The Principal’s Experience through the Process of Implementing Social Media in Schools

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Abstract

As school districts struggle to identify the role social media will play both inside and outside of the classroom, educational leaders can no longer ignore the benefits that these tools provide to students, stakeholders and faculty members. The potential challenges facing school leaders working in schools that utilize social media is extensive. Exposure to inappropriate content, online bullying and even identity theft are obstacles that can impact both students and staff. These threats can potentially lead to stakeholder resistance and lack of support towards social media tools in an educational setting. Despite these challenges, the impact social media can have on classroom instruction and communication make it an essential tool that schools must utilize to meet stakeholder needs and prepare students to be college and career ready. This study will provide educational leaders with strategies to aid them in determining how to go about implementing social media tools into their school. In addition, the study will look at how school principals have overcome the challenges associated with the implementation of social media tools in an educational setting. The primary research question that guides this study is: How have principals have gone about integrating social media into their school?”

Key Words

Social media, educational technology, digital media, Facebook, Twitter, social networking, educational leadership
Acknowledgments
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The Principal's Experience through the Process of Implementing Social Media in Schools

Chapter I: Introduction

Statement of Problem

Currently, there is little research pertaining to the implementation process principals have used to incorporate social media tools into their schools. Despite the fears many school leaders have related to the use of social media, there are schools currently utilizing these tools. By examining relevant literature and investigating the social media implementation processes these principals used, it will result in a better understanding of the steps needed to implement social media in an educational setting.

Society’s use of social media has led to an increase in communication; however, its impact in the educational setting has been one of cautious optimism (EdWeb, 2010). This stance is a result of a number of potential online dangers. Each group of educational stakeholders has its own concerns; parents are worried about student exposure to inappropriate content, schools are fearful of online bullying and harassment, and faculty members are intimidated by new and ever-changing technologies (Brooks, 2009). However, despite these risks, school leaders cannot ignore the popularity of social media among teenagers. Students age 15-18 are currently spending an average of twenty-six minutes per day on social networking sites (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010). With use of social media sites growing among teens, some schools have begun to use these sites for educational purposes. School leaders who have not yet gained an understanding of the impact social media tools have on student learning and stakeholder communication must do so or risk falling behind.
Stakeholder fears related to social media are legitimate concerns and in response these fears, many schools and districts prohibit the use of these tools. A National School Boards Association study (2007) has revealed that more than 8 in 10 school districts have rules in place prohibiting online chatting and instant messaging (IM’ing) in their schools. The same study also shared that over 60% of the participating districts banned the use of online bulletin boards/blogs, and the same percentage did not allow student email use within school (National School Boards Association, 2007, p. 4). The results of this study reflect the fear many educational leaders have regarding social media and rather than educate students and parents about potential risks, the districts opted to ban the use of these tools in the school. However, restricting the use of social media denies students access to tools that would expand classroom walls, increase communication, and assist in making the curriculum and learning environment more relevant to students (Liang, Commins, & Duffy, 2010).

In addition to being fearful of potential online dangers, time is another factor prohibiting the implementation of social media tools in many schools. Due to the increased responsibilities and accountability of school administrators, the implementation of social media is often not an immediate concern (EdWeb, 2010). Nonetheless, these tools can serve as a cost effective way to improve teaching, learning and communication while aiding school personnel in meeting the increased demands placed on them through online collaboration and professional learning networks.

In 2001, No Child Left Behind legislation made recommendations that all students become technologically literate and repeatedly references technology as an important source of support for teaching and learning across the curriculum (Mandinach, Honey, & McMillan, 2005). Despite this acknowledgement, many districts are still hesitant to keep up with current
technology and online resources do to potential online dangers. While fears regarding potential dangers of social media do exist, the value and relevance of these tools in an educational setting cannot be ignored (Liang, et al., 2010). Therefore, principals and educational leaders need to identify effective ways to implement social media tools in their schools. The question driving this research study centers on the process principals, who have successfully implemented social media tools, have used. In addition, the study will examine how the principals gained stakeholder support for the initiative, overcame obstacles related to the implementation and how teachers describe the process. The questions will be answered through a review of pertinent literature relating to social media, its history and its role in both society and education. In addition, evidence will be gathered from interviews with principals currently utilizing social media in their school and teachers who have been part of the implementation process. This will lead to an understanding of how principals can implement social media into their school.

**Significance of the Problem**

*Just like websites, which eventually became “must have,” every school district will ultimately need to embrace social media. The school districts that will thrive will be the ones using social media to engage their community, and aggressively enhance and protect their reputation. The ones who do not will find themselves playing defense with an unengaged public and a healthy number of skeptics who may question the value of public education in their community.*

-Dorie Clark, Forbes Magazine, August 23, 2012

Ms. Clark, in a Forbes Magazine article regarding social media, shared her views regarding the potential impact on school districts who do not currently utilize social media tools.
While her views are based on opinion, the lack of urgency by school districts in incorporating social media may have a negative impact on district communication, student engagement and student preparedness for both post-secondary education and the work force.

Districts that are reluctant to utilize social media tools to engage stakeholders are missing an opportunity to exchange information regarding school events, budget issues and school news with students, parents and community members in a timely manner (McCrea, 2010). While many businesses seem to have embraced this form of communication, districts that are not utilizing social media risk missing opportunities to engage stakeholders in a cost effective manner and control the information relating to the school. It is imperative that educators stay at the forefront of the digital age and utilize cost effective tools to reach stakeholders and communicate in real time.

School districts also must utilize social media tools to increase student engagement and better prepare graduates for the rapidly evolving workforce. In an educational system that is constantly looking for ways to increase student participation, social media provides an effective method to assist in accomplishing this in an environment that is familiar to students (Reynol & Cotten, 2011). Engaging students using social media tools also provides them with method of communication that they are comfortable with (EdWeb, 2010). Social Media also allows for learning to continue well after the final school bell with teachers answering questions and students collaborating into the evening. Collaboration has been identified as a 21st Century Skill (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2011) as well as been recognized by business leaders as one of seven survival skills needed to succeed (Wagner, 2008). To increase student engagement and collaboration, districts need to utilize social media tools.
School leaders need to take a forward thinking approach when assessing the role social media plays in their school and district. These tools benefit students, staff and community stakeholders and each day that social media tools are not being utilized by the school results in missed opportunities for communication, collaboration and increased engagement. Knowing the benefits, principals must begin to examine how they will go about implementing these tools into their school.

**Practical and Educational Goals**

While there is a great deal of research available on the use of social media in education, there is no research relating to the process used by school leaders to implement these tools into a school setting. While the utilization of social media in education is inevitable, schools must have an understanding of potential impacts that come along with the implementation of these tools and how to go about minimizing obstacles and maximizing stakeholder support and utilization. This study will provide principals with steps to follow to successfully implement social media into their school.

**Research Questions**

As the popularity of social media continues to grow in society and in educational, research on the topic will grow. Since there is little research available on process utilized by principals when implementing social media, this study will provide insight and suggestions for school leaders looking to utilize these tools in their school. The following are the research questions for the study:

**Primary Research Question:**

- How have principals gone about integrating social media into their school?
Secondary Research Questions:

- How do principals, who actively integrate social media into the school community, describe the implementation process?
- What strategies did principal utilize to gain staff member support?
- What obstacles did principal identify as impeding the implementation process?

Summary of Contents and Organization

The study will be organized into six chapters, including the introduction. Additional chapters will focus on an in-depth look at the theoretical framework used to drive my research, proposed research questions, a review of the relevant literature, the research methods and designs utilized in the study, an overview of the protection of human subjects and a conclusion.

The introduction will focus on the purpose of the study and its educational impact. The impact will be examined through the lens of school principals and other educational stakeholders. The introduction will include a brief overview of the current state of research in the area of social media in education and an explanation of why this dissertation will benefit this pool of research.

The literature review will take an in-depth look at social media and its role in education. The literature review will also provide a lens to examine the history of social media and its current and future roles in education. By grounding the paper in current literature, it will ensure that the main findings align with current scholarship. Along with the history of social media, topics that will covered in the literature review include the role of social media in education, stakeholder benefits of social media, and the challenges facing schools utilizing social media.

The research methods chapter will go into additional detail regarding the research questions and the methodology used to answer the research questions. The methods section will
give a more succinct look into how the researcher will go about gathering evidence and provide a detailed description of the steps needed to complete the study. This section will examine the validity and credibility of the research being conducted.

The last two chapters are the Protection of Human Subjects and conclusion. This will look at the ethical challenges of the research, and provide an overview of the study.

Theoretical Framework

School based leadership has evolved over time from the traditional role of the principal as a single authoritative figure into the current role which focuses on the principal as both an instructional leader and building manager (Nettles & Herrington, 2007). There is extensive writing on educational leadership and the field is led by scholars such as Michael Fullan, who focuses on the principal’s role in both shaping school culture and the change process, James Spillane, who focuses on distributed leadership, and lastly Terrence Deal and Kent Peterson, who focuses on school culture as it related to the change process. Each of these men is considered a leader in the field of educational leadership and therefore their theories and views are a proper starting point when determining an appropriate theoretical framework related to principals leading the implementation of social media into their school.

Michael Fullan has authored a number of books and articles relating to educational leadership. In his paper, Change Theory, he provides an outline of effective traits which have been associated with successful school changes. These traits include the leader focusing on motivation, focusing on results, learning in context, reflective action, stakeholder engagement and persistence and flexibility in staying the course (Fullan, 2006). By identifying these traits, Fullan provide educational leaders with guidance when they attempt to bring about change in their school. Fullan (2002) also recognizes the need for principals to adapt to external changes,
like social media, is stating that "Only principals who are equipped to handle a complex, rapidly changing environment can implement the reforms that lead to sustained improvement in student achievement" (p. 16). Fullan identifies the need for principals to adapt to the external environment when bringing about change, while taking a systematic approach to the change process through the utilization of traits that have been associated with prior successful changes.

James Spillane has focused on distributed leadership in education throughout his research. Distributed leadership is the idea that there are multiple leaders in an organization and that leadership activities are shared (Spillane et al., 2004). The distributed leadership practice focuses on interactions, as opposed to actions, and requires people to operate interdependently within networks of shared and complimentary expertise rather than in hierarchies of clearly defined divisions of labor (Elmore, 2000). Therefore, the principle of distributed leadership as relates to the implementation of social media requires a collaborative process led by educators at all levels as opposed to just being led by the building principal.

Terrence Deal and Kent Peterson are also well respected researchers who study education leadership. Deal and Peterson has focused on the relationship between symbolic leadership and technical leadership (Lashaway, 2007). In relation to undergoing change, Deal and Peterson (1999) state

School leaders must understand their school . . . changing something that is not well understood is a surefire recipe for stress and ultimate failure. A leader must inquire below the surface of what is happening to formulate a deeper explanation of what is really going on. To be effective, school leaders must read and understand their school and community culture. (p. 86)
According to Deal and Peterson’s theories relating to educational leadership and change, principals need to have a firm understanding of the school and communities culture before making the decision to implement social media.

While each of the outlined leadership theories is applicable to the proposed study, The Organizational Culture and Organizational Effectiveness Theory by Daniel Denison and Aneil Mishra has been chosen as the guiding theoretical framework for this study. The Organizational Culture and Effectiveness Theory contains similar language and shared ideas with each of previously identified theories and therefore results in a deeper examination of the social media implementation process.

The Organizational Culture and Organizational Effectiveness Theory was created by Denison and Mishra in 1990 and expanded upon in 1995. The theory identifies cultural traits and the impact each trait has on organizational effectiveness. The purpose of the theory, in relation to this research, will be to assist in the identification of organizational traits that school principals can utilized to successfully implement social media into their respective schools. In addition, the Organizational Culture and Organizational Effectiveness Theory will provide guidance in determining principal interview questions and categorizing the evidence and data. The traits were created from two studies, one qualitative and one mixed methods, and were identified by a number of organizations to determine the impact each one had on performance and effectiveness within the organization.

Additional research conducted utilizing the theory revealed that The Organizational Culture and Effectiveness Theory can be applied to a variety of different organizations in a similar manner (Denison & Fey, 2003, Denison, Haaland & Goelzer 2003, Denison, Lief & Ward, 2004). This is important, as the initial theory was created based on data gathered from
corporations and for the purpose of this study, the theory will be applied to an educational setting. The Organizational Culture and Effectiveness Theory will be used to examine the data through the lens of the identified cultural traits resulting in the identification of traits principals can utilize during the implementation process.

Daniel Denison is a nationally recognized expert in the field of organizational culture and leadership focusing on the relationship between leadership and culture and organizational effectiveness and performance. The initial Organizational Culture Theory (1990) takes a look at the relationship between organizational effectiveness and organizational traits. The theory was created as an informally published manuscript from the University of Michigan’s School of Business Administration. The study was titled Organizational Culture and Organizational Effectiveness: A Theory and Some Preliminary Empirical Evidence (1990) the paper was co-authored by Denison and Aneil K. Mishra. The paper is the precursor to a follow up study, Toward a Theory of Organizational Culture and Effectiveness, published in 1995 by the same authors. Both works identify four cultural traits used to examine organizational effectiveness: consistency, mission, involvement and adaptability. Eventually, these four traits, or cultural hypothesis (as referred to by Denison and Mishra), were combined in a single framework.

Denison and Mishra created this framework to assist in understanding the four cultural traits and how they relate to different organizational stages. The stages are divided into two categories: flexibility vs. stability and internal integration vs. external orientation. The involvement and adaptability traits relate to an organizations ability to adapt to change while the mission and consistency traits focus on the organizations stability and control. The external orientation determines how well your organization can relate to its outside environment while the internal integration relates to the inner workings of the organization (Liu, 2006). The theory, as
applied to the current research, will reveal which cultural traits were utilized by school principals when going through the social media implementation process in their school as well as identify techniques they utilized to overcome external and internal obstacles.

**Consistency Hypothesis.** The consistency trait relates organizational effectiveness to a strong and unified organizational culture. According to Denison and Mishra (1990), the consistency hypothesis,

Emphasizes the positive impact that a "strong culture" can have on effectiveness; arguing that a shared system of beliefs, values, and symbols, which are widely understood by an organization's members, has a positive impact on their ability to reach consensus and carry out coordinated actions. (p. 168)

Having shared organizational expectations and beliefs results in improved communication and increases the ability of members in the organization to adapt to changes and organizational evolution. The consistency hypothesis is expanded on by Denison in 2001 to include three cultural indicators used to measure the hypothesis. The indicators are:

- Core values: If all the members in the organization share a set of the same values, they will form a sense of their organizational identity and have a clear set of expectations (Denison, 2001, p. 353).

- Agreement: This reflects how easily the members in the organization are able to reach an agreement on crucial matters. Such agreement contains both the underlying level of agreement and the ability to resolve differences when they occur (Denison, 2001, p. 353).

- Coordination and integration: An organization with good coordination and integration skills is capable of bringing people from different functions and units to work together.
well to achieve common goals. The organization’s functional boundaries do not get in the way of getting work done (Denison, 2001, p. 353).

A key component regarding the research, as it relates to the consistency hypothesis, will be examining how the utilization of social media fit into schools preexisting norms and expectations. The consistency hypothesis, in addition to the cultural indicators, will determine if the principal utilized the school or school district’s core values when deciding to implement social media into their school, how the decision was reached to use these tools and how the implementation was coordinated and integrated to achieve success. The consistency hypothesis will assist in providing an understanding of how the educational leader utilized the existing cultural foundations of the school to assist with the implementation of social media in their school.

**Mission Hypothesis.** An organization’s mission should guide its decision making process and serve as a definition of the organization’s overall purpose. Denison and Mishra’s mission hypothesis,

> Emphasizes an organization’s purpose and meaning by defining a social role for an institution and defining the importance of individual roles with respect to the institutional role. This process of internalization and identification contributes both to short and long term commitment and leads to effective performance. (p. 169)

The mission hypothesis also stresses the importance of the organizational mission, strategic direction and goals, and how each provides a purpose for the organization and its members by defining the organizations social role as well as the roles of individual members. The
organization’s mission must also be shared and understood by all members and be a driving force in decision making and organizational change. The four cultural indicators associated with the measurement of the mission hypothesis are as follows:

- **Vision:** This indicator is defined as the shared view of a desired future state in the organization. It represents the organization’s core values and provides guidance and direction to the organization and its people (Denison, 2001, p. 354).

- **Strategic direction and intent:** An organization’s purpose can be conveyed by a clear strategic direction and statement of intent. This will help members in the organization to clearly understand and state how they can contribute and plan to 'make their mark' in their industry (Denison, 2001, p. 354).

- **Goals and objectives:** An organization needs to establish a clear set of goals and objectives that are linked with the mission, vision and strategy. This will provide everyone with clear direction in their work (Denison, 2001, p. 354).

