders in an urban district in a southeastern state interpret effective means of communication among stakeholders including: school board members, superintendent, school leaders, parents, business leaders and community leaders? The leaders within this district had a clear understanding of their role within the district; however, there is a need to exemplify effective leadership skills to ensure that communication is translated for each specific stakeholder, which includes conversations that are lucid, free of bias, take a supportive stance, and are free of educational jargon. The leaders of this district need to obtain the necessary skills to use the most effective speech and language among all stakeholders regardless of their educational attainment. Buble, Juras, and Matic (2014) pointed out that organizational leaders have a critical role in this path of inclusiveness of all stakeholders. Organizational leaders hold the lead in pushing the organization into the realm of success to achieve organizational goals and promoting collaboration among all stakeholders. Moreover, the style of leadership needs to be attuned to the necessities of the supporters or stakeholders.

Research Question 2

What are the underlying reasons that cause there to be barriers in communication among school leaders, school board members, parents, community leaders, business leaders and the superintendent within an urban school district? As revealed in the subthemes of Theme 8, the barriers noted by stakeholders were the following:

1. Hidden agendas.
2. Communication going out but not really going back to school.
3. Miscommunication.
4. Mixed messages.
5. Not being informed more.
6. Everyone seems to make an effort.
7. Lack of responsiveness or lack of courtesy that sets off an emotional response.
8. A lack of consistency.
9. Frequent changes in leadership.
10. There is not an alignment organizational communication.
11. Resistance to change.
12. Lack of transparency.
13. Not being informed more of pertinent issues or concerns with the district.
14. Everyone seems to make an effort.
15. Some lack communication to follow through on planning.

Research Question 3

How does the working relationship among school board members, superintendent, school leaders, community leaders, business leaders and parents of an urban school district affect the partnerships among the parties?

The working relationships among all parties should improve with more direct, lucid communication that is not flawed by past negative experiences among the parties. The working relationship promotes the need for more collaborative partnerships among the parties identified within this study. The partnerships need analysis to ensure that loyalty, trust, and transparency are evident.

Research Question 4

How does working in a defined role affect the working relationships among school board members, school leaders, stakeholders (parents, community, and business leaders), and the superintendent of an urban school district? The defined roles of school board members, school leaders, the superintendent, and other key stakeholders within this study have to have an understanding of how their role will advance the mission and vision of the school district, which is student centered. The stakeholders and district leaders have to hold considerable amounts of productive conversations that will lead to a comprehensive discussion for transparency. A thorough analysis of fault or wrongdoing made by stakeholders, acknowledged by the party committing the act, is necessary if progress is to be made to move forward into a brighter future of a positive working relationship.

Implications of the Study

The overarching themes that resulted from the stakeholder interviews revealed a need for urban school districts to improve their lines of communication. The interviewees revealed a need for more direct, transparent communication minus the use of educational jargon between and among stakeholders. The district leaders should promote relationships of positivity among the superintendent, school board members, school leaders, parents, community leaders, and business leaders. Perception versus reality is a

realization that should be examined within this urban school district. The perception of effective communication versus ineffective communication (reality) has affected the working relationships among stakeholders. The current perceptions from the stakeholders (i.e., school board members, parents, school leaders, business leaders and community leaders) of this district suggest that all past faults have been forgiven. It is time to rebuild the trust and commitment that the stakeholders need to reach effective communication for collaboration among themselves. Stakeholders look forward to a brighter, fulfilling future with the district that supports positive communication, which will build positive working relationships.

Relevance of the Study

The literature upheld the relevance or importance of this study, which examined effective modes of communication and building positive working relationships. Efficient communication gives legitimacy and consistency to the vision and mission of the school district (Sroufe, 2013). The 10 themes that were revealed within this study validated the critical need for commonly expressed interest to enhance positive working relationships in an organization such as the urban school district examined in this study. The literature of this study revealed inconsistencies among the working relationships within this district that forestalled building solid, transparent relationships. Thus, a lack of effective communication revealed the importance of clear and effective lines of communication among all stakeholders. The leaders of this urban school district are at the forefront of setting the tone for a culture of positivity and effective communication.

Critique of Findings With Suggestions for Change and Future Inquiry

This study generated a number of ideas for future research. First, the current study focused on one urban school district in the Southeastern United States. A future

researcher could expand the study to other urban school districts in the Southeast. A comparative model across urban school districts could be utilized to describe best practices of communication methods, which will build a basis for maintaining positive working relationships.