The research will look at the participating school’s mission statements and strategic planning documents (school and district strategic plans and improvement plans). Through the examination of these documents, a deeper understanding of why schools and districts decided to implement social media in their school may emerge. The mission statement and school improvement goals will also provide insight regarding what the school was looking to accomplish when making the decision to utilize social media tools in an educational setting.

**Involvement Hypothesis.** Stakeholder involvement in the change process is a key to reduce resistance and ensure buy-in. Regarding the involvement hypothesis, Denison and Mishra (1990) state,
High levels of involvement and participation create a sense of ownership and responsibility. Out of this ownership grows a greater commitment to an organization and a growing capacity to operate under conditions of greater autonomy. (p. 168)

Beyond the creation of organizational loyalty and responsibility, the involvement hypothesis will also assist in providing employees with a sense of ownership in the organization. The cultural indicators associated with the measurement of the involvement hypothesis are as follows:

- **Empowerment:** In an organization with high levels of empowerment, the employees have the authority, initiative and ability to manage their own work, which enable them to create a sense of ownership and responsibility toward their organization (Denison, 2001, p. 353).

- **Team orientation:** Organizational values are placed on working cooperatively to get the work done and all employees feel mutually accountable. A team-oriented organization depends on team effort to deal with everyday tasks (Denison, 2001, p. 353).

- **Capability development:** An organization with a good plan for capability development will continue to invest resources in the development of employees’ skills, which enable organizations to maintain their competitive advantage and meet ongoing business needs (Denison, 2001, p. 353).

The involvement hypothesis relates to levels of stakeholder involvement in the social media implementation process. The levels of teacher involvement and collaboration in the implementation process will allow for reveal how the initiative started, stakeholder roles in the process and how much support (professional development) was provided.
Adaptability Hypothesis. The ability for an organization to confront and adapt to change is necessary for the organization to thrive. Denison and Mishra (1990) state that

The adaptation hypothesis asserts that an organization must hold a system of norms and beliefs which support the capacity of an organization to receive, interpret, and translate signals from its environment into internal behavioral changes that increase its chances for survival, growth and development. This complex theory states that an organization’s ability to adapt will impact its effectiveness. (p. 169)

An organization must be able to adapt to signals from the external environment, such as the rise in popularity of social media, and convert those signals into changes in the internal environment. This will increase the organizations chances of not only surviving, but thriving. The cultural indicators used to measure the adaptability hypothesis are as follows:

- Creating change: An organization with a strong ability to create change is able to find adaptive ways to meet changing needs. It indicates the organization’s abilities to understand their business environment, react rapidly to current movements, and forecast future changes (Denison, 2001, p. 354).

- Customer focus: The more effort an organization puts into getting to know its customers, the quicker and better its reaction to the customer's current needs and the better its anticipation of their future needs. It reveals the degree to which the organization is driven by the concern to satisfy its customers (Denison, 2001, p. 354).

- Organizational learning: If an organization is willing to take risks, learn from mistakes, encourage innovation and continue to invest in training employees towards gaining new
knowledge and developing capabilities, the organization will be able to get, interpret, and convert signals from the business environment into opportunities (Denison, 2001, p. 354).

The adaptability hypothesis, as applicable to this study, will assist in providing a look at external motivating factors which led schools and educational leaders to investigate and ultimately decide that their schools should implement and utilize social media tools. The literature review has revealed that students are utilizing social media tools at an increased rate (Junco, & Chickering, 2010) and the degree to which the implementation of social media tools in schools was a reaction to this trend will allow for a better understanding regarding the school’s focus and ability to create change. In addition to looking at these traits and indicators (Appendix A), the school’s organizational learning capacity will reveal what principals did to overcome hurdles during the implementation process. This information will aid future educational leaders in navigating through similar issues and challenges.

To gain a deeper understanding of the Organizational Culture Theory, a review of how the studies were conducted is essential. Denison and Mishra began their research by sending a series of questionnaires to a number of CEO’s as well as other heads of corporations in the Midwestern United States. The surveys were formulated based on the Organizational Culture and Effectiveness Theory highlighting the four cultural traits. The results of the questionnaires revealed strong support for all four hypotheses. The Mission Hypothesis received the strongest support by the CEO’s and was the best predictors of performance. This was followed by the Involvement Hypotheses and Adaptability Hypotheses, which both showed strong ties to organizational effectiveness. The Consistency Hypothesis was the weakest hypothesis of the four in terms of being a predictor of strong organizational performance. Based off of similarities of
these results, Denison and Mishra combined the four theories into one. They believe that each hypothesis provides a strong foundation to build upon, however it is difficult to determine which of the traits represents the best approach. Denison and Mishra provided the following visual diagram representing their combined theory (Denison & Mishra, 1995, p. 216).

Note. Adapted from “Organizational Culture and Organizational Effectiveness: A Theory and some Preliminary Empirical Evidence,” by D. Danison and A. Mishra, 1990, published manuscript, School of Business Administration, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

After combing the four traits, Denison and Mishra tested the Organizational Culture Theory in an article published in *Organizational Science* in 1995 in a study, titled “Toward a Theory of Organizational and Cultural Effectiveness”. This study continued to build upon the research findings from the original; however the new study used mixed-method approach. The
research was conducted using both case studies, which focused on five different companies, as well as a quantitative survey. The goal of the case studies was to analyze how cultural dynamics relate to organizational effectiveness. The companies participating in the case study included startup companies like People Express Airlines and also established industry giants like Proctor and Gamble.

The overall findings once again revealed a positive correlation between the four cultural traits and organizational effectiveness. The study showed that adaptability and involvement traits strongly related to organizational growth and that the mission and consistency hypothesis related to organizational profitability. Based on these findings, it seems the adaptability and involvement traits will be the two traits associated with and utilized by educational leaders when implementing social media tools in their schools.

The four organizational traits identified in Denison and Mishra’s Organizational Culture Theory focus on of the different aspects and functions of an effective culture. Baker (2002), in reviewing the theory, summarizes it when he states,

The consistency and mission hypotheses tend to encourage and promote stability; while the adaptability and involvement hypothesis allow for change and adaptability. The consistency and involvement hypotheses see culture as focusing on internal organizational dynamics; the involvement and adaptability hypothesis see culture as addressing the relation of the organization to its external environment. (p. 5)

Denison and Mishra used the traits to determine the organizations culture in relation to its ability to succeed in different areas. While the traits were identified during their study and the organizational assessment made after, principals looking to implement social media will not have
this option. Each school is its own entity and therefore different schools will associate with
different traits making it impossible to have one dominant trait in all schools. Therefore the
suggested steps outlined in chapter 5 need represent aspects of each of the four traits.

The importance of an appropriate theoretical framework is highlighted by Yin (2012),
who states that relying on theoretical concepts to guide research design is critical when
conducting case study research. The Organizational Culture and Organizational Effectiveness
Theory will guide the research. Using Denison and Mishra’s four cultural traits and their
accompanying indicators as an investigatory lens, will help ground the study in relevant theory.
It will also aid in determining interview questions and data coding. The Organizational Culture
and Organizational Effectiveness Theory allows for the examination related to which of the four
organizational traits outlined by Denison and Mishra were present during the implementation
process of social media at each school. It will also help determine which traits, if any, were
dominant and how each principal utilized organizational strengths to assist with the
implementation of social media.

**Chapter II: Review of the Literature**

To fully understand social media and its role in education, a review of current literature is
required. In this chapter, the intention is to look at the history of social media and how it has
evolved over time, school and education’s reaction to this evolution and the benefits and
challenges that these tools provide in an educational setting. Due to the rapid growth of social
media, the pool of literature is constantly expanding and providing fresh insight and data relating
to the outlined topics. The literature review is guided by the following questions:

1. What is social media?
2. How has social media evolved over time?
3. How are schools and districts approaching the use of social media?

4. How does the utilization of social media in education benefit stakeholders?

5. What are the most common challenges for schools utilizing social media?

**Definition of Social Media**

There are a large number of definitions that encompass the term social media. New social media sites and tools are being created on a frequent basis resulting in an ever-changing landscape and unprecedented growth. As social media evolves, its popularity grows and the way we look at these tools has transformed from a teenage fad into a mainstream communication tool. Definitions relating to social media are continuing to evolve as well and this was evident throughout the literature review. The evolution of social media was summarized by Zystra, “Over the past number of years, websites have evolved from being basic information portals into virtual spaces that are places to hang out, to discover, and to socialize” (2011, p. 12). According to researchers, Jue, et al. (2009) the term social media typically refers to the many relatively inexpensive and widely accessible electronic tools that enable anyone to publish and access information, collaborate on a common effort, and build relationships. This definition is consistent with other definitions in the literature which add that social media is a collection of web sites, services, and activities that engage users through collaboration, sharing, and democratization of roles and responsibilities (Junco & Chickering, 2010; Lusk, 2010; McCarthy, 2010; Waters, 2011). The common themes in each definition consist of collaboration, communication and creation.

For the purpose of this study, we will use a definition by Boyd and Ellison. This definition of social networking combines a number of the definitions we previously reviewed and others that were found throughout the literature. They define social network sites as “web-
based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (Boyd and Ellison, 2007, p. 1). Lusk (2010, p. 3), provides insight into what sites are currently considered social media websites. His list includes, but is not limited to:

- Social networking sites, such as Facebook and My Space
- Blogs and micro-blogs (Twitter)
- The creation and sharing of photos, videos, and artwork (YouTube or Flickr)
- Online Gaming (World of Warcraft)
- Virtual worlds, which are online communities wherein the participant creates an identity and interacts with other community members, usually in a game-type format

These websites are also known as Web 2.0 and allows individuals to present themselves and maintain connections with others while creating their own individualized content (McCarthy, 2010). What makes social network sites unique is not only the increased communication and relationship building, but the ability for users to create and articulate an online identity and brand.

One of the primary appeals of social networking sites, to both adults and teens alike, centers on the collaborative environment these sites offer. The online collaboration on these sites often leads to the creation of relationships, which is another important appeal of social media websites (Lusk, 2010; Hogan & Quan-Haase, 2010; Rheingold, 2008). Ellison Steinfield, & Lampe (2007) reveal that Facebook use is based on the need to maintain relationships and keep in touch with classmates. In both instances, the primary factor associated with the use of Facebook was for gaining, what is referred to in the literature, as “social capital”. This is
consistent with the work of Lampe et al. (2006) from a year earlier, who reported that social media sites are utilized by students to “social search” for current acquaintances or “social browse” to search for new connections. The need for “social capital” can result in connections between individuals that would not otherwise be made, however these new connections are not often the goal of the user. (Haythornthwaite, 2005; Hogan & Quan-Haase, 2010; Mitchell, 2010).

While maintaining and creating relationships is a major attraction of social media sites, users also enjoy being active participants. This is consistent with the uses and gratification theory (Quan-Haase & Young, 2011) which states

> The audience is characterized as active, discerning, and motivated in their media use. The focus of the theory is on what people do with the media rather than the influence or impact of the media on the individual. (p. 351)

The need for “social capital” along with the ability for users to active participants in creating content has resulted in social networking sites being amongst the most visited sites on the internet (Liang, Commins, & Duffy, 2010; McCarthy, 2010; National School Boards Association, 2007). While there is not one clear definition of social media, the literature reveals that there are common threads associated with what is contained in a social media website. The ability for users to create and shape content and sustain and build social relationships is what has attracted individuals, regardless of age, race or gender, to social media websites and continues to make them such a popular attraction.

**Evolution of Social Media**

The literature related to the history of social media reveals that technology has developed at a rapid pace since the first email was send in the 1970’s. Since that time, the internet has
become a major part of many individuals’ personal and professional lives (Junco & Chickering, 2010; Liang et al., 2010; McCarthy, 2010). Yearly figures from *Pew Internet and American Life Project’s Survey* indicate that, “at least since early 2000, just over 90 percent of internet users used e-mail, with between 50 and 60 percent using e-mail daily” (Junco & Chickering, 2010, p. 12). Access to the internet has continued to grow as well, as a Nielson Report (2009) has shown that of 33 million teens ages 10 to 19, 90% have access to the internet at home, and 73% have access to the internet on a school computer. The popularity relating to both the internet and email communication has contributed to the growth of online communication through social media.

To understand how social media has become so popular so quickly, it is important look back at how and where it started. The history of social media is reviewed by Loftus (2011) who states that the first social media websites appeared in 1996, with a website called sixdegrees.com, which was quickly followed by a website called Blogger.com in 1997. Sixdegrees.com allowed friends to send each other messages and post comments on shared bulletin boards. The site name was derived from “six degrees of separation” and the website lasted until 2001. Blogger.com is a website that hosts blogs and is still around today, having linked with Google. Boyd and Ellison (2007) elaborate on the history of social networking in the article *Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship*. They report that the first significant social website was Friendster, launched in 2002. Friendster was a social networking and gaming tool which had a high membership number of 300,000 users before encountering a number of issues (O’Shea, 2003). The issues resulted in a steady decline in membership leading to its transformation into a social gaming site. Early social networking websites all got off to strong starts, but could not maintain their place in a market competing for users, which resulted in most fading into the background of the social media world.
In 2003, My Space was launched and offered users the capabilities to talk online with friends, play matchmaker, keep in touch with families, follow musical acts, network with businesses or co-workers, study with partners, and assist in finding long lost friends (Griffith & Liyanage 2008). Boyd and Ellison (2007), in a study on My Space, summarize is rise in popularity when reporting

That teenagers began joining MySpace en masse in 2004. Unlike older users, most teens were never on Friendster—some joined because they wanted to connect with their favorite bands; others were introduced to the site through older family members. As teens began signing up, they encouraged their friends to join. Rather than rejecting underage users, MySpace changed its user policy to allow minors. As the site grew, three distinct populations began to form: musicians/artists, teenagers, and the post-college urban social crowd. (p. 1)

While My Space seemed to start as a community serving a distinct clientele, LinkedIn was formed at the same time and was geared towards an entirely different target audience. In 2003, LinkedIn launched as a corporate social networking site geared towards connecting professionals (Loftus, 2011). LinkedIn offered professionals a chance to expand networks, look for new business opportunities and share advice. These two social networking websites are still around today and are experiencing varying degrees of success.

Arguably, the most significant date in the history of Social Media occurred in 2003 with the launch of Facebook. Currently, with over 400 million users, who spend 500 billion minutes on the site each month, Facebook allows users to stay in touch and interact with friends. Studies have shown that it is used by 69% -99% of all college students (Junco & Chickering, 2010).
Facebook offers more privacy than MySpace and its other social media predecessors, allowing users to have complete control over personal data and information and determine the information that they wish to share with other people (Griffith & Liyanage, 2008).

Facebook features include: “The Wall” – a space where messages can be posted on each other’s profile page, “Pokes” – Virtual Pokes can be given to each other, Users “Status” – Information which can be given to friends on the current actions or whereabouts of the user, “News Feeds” – where Facebook can announce changes to its site like upcoming events, profile changes and birthdays related to friends and a “Photo” application in which users can load photos for their friends to see. (Griffith & Liyanage, 2008, p. 76-77)

The past five years have witnessed a shift in the demographics of Facebook transitioning from primarily adults and college students to teenagers (and younger students). The 2009 Neilson Company report How Teens Use Media (Neilson, 2009), showed that in 2009 half of all teens online visited either Facebook or MySpace. Facebook has become a way for teens to accumulate social capital, provide a low-maintenance way for users to keep up-to-date on friends’ activities and maintain close relationships (Ellison, et al., 2007). Facebook has become the leading social networking site on the internet.

Microblogging, which is smaller than a traditional blog, and social media combined with the 2006 creation of Twitter. Twitter’s main focus is the Tweet, which is a 140-character message, which has quickly become “a relatively ubiquitous artifact of the digital age” (Junco & Chickering, 2010). Twitter follows My Space and Facebook as a direct messaging site and allows users to share content (Hogan & Quan-Haase, 2010). Twitter updates are viewed by
“followers” or people who have signed up to receive the messages (Carscaddon & Harris, 2009). Twitter’s popularity continues to grow with well over 350,000,000,000 tweets delivered on a daily basis (Loftus, 2011). Seemingly, Twitter has become one of the main methods of teen communication and has become a mainstream communication method throughout business and entertainment.

Beyond the most well-known social media websites are a number of secondary sites which are growing in popularity.

- Community production and sharing of knowledge (Wikipedia), culture (YouTube, Flickr, the blogosphere), online tools (free and open source software), markets (eBay and Craigslist), education (Open Educational Resources), journalism (citizen journalism) and political organization (meetups, netroots activism, smart mobs) are early manifestations of social changes that could continue to bloom as more become literate in participatory media — or could fail to take root if those literacies are available only to elites. (Rheingold, 2008, p. 25)

Social media has found its way into almost every aspect of society and its potential is limitless. One of the most popular social networking sites in education is Edmodo, which is modeled after Facebook, offering a safe and secure environment for teachers and students to communicate and collaborate (Waters, 2011). Beyond educationally based sites like Edmodo and Blackboard, social media is providing students with a forum to discuss education. Students report that one of the most common topics of conversation on the social networking scene is education. Almost 60 percent of students who use social networking talk about educational topics online and more than 50 percent talk specifically about schoolwork (National School Boards Association, 2007, p. 1).
Social media provides teachers and educational leaders an opportunity to reach students in a learning environment that they are both comfortable in and familiar with.

The appeal of social media and social networking sites for teenagers goes well beyond educational use. With 73% of online teens using social networking sites for roughly nine hours a week, social media has becoming an integral part of teens’ communications with peers and the outside world (Lenhart et al., 2010; National School Boards Association, 2007). According to Lusk, (2010),

Of these online teens using Social Networking Sites (SNS), 91% say they mostly use the sites to keep in contact with friends they frequently see, 82% use the site to keep in touch with someone they rarely see, 72% make social plans, while 44% say they use them to meet new people. (p.3)

The literature reveals the need for teenagers to utilize this median for social communication to both keep up with current friendships and build new relationships. Lusk’s research is somewhat similar to that from a 2009 Nielsen Study, titled How Teens Use Media, which reveals that the teens themselves report being attracted to social networks for gossip and photo sharing, and as a key source of information and advice (Nielsen Company, 2009). The article Digital Natives and Social Media Behaviors: An Overview (Lusk, 2010, p. 3-4) details how social media can yield many benefits for youth beyond simply maintaining relationships, including

Providing a virtual space for teens to explore their interests or problems with similar individuals, academic support, and strengthening online communication skills and knowledge. One positive aspect of online communities is that youth can use them for academic assistance and support. (p.3-4)
Lusk also adds that some teens utilize virtual communities for comfort going to these spaces to find inclusion and support they do not find it in the offline world. These social media communities and websites are geared for different groups of teens, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth, teens of different religious affiliation, and youth with mental health problems. “Websites of this nature offer a venue for youth to discuss relevant issues with peers, gain access to resources, and more or less create a safe environment for youth to sound off on deeply personal issues” (Lusk, 2010, pp. 3-4). The literature shows that teens are utilizing social media for a variety of social and academic reasons. For many teens, the draw of social acceptance and communication, as well as virtual peer support, is very important. School districts can recognize both this appeal and usage and create content controlled mediums that can combine teen interest and needs with predetermined education outcomes.

**Role of Social Media in Education**

A 2007 report from the National School Boards Association indicated that 96 percent of students with online access reported to have used social networking technologies, which include online chatting, text messaging, blogging sites and visiting social communities (such as Facebook, MySpace, Webkins and Nick.com). The report added that 81 percent of students claimed to have been on a social networking site within the previous three months with 71 percent of those students claiming to utilize social networking tools on a weekly basis (National School Boards Association, 2007, p. 1). These numbers are far greater than those reported by Rideout et al. in 2010, which reported that 53% of 15–18 year olds used social networking websites and spent an average of 48 minutes per day on such sites. Additional literature revealed percentages closer to the average of the two studies, revealing 73% of online teens use social networking sites on a regular basis (Lenhart et al., 2010). Despite these subtle differences in the
research surrounding percentages of students utilizing social media, it is clear that social media tools have become an integral part of teens’ communications with peers as well as the outside world. Educational leaders and professionals need to fully understand the numbers of students using social media on a regular basis as well as the amount of time students are spending on social media websites when determining the direction schools will take regarding social media use in schools.

The literature indicated that while some schools and districts have embraced the use of social media, there is still reluctance among many districts to utilize these tools. The school districts that have embraced the use of social media cite the fact that they are reaching students, or “digital natives” (a popular term created by Prensky), in a medium which they are familiar with (McCarthy, 2010; Prensky, 2001a). According to Prensky, “digital natives” have “spent their entire lives surrounded by and using computers, videogames, digital music players, video cams, cell phones, and all the other toys and tools of the digital age” (Prensky, 2001a, p. 1). Prensky adds that, “our students are clamoring for these [new] technologies to be used as part of their education, in part because they are things that the students have already mastered and use in their daily lives and in part because they realize just how useful they can be”. These views align with Reynol & Cotten, 2011 and Waters, 2010, who agree that social media tools are a pathway to increased student engagement. By utilizing social media tools, district and school administrators may increase student engagement by presenting the curriculum in a familiar environment.

Schools that utilize social media are doing so for a variety of reasons. More than four in ten districts hope social networking will help students to “learn to express themselves better creatively” and “develop global relationships” (National School Boards Association, 2007). The
Creating and Connecting Report (2007) also reveals that 36% of district leaders believe that the utilization of social media will lead to increased student collaboration and academic problem solving skills. Districts that share beliefs that social media will help enhance 21st Century Skills are utilizing educational tools like Blackboard, Edmodo, and Facebook, blogging websites like Blogspot, and Wordpress and microblogging using Twitter. The utilization of content sharing websites (Flickr, YouTube) is also common in many schools (Neibling, 2010). The utilization of social media tools in education is extensive and can impact students and curriculum in a number of ways.

Social media is also used by school districts and universities to create alternative means of communication with stakeholders and alumni (Griffith, & Liyanage, 2008; McCrea, 2010). Butler (2010) reiterates the importance of social media and communication with stakeholders by sharing how districts utilize Twitter to communicate within the organization. This creates real time communication which can impact organizational culture. A National School Boards sponsored study revealed that twenty-seven percent of schools participate in a structured teacher/principal online community using social media tools (National School Boards Association, 2007). Educational institutions also utilize social media to create community management systems. These systems “integrate a district's online communication effort via a single, unified platform, using surveys, forms, blogs, and other features to bring a district in closer touch with its constituents” (McCrea, 2010, p. 1). By linking all online communication, the organization can control the message being sent to stakeholders and provide one platform for them to go to for information.

Another benefit of social media tools for schools is that it allows for the creation of a brand. Schools can utilize social media to brand their institution and create opportunities for students to
create their own brand which reinforces ties to their school (Chapman-Cameron, 2010). This allows the districts to control online information related to the school and develop a reputation based on information they are sharing leading to the creation of their own image.

Despite the positives associated with utilizing social media in an educational setting, some districts are apprehensive about utilizing these tools. The Creating and Connecting Report (2007, p. 4) investigated the use of social media tools in education and reported the following:

- More than nine in ten school districts (92 percent) require parents and/or students to sign an internet use policy.
- Nearly all (98 percent) districts use software to block access to inappropriate web content.
- More than eight in ten districts have rules against online chatting (84 percent) and instant messaging (81 percent) in school.
- More than six in ten districts (62 percent) have rules against participating in bulletin boards or blogs; six in 10 (60 percent) also prohibit sending and receiving e-mail in school.
- More than half of all districts (52 percent) specifically prohibit any use of social networking sites in school.

(National School Boards Association, 2007, p.4)

This apprehension is rooted in the ideas that social networking sites and social media have little value in an educational setting. Many schools and school districts have severely limited student exposure to tools available through social media and on the web. While content blocking and an internet use policy are deemed best practice in most districts, limiting blogs, collaboration and communication are impeding information sharing and skills that are
traditionally valued in an educational setting (Waters, 2011). While there is a reluctance to incorporate social media tools into the educational setting, the benefits of these tools are difficult to ignore.

**How the Utilization of Social Media in Education Benefits Stakeholders and Teaching and Learning**

Despite the hesitancy of some district to utilize social media, there are a number of schools that are using these tools. Social media in an educational setting can provide a number of benefits to students, parents and other stakeholders. Social networking sites allow students to explore their own identities and find support, intimacy and autonomy while establishing their own brand (Griffith & Liyanage, 2008; Ishizuka, 2010). Richardson (2011) expands on the idea of student branding in stating that

A student’s “branding” effort may take many forms. Students may have blogs in which they write about the things that most engage them, making connections with others who share those interests and deepening their knowledge in the dialogue. Or they may create a Facebook group around a change-the-world idea, a YouTube video that shows off their musical talent, or even a live-streamed radio or TV show that builds an audience around a particular topic. (p. 22)

Students appreciate the forum social media sites provide, as it allows them to share their identity and passions in addition to hobbies and interests that appeal to them with others. McCarthy (2010) understands the student need for individualism and suggests that ways students use social media tools in a social realm may vary from their preferences with technology in an educational setting. While educational settings often directly or indirectly require students to conform to a set of standards regarding rules, dress, required courses, etc., social media sites provide students
with a setting which allows them to be themselves without apprehension. Students will need time to get adjusted to using social media in an educational setting as it may be more restrictive in comparison to their traditional use of these sites.

The literature also recognizes the impact social media has on the learning environment. McCarthy (2010) notes that students are able to communicate at their own pace in a social media learning environments and benefit from being able to process information before providing an answer as opposed to being put on the spot in a classroom. There is also a correlation between social media based learning environments and student engagement (Reynol & Cotton, 2011). The increase in student engagement has improved the link between theory and practice and therefore increased student understanding of course content (McCarthy, 2010). This engaging environment has also increased opportunities for student collaboration, sharing and democratization of roles and responsibilities (Junco & Chickering, 2010). The School Principals and Social Networking in Education Report (2010) also corroborate these views, as principals reported believing that learning experiences would be impacted through the development of a more collaborative view of learning, improved motivation, engagement, and/or active involvement and through the creation of a more relevant learning environment for students. Social media lends itself to a hand-on, interactive learning environment which allows students to be active participants while working at a pace that meets individual learning needs.

Additional educational benefits of social media include increased communication with stakeholders, the potential of creating professional learning communities, and the sharing of information and resources with an extended community of educators (EdWeb, 2010). Social networking tools are enabling district leaders to increase communication, which opens the door for stakeholder feedback and participation in the decision making process (Liang, et al., 2010 &
Rheingold, 2008). This is accomplished through the utilization of a number of social media tools; however Twitter is quickly becoming a popular median for this type of communication. Districts are beginning to utilize Twitter for both internal and external organizational communication (Butler, 2010). The literature has revealed that principals are utilizing social media tools for external stakeholder communication more than to communicate with faculty and staff. When using social media tools to communicate with staff, school administrators are utilizing Webinars, YouTube and Podcasts to assist in facilitating smaller learning communities and offer staff a wide variety of professional development options (EdWeb, 2010). By utilizing social media tools to increase communication and assist with professional development, administrators are using cost effective tools to improve teaching and learning and school culture.

The literature is not as clear relating to the impact social media has on student achievement. In the journal article, *The Impact of Educational Technology on Student Achievement*, by John Schacter (1999), the author analyzes current research regarding the relationship between social media and student achievement and provides two findings. The first finding reveals that students with access to technology and software showed positive gains in achievement on a variety of teacher created and standardized tests. Schacter’s research also showed that technology was ineffective when learning objectives were unclear and the focus of the technology is scattered.

Another study revealed that there was an increase in student engagement for students who utilized social media tools for learning. Results from this study revealed that students had a higher semester grade point average when utilizing social media tools (Junco, et al., 2011). Social media’s positive impact on student engagement was supported by Bynum (2011), who stated that social media tools were especially beneficial for increasing engagement and providing
increased opportunities for interaction for students with diagnosed disabilities. Bynum warned
that social media can also serve as a disservice to students if teachers do not embrace its use in
the classroom (Bynum, 2011). While the research was inconclusive regarding the overall impact
social media tools can have on student achievement, it did reveal an increase in student
engagement and collaborative opportunities.

The Most Common Challenges Facing Schools Utilizing Social Media

Principals identified in the *School Principals and Social Networking in Education:
Practices, Policies, and Realities* study stated that most districts they worked in utilized Web 2.0
technologies in their schools. In addition, the majority of the principals reported that social
networking sites were blocked for student use (EdWeb, 2010, p. 18). When elaborating why the
content blocks were in place, they revealed some of the potential hazards concerning social
media:

- Discouraging or preventing social contact between educators and students (e.g., “friending”
  students)
- Freedom of speech issues (including limits in areas such as defaming others)
- Inappropriate student posting
- Sexting
- Cyber bullying

The list of dangers associated with social media is consistent throughout the literature.

Districts are concerned with potential online dangers resulting in roughly 52% of school districts
not allow the use of social media sites (National School Boards Association, 2007). *The Creating
and Connecting Report* also revealed that despite the negative views, only a small number of
students have encountered a negative experience while using social media websites, and that
most of the problems students had while using these tools were similar to those problems encountered in any form of media (television and music) which include both inappropriate content and inappropriate language.

While the potential dangers associated with social media cannot be ignored, the literature reveals that many of the fears are not as common as they may seem. Exposure to online sexual predators is one of the biggest worries facing school and district administrators (Griffith, & Liyanage, 2008).

Approximately one in seven youth (13%), ages 10–17, receive an unwanted sexual solicitation in a one-year period. These involve unwanted requests for the youth to talk about sex, answer personal questions about sex, or do something sexual online. However, these solicitations do not necessarily come from “online predators”—almost half come from other youth. (Mitchell, 2010, p. 7)

Mitchell’s research has also revealed that 4% of youth have received aggressive solicitations; which involves attempts to contact the potential victim off-line to meet. Sexting, which is defined as sharing of inappropriate pictures or videos via text messaging, is also common fear among school principals (EdWeb, 2010). In the article, Remaining Safe and Avoiding Dangers Online, it is revealed that 15% of students ages 12-17 have received a sexually suggestive text message from someone they know and that 4% of teens claiming they have sent a sexual explicit message containing a nude image of themselves. While the fear of online predators has been identified as one of the main deterrents to the use of social media in schools, student sharing of inappropriate sexual content also poses a threat to student’s well-being.
Cyberbullying has been identified by principals as another fear associated with utilizing social media tools in a school setting (EdWeb, 2010). Lusk (2010, p. 5) provides a bullying definition, taken from the website Stopcyberbullying.org, which states

Cyberbullying is when a child, preteen or teen is tormented, threatened, harassed, humiliated, embarrassed or otherwise targeted by another child, preteen or teen using the internet, interactive and digital technologies or mobile phones. (p.5)

Lusk (2010) offers more specific examples of online bullying in the journal article *Digital Natives and Social Media Behaviors: An Overview*, sharing some examples of online bullying:

- Spreading rumors online
- Posting mean or hurtful online comments
- Forwarding private messages
- Making threats, either online or through a phone call or text, of physical harm
- Posing as victim online
- Posting a mean or hurtful picture of someone online

A Pew Internet and American Life survey conducted in 2007 showed that 32% of youth surveyed revealed they were victims of online behaviors that could be described as bullying (Lenhart, 2007). This number is consistent with the number of students who reported being bullied in a report completed by Mitchell in 2010; however, she adds that only 10% of these reports would have met the school definition of bullying (aggression, repetition, and power imbalance). Ten percent is similar to the numbers reported in the *Creating and Connecting Report*, which states that only one in 14 students (7%) report to have experienced cyberbullying (National School Boards Association, 2007). These numbers do provide proof that there is a
tangible threat; however by providing students with a cyber-ethics or digital literacy course, these numbers may be reduced. In addition, the literature does not specify how many of the online bullying interactions occurred while in school or with students utilizing school technology.

Online harassment poses another threat to the utilization of social media tools in educational settings. Mitchell (2010, p.7) defines online harassment as “receiving threatening messages, having private emails or text messages forwarded without consent, having an embarrassing picture posted without permission, or having rumors spread online”. The definition is similar to the definition of cyberbullying; however there is often a pattern which emerges in online harassment cases. Students report frequently witnessing such behavior online and the offending parties are not often students who typically partake in such behaviors. Junco & Chickering (2010, p. 15) reviewed student participation in these activities and reported that “it’s very easy to join a group harassing another person when that harassment is taking place online, presumably because they can be anonymous, or because it is less threatening than doing so face-to-face”. While not as common as cyberbullying, 9% of teens, ages 10-17, reported being victims of online harassment (Lusk, 2010 & Mitchell, 2010) while 28% of youth reported making rude or nasty comments to someone online (Mitchell, 2010). Mitchell adds that these numbers are not as high as the number of students who are involved with similar behaviors offline, which is an important fact for educational leaders to consider when making decisions related to social media.

The literature reveals that another potential threat related to social media use in schools involves the information students’ access through social media sites. In the article Digital Natives and Social Media Behaviors: An Overview, Lusk (2010), reveals that a third of teens
utilize the internet and social media for advice pertaining to their health (sexual health, nutritional and information related to drugs). This can lead to students being exposed to potential dangerous situations, if they inadvertently follow the advice of someone who is not properly educated on topic the student is researching. In addition, Lusk adds that some students access information on suicide, drugs, eating disorders and self-injury through these sites. By educating students on the potential dangers of information available online, educational leaders can reduce potential student’s risks and hazards.

Teacher and student communication using social media forums also pose a potential threat relating to content and information shared. Mazer et. al. (2007) reviews the potential dangers faced by school faculty and staff members in communicating in an online educational setting with students. The authors reveal that teachers must remain careful with information shared on social networking sites to protect their credibility in the classroom. Teachers must also make certain no derogatory or discrediting remarks appear in class discussion boards. The authors also warn that the advertising that may appear on some of the social networking sites can be inappropriate for a school aged audience. Teachers must protect their reputation and credibility while maintaining a safe and secure online learning environment for their students.