The study took place over 46 days, beginning at the start of the winter term and lasting until the spring quarter terms started (which is the testing period for the school district). Future study could take place during different times of the school year to see if the results are different.

This study could be expanded in the future with direct input from other stakeholder populations, such as students, teachers, and other staff members within the district. Future research in effective communication and positive working relationships could be implemented to include an in-depth analysis of decision-making processes or procedures and the utilization of various decision-making strategies on an urban school district's push for various initiatives and reforms.

Integration of the Findings With Previous Literature

Theme 1—Integration: Being in an explicit and supportive role to promote shared collaborations among all stakeholders. Each stakeholder gave a thorough analysis of his or her role within the district. The school leaders used terms and phrases such as school managers, school leaders, liaisons, inclusive leaders, providing wraparound services for parents and students, instructional role, school safety, and secure school climate. A school leader with fewer than 5 years of experience within the subject district but more than 20 years of experience in urban education stated that providing resources and being a barrier breaker is critical for an urban school district. Another school leader used the phrase “effective school” to show the purpose or role of being a

school leader. In order for the school leaders to advance in their leadership roles, they need to accept the premise that efficient communication is vital to any success within an organization (Emanoi et al., 2013).

Additionally, the community leaders justified the importance of their roles by using terms and phrases such as “invested in the development of children and families in the community” and “empowering families outside of the classroom to take care of themselves.” The business leaders focused on the plight of the whole community. One business leader used the phrase “engage or reengage all stakeholders in the planning of the decision making process.” The critical communication theory, which upholds the theoretical foundation of this study, envisions the decision-making process as a process surrounded with thorough and lucid decisions (Deetz, 1982).

Next, the parents used terms and phrases such as “active participant,” “providing resources and opportunities for their children,” “firm role,” “supportive,” and “very involved.” The parents within this urban school showed a willingness to be a part of their children’s education and also a part of the initiatives brought forth by the district. The parents carry a strong sense of passion and courage to support their children to successfully complete school. Many parents have confidence in their children’s educators and school districts (Guidera, 2015). School districts are the initiators of communication and should provide lucid responses to parental inquiries. Clearly, as shown throughout this study, stakeholders desire transparency or candidness to develop confidence among all members of the school district. The duty of taking the initiative of interacting or collaborating with parents is the responsibility of the school districts, thus this partnership plays an important part in promoting candidness between the school districts and parents.

Moreover, school board members gave a specifically defined role and an in-depth

elaboration of the role. The school board members stated that they were elected members of the board and district representative. However, one of the school board members added that he/she had been a parent leader in school organizations and cluster organizations in the past.

Theme 2—Integration: Using effective modes of communication that are accessible and attainable. As emphasized by Butt and Shafiq (2013), communication is an important piece of the puzzle for organizational success. Most stakeholders preferred electronic means of communication, which Kiddie (2014) noted as being a new and innovative way of communication around the globe. The need to communicate via the Internet has increased drastically over the past 2 decades (Michaeli, 2013). Surprisingly, social media were not very popular among the stakeholders as the sole use of receiving and getting out information in the district. School leaders preferred face-to-face contact with parents. Some school leaders used recorded messages to contact or give information to parents, known as Robo calling. School board members used a variety of means such as texting and email. Business leaders discussed using roundtable discussions, a form of face-to-face communication. Community leaders also preferred face to face but mostly used email. The results of preferred modes of communication among the stakeholders were consistent with stakeholders' expressed needs for effective and lucid lines of communication. The method of communication preferred by each stakeholder was consistent with the need for transparency of communication.

Theme 3—Integration: The need for dependent, collaborative working relationships among all stakeholders. Theme 3 revealed some vital components or facets about working relationships. The superintendent has a close relationship with board members, as expected because of the accountability and implementation of

policies, laws, and initiatives voted on by the board. The other stakeholders do not have direct contact with the superintendent, thus, the working relationship needs to be clearly defined or developed. The school district has evidently set up a chain of command, as seen in the responses from Interview Question 5. Parents share their concerns or issues with school leaders. If the school leader of a school needs further assistance on the issue, then the school leader seeks assistance from the district leaders such as associate superintendents. The superintendent of the district is at the end of the chain of issues or concerns within the district.