A final challenge facing educational leaders is making certain students have access to social media tools in their homes if such tools are required for educational purposes. Research regarding this issue was completed by Mitchell (2010) and results revealed that teens from college educated families, with an annual income over $50,000, are more likely to have high speed internet access in their homes and therefore participate more in online school activities. In addition, Mitchell reveals that 23% of teens report accessing their social media websites from their cellphones, which makes it important for schools to review handbook policies related to
social media and also cell phone use. With internet access readily available on mobile devices, the socio-economic impact of internet access has been reduced. Teens from lower income families (those earning less than $30,000 annually) and students from wealthy families are utilizing social media tools at similar rates-80% of low income students and 70% of students from wealthier households utilize social media through cellphones (Mitchell 2010, p. 8). Therefore, the economic factors that could be perceived as a deterrent for the implementation and accompanying utilization of social media tools is not as prevalent as districts may believe.

Chapter III: Research Design

Purpose of the Study

The examination of how schools successfully implemented social media in their district is essential. School principals have recognized that teenagers have a substantial degree of interest or comfort level using social networking sites (EdWeb, 2010). However, the review of the literature reveals that despite this acknowledgement, many educational leaders and school districts demonstrate reluctance regarding implementing and utilizing social media tools in an educational setting. This reluctance is a result of schools and district leaders fearing the potential risks associated with social media in schools outweigh the potential benefits (McCarthy, 2010; National School Boards Association, 2007). In addition, the literate review revealed that social media tools not only reach students in a relevant and familiar fashion, which results in an increase in student engagement, but social media can also provide an authentic communication tool for schools to reach a wide variety of stakeholders (McCarthy, 2010; Reynol & Cotton, 2011). As social media continues to become an important part of our culture, schools not utilizing social media tools and technologies risk falling behind other districts, which can often lead to districts having to play “catch-up”. The purpose of this study is to explore the methods
used by educational leaders to implement social media tools in their respective schools. By gaining an understanding of the methods used by principals and the challenges faced by school districts during the implementation process, it will provide other educational leaders a road map to follow when seeking to replicate the implementation of social media tools in their respective school.

**Research Questions**

Toward reaching the identified outcome of developing a better understanding of the how high schools principals have gone about implementing social media into their schools, I propose a qualitative case study. The guiding question is a *process question* focused on “how things happen, as opposed to whether or not there is a relationship or how much of it is explained by other variables” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 232). The primary research question is: How have principals gone about integrating social media into their school?

The primary research question will be examined through Denison and Mishra’s Organizational Culture and Organizational Effectiveness Theory (as outlined in the theoretical framework) along with research highlighted throughout the literature review. Denison and Mishra’s Organizational Culture and Organizational Effectiveness Theory (1990 & 1995) identify cultural traits that typify a successful organizational culture and leads to an increase in organizational effectiveness. By examining which cultural traits were utilized by districts and principals, it will provide a clearer understanding of the guiding principles and processes the educational leaders and organizations utilized to ensure a sustainable implementation process of social media tools.

The secondary, or sub-research questions, seek to provide additional clarity about the process and allow for a deeper look into the steps taken by educational leaders to ensure effective
implementation of social media tools into their schools. The following questions will assist in understanding the school principals’ views of the process and how they went about developing and completing it. These secondary research questions will also assist the researcher in answering the primary research question.

- How do principals, who actively integrate social media into the school community, describe the implementation process?
- What strategies did principal utilize to gain staff member support?
- How do teachers describe the process of social media integration?

**Method**

To determine how principals have gone about implementing social media into their schools, a qualitative case study method of inquiry will be utilized. Creswell (2009) defines a case study as “a strategy of inquiry, [in] which a researcher explores in-depth a program, event, activity, process or one or more individuals” (p. 15). The type of case study will be collective. Stake (1995) stated that the number and type of case studies depends upon the purpose of the inquiry. He adds that a collective case study is the study of a number of cases in order to inquire into a particular phenomenon. Yin’s research (2009) supports the use of a case study as it aligns with the outlined research questions used in this study. Yin states that case studies are the preferred strategy when “how” and “why” questions are posed. Yin adds that, in general, a case study is an empirical inquiry which:

- Investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context
- The boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident
- Multiple sources of evidence are used (p.13)
The value of a utilizing a collective case study for investigating this project is that it allows evidence and data to be gathered from a number of different schools and sources. The informational sources will include interviews, document reviews, observations, participant observations, review of physical artifacts and surveys. Yin (2009) suggested using multiple sources of evidence as the way to ensure construct validity. The information gathered will allow for a trail of evidence to be constructed to assist in addressing the research questions and ultimately assist in determining structures and strategies were utilized by school principals when undergoing the implementation of social media into their schools. In this study the researcher will serve as the primary data collector, with the data collection taking place in the fall of 2012 and winter of 2013.

**Multiple Site Case Studies**

A multiple case study approach will be used to conduct the research and provide a more thorough investigation into the implementation process. According to Schell (1992), case studies usually follow one of two types of research methodology; they either use multiple sources of evidence (triangulation) or consist of a review of multiple sites. This study will utilize multiple sites and multiple sources of evidence and seek to find repetition in the data from the different locations. Multiple case studies require each site to be treated as an individual case with the data gathered from the multiple sites contributing to the conclusions of the entire study. This method of sampling enhances the reliability of data which therefore increase the strength and reliability of the results. By utilizing multiple sites to gather data, the researcher will not only strengthen his findings, but increase their credibility as well.
Site Selection and Participants

Maxwell (2009) states that the optimal way for researchers to “operationalize” their study is through the selection of a quality research site. Patton (2002) adds that it is important to select “Information-rich cases …from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research” (p. 169). For the purpose of determining how school principals have gone about implementing social media tools into their respective schools, this study will be conducted at three different secondary schools. These schools will be selected through a sampling process which involves screening potential sites. This aligns with the work of Yin (2009), who requires the brief collection of data on each potential site before selecting final sites. The screening process will identify schools that have incorporated social media into their respective school. The screening process requires the creation of operational criteria to utilize as a selection guide.

The operational criteria will include identifying Massachusetts public schools with a principal who has a minimum of one-year administrative experience at the school prior to the implementation of social media tools. Massachusetts public schools are faced with a number of obstacles, such as budgetary restrictions, state and federal priorities and strong teachers unions, which could potentially impact the implementation process. The ideas and designs utilized by the participating principals to overcome these obstacles and implement social media tools will provide educational leaders in Massachusetts and throughout the country steps to emulate. The problem of practice outlined criteria and qualifications that were utilized in creating selection criteria.

In addition to identifying principals, the study will gather evidence from teachers who were in the school during the implementation of social media. Two teachers from each of the
chosen sites will also be asked to participate in the study. These teachers will be chosen with the help of the building principal and will need to be actively utilizing social media tools in their classroom. The addition of teachers to the study will result in added evidence relating to the implementation process. This will increase triangulation of the data and study validity while reducing participant and researcher bias.

Creswell (2007) notes the importance of acquiring participants who will be willing to openly and honestly share information or “their story” (p. 133). Therefore the selection process is a critical component in a quality study. Once the sites and leaders have been identified, both principals and teachers will be invited to participate in the study. The invitation will be extended with an introductory letter and followed up with a phone call and email. The personal communication will allow the participants to ask any questions they may have about the study. A research consent form will also be forwarded to study participants. This form will outline participant rights and confidentiality and require a signature.

Data Collection

“Qualitative inquiry deals with human lived experience. It is the life-world as it is lived, felt, undergone, made sense of, and accomplished by human beings that is the object of study” (Schwandt, 2001, p. 84). Therefore, the study will derive data from intense exploration with the school principals, as well as school staff (Polkinghorne, 2005). The data will be gathered utilizing three methods; participant interviews, observations and document analysis. These data sources will provide evidence needed to answer the main research question as well as the sub-questions, and result in the validation and cross-checking of findings (Patton, 2002). The purpose of the data collection, in relation to this study, will be to provide the researcher with evidence relating to how principals have gone about implementing social media tools into his/her school.
Once the participating sites are confirmed, there will be an initial visit to each site to gather documentation. This will allow for a thorough review of relevant school documents and literature relating to the implementation of social media in each respective school prior to the start of the interview process. Upon completion of the document review, the interviews were scheduled at each participant’s school. This step aligns with the work of Creswell (2009), who states that it is best to conduct research in a comfortable setting for the participants. The research will be conducted in each principal’s office and each teacher’s classroom. This allows the interviews to take place in a setting that is both natural and familiar to the participant.

The data collection will be aided by the study’s theoretical framework, Denison and Mishra’s Organizational Culture and Effectiveness Theory. This theory and its four identified cultural traits will guide the creation of interview questions and coding of the data. The theory will assist in the identification of steps, or traits, which school principals used to implement social media.

**Documentary Evidence.** According to Patton (2002), document analysis consists of “studying quotations, excerpts or entire passages from organizational, clinical, or program records; memoranda and correspondence; official publications and reports; personal diaries; and open-ended written responses to questionnaires and surveys” (p. 3). Patton adds that documentary analysis also “adds a behind-the-scenes look at evidence that may not be directly observable and about which the interviewer might not ask appropriate questions without the leads provided through documents” (p. 307). For this study, documents reviewed will include written, visual, oral or multimedia sources that relate to the implementation of social media at each participating school. The sources will include school mission and vision statements, improvement plans, district technology plans, student handbooks, acceptable use policies and
school and district websites. A review of these documents will allow for the potential
identification of common themes and cultural traits that may have been present in relation to the
implementation of social media tools at each particular site (Patton, 2002). The documents will
also provide an insight relating to the school and district views towards technology and areas
they are looking to improve in.

**Interviewing.** “Qualitative interviews provide an opportunity for exploring the ways in
which subject’s experience and understand their world. It provides unique access to the lived
world of the subjects, who in their own words describe their activities, experiences and opinions”
(Kvale, 2007, p.9). In relation to this investigation, interviews will provide first-hand accounts
and information pertaining to the principal’s experiences relating to the implementation of social
media at their school. Gall, Gall, & Borg (2003) outline three forms of interviews; (a) informal
conversational interview, (b) general interview guide approach, and (c) standardized open-ended
interview. For the purpose of this study, the standardized open-ended interview method will be
used. This method is very structured and each participant is asked the same questions, however
the question design allows for open-ended responses (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). A benefit of
this method is that is permits participants to share detailed answers and researcher to ask follow
up questions.

This interviewing technique will allow for a standard set of questions to guide the
interview, ultimately seeking open-ended answers from the interview participants. Standard
open-ended protocol also assures that a large amount of information will be gathered from each
interview participant, which will aid in the coding of the gathered data and assist in reducing
researcher biases when analyzing the data (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). Creswell (2009) does
identify a weakness with this interview method, stating that open-ended interviews allow
participants to share very detailed responses which create copious data, which in turn can result in researchers having a difficult time extracting similar themes or codes from the interview transcripts.

The participant interviews will consist of a one-on-one discussion with the interviewee. The goal of the interview will be to gain both the school principal and teacher’s personal account and perspective of the process the school went through when implementing social media tools. The interview questions will be created utilizing Denison and Mishra’s Organizational Culture and Organizational Effectiveness Theory as a framework. The questions will seek to gain an understanding on how principal’s implemented social media within the context of the four outlined cultural traits (involvement, consistency, adaptability and mission). By utilizing this theory to frame research questions, the researcher will have a clear understanding of what cultural traits, as related to each respective school, the principal valued and utilized throughout the implementation process. The following are the administrative interview questions:

1. How was the decision made to implement social media tools into your school?
2. How do you feel about the implementation process that occurred to get social media tool utilized in your school?
3. What do you think the benefits of social media are for your school?
4. What do you think are the drawbacks of utilizing social media in your school?
5. What kind(s) of changes (if any) did you notice with staff during the implementation of social media tools?
6. What impact did you observe the implementation of social media having on different stakeholders?
   a. District administration
b. Teachers  
c. Parents  
d. Students  

7. Do you think the implementation of social media went as you had initially planned? Why or why not? What would you do differently?  

8. How did the school go about adapting to issues and resistance that arose during the implementation process?  

9. Do you feel that the utilization of social media tools aligns with the school’s mission and core values?  

10. Was there staff members/stakeholders involved in the implementation process? If so, how was this accomplished?  

11. Is there anything that we haven’t talked about with regard to implementation of social media tools in your school that would be important to know?  

The following teacher interview questions will be used to gather evidence from teachers relating to the social media implementation process that took place in their school:  

1. How was the decision made to implement social media tools into your school?  

2. How do you feel about the implementation process that occurred to get social media tool utilized in your school?  

3. What do you think the benefits of social media are for your school?  

4. What do you think are the drawbacks of utilizing social media in your school?  

5. What kind(s) of changes (if any) did you notice with colleagues during the implementation of social media tools?
6. What impact did you observe the implementation of social media having on different stakeholders?
   a. District administration
   b. School Administration
   c. Parents
   d. Students

7. Do you think the implementation of social media went as the school had initially planned? Why or why not? What do you feel could have been done differently?

8. How did the school go about adapting to issues and resistance that arose during the implementation process?

9. Do you feel that the utilization of social media tools aligns with the school’s mission and core values?

10. Was there staff members/stakeholders involved in the implementation process? If so, how was this accomplished?

11. Is there anything that we haven’t talked about with regard to implementation of social media tools in your school that would be important to know?

The interview questions were designed based on the recommendations of Patton (2002) who suggested using basic sentence stems to remain consistent and allow for the interviewee to take the answer in whatever direction they choose. This method will allow for authentic answers, which in turn will create useful data.

**Researcher Observations.** The final method used to gather data will be researcher observations. Potter (1996) defines observations in qualitative research as a “technique of
gathering data through direct contact with an object—usually another human being. The researcher watches the behavior and documents the properties of the object” (p. 98).

Observations will take place throughout the interviews and visits to each participating school. Observation notes will be taken after interviews to record participant interactions (both verbal and non-verbal), expressions, tone, and dress, which will provide additional meaning to the interview answers. Observation of the school environment will also occur. This will include looking for evidence of social media being utilized by staff members in the classroom, students in the computer labs and hallways, and by school administration. The evidence gathered during the observations will be used to clarify data gathered during interviews and document reviews (Polkinghorne, 2005).

To be included in the evidence that will be analyzed, the observations will need to be recorded in written form. The immediacy of recording observational notes, or memos, is imperative as it will allow for a clearer recollection of what was observed and how it relates to the experience being studied (Polkinghorne, 2005). Observations will be transcribed throughout each visit and directly after interviews are concluded.

**Data Analysis**

When referring to data analysis, Eisenhardt (1989) states that “analyzing data is the heart of building theory from case studies, but it is both the most difficult and the least codified part of the process” (p. 539). The data analysis will begin with the transcription of the interviews. By listening to the recordings and reviewing observations and transcripts from the interviews, the researcher “will obtain a general sense of the information to reflect on its overall meaning” (Creswell, 2008, p. 185). Creswell (2007) adds that data analysis is when the
researcher must make “sense” out of what was just uncovered and compile the data into sections or groups of information, also known as themes or codes.

The data analysis and coding will be divided into two parts. Initially, the Organizational Culture and Organizational Effectiveness Theory will be utilized to assist in coding the data in accordance with one of Denison and Mishra’s four identified traits. The traits mission, adaptability, consistency and involvement will serve as a priori codes (having predetermined codes is also referred to as a priori coding) and will aid the researcher in analyzing evidence relating to the implementation. The data will initially be coded under one of the a priori code headings to determine if any of the traits were present during the implementation. Inductive coding, which are codes developed as the researcher is examining data, will also develop during data analysis and lead to the creation of sub-group headings under the four identified cultural traits.

The data will then be reviewed to determine emergent codes. This will require the identification of themes, ideas and categories that emerge outside of the traits identified in the Organizational Culture Theory. Both parts of the data analysis will begin immediately after the initial data collection and continue throughout the data collection process. This process will result in the development of several themes or categories for the research study, which will likely “appear as major findings” (Creswell, 2008, p. 189) of the study. Drawing conclusions from the evidence will be the final step in the data analysis. This step will require continual analysis of the data until theories emerge and a clearer understanding of cultural traits which are best suited for implementation develops.
Validity and Credibility

Validity and credibility both must be maintained throughout the study. Seliger & Shohamy (1989, p. 95) stated that "Any research can be affected by different kinds of factors which, while extraneous to the concerns of the research, can invalidate the findings". One of the main objectives of this study is to make certain that the study is both credible and valid. To assure validation, data will be triangulated. This is a common method in qualitative studies to make certain the study results are reliable. By utilizing multiple sources of evidence and data such as interviews, documents and observations and multiple sites, the researcher will ensure that the data is triangulated and results are valid and potential biases eliminated.