The literature discussed the need for the development and conservation of working relationships, which is a significant element of the climate of an organization (Goldsmith, 2010). The school leaders have direct contact with the district's parents; however, the parents wanted more lucid and transparent communication from school leaders just as they wanted from the superintendent. The school leaders are furthest removed from contact with business and community leaders because of the many roles that school leaders play in day-to-day operations of the school (instructional leader, school manager, parent, and district liaison). The superintendent and school board members should have closer contact with business leaders and community leaders. School board members are implementing strategies and cluster meetings to make direct contacts with parents in the community to increase the use of effective communication. Overall, there is a need for effective communication concerning the lines of communication among stakeholders. As revealed in the literature review for this study, communication flows from lower-level managers to organizational members, from organization members to higher management, and from members or stakeholders to a variety of departments in the organization (Spaho, 2010). This theme also showed the

need for inclusivity among all stakeholders. An inclusive communication system, as suggested by the stakeholders, is a system that ensures visibility and responsibility of all stakeholders through a process of immediate communication methods that are accessible to all parties.

Theme 4—Integration: Reliance on electronic means of communication for everyday use. The literature review elaborated the importance of organizations choosing an effective mode or method of communication, which is key to establishing relationships with the members or stakeholders of the organization (Mills, 2009). The CareerBuilder (2012) study revealed that communicating by e-mail is second place to communicating face to face. The stakeholders of this study revealed their initial choice of communication to be email. However, the next choice of communication revealed that in-person or face to face was number one in resolving conflicts between stakeholders.

Theme 5—Integration: Reliance upon face-to-face or in-person communication to resolve conflicts. Just as Charles Dickens, a well-known author, suggested that in-person communication is vital to gaining a sense of honesty from individuals involved in dialogue, this study revealed similar findings. The CareerBuilder (2012) study revealed that most of the organizational members and leaders preferred face-to-face communication. Dunbar and Abra (2010) found that in-person communication is more influential and presents a more truthful response.

Michaeli (2013) and Glomb (2013) found more communication over the Internet than in-person interaction, which have decreased over the past few years. Other studies showed that communicators could see the nonverbal aspects of communication, such as tone and eye contact, that are not revealed through electronic communication (Hall & Knapp, 2013; Puce, 2014). The literature showed that less than one-third of

communication is spoken between humans (Hall & Knapp, 2013). Unspoken communication accounts for a little over 90% of communication exchanges between humans (Gentry, 2010). The findings of this study revealed that nonspoken communication was not an issue that was brought to the forefront of reasons for ineffective communication among stakeholders in the district. The need of stakeholders was immediate and transparent communication that is clear and direct to the intended recipient of the message.

The literature review on conflict management emphasized that the mere fact of having conflict in organizations is not the issue, whereas the mismanagement of conflict is the issue (Nguyen & Yang, 2012). The resolutions of conflict will lessen the time that organizational leaders or management must devote to handling or resolving conflict. The literature review showed that organizational leaders spend about 20% of their day dealing with conflict (McCall, 2014). Research also showed that unresolved conflicts have a negative impact on the organization (Charlton, 2010).

Theme 6—Integration: Preference for a democratic, inclusive, motivating, and collaborative style of leadership to build a positive working relationship through effective decision making. Effective leadership is important for an organization to be successful (Kosicek et al., 2012). Furthermore, Kieu (2010) emphasized that leadership has a direct influence on the achievements within the organization. Limbare (2012) added that a leader's style of leadership could determine how the leader would handle or manage conflict within the organization. The stakeholders of this study called for leaders who are transformational in nature, which means they are motivational and considerate and establish connections among stakeholders (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014; Nell, 2012; Raja & Palanichamy, 2011). The school leaders in this study

revealed the need to be a leader who carries the quality of being democratic, inclusive, and cooperative. The parents in this district expressed the same sentiments. The parents also spoke to the need for leaders who are motivating and responsible and help to build a commonality of understanding. Other stakeholders, such as school board members and community leaders, focused on bringing unity among stakeholders through the sharing of leadership roles.

Theme 7—Integration: Building a transparent, equally, beneficial relationship that is representative of all community stakeholders. Some key factors that were developed from Theme 7 showed that stakeholders (school board members, school leaders, business and community leaders) felt that there was a need to provide pertinent information, specifically to the parents, concerning the direction, initiatives, and other decisions made within the district that affect their children. Stakeholders focused on the need for a widespread and complete inclusion of the community so that outreach can touch all community members, thereby promoting an inclusive culture. An inclusive culture, as reported by the stakeholders, will create more opportunities for an equally advantageous relationship. To accomplish the request or need that was discovered within Theme 7, school district leaders should understand that effective, truthful, and unrestricted communication is the key to achieving the goals that are promoted through Theme 7 (Chin, 2013).

Theme 8—Integration: The need for a lucid, responsive, and accessible line of communication. Anant (2010) commented on the fact that ineffectual communication, as defined by Chin (2013), is the primary cause for a breakdown in an organization's administration. The literature review of this study also indicated that organizational leaders have the obligation to make sure that communication is flowing throughout the

organizational environment (Conrad, 2014). All interviewees in this study addressed the importance of straightforward or blunt conversations from district leaders. Interviewees suggested that at times, communication carried or held hidden or secret plans or schemes from district leaders. Thus, the stakeholders called for alignment or consistency across the board concerning communication. The responses from the stakeholders suggested that, often, change is resisted within the district because of ongoing changes that continue to occur, such as in leadership. Stakeholders seek a flawless and fluid process to communicate with the district's leaders.

Theme 9—Integration: Connecting the positive factors and eliminating the negatives to build an accurate, flexible, and constant working relationship. The theory that was foundational to this study, known as the Critical Communication theory, supports the need for an addendum that positive communication equates to positive working relationships in organizations. Positive communication, as suggested by the stakeholders, is communication that is truthful and transparent and lacks organizational jargon that at times intimidates stakeholders. The addendum to the Critical Communication theory will lead to considerable success for organizations, especially the subject school district. The newly constructed additions to the theory will also give validity to the conceptual definition of positive working relationship as defined within this study: a system of relationships among leaders, workers, or employees, and related parties (i.e., stakeholders, school leaders, and school board members) in which communication is shared through an even flow of positive verbal and nonverbal exchanges.

Theme 10— Integration: Promote an inclusive, technological method of communication that will enhance partnerships among all stakeholders. The

stakeholders within this study would prefer and benefit from a technological method of communication that will build trust and connectedness among all district stakeholders. The basis of trust will begin to increase the connectivity among district stakeholders. Trust will take time, but the time invested produces a transparent mode of communication that is free of judgment and biases. Stakeholders, specifically the parents of all students in the district, should be given direct access to the Internet and given an electronic device to ensure that communication is flowing freely between the district and parents of district students. The flow of communication should be steady and consistent, but most importantly, direct and transparent.

Limitations

The results of this study essentially have to be viewed as unique to the study participants—school board members, school leaders, parents, community leaders, and business leaders. The participants of this study did not include teachers or students; thus, further research should encourage the use of teachers and students to gain a perspective from those populations of positive working relationships and effective modes of communication. The study findings of aligned preferences for electronic modes of communication for everyday communication and in-person communication preferred for conflict management may have been due to contextual factors that might not occur in other schools that are not in urban communities. The utilization of additional data-collection methods such as focus groups or research-study participant journals could possibly have enhanced the study. The interviewees had busy schedules, which restricted the time they could dedicate to additional interviews; thus, one interview per participant was conducted by the research assistant.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study's results led to several conclusions concerning the relationship between effective modes of communication and building or establishing positive working relationships. The study results suggested that lines of communication have to be more direct and transparent and eliminate unnecessary educational jargon (because it can lead to feelings of intimidation among various stakeholders). The district superintendent has to conduct a thorough evaluation of communication across all district lines to ensure that all stakeholders' voices are heard, along with their concerns and suggestions.

However, the parents of the urban school district also have to follow the chain of command. Parents have to exhaust all concerns at the school level with the school leaders to come to a resolution that is beneficial for all parties—school leaders, parents, and students. Thus, communication between school leaders and parents has to become more fluid and relaxed, minus the negative tones and responses that only add to the tension of the concerns or suggestions. Business leaders and community leaders within the district should show more interest in school board meetings so that the building of a deeper and connected relationship can begin to develop among school board members, the superintendent, and business and community leaders. School leaders should seek to have more conversations with school board members and the superintendent. The defined role of school leaders can hinder the ability to address the superintendent and school board members concerning suggestions for the district. School leaders are the building leaders of the urban schools; thus the chosen language of communication is from a viewpoint of the school leaders for improving the schools by providing adequate resources for students and teachers.