The researcher cannot overlook the possibility that of potential threats to validity in relation to his past and current professional positions and the limited pool of potential study participants. The researcher is currently the Director of Secondary Programs in a suburban school district south of Boston. Prior to taking this position, he was the high school principal in the same district. He has maintained active membership in organizations such as the MSSAA (Massachusetts Secondary School Administrators Association) for the past eight years. The researchers background, in addition to the qualitative method utilized in this study allow for the potential of researcher bias. Patton (1987) recognizes that the credibility of the researcher is especially important in qualitative research as it is the person who is the major instrument of data collection and analysis. To assist with avoiding researcher bias, the researcher will utilize member checks. A member check is a check of data accuracy that occurs on location. At the conclusion of data gathering, subjects will be asked to review data and evidence in which they were active participants. This will occur on-site immediately after the data is gathered. Guba and
Lincoln (1994) refer to member checks as one of the most important steps a researcher can do to ensure a study’s credibility. This is also referred to as respondent validation.

The main objective in the study is to investigate how educational leaders have gone about implementing social media tools into public high schools. This will limit the number of potential participants. The participants will be chosen by the researcher and will have qualified for this study by having the shared experience of leading the implementation of social media tools into their school. The researcher will take into account the limited number of participants in the study and make changes to the sample if necessary.

**Protection of Human Subjects**

A number of steps will be taken to protect the participating subjects and make certain confidentiality is maintained throughout the study with potential risks minimalized and communicated. An individual consent form (appendix B), which outlines the purpose of the study, the need for collecting information relating to the study, measures taken by the researcher to ensure confidentiality and potential risks from participating will be distributed to each participant. The individual consent form will require a signature from each of the study participants.

In addition, each participant in the study will be assigned a pseudonym to be utilized throughout the study. The school district and school names will also be changed. These pseudonyms will only be known by the researcher. Participants will also have the opportunity to review the gathered data throughout the study. This will allow for participants to check to make certain information is a clear representation of the intended meaning. In addition to the participants checking the data, all documents and recordings will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study to ensure confidentiality and prevent information from reaching researchers who
might misappropriate it (Creswell, 2009). Based on the nature of the study and information being gathered, there is little to no professional or personal risk associated with participation in this study.

Chapter IV: Results

This study aims at providing a look at the process used by principals to implement social media into their respective schools and identify steps which future administrators may choose to emulate. While many schools and districts are apprehensive regarding the use of social media, the popularity, costs and educational benefits of these tools make it a resource school districts need to embrace. Currently, more districts are beginning to recognize this value and are utilizing social media for a variety of reasons. This chapter will present results and findings from this qualitative case study on the social media implementation process utilized by principals at three different schools. The study design utilized participant interviews, a review of pertinent documents, which included each schools mission and vision statements, school improvement plans and district technology plans, as well as researcher observations of the school and different interview settings. The chapter will utilize a descriptive approach, which provided background information about the sites and the participants, in addition to themes and subthemes that emerged throughout the study. To properly identify the processes utilized by the principals and school districts, a series of interviews were set up with school personnel in three different districts. Interviewees included principals from schools that are utilizing social media two teachers from each of these schools. The principals ranged in experience from 4 to 8 years, while the teachers experience spanned a range of 5 years to 14 years. All three of the principals were in their current position when the school began to utilize social media tools. Each of the six
teachers interviewed were also in their current roles during the social media implementation process.

This chapter will profile the participating districts, principals and teachers. In addition, the chapter will also examine the results of the research as organized through Denison and Mishra’s Organizational Culture and Effectiveness Theory. The theory has provided a priori codes, which will assist in the organization and examination of the data. The codes, or themes, include Organizational Consistency, Alignment with the School Mission, Stakeholder Involvement and Organizational Adaptability. These themes will be outlined in additional detail throughout chapter 4.

**Introduction of Sites and Participants**

The three schools selected for this study are all public schools in the state of Massachusetts and each of the schools is currently utilizing social media tools. The schools are from different districts and were identified through discussions with colleagues and peers as utilizing social media. Once the schools were identified, contact was made with district superintendents and approval to conduct research was granted. The districts selected differ in a number of areas including the way each is staff currently utilizing social media. The following is a profile of each participating site, principal, and teachers. Pseudonyms are utilized to identify all school, principal and staff member names.

**Cedar High School.** Cedar High School opened in 1988 as a comprehensive high school containing both an academic and vocational component. The school has a student population of over 1350, serving students in grades 9-12. The student ethnic population at the school breaks down as follows: 94% of the student body is classified as being white, 2% are classified as being
multi-racial, 1.5% classified as African-American and 1.5% classified as Hispanic. The socio-economic indicators show that 25% of the student body is classified as low income with 17% on free and/or reduced lunch. Students classified as requiring special education services make up 19% of the student body. The principal of the school oversees a staff of 124 teachers, which results in an 11:1 student to teacher ratio. The school has a ratio of two students per computer with 100% of the classrooms wired for the internet. Currently, 48% of the school’s graduates go on to attend a four year public or private college while 22% of the graduates go onto 2-year colleges and 23% enter the workforce (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2013). To gain a clearer understanding of the school it is important to look at the surrounding community. Please note that all community data was gathered from the Massachusetts State website. The town’s population is at just over 56,000 residents. The per capita income in the town is listed at $23,700.

The districts website’s homepage has evidence of social media use, as a You Tube video is prominently displayed at the top of the page. In addition there is a Cedar Public Schools Google Apps link, as well as a location for parents and guests to sign up to receive the districts e-newsletter. The specific Cedar High School website contains numerous social media tools including a link to the school principal’s blog, a link to “like” the school on Facebook, a link to follow the school’s athletics on Twitter, and two You Tube videos containing relevant school related content. The districts technology plan is also linked off of the school website and states, “Students should not use the following without authorization: Social Networking, Instant Messenger, Chat Rooms and Personal Wireless Devices”. Additional references to social media are made in the plan, including standard language to protect both the students and school. The district’s five year technology plan focuses on the education of students and staff regarding appropriate use and potential dangers associated with social media. The plan also outlines
technology needs that would allow for additional access for students and staff to wireless technology, which would in turn increase the use of social media tools.

The Cedar High School Mission Statement:

*The mission of Cedar High School is to deliver a quality education in a caring, safe, and respectable environment that encourages a diverse student body to become independent, critical thinkers and productive citizens in a changing society.*

**Principal Tink.** The first study participant was Principal Pamela Tink. Ms. Tink is in her 8th year as principal at Cedar High School. Prior to taking on this role she was a principal at a smaller high school for 3 ½ years and before becoming an administrator, she taught foreign language for 7 years. She is currently enrolled in a doctoral program, which led to her first exposure to social media. When she started in the doctoral program, her classmates were utilizing Facebook to communicate. This prompted Ms. Tink to create her own Facebook page so she could maintain communication with her classmates. Ms. Tink has continued to become more comfortable with social media and has created a Facebook page and Twitter account for Cedar High School and utilizes both of these tools to share information with stakeholder and publically recognize and acknowledge student and team success. At Cedar High School, the administration utilizes social media; however, it does not require teachers to use these tools. There is no mandate for the utilization of social media by teachers and utilization of these tools is voluntary.

Ms. Tink’s excitement was visible throughout our discussion. She is proud of the use of technology and social media at her school and feels the district has been very supportive of her efforts in this area. She states, “Cedar is ahead of the curve when it comes to technology.” She then offered support of this statement sharing how a teacher broke her foot during one of the
recent snowstorms and has been utilizing Skype to teach her class every day while she is at home. The district has also asked Ms. Tink to communicate information via the school’s Twitter account. This has come in handy during mass power outages and during inclement weather.

Ms. Tink feels that both parents and students are utilizing these tools on a regular basis to communicate and has encouraged educational use by updating the school’s electronics policy. Cedar High School now has “electronic free zones”, which are designated areas where students are prohibited from using technology, but does allow for cell phone use in areas like the cafeteria, hallways and in classes that are using them for the lesson. While she is excited about the use of social media, Ms. Tink also feels that these tools have been detrimental to student’s communication skills citing a perceived deterioration of skills in both face-to-face conversation and phone use and etiquette. Overall, Ms. Tink is very happy about the use of social media in her school. There have been minimal behavioral incidents and negative experiences associated with the school’s use of these tools. The overall feedback from stakeholders has been positive and she feels teachers, despite initial hesitancy and concerns are minimally impacted. Principal Tink assisted with the selection of staff members to assist in the study.

The researcher has known Principal Tink professionally for a year prior to the study, frequently communicating with her electronically, but never meeting her in person prior to the interview. The interview was conducted in her office, located in the front of the school. Her office was spacious, comfortable, and covered in student work. Pamela seemed at ease and eager to participate in the study despite numerous interruptions from students seeking an audience.

Ms. Tucci. Ms. Susan Tucci is a ninth year math teacher at Cedar High School. She has been at the school for the past eight years after teaching one year of math at the middle school level. Currently, she teaches upper level math courses to both junior and senior students. She
began utilizing social media in her classroom this past year and is passionate about how it has impacted both her students and the curriculum.

Prior to this school year Ms. Tucci taught in a traditional manner; however, after purchasing an I-Pad over the summer she began to experiment and research ways in which both technology and social media can enhance her instruction. She currently utilizes Doceri, which is an application (app) that connects her I Pad to her classroom overhead projector and whiteboard. This allows Ms. Tucci to circulate the classroom and record notes and sample problems on her I Pad, which allows the students to see the work projected on the whiteboard. Students are also often asked to complete sample problems using the I Pad and projector. At the conclusion of each class, Ms. Tucci tweets the notes and sample problems completed during class using Doceri as well as homework assignments directly to her students who follow her on Twitter.

Ms. Tucci feels that social media has allowed her to have improved relationships with her students and has observed increases in both class participation and homework completion. While she is new to social media, she appreciates that the district has not pressured staff members to utilize this technology and feels that sharing with her department and other colleagues was more effective than a district mandate to use these tools.

The researcher had not met Ms. Tucci prior to the interview. The interview was held in her classroom and she was at her desk while the researcher was seated at a nearby student desk. Ms. Tucci was comfortable and opened up throughout the interview and her excitement regarding the use of social media in her classroom came through in her responses to a number of the questions.
**Ms. Burne.** Ms. Alyssa Burne has been a history and psychology teacher at Cedar High School for the past 12 years. She is very involved in the school community, being an active participant in the school’s smaller learning communities, senior project, and advisory committee in addition to acting as senior class advisor. These many roles have assisted Ms. Burne in establishing positive relationships with her students. These connections are very important to her both professionally and personally and her utilization of Twitter in her classes allows these relationships to grow and expand beyond the school day.

Ms. Burne frequently utilizes Twitter to communicate with her students beyond the school day and to collaborate with other educational professionals on a number of relevant issues. She feels that Twitter allows students to contact her after school hours with questions and extends the school day allowing her to share additional information related to the classroom content. She cited examples of students asking content questions and also tweeting her videos and quotes related to the current unit they were working on in class. Beyond the connection between students and curriculum, Ms. Burne utilizes Twitter to connect with other educational professionals throughout the world. This connection has led to a number of collaborative lessons between Ms. Burne and other teachers. Her students recently completed a unit on 9/11, which was created and completed in conjunction with seven other teachers throughout the country. The aim of the unit was to show how location can dictate how individuals receive information, which results in the same experience being viewed differently based on a number of variables.

Ms. Burne feels that social media tools provide a new avenue for teachers to engage students. She appreciates the fact that the use of social media was not a mandate from the district and that these tools can be utilized based off of individual teacher comfort levels. Ms. Burne
enjoys using social media and recognizes the positive impact she feels that its use has had on students.

The researcher had not met Ms. Burne prior to the interview. The interview was held in her classroom and both participants were seated at student desks. Ms. Burne was confident and clear with both her answers and feelings regarding social media use in the school.

**Bay Middle School.** Bay Middle School has a student population of just over 837 serving grades 6-8. The school opened in 1960 and contains a student population consisting of 97% white, with an equal percentage (under one percent) of students representing a variety of different ethnicities. The socio-economic make-up of the school shows that 6% of the student body is identified as being low-income with the same percentage receiving free/reduced lunch. Students who have been identified as requiring special education services make up 12% of the population. The school employs 61.5 teachers, which results in a 13.8:1 student to teacher ratio. The school has 2.5 students per computer and 100% of the classrooms are wired with the internet. The school is in a community of just over 15,000 people and the per capita income in the town is just over $40,000.

The Bay Middle School webpage makes no reference to social media on the homepage. There is a link to “teacher pages” which allows access to teacher webpages by name. These individual teacher webpages provide links to some social media webpages that the teachers utilize in class. The sites include Goggle Docs and Edmodo as well as relevant web links and course related documents. The school district’s homepage provides a link for Google Calendar, Google Drive, Moodle Tools and also hosts a You Tube clip depicting the construction of the new high school. The middle school webpage provides minimal evidence of social media utilization, while the district webpage has evidence of social media. The Bay Middle School
student handbook prohibits the use of personal electronic devices during the school day unless under the direct supervision of a classroom teacher. Social media is not directly referred to in the student handbook. The district technology plan is available on the district website and it states that the district must provide “maximum learning opportunities for all students so that that they may become effective communicators and responsible collaborators who are well prepared to enter the global community.” While the district acknowledges the need to prepare students to communicate effectively in the global community, it does not reference whether students and staff are being trained to use or are utilizing social media to meet this goal. The only mention of social media involves the need to educate both faculty and students on bullying and dangers associated with these platforms, stating, “Bay Public Schools educates teachers and students about appropriate online behavior. Topics include cyber-bullying, potential risks related to networking sites and chat rooms, and strategies for dealing with these issues.”

The Bay Middle School Mission Statement:

The Mission of the Bay Middle School is to provide an educational program of the highest quality to enable all students to develop to their full potential intellectually, emotionally, morally, ethically, physically, and socially.

Principal Proper. Mr. Greg Proper is the principal of Bay Middle School. He has been the leader at this school for four years. Prior to starting as principal at Bay Middle School, Mr. Proper substitute taught in the local school districts while waiting for his Massachusetts Educators License to process, resulting from his move from Missouri to Massachusetts in 2007. While in Missouri, Mr. Proper held a variety of education positions. These included being an elementary school teacher, a guidance counselor, athletic director, and assistant principal at a
middle school. At Bay Middle School, Principal Proper utilizes Twitter as a communication tool with parents, Tweeting the daily school announcements; however, many of his teachers utilize Edmodo, along with Twitter and other technologies to enhance instruction and communication with students.

Mr. Proper, when asked how comfortable he is on a personal level with social media, states, “On a scale to 1 to 10, I am an 8.” Mr. Proper then shared that while he has both a Facebook and Twitter account, he rarely utilizes social media for non-professional reasons. He did indicate that he has been planning to use Twitter more as a tool to communicate with the school faculty.

Mr. Proper was clearly proud of social media use in his school. He acknowledges the potential problems that can result from social media use, but encourages his staff to take risks. He also acknowledges that education is changing and information is readily assessable and that there is no need for the relaying of factual information (which he refers to as Trivial Pursuit) in the classroom and has told his teachers, “If students can Google an answer on a worksheet in 30 seconds, lose it.” This view summarizes his approach to social media as an educational leader. Mr. Proper feels global schools need to focus on student collaboration, information sharing (he states that no student should learn in isolation), debating and critiquing, leading to the use of higher order thinking skills. Mr. Proper assisted with the selection of staff members to assist in the study.

The researcher had not met Mr. Proper prior to the interview. The interaction was very informal and comfortable, and Mr. Proper seemed more relaxed and forthcoming as the interview progressed. The interview took place in his office, which was located in the front of the
school. The office was small and dark; however, it had pictures of his family as well as school documents posted on the walls.

**Ms. Chevs.** Ms. Amanda Chevs is a fifth year teacher who is currently teaching grade 8 social studies at Bay Middle School. She has recently completed her Master’s Degree and is currently enrolled in a CAGS program for educational leadership. Ms. Chevs is very confident with her use of social media and has utilized it since she was in college. She stated that she has utilized social media tools her entire adult life, both professionally and personally, citing Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Edmodo as the sites she most commonly uses.

Ms. Chevs states that she has developed her own professional social media skills. Her interest in social media really peaked at an educational conference a few years back when a speaker introduced her to the educational benefits of Twitter. She returned from this conference and immediately shared what she had learned regarding the free content and resources that were available with the school principal, Mr. Proper. This started a conversation regarding how the school could utilize Twitter. Ms. Chevs continued to refine her social media and technology skills relating to education and become the staff “go to person” for teacher questions, issues and those in need of assistance relating to technology. The district also began to utilize Ms. Chevs as a trainer in the “train-the-trainer” model of professional development. With this role came additional technology resources and this past year she was given a cart of I Pads, which she had to train herself to use.

As one of the schools de facto point persons regarding technology, Ms. Chevs feels both the excitement of working in a district that is progressive with technology and the use of social media and also the frustration of having it not move at a pace that best meets her needs. She
recognized the potential of social media tools in education and acknowledges the positive impact it has on her students and classroom, but also feels that the staff would benefit from a more structured and consistent technology training program.

The researcher had not met Ms. Chevs prior to the interview. The interview was held in her classroom and she was at her desk while the researcher was seated at a student desk. Ms. Chevs seemed guarded at first, but soon became more comfortable as the interview progressed. Her passion and enthusiasm relating to social media and technology tools was evident throughout the interview.

**Mr. Yuke.** Mr. Steve Yuke is an eighth year social studies teacher who joined the Bay Middle School staff five years ago. He frequently utilizes technology in his classroom, enjoying both the challenges that come with “toying around with technologies in the classroom” and the impact he observes social media tools having on his students. He first began using social media on a personal level when his wife introduced him to Facebook, which he joined to connect with former contacts and friends. Professionally, his first utilization of social media tools came as a coach of the high school football team. The coaches and student-athletes were communicating through “Twitter” and Mr. Yuke wanted to participate in this communication. He now uses Twitter and Edmodo in his classrooms to for both communication and sharing of information.

Mr. Yuke cites the expansion of the classroom walls and peer collaboration as two major benefits of utilizing social media. He has observed his students collaborating on assignments using social media and his own communication with students goes on well past the conclusion of the school day. He has also observed peer competition and encouragement on Edmodo, which he feels makes the class more enjoyable for his students.
While Mr. Yuke acknowledges that utilizing social media tools in an educational setting is not for all teachers, he feels there is a mix of both excitement and trepidation among the Bay Middle School staff. He worries about the number of applications the district utilizes and would like to see more clarity regarding the different applications and administrative expectations relating to each platform. He does appreciate that the implementation of social media tools and technology was voluntary for staff as it reduced anxiety and allowed for risk taking from the staff members looking to use these tools.

The researcher had not met Mr. Yuke prior to the interview however, we soon realized we had a number of common friends and were both alumni of the same college. These similarities allowed for a very relaxed and calm interview. The interview was held in Mr. Yuke’s classroom with Mr. Yuke at his desk and the researcher stationed at a large desk connected to the teacher desk. The classroom was lined with student work and an I-Pad cart was close to the desk.

**Green High School.** Green High School has a student population of just over 557 students in grades 9-12. The school opened in 1958 and a new 7-12 high school adjacent to the current building is slated to open at the start of the 2013 school year. The student population consists of 95% of students characterized as white, with roughly 2% of students representing African-American, Asian and Hispanic populations. The socio-economic make-up of the school shows that 15% of the student body is identified as being low-income with the same percentage receiving free/reduced lunch. Students who have been identified as requiring special education services make up 10% of the population. The school employs 36 teachers, which make up a 15.3:1 student to teacher ratio. The school has 2.7 students per computer ratio and 100% of the classrooms are wired with the internet. The new high school will be fully equipped with state of
the art technology, which will impact these numbers in the future. The school is in a community of roughly 13,800 people and the per capita income in the town is just over $23,532.

The Green High School website has a link to sign up for the school’s Facebook page. The homepage also provides links to individual teacher’s webpages. These pages are updated independently and offer a window into the teacher’s use of the social media tools. The district’s homepage provides no links or mention of social media tools. This is reflected in the teacher and principal interviews, which note that the use of social media is restricted to the school and consistent utilization of these tools has not occurred at the district level. The school handbook prohibits the use of cell phones and portable electronic devices during the school day and the third violation of this rule results in suspension. Social media is not referenced in the student handbook. The district technology plan is similar to Bay Middle Schools. The mention of social media is in relation to student safety: “The district educates teachers and students about appropriate online behavior. Topics include cyberbullying, potential risks related to social networking sites and chat rooms, and strategies for dealing with these issues.”

The Green High School Mission Statement:

At Green High School, our mission is to create a positive learning environment in which all members work collaboratively to pursue excellence and to maintain high standards in academic and civic pursuits, and in which all members promote respect for others, develop skills in a variety of disciplines, and encourage life-long learning.

Principal Corvo. Mr. Ted Corvo is currently in his seventh year as Principal of Green High School. Prior to becoming principal, Mr. Corvo was an assistant principal at another high
school for six years and taught Spanish for the six years prior to that. Mr. Corvo is very enthusiastic about social media and technology and is looking forward to the new school opening, which will allow the staff to utilize more technological tools to enhance teaching and learning. Mr. Corvo utilizes Facebook and Twitter both personally and professionally. He has separate personal and professional accounts with both applications.

Mr. Corvo was and remains an advocate for social media use at Green High School. Roughly four years ago, he took note of the extensive use of Facebook by Green High School students. He then requested permission from his superintendent to create a school Facebook page. After two years of consistent asking, she allowed him to set up a school page to communicate with the community. Last year he noticed students migrating from Facebook to Twitter and began to use Twitter both professionally to communicate information to stakeholders and personally to create a professional learning network. He continues to attend conferences to learn about social media and has connected with a number of professionals and peers who use social media tools for a variety of reasons.

Mr. Corvo recognizes that the decision to utilize social media tools came from the top down at Green High School. He, along with his vice principal, began to use Twitter and even held a voluntary professional development workshop after school for teachers who were interested. Mr. Corvo believes that the use of these tools has benefitted the school in many ways and quoted an administrator from New Jersey when discussing the benefits stating, “You need to tell your own story or someone else will”.

Mr. Corvo was observantly passionate about the use of social media to enhance education throughout the interview. He was visibly animated in discussing his beliefs regarding social media use in education. He shared his belief that social media tools are here to stay and while the
names of the applications may change, the use of social media will help transform education. With close to 400 Twitter followers, including roughly 75% of his staff, Mr. Corvo is the leading advocate for the use of social media tools in his school. Mr. Corvo assisted with the selection of staff members to assist in the study.

The researcher has known Principal Corvo both personally and professionally for about seven years. We have a common friend and have been in attendance at the same conferences on numerous occasions. The interview was conducted in his office, located in the front of the school. The office was spacious and comfortable and the interview was both relaxed and direct based on our prior relationship. Mr. Corvo is very passionate about social media and feels that it is both relevant and needed in today’s schools.

**Mr. Loaf.** Mr. Fred Loaf is the STEM department head at Green High School. Beyond his administrative duties, he also teaches three Science courses. He utilizes social media in both roles. He uses Twitter to communicate with his department members to share ideas throughout the summer and also utilizes Twitter in class as a means to increase student engagement. While he utilizes social media professionally, he does not use it personally beyond the infrequent checking of his Facebook page. Mr. Loaf has been teaching Science for 14 years with his last seven years spent at Green High School.

Mr. Loaf feels as though the district has come a long way in a short period of time when it comes to the utilization of social media. He commented on how he attended a staff meeting four years ago when, after a teacher incident on Facebook came to light, teachers were told that they should not have professional or personal Facebook pages. Since this time, the school has a Facebook page and over half of the staff is on Twitter for a variety of reasons. He believes social
media is a great tool to enhance communication with students and his students have benefitted from his Twitter use as both a classroom teacher and soccer coach. In the role of coach, his tweets allow for quick sharing of information with parents and students regarding time and location of practices eliminating the need to call each individual.

Mr. Loaf feels that the implementation of social media tools at Green High School has been successful for two reasons. The first was that the school principal, Mr. Corvo, was modeling its use and encouraging staff to take a risk and try it and the second reason for its success was that it was a voluntary initiative. He adds that once some teachers started using social media and talking about it, other teachers quickly became interested and its use spread among staff. Teachers who were initially reluctant to try social media are now on Twitter and enjoying the experience.

Ms. Noe. Ms. Noe has been teaching for seven years at Green High School. She currently teaches freshman as well as Advanced Placement courses in ELA. Personally, she is comfortable with social media, although she does not have a Facebook or personal Twitter account. She uses Twitter professionally and has recently started utilizing Instagram to share photos.

Ms. Noe utilizes social media to communicate with her students beyond the school day. She will Tweet out news articles and video links related to topics that are being discussed in her classes. She shared a recent activity in which her students were asked to watch the President give a speech from home and Tweet examples of rhetoric from his speech. She felt that this assignment was a great way to cover material in an environment familiar and not intimidating to her students.
Ms. Noe also utilizes Twitter as a coach. She will often Tweet scores and give individual players something she refers to as a “Twitter Shout out,” which is when she shares accomplishments and photos of students who have gone above and beyond on her team. She has received great feedback regarding her use of Twitter from both her students and fellow teachers. She feels it has allowed the staff and students to stay involved with the different teams, clubs, and school activities, which has resulted in improved school spirit and increased communication. She cited a specific example of how she is aware of the events and news in the school music program due to the music director’s use of Twitter.

Summary

The three participating sites all are utilizing social media tools to fit their own school and student needs. The socio-economic status of each town, the availability of resources, and the philosophies of each school’s principal and district leadership has impacted the implementation process at each school. None of the participating schools utilized a formal implementation plan for social media, with examples of both principal led and teacher driven change present at the participating sites. While the processes were different at each participating school, the resulting utilization of social media tools is consistent. Increased communication, student engagement, staff collaboration, and professional networking are among the benefits of social media listed by the study participants.

Organization of Results

Denison and Mishra’s Organizational Culture and Organizational Effectiveness Theory (1990 & 1995) will provide the theoretical framework for examining the traits that were present when principals led the implementation of social media into their schools. According to Denison and Mishra, the presence of one or more of the four identified traits is critical to organizational
effectiveness, therefore the codes utilized in chapter four will be built from this theory. The four traits will serve as a priori codes and additional themes that emerge will be used as sub-codes of the four traits. The four traits used to present the data are: consistency, mission, involvement and adaptability. Under each of the four main themes, the subthemes that were created are as follows: Utilization of school core values, impact on school culture, shared expectations among staff, Principal’s vision, organizational rationale, staff empowerment, training, response to external needs, response to internal needs and organizational learning.

**Organizational Consistency.** The consistency trait reflects the impact a strong school culture, led by a shared system of beliefs, values, and symbols, can have on organizational effectiveness. Each school has a significantly different school culture that is reflective of the school and community values. While each district acknowledges the need to continue to recognize and implement technology, the degrees of commitment and use vary based on various factors, one of which is the culture of the school. A principal has a large impact on a school’s culture (Fullan, 2002) and the participating school leaders are strong advocates for the use of technology and social media tools and have worked to create a culture which allows teachers to take risks and utilize these tools to improve both school and classroom culture. The interviews and document reviews provided insight into these areas allowing for a look at how the school culture and values impacted the implementation and use of social media.

**Utilizing the school’s core values to drive implementation.** A school’s core values are developed through a process that involves school and community stakeholders with the goal of determining the educational direction and character traits that serve as the foundation for the school and its students. The core values serve as a basis for school decision making and outline the school’s commitment to students and the surrounding community. Core values are required
for New England high schools to receive accreditation through NEASC and serve as a compliment to the traditional school mission statement at most Massachusetts high schools.

Examining the school’s core values and how they relate to the implementation of social media requires a review of the core value documents from each school. All three participating schools have core value statements available on the school websites, and each was found posted at or near the entrance of each school building. Many of the documents were long and therefore only parts of each school’s core value statements will be reviewed:

Cedar High School Core Beliefs Statement

*The mission of Cedar High School is to deliver a rigorous, comprehensive education and expose students to authentic experiences in a caring, safe, and respectful environment. Cedar High School welcomes a diverse student body and prepares students to become critical thinkers, productive citizens, and independent learners in a changing society. The Cedar High School student is expected to contribute to a culture of learning and lead by example.*

The Cedar High School core value statement was rewritten earlier in the school year in preparation for the upcoming accreditation visit from NEASC. The value statement has addition subheadings outlining specific indicators required of successful Cedar High School students. The following is one of the academic indicators:

*Successful Cedar High School students will....use technology to acquire, create, and share information ethically and effectively*

This indicator is directly related to the school’s views about the importance of educational technology and social media. Principal Tink stated that she felt that the core value statement
aligned with the school’s use of social media and added that the skills acquired through the use of social media also relate to lifelong learning and 21st century skills. Both teacher participants from Cedar High School shared Principal Tink’s views. Ms. Tucci stated she believed that the statement reflected the identified need to “encourage students to communicate tactfully through social media because it is such a large part of their lives now. Kids are coming under fire about things they post on Twitter and Facebook.” Ms. Burne believed communicating effectively though technology is also very important and also felt it valuable to model the appropriate professional uses of social media for her students. The Cedar High School core values and beliefs statement clearly recognizes and promotes the use of social media in the school and serves as a foundation for the use of these tools by both school administration and teachers.

Bay Middle School Core Value Statement

We are a school that achieves its results through a collaborative effort of students, teachers, administrators, support staff, families, and community.

We believe all children can learn.

We hold high expectations for all members of our school community.

We recognize, respect, and value diversity.

We believe education is a shared responsibility where mutual respect is fundamental.

We believe character is an integral part of our school culture. We define character as:

Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Integrity, Caring, and Citizenship.

We believe a clean, safe, caring environment is a prerequisite to learning.

The Bay Middle School core value statement makes no reference to technology or social media. Two of the participants from Bay Middle School stated that they felt that the utilization of social
media tools did align with the schools core values statements and/or mission statement and both cited 21st century skills; however, neither the school’s mission statement nor core value statements make any mention of 21st century skills or technology. Therefore, the school’s core value statement had little to do with the implementation and utilization of social media at Bay Middle School.

Green High School Core Value Statement

Green High School has student learning expectations that accompany their core values statements:

LEARNING EXPECTATIONS: Upon graduation from Green High School students should be able to:

1. Acquire information through reading, listening and observing.

2. Communicate through speaking, writing, the arts, and other means of expression.

3. Demonstrate high-level thinking skills.

4. Identify, define, analyze and solve problems.

5. Use technology relevant to today’s world.

6. Demonstrate the qualities of good citizenship and value participation in school and community activities.

7. Exhibit appropriate personal and social behavior.

The learning expectations recognize the need for students to use technology which is “relevant to today’s world”, which is interpreted as including the use of social media tools. When asked about the alignment between social media and the school’s core values, Mr. Loaf stated that he felt that the Green High School is trying to produce students who are college and career ready
and who are 21st century learners. He adds that social media tools are used in businesses on a regular basis and that “what is appropriate and what is not is one of the biggest concerns”. Mr. Corvo also stated that the school’s core values were created to reflect the focus that Green High School has on students being college and career ready and that the use of social media falls within that category. The term “college and career ready” came up throughout the interviews at Green High School and is clearly a value the school believes in and works towards.

While the core value statements at the three participating schools do not directly mention social media, it is inferred in the two high school’s core value statements. Both recognize the need for students to be able to effectively use and communicate with technology, which in today’s world means the utilization of social media tools. The evidence reveals that the core value statements recognize the importance of student’s utilizing relevant technology, which in the case of the high schools equates to the use of social media.

**Impact on school culture.** Gaging a school’s culture throughout the change process is an important step for any educational leader. The implementation of technology and social media can result in heightened levels of anxiety among staff members, leading to push back and ultimately resistance. Each participant discussed the school’s culture and climate in relation to the utilization of social media tools. While the implementation of social media tools did, in some cases, impact school culture, the theme’s focus will be on each school’s culture during the implementation process.

At Green High School, both Ms. Noe and Mr. Loaf commented that the implementation of social media was met with some initial resistance; however, the principal’s enthusiasm towards social media and his modeling the use of social media tools impacted the school’s culture and reduced
staff resistance. Mr. Loaf stated, “There are people willing to put themselves out there a little bit and know that the boss is going to say...hey I'm OK with you taking some risks…. Ted was really on board with it right away.” Ms. Noe agreed with this view when she shared,

I think a lot of people started off really negative about it and slowly more and more teachers got Twitter and started using social networking...they kind of felt more comfortable using it...like it was kind of like people not using Twitter became the minority...as opposed to the people not using Twitter being the minority. More and more people jumped on board even those who were slightly negative about it came around.

While the use of these tools was voluntary at Green High School, it started as a top down approach; however, the trust in the principal and his encouragement and support allowed the use of these tools to spread among staff and become more of a teacher driven initiative. The staff members who were resistant to social media at first soon became outnumbered by the users, which impacted and shaped the school culture as it relates to the implementation of social media.

Cedar High School’s foray into social media, similar to that at Green High School, began at the administrative level. The Principal and technology director at the time decided to utilize Facebook as a method to improve communicate with students and parents in a platform they frequent and were familiar with. Over time the success of the Cedar High School Facebook page led to the creation of a Cedar High School Twitter page. Soon after the school began to utilize Twitter as a communication device, teachers started to utilize Twitter in their classrooms for instruction and to increase communication with students after school hours. However, no formal social media implementation plan was created at Cedar High School and therefore the use of
social media by teachers was voluntary. Principal Tink reiterated staff’s reaction to the move towards social media stating, “There really wasn’t any resistance. I have not had one thing in my career that has not had resistance. There is nothing...no one cares…they just use it.” The lack of an administrative mandate in addition to both school and district administration utilizing Twitter allowed social media to spread organically and have minimal impact on the school’s culture. Ms. Tucci did feel that there was a cultural impact at the classroom level stating that she has a stronger relationship with her students due to her use of social media as a learning tool. It is her belief that the relationships are built on a respect and appreciation the students have for her being open to “their methods of learning.” She added, “I have kids that have a better relationship with me this year than in previous years, just because they can talk to me on Twitter”. The impact social media tools had on her classroom culture was a theme Ms. Tucci referred to numerous times throughout our interview.