Further, this study revealed a need for leaders who promote unity rather than

discord among stakeholders, which was consistent with previous research cited in the literature review. More importantly, the working relationship has to be built upon the notion of trust and honesty. Each individual must be willing to work through any hardship or blockage that may occur within the relationship. The relationship between a superintendent and the school board must be ethical and considerate of the reality of pitfalls but highlights the relationship. The pitfalls or areas of weakness between both parties have to be examined with scrutiny in order to improve the relationship. Unity is the key to any working relationship.

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Appendix A

School Board Member Interview Questions

School Board Member Interview Questions

1. Describe your role as a member of the school board within an urban school district.
2. Describe your preferred method or methods of communication among the superintendent, parents, school leaders, business leaders, and community leaders.
3. Describe the working relationship between yourself and the stakeholders listed above in question number two.
4. What means of communication do you rely on or use the most?
5. What are the steps that you take to resolve a conflict when dealing with stakeholders within an urban school district (superintendent, parents, school leaders, business leaders, and community leaders)?
6. Will you briefly describe your leadership style?
7. What are some suggestions to improve school-community relations within this urban school district?
8. What are some issues that you have encountered concerning communication with the superintendent, parents, school leaders, business leaders, and community leaders within this urban school district?
9. What are some factors that affect your working relationship among other stakeholders positively and negatively within this urban school district?
10. What is your vision for the future in terms of improving communication methods for the school district?

Appendix B

School Leader Interview Questions

School Leader Interview Questions

1. Describe your role as a school leader within an urban school district.
2. Describe your preferred method or methods of communication among the superintendent, parents, school leaders, business leaders, and community leaders.
3. Describe the working relationship between yourself and the stakeholders listed above in question 2.
4. What means of communication do you rely on or use the most?
5. What are the steps that you take to resolve a conflict when dealing with stakeholders within an urban school district (superintendent, parents, school leaders, business leaders, and community leaders)?
6. Will you briefly describe your leadership style?
7. What are some suggestions to improve school-community relations within this urban school district?
8. What are some issues that you have encountered concerning communication with the superintendent, parents, school leaders, business leaders, and community leaders within this urban school district?
9. What are some factors that affect your working relationship among other stakeholders positively and negatively within this urban school district?
10. What is your vision for the future in terms of improving communication methods for the school district?

Appendix C
Parent Interview Questions

Parent Interview Questions

1. Describe your role as the parent or guardian of a student within an urban school district.
2. Describe your preferred method or methods of communication among the superintendent, school leaders, business leaders, and community leaders.
3. Describe the working relationship between yourself and the stakeholders listed above in question number two.
4. What means of communication do you rely on or use the most?
5. What are the steps that you take to resolve a conflict when dealing with stakeholders within an urban school district (superintendent, school leaders, business leaders, and community leaders)?
6. Will you briefly describe your leadership style?
7. What are some suggestions to improve school-community relations within this urban school district?
8. What are some issues that you have encountered concerning communication with the superintendent, parents, school leaders, business leaders, and community leaders within this urban school district?
9. What are some factors that affect your working relationship among other stakeholders positively and negatively within this urban school district?
10. What is your vision for the future in terms of improving communication methods for the school district?

Appendix D

Business and Community Leaders' Interview Questions

Business Leaders and Community Leaders Interview Questions

1. Describe your role as a stakeholder in an urban school district.
2. Describe your preferred method or methods of communication among the superintendent, parents, school leaders, business leaders, and community leaders.
3. Describe the working relationship between yourself and the stakeholders listed above in question number two.
4. What means of communication do you rely on or use the most?
5. What are the steps that you take to resolve a conflict when dealing with stakeholders within an urban school district (superintendent, parents, school leaders, business leaders, and community leaders)?
6. Will you briefly describe your leadership style?
7. What are some suggestions to improve school-community relations within this urban school district?
8. What are some issues that you have encountered concerning communication with the superintendent, parents, school leaders, business leaders, and community leaders within this urban school district?
9. What are some factors that affect your working relationship among other stakeholders positively and negatively within this urban school district?
10. What is your vision for the future in terms of improving communication methods for the school district?