Social media has had little impact on the school culture at Cedar High School. The voluntary nature of its use in addition to the support offered at the varying degrees of administration allow the teachers to explore and experiment with these tools on an at will basis. The cultural impact at Cedar High School occurred mainly at the classroom level between teachers and students.

At Bay Middle School, staff use of instructional technology initially came from a mandate from the superintendent. She stated that as part of the teacher evaluation system she wanted all staff members to “dip their toe in” and experiment a bit with classroom technology. Ms. Chevs shared that this caused fear and resistance among staff. Mr. Yuke added that, “Two years ago we got bombarded with it. We were using X2, a website, Google Docs, everyone got flooded with it. People starting complaining and administration started backing off and making things more
voluntary.” This decision allowed teachers to move at their pace in relation to personal comfort levels. While the anxiety was reduced, the Bay Middle School staff still feels that an increase in expectations and direction from administration would be beneficial. Both teacher participants expressed frustration with the lack of district professional development aimed at enhancing social media and technology skills. Ms. Chevs shared that the district has been supportive of purchasing some materials, but has not provided the support and professional development needed to accompany the materials stating,

The serious flaws with how we pushed things through could be reexamined. Not necessarily enough professional development and I'm not sure, without devoting a ton of time, there is no quick fix for that because there is such a need for differentiated instruction with all the different teachers.

Mr. Yuke also felt more training and direction would benefit the staff and ultimately the students. He shared that the number of applications used in the district to can cause confusion and frustration among staff members. He listed the school website, Google Docs, X2 (grading program), Edmodo in addition to social media sites as platforms recognized by the district and that there are a number of places that teachers have to go to “get stuff”. There was frustration to varying degrees among the staff at Bay Middle School regarding technology. The district has supported the use of social media through both mandates and purchases of materials; however, the lacks of direction and training, in addition to the number of platforms being used, have caused anxiety.
Changes and new initiatives in a public school can often impact a school’s culture. The implementation and utilization of social media tools impacted each participating site in a different way. While the impact was positive at two of the sites, the impact at the third site did not seem as upbeat.

**Shared expectations among staff.** Denison and Mishra state that shared organizational expectations among staff members results in increased communication and improves the ability of members in the organization to adapt to changes and evolution. While each district and school principal views social media differently, the expectations for staff seemed to be consistent. Staff members were allowed to progress at their own comfort level and encouraged to take risks regarding classroom use of social media knowing that they had the support of the school principal.

At Cedar High School, the expectation is for teachers to experiment with social media tools based on personal comfort level. Ms. Burne believed that this expectation is a reason for the lack of pushback from staff. “No one is saying you must have a Twitter, must have a Facebook, must use Edmodo...it is really been if you are comfortable”. Ms. Tucci also felt that the lack of an administrative mandate was beneficial as it allowed a teacher who was bold or comfortable enough with technology to go forward. When referring to increasing teacher effectiveness with technology, she added that, “The pairing off and sharing with department members is more effective and that's what we have been doing.” The sharing within each department and through teacher word of mouth has been an effective means for the spread of technology in each of the schools. It has eliminated the dynamic related to teacher age and experience level that is often associated with use of technology and therefore made an administrative mandate related to the use of technology ineffective.
The same expectation for teacher utilization of social media tools is in place at Green High School. With the principal encouraging the use of these tools, the staff members who are interested in using social media feel encouraged and utilize tools such as Twitter to enhance instruction and to assist with communication for clubs and athletics. Principal Corvo was pleasantly surprised how, despite the lack of an administrative decree, the utilization of social media began to grow among staff. “People who I never thought or were reluctant...latched on pretty well. Interesting to see people who at 10:15 on a Saturday night would tweet out an educational piece of information that you never thought they would tweet out.”

At Bay Middle School the expectation regarding instructional technology began as administrative mandate to staff members from the superintendent. After facing resistance from some staff regarding this request, the school took a different approach in dealing with social media. The school allowed the use of these tools to be voluntary. This approach has resulted in more teachers utilizing social media tools in their classrooms and staff collaborating on uses and problem solving. Ms. Chevs summarizes the Bay Middle School approach,

They pushed us to try it out to find a safe place...called sandbox...play...it’s OK if it does not work out...have to try something. That was smart. Because the people who were so afraid....once they heard jobs not on the line...they were willing to try it and that removed the fear....fear of jumping in with both feet to something new.

Each participating site took a similar approach in relation to staff expectations regarding the use of social media. The schools allowed teachers to use this technology on a voluntary basis; however, in all three districts formal professional development and support was minimal or
nonexistent and schools relied upon teacher collaboration and sharing. The teachers participating in this study worked their way around these issues; however, it could serve as a potential roadblock to staff members not as progressive or independent regarding the use of technology and social media.

**School Mission and Leadership Vision.** Each school’s mission statements and administrator’s beliefs also had an impact on the implementation of social media. Denison and Mishra state that a school’s mission statement guides the decision making process and defines the organization’s purpose. The Mission Hypothesis emphasizes the importance of the organization’s mission as a shared sense of direction for the organization and its members to follow. It includes organizational strategic direction and intent as well as goals and objectives. The document review and participant interviews reinforced the value of the school’s mission as it relates to the implementation of social media. While the mission did not drive the implementation of social media at the schools, it clearly supported it.

All nine interview participants felt that the school’s mission aligned with the educational uses of social media. However, none of the participants acknowledged that the mission statement was a driving force, or even a reference point, for the implementation of social media at their school. The common notion among teachers was producing students who could utilize 21st century skills and would be college and career ready. Ironically, these terms are not mentioned in the mission statement of any of the three participating schools.

**Principal’s vision for social media.** Each school principal’s vision relating to the implementation and use of social media impacted the process and utilization by staff members. Each of the school’s principals is a strong advocate for the use of educational technology as well
as social media and created and communicated this vision to staff members at their respective schools.

Principal Tink of Cedar High School had a shared vision with the school’s educational technology teacher regarding the importance of embracing, “The student’s generation” and enhancing the means of communication. An outside the box thinker, Ms. Tink proposed the creation of a school Facebook page to better communicate with her students and parents. She attended a conference on student safety and the topic centered on the importance of parents keeping a closer eye on their children through the monitoring of Facebook pages. She then sought and received district approval to pilot a school Facebook page to communicate school events and happenings. The Facebook page, in addition to her Twitter feed, has served as a great way to share information, praise and thoughts with a variety of stakeholders. Ms. Tink’s vision regarding the use of social media is centered on increasing communication between herself (representing the school) and the students and parents of Cedar High School. She also believes that utilizing these tools will assist in the creation of a learning environment that is relevant to this generation of students.

Principal Proper of Bay High School believes that social media and technology will prepare his students for life after attending public schools. He feels that learning is no longer done in isolation and states that “The business world encourages collaboration and Edmodo, blogs, etc. allow access to teacher 24-7”. He adds that these tools also encourage and often require student collaboration. Mr. Proper is a believer that teaching must evolve to meet the societal changes we are experiencing and will often tell staff members if a student can “Google an answer on a worksheet in 30 seconds…they should lose the question”. Principal Proper allows his teachers to take the lead on the implementation and utilization of social media. He
feels that his role is to support and encourage staff use which allows his teacher leaders interested in social media to lead. He stated “I stay out of their way, but offer support”. He has utilized a pro-technology philosophy when hiring new staff members as well, making certain they are knowledgeable regarding social media and willing to utilize these tools in the classroom. Principal Proper believes that a combination of hiring the right people and supporting his teacher leaders who utilize social media will lead to increased use in the classroom and assist in preparing students for life after high school.

Principal Corvo is passionate about the use of social media at Green High School. He utilizes these tools to communicate with staff, parents and the Green High School community while encouraging staff to use social media as an educational and communication tool to assist students. He acknowledges the fact that students can relate to social media and it provides another “tool in the teacher toolbox”. Mr. Corvo also uses social media as a way to grow as an educator and an administrator. He utilizes tools, like Twitter, “To build my own personal network; I saw the benefits of the free professional development and the free online learning support that you can get from an educational standpoint.” He also acknowledges how engaged students and staff members have become through the use of Twitter within the school. He encourages staff members to use social media and it has grown within the school to well over 50% of the staff utilizing Twitter for a number of reasons. Mr. Corvo has been an active leader in the use of social media and constantly posts information on Twitter. The posts range from half time scores of a game he is attending, to a holiday greetings for staff or acknowledgements of individual student and class achievements. This has created a respectful community of Twitter users at the school and allowed staff members to take risks in their own classrooms regarding the use of social media to enhance instruction. Mr. Corvo’s vision of social media was complex. He
viewed these tools as a way to enhance classroom instruction, increase communication among stakeholders and as a way to increase professional learning for both him and the Green High School staff.

**Organizational rationale/goals for implementing social media.** Two of the common themes that emerged at the participating schools relate to the rationale for implementing social media. The participants all acknowledged the positive impact social media could have on enhancing teaching and learning and improving communication among stakeholders. Each of the principals consistently cited these two areas throughout their interviews and teachers echoed these uses.

For each of the principals, the impact social media has on teaching and learning revolves around preparing students to be both college and career ready. To accomplish this, they communicated a need to expand the classroom walls, teach students how to properly access and validate information, and understanding the impact social media has on both society and themselves. Mr. Corvo stated that “cell phones, internet, texting, Tweeting, it is all part of what this generation is doing and one of our jobs is to use this as a teachable moment”. Ms. Tink also shared her beliefs regarding impact social media can have on the students and the school. She shared,

Benefits are that we are embracing the student’s generation. When I go to presentations about student safety, tragedies, etc., they tell us to stay on top of your children...parents are getting Facebook pages to watch their kids, why not give them an opportunity to view what’s going on here.
Mr. Proper recognized examples of how teachers are utilizing social media in the classroom at Bay Middle School and shared how the annual student research papers are being done this school year using only Edmodo and Moodle Tools. He stated, “Nobody learns anything in isolation, the business world encourages collaboration and Edmodo, blogs etc. allows teachers to teach 24-7.” The idea that social media can positively impact student learning and the learning environment is shared among the three school leaders and a driving force behind the implementation and use of social media at each school.

An increase in stakeholder communication is also a benefit of implementing social media at each school. At Bay Middle School, the daily announcements are Tweeted out each morning. This allows middle school parents/caregivers to be aware of the dates and times of activities their students are participating in and keep current with school news and events. The Facebook pages and Twitter feeds from both Green High School and Cedar High School serve a similar purpose. They allow announcements, athletic scores, student activities and school news to be communicated effortlessly. Ms. Tink, in sharing how communication at the school has evolved, cited an example of rumors that were circulating regarding a potential threat of violence at the school correlating with the End of Days on the Mayan Calendar. She posted updates on her blog to keep parents informed and also Tweeted links to her blog to let parents know when updates were made. The feedback from parents regarding the constant communication was overwhelmingly positive. Ms. Tink also shared information regarding school closings during a recent string of snow storms in the region. “There was no power and people had no phones…they were depending on it (Tweets)”. At Green High School, Mr. Corvo’s use of social media is consistent with that of Ms. Tink; however he also uses Twitter to communicate with staff. The communications range from acknowledgements of achievement to shared news,
articles, and educational videos. The staff also utilizes Twitter to pass on personal information. An example cited by Mr. Corvo included a staff member passing on a child’s college acceptance. This resulted in congratulatory Tweets from peers and resulted in staff members sharing information about the college with each other through Tweets. Increased communication was a major factor each school implemented social media and evolution of this communication at each school is ongoing.

**Stakeholder Involvement.** The involvement hypothesis extends beyond the concept of staff member involvement in the decision making process. The theory also states, “High levels of involvement and participation create a sense of ownership and responsibility. Out of this ownership grows a greater commitment to an organization and a growing capacity to operate under conditions of greater autonomy” (Denison & Mishra, 1009, p. 168). The idea that staff members have the autonomy to take risks and explore the impact social media tools can have in their respective classrooms is invaluable. Staff involvement in the implementation and use of social media is a common theme at each participating site.

**Staff empowerment.** While not part of the decision making process to implement social media, the staff at each of the participating sites were empowered to use social media tools both in and out of the classroom at a pace they designated. This allowed for staff to proceed based on personal comfort levels and take risks with the assurance that the school administration was supportive of forays into social media.

At Bay Middle School the staff has found creative ways to use social media. Ms. Chevs has used social media tools to enhance both her classroom instruction as well as her own practice. “I know I have benefitted in my own teaching practice, so my students have benefitted from the sheer professional development skills I have gleaned from personal learning on
Twitter”. She also appreciates the resources the district has provided teachers to allow them to experiment and explore with social media adding,

But once you get the flood gates open with people trying things and realizing that it was not going to blow up in their faces every time and you got enough of the infrastructure in the district set up so we have wireless hubs everywhere, we have devices, more computers to support them, then it seemed more like OK… I don't feel like you ready to try this… I’ll take a little piece of this for this year and this has been supported by administration.

The support of teachers in both practice and with materials was also noted by Mr. Yuke who described how the school administration has encouraged teachers to experiment with technology, “I like the ways we have done so far, it is more voluntary, if you want to try it, try it.” For Mr. Yuke, Ms. Chevs and other Bay Middle School staff members, the experimentation with technology led them to toy with social media tools in their classroom to increase student engagements, enhance personal learning and increase communication with stakeholders.

The teachers at Green High School were also empowered to utilize social media. The evolution of social media from the initial school Facebook page to more than half the staff utilizing Twitter was led by the school principal, who modeled the use of these tools and also supported and encouraged staff to do the same. Mr. Loaf shared,

It was actually Ted, the principal that brought it in. He started using it... started it with Facebook to have info out there for the public. Then he went to a workshop and came back and was like… they are using Twitter,
it is great, and they are able to respond to things that are going on inside the workshop. Then 4-5 of the staff members got on board with it and it kind of blossomed from there.

Having the confidence that it was accepted and supported by administration led to teachers using it. Both Mr. Loaf and Ms. Noe use social media tools in the classroom to increase engagement and communicate beyond the school day with their students. In addition, both utilize social media as coaches to communicate with athletes and parents and as colleagues to pass on information to other staff members. With well over 30 staff members utilizing Twitter at the school, it has become an accepted way to communicate among faculty, who share school information as well as personal information via Twitter feeds. These feeds impact the culture at the school by allowing the staff to stay on top of school events and colleagues’ personal news.

Cedar High School also provided technology tools for teachers to utilize to enhance instruction. These tools, in conjunction with support from the building principal, have empowered teachers to use social media tools to better meet the needs of students in their classes. Ms. Tucci noted the freedom allotted to teachers when asked about the implementation process that occurred at the school: “Everyone was given the message, here is the technology, do what you can and figure things out. Our Superintendent uses Twitter, our Principal does…It is understood that everyone is welcome to try it.” Through modeling the use of these tools, both district and school administration has allowed teachers to take risks and use social media tools to enhance instruction and increase communication. Both teacher participants utilize social media in a variety of ways. Ms. Tucci utilizes these tools to Tweet out homework assignments and notes from her daily classes. She also uses it to answer student questions beyond the school day. Ms. Burne also responds to student Tweets well after the conclusion of school day and has
collaborated with teachers throughout the country to create a variety of lessons that call for students to interact with peers from the different schools. She also described additional benefits,

I have a good relationship with my students and they send me funny quotes or You Tube videos (on Twitter) relating to what we are doing in class. It allows them to make that connection outside of what we are doing in our 45 minutes together. In the past few weeks, I have got a few You Tube clips pertaining to what we are doing in class. I think it is cool that the kids are making the connections and thinking.

Teacher empowerment is present at all three participating schools. This empowerment was created through administrative support at both the school and district level and in the cases of Green High School and Cedar High School, though the modeling of social media tools by the building principals. The support has allowed social media to evolve differently in each school and in each classroom to best meet the needs of students, parents, staff and the school community.