Appendix E
Interview Protocol Form

Interview Protocol Form

Institution: _____

Interviewee (Title and Name): _____

Interviewer: _____

Interview Checklist:

_____ A: Purpose of the Study

_____ B: Consent Form

_____ C: Interview Guide

_____ D: Interview Follow-up

_____ E: Closure/Thank you

Additional Topics Discussed _____

Documents Obtained _____

Postinterview Comments or Leads:

Appendix F
Recruitment Letter

Recruitment Letter

Dear Sir or Ma'am:

My name is June J. Chennault. I am a doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership Department at Nova Southeastern University. I am conducting a research study as part of the requirements of my doctoral degree completion in the area of Educational Leadership and I would like to invite you to participate in this study.

I am studying the effectiveness of communication and the working relationships among district leaders and stakeholders in an urban school district. This qualitative study makes three contributions to the field of the study. I will elaborate on the study once an in-person or telephone meeting is scheduled with you.

I will be happy to answer any questions you have about the study. You may contact me at the contact information listed below. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Office of Research Compliance at Nova Southeastern University. I thank you for your consideration to participate in this study. If you would like to participate, please contact me if you are interested in hearing more about the study. I hope that you will participate in my research study, as you are an integral part of the study.

With kind regards,

June J. Chennault, B.S, M.A.T
Researcher

Appendix G

Emergent Themes and Subthemes Derived From Interviews

Emergent Themes and Subthemes Derived from Interviews

Theme	Subthemes
Theme 1. Being in an Explicit and Supportive Role to Promote Shared Collaborations among all stakeholders	1. Liaison Advocate Inclusive leader Firm Role
Theme 2. Using Effective Modes of Communication that are Accessible and Attainable	1. Effective Change Innovation Efficient Way to Communicate
Theme 3. The Need for Dependent, Collaborative Working Relationships among all Stakeholders	1. Engaged (immersed) relationships
Theme 4. Reliance of Electronic Means of Communication for Everyday Use	1. Quality 2. Mutual Consistent
Theme 5. Reliance Upon Face to face or In- person Communication to Solve Conflicts	1. Cohesiveness Liability Protocol Reassurance
Theme 6. Preference for a Democratic, Inclusive, Motivating and Collaborative Style of Leadership to Build a Positive Working Relationship through Effective Decision-Making	1. Personable leader Reflective and open Team participation Active leader Passionate, Gentle-spirited leader Consolatory leader Trust Service, not dictatorial Supportive not authoritative Unity Coach-guiding Shared-leadership Style
Theme 7. Building a Transparent, Equally, Beneficial Relationship that is Representative of all Community Stakeholders	1. Value the Community Become a Force Increasing Parent Involvement Over Communicate Educate Stakeholders Being Intentional Communicate more with Parents Recognizing the Demographics of the Community Developing Programs that are Equally Accessible More parent-team workshops More Consistent, Correct, and Advanced Notice Show Full Representative

Theme	Subthemes
Theme 8. The Need for a Lucid, Responsive, and Accessible Line of Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . A Wider Representation of Creating Opportunities . Promote an inclusive culture . Buy in from all organizations in our district . Strategic Planning and the Community and District as a Whole <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lack of transparency Hidden agendas Communication going out but not really going back to school Miscommunication Mixed messages Not being informed more Everyone seems to make an effort Lack of responsiveness or lack of courtesy that sets off an emotional response A lack of consistency . Frequent changes in leadership . There is not an alignment . Resistance to change . Some lack communication to follow through on planning
Theme 9. Connecting the Positive Factors and Eliminating the Negatives to Build an Accurate, Flexible, and Constant Working Relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stakeholders are supportive Hidden agendas, politics Lack of time and prep People's motives Openness, willingness to learn, and listen Comfortable in dual roles Diverse backgrounds Politics in the district The District is accountability focused . Needs to be trusted . Lack of trust . Perception is a big factor
Theme 10. Promote an Inclusive, Technological Method of Communication that will Enhance Partnerships Among all Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve the school district's website and make it more interactive Be transparent Having the school district work closely with the schools in the district

Theme	Subthemes
	Practice effective communication Better letters who communicate More inter-stakeholder dialogue Less Industry Jargon More Involvement More Partnerships between Parent-leaders in our schools Planning