**Orientation/Training.** Each school lacked professional development and training opportunities for staff members interested in professional growth related to the use of social media. While some of the participating teachers felt that professional development relating to technology and social media would benefit the staff a great deal, others felt it was not as important. The districts are relying on teacher collaboration and mentoring from teacher leaders to help increase the use of social media tools among staff. This has been successful to an extent; however, it has also caused some frustration among teachers.
At Bay Middle School, both Mr. Yuke and Ms. Chevs have taken on leadership roles relating to staff use of technology and social media. While they both appreciate the acknowledgement by administration and peers, it has resulted in some frustration. Mr. Yuke, in reference to the implementation plan at the school stated, “We do not have a very clear process for doing it,” and he referred to one unsuccessful attempt at a training which took place at a staff meeting. “At one faculty meeting everyone had to create a Google Doc and post it to a X. It did not go well as there were a lot of clunky issues”. Principal Proper echoed Mr. Yuke in stating that there was never a formal process at the school; however, he shared that he tries to send six staff members per year to MassCue (A Massachusetts Education Technology Conference) to stay current and allow for the sharing of relevant ideas.

Ms. Chevs has attended the MassCue conference as a representative of Bay Middle School, but feels additional professional development is warranted. Ms. Chevs explains,

We have been using a train the trainer model for any of our technology implantation, which sounds great, has a lot of merit, but is a cheaper solution then some costly training that could take place. The merit is that they peg someone like me or my colleagues that are interested in technology of any kind, train us and we try something and show other people and that person says; well I respect that person as a teacher and will try that. It has proven to be positive for PD in general but I think that the struggle has been that I feel like many schools the technology literacy span/spectrum that people have is so great that we have people that struggle to check their email regularly and open an attachment and they
cannot handle a twitter feed they can’t handle an advanced ...putting something on I-movie.

She added that she feels additional professional development is required and that it needs to include elements of differentiated instruction for the teachers who arrive with different technology and social media skills. She is also discouraged at the amount of time she spends assisting colleagues with rudimentary technology tasks.

Every time I have a prep...I have people popping in here ...the other day an older teacher coming in, and I say older as it seems generationally specific relating to technological literacy, she had a pop up blocker and could not open a PDF and she thought the whole website was down, it was one button, and she just didn't know it. I am happy to help with that, but there should be a level of literacy that she should probably solve that. I would rather help someone develop a project based learning unit using I-Pads and some Apps. That would be the train the trainer model I would envision. Not, “you had to right click that.

While many teachers at Bay Middle School are utilizing social media tools in their classroom at varying degrees, a clearer implementation plan may reduce teacher stress and allow for the creation of a baseline of technology skills all teachers must know.

Ms. Burne at Cedar High School feels that professional development relating to social media would be of little value based on the lack of a district mandate for its use, in addition to her own knowledge relating to social media. She stated
I don't think we needed PD...that might be ‘cause I am comfortable with it.
I know there are a lot of teachers not comfortable using social media…for
personal or professional reasons...so if it is something the school wants us
to do there needs to be PD, but I think those who jumped on board who
are using Twitter…I don't think…I would be bored in a PD session for
Twitter.

Her colleague Ms. Tucci appreciates the current approach of peer sharing within each
department, “I say the pairing off and sharing with department members is more effective and
that's what we have been doing.” Her feelings are based on the dynamics relating to experience,
age and skill set that are present in each department. Overall, the lack of professional
development at Cedar High School does not seem to be a problem for staff members
participating in the study; however, those not currently utilizing social media are not represented.

At Green High School the professional development and training related to social media
was offered by Principal Corvo and his Assistant Principal in an afterschool Twitter workshop.
Mr. Corvo reported that roughly two dozen teachers attended the workshop, which focused on
the free online support and educational professional development that can be available through
Twitter. Mr. Corvo also held a Twitter presentation at a faculty meeting months later. Principal
Corvo has also been active in attending technology and social media workshops and conferences
to enhance his understanding and skill related to social media. Mr. Loaf, a teacher in the school,
would like to see additional social media related professional development opportunities made
available to teacher in the district, but understands the hurtles the district faces. “One of the
problems in the district is that there are very few PD days”. With a new school opening next
year, the district has utilized recent professional development days to assist with the transition to
the new building. While the principal has utilized faculty meeting time to promote the use of social media, teachers would like to see additional district PD time for training on social media tools in education.

Organizational Adaptability to issues that arose. The adaptability hypothesis is the ability for an organization to confront internal and external change, adapt to this change and thrive. This theory is the most complex; however, it clearly fits within the realm of education and specifically social media. Externally, there is a need to stay current with both educational and societal changes. For schools, this would be the utilization of social media, which has continued to become accepted and an everyday part of societal norms. Internally, there is pressure to adapt to student needs and utilize a median, which they are both comfortable and familiar with. Denison and Mishra state that the ability for an organization to adapt will ultimately impact its effectiveness. At each site, participant shared the means in which each site adapted to both internal and external needs.

Creating change to meet external needs. The external needs that were identified in the participant interviews all focused on schools being able to adapt to the current generation of students. With the aforementioned growth of social media among middle and high school aged children, schools are realizing that social media provides a forum students are comfortable with and some are working towards adapting these tools to create a familiar learning environment. According to Principal Tink of Cedar High School, the school needed to “meet the kids on their level,” with the benefit of social media being that it “embraces the student’s generation.” Ms. Burne agreed with her principal and acknowledged that her students are always checking social media and that this platform is a great way to reach students. Ms. Tucci shared this view and understands why Cedar High School has started utilizing social media tools when she stated,
It’s a reality that this is how we communicate with kids. If we want to communicate with kids we are going to have to do it a new way. I have kids that have a better relationship with me this year than in previous years, just because they can talk to me on Twitter.

Both Green High School and Bay Middle School had similar views regarding the need to better meet students on a generationally appropriate platform. Mr. Yuke at Bay Middle School has observed that his students are more engaged, competitive and having fun when he has utilized social media tools, such as Edmodo, to enhance learning. He cites the similarities between Facebook and Edmodo as appealing to students as it allows them to express themselves and collaborate in ways that are difficult in the traditional classroom. Principal Corvo also recognized the need to look towards social media to better engage students. At first he implemented a Facebook page at Green High School, but responded to external changes relating to current social media platforms. His response to the change occurred “last year when I saw the migration of kids from Facebook to Twitter. I started using Twitter for the school”. He also recognized that in difficult budget times, social media can provide cost effective professional development and personal learning tools. This allowed him to continue his growth as an educator and administrator in a relevant manner at no cost. To best meet the needs of this generation of students, all three participating schools realized that social media was an avenue which provided students with a familiar platform and comfortable learning environment.

**Stakeholder focus on internal needs.** To get a clear understanding of each of the participating schools internal need for changes, a review of the School Improvement Plan (SIP) for each school was completed. Each of the three schools had a reference to a social media in
their respective plans providing evidence that social media will assist in meeting an identified internal improvement goal.

At Bay Middle School, one of the identified goals on the school improvement plan, under the heading of Climate and Culture, is to establish a school presence by having at least one school course on ITunes U. While the plan does not articulate the rationale for this need, there is a timeline that would include the investigation, creation and posting of a Bay Middle School course on ITunes U by September 2013. Mr. Yuke made mention of this goal in his interview; however, he felt a “clearer process and additional direction” was needed for this goal to be accomplished.

The SIP at Cedar High School, under the heading of School Community and Culture, referred to the importance of communication and collaboration between all stakeholders. School objectives to support this goal included the establishment of a Principal’s blog as well as the utilization of the school’s Facebook page. Both of these objectives utilize social media to meet an identified internal school need. Principal Tink provided examples of how she utilizes these tools to meet the goal. When discussing a proposed threat that occurred in December she stated, “Kids were generally scared as it aligned with the end of the world...my blog was helpful and I had parents call me and thank me for updates.” She also noted how she often tweets updates regarding inclement weather via her Twitter feed and created a video defining 21st century skills so the Cedar High School staff would be prepared for an upcoming NEASC visit. Ms. Tucci has also utilized Twitter to communicate with stakeholders and tweets homework assignments on a daily basis. The results in her classroom have been immediate: “The homework average has improved...they feel like they can talk to me more this year than in years past...grades wise I do not feel it really has an impact, but maybe final exams will say otherwise”. She has also felt that
this new method of communication has had a positive impact on student attitudes and helped her establish improved relationships with her students.

The SIP at Green High School also focused on enhancing communication between the school and community. The plan makes reference to the utilization of Twitter, Facebook and the new district webpage to assist meeting this improvement goal. Principal Corvo believes that utilizing social media is an important way to control information and keep parents/caregivers informed in a timely and relevant manner stating

If I'm not sharing info about what’s going on and I'm not sharing with the community and not pushing that information about what’s happening, someone else is going to do it. I think social media from that standpoint is useful. Parents aren't checking the website for information. Kids are not going to the website for info. If you want to do extensive research it’s there...but we live in a society which people are used to getting information pushed to them.

Ms. Noe is also utilizing social media to communicate with parents and students sharing,

For the school it gets a lot of messages out there quickly...promotes school spirit. I know as I coach tennis and field hockey...I will post scores and post people who scored goals and who had different achievements and the kids get really excited for those Twitter shout outs...it encourages community and school spirit.

The internal need to increase and enhance communication with stakeholders was identified by both Cedar High School and Green High School, with both schools utilizing social
media to help achieve these goals. At both schools, communication with stakeholders is a priority and both administration and staff have tried a new approach to meet the needs of the school while acknowledging the societal changes in the way people communicate.

**Organizational learning and adapting to challenges.** From the school principal perspective, there were few challenges relating to the implementation of social media. From their perspective, the staff members who were comfortable utilizing these tools did so, and those uncomfortable using them did not. This led to little pushback from staff. Mr. Corvo, when asked about the lack of staff resistance stated, “Those who wanted to do, those who don't-don't.” The other two participating principals echoed these comments and felt the lack of a mandate resulted in minimal staff resistance.

The teacher participants communicated challenges they felt the school, or they personally, had to overcome to utilize social media in the school. Mr. Loaf, from Green High School, felt that the first organizational obstacle the school needed to overcome was the blocks (firewalls) placed on social media websites. Due to a previous negative interaction on Facebook between a former staff member and student, social media sites such as Facebook and You Tube were restricted. It took a number of years and a school committee intervention to allow many of these sites to become unblocked and used for educational purposes.

Ms. Tucci, from Cedar High School, had to adapt to challenges at the classroom level. After creating a Twitter feed at the start of the school year, she realized that not all of her students possessed Twitter accounts and had to work through this potential hurdle. She assisted those students who were interested in creating personal accounts, while making certain it was communicated to both students and parents that the use of Twitter in her classroom was
voluntary. Ms. Tucci also had to deal with a student who asked her “what she was doing over the weekend” through a Twitter feed. Ms. Tucci quickly reminded the student, via Twitter, that this platform is for professional use only. This resulted in the student refraining from additional personal inquiries. These examples illustrate how different obstacles arose at the district, school and classroom levels and resulted in changes in policy, procedures or classroom rules. The ability to adapt to challenges during the change process is essential to ensure lasting and meaningful change.

**Conclusion**

This chapter included a review of the three participating schools, their surrounding community and provided a brief background on the three principals and six teachers who participated in the study. The data presented in chapter four was a result of participant interviews, a review of pertinent school and district documents and observation. The resulting data was organized in accordance with the theoretical framework anchoring the study, The Organizational Culture and Effectiveness Theory by Denison and Mishra (1989 & 1995). The theory provided a lens that lent itself to the use of a priori coding to review successful organizational traits and how the implementation and use of social media aligned with these predetermined traits. The following themes and subthemes were utilized: consistency, mission, stakeholder involvement and organizational adaptability, utilization of school core values, impact on school culture, shared expectations among staff, principal’s vision, organizational rationale, staff empowerment, training, response to external needs, response to internal needs and organizational learning. The organizational of the data reveals the overall strengths and focus areas needed for a successful implementation of social media.
The next chapter will utilize the results from chapter four to present findings from the study aimed at answering the identified research questions. These results and accompanying discussion will examine the implementation process used at each school and both acknowledge strength and identify suggestions and strategies that can be utilized by future educational leaders who are looking to implement and utilize social media in their own school. Included in this chapter will be practical implications that have emerged as well as recommendations for future research in this area.

Chapter V: Findings and Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine how school principals have gone about implementing social media into their schools. As the popularity of social media continues to grow among all age groups, school districts are finding creative ways to utilize these tools to meet the needs of stakeholders in a relevant and cost effective manner. In this chapter, I will expand on the results from chapter four and review the study’s problem of practice, theoretical framework, design, and research questions within the context of these findings. The discussion of the study findings will provide a clear connection between the identified themes from chapter four and common practices and traits which have led to successful implementation of social media in the identified schools. This information will assist educational leaders looking to implement social media into their own schools as well as encourage those leaders who are not looking to utilize these tools to do so.
Review of Problem of Practice

Despite the growth in popularity of social media tools among teens and adults, many school districts have been reluctant to utilize these tools (EdWeb, 2010). While social media serves as a cost effective way to increase student engagement, streamline both internal and external communication, and assist in preparing students to become college and career ready (Lusk, 2010; McCrea, 2010), the potential obstacles associated with the use of these tools are difficult for many district and school leaders to ignore. Online bullying, harassment, exposure to inappropriate materials and the potential threat of online predators are concerns that many districts are not prepared to face (Brooks, 2009). However, despite these risks, there are districts utilizing social media and benefitting from the positive impact they are having on classroom instruction, communication, and school culture. School leaders not utilizing social media must begin to explore ways to implement these tools in their schools or risk falling behind other districts (Liang, et al., 2010).

Review of Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used to frame and organize the data analysis in this study was Denison and Mishra’s Organizational Culture and Effectiveness Theory (1990 & 1995). Both researchers’ aim was to identify cultural traits associated with organizational effectiveness. The cultural traits categorized by the two researchers allow for an understanding of the relationship between each trait and an organization’s ability to both successfully handle and adapt to change and maintain organizational stability and control. The involvement and adaptability traits were determined to relate to an organization’s ability to adapt to change while the mission and consistency traits were shown to correlate with the organizational stability and control.
Denison and Mishra’s theory served as the foundation for the study. It was utilized to assist with the creation of interview questions and the four traits (consistency, adaptability, involvement and mission) were utilized as a priori codes to assist with organizing the data. The gathered evidence was categorized under the heading of one of the four traits, or under a subcategory of the trait, allowing for the data to be examined in the context of the theoretical framework. This method allowed the data to be looked at through the lens of organizational effectiveness by determining the schools’ flexibility and ability to adapt to change through the implementation process and subsequent use of social media. By utilizing the theoretical framework in both question design and data categorization it allowed for the emergence of effective practices relating to the implementation of social media.

**Review of the Study Design**

The study looks at how school principals have gone about implementing social media into their schools. The literature provided insight regarding the history and definitions of social media, benefits and risks of utilizing these tools in an educational setting, and revealed how some school districts are currently utilizing this technology. Denison and Mishra’s Organizational Culture and Effectiveness Theory provided the framework to determine which traits of successful organizations were present during the implementation of social media at the participating schools.

The method of design for this study is a multi-site case study. Yin (2009) suggested using multiple sources of evidence as the way to ensure construct validity allowing for data to be collected from a number of relevant sources. Therefore, the study sites consisted of two high schools and one middle school, each having been identified as utilizing social media. The information was gathered through interviews with relevant stakeholders, observations and a
review of relevant documents. The multiple sources of data resulted in the formation of themes which ultimately addressed each research question.

**Findings and Discussion**

The aim of this section is to analyze the results presented in chapter four and provide guidance for administrators looking to implement social media into their respective school. The study’s research questions provide the framework for the discussion. The questions are as follows:

**Primary Research Question:**

- How have principals gone about integrating social media into their school?

**Secondary Research Questions:**

- How do principals, who actively integrate social media into the school community, describe the implementation process?

- What strategies did principal utilize to gain staff member support?

- What obstacles did principal identify as impeding the implementation process?

Each secondary question heading will provide discussion related to that question, with the primary research question addressed at the conclusion of the section. This will lead to a clear understanding of the role of the principal during the implementation of social media and outline steps that will assist in the successful implementation of these tools.

**How Principal’s describe the Implementation Process.**

Social media, technology, and the internet is not like buying a text book or reading program. When you purchase a reading program, you sell it to your
superintendent and teachers and you have 99% of your questions already answered. You cannot do that with social media. It’s going to change and you got to have the bulk of your stuff done, but if you think you are going to be able to answer every single question about social media, how you roll it out, the implications, and the what ifs, you will never be able to do it and you never will do it.

-A participant as told to him by a contemporary

While none of the participating schools conducted any formal social media related research or did any planning prior to implementing the use of these tools, which seems to go against “best practice” related to educational change and program implementation, each of the participating principals was convinced of the benefits of social media and committed to the communication of these benefits to stakeholders. This is consistent with the work of Bolman and Deal (1994) who believed that successful leaders must be able to create a vision which others will follow or facilitate the collaborative creation of a vision. Early in the implementation process, these principals and school leaders outlined how social media can benefit students, staff and other stakeholders, and they shared these benefits with each group. This allowed for a shared understanding of how social media might increase communication (Butler, 2010) and enhance instruction (The Creating and Connecting Report, 2007). The creation of a vision relating to technology and social media provided a fundamental sense of purpose and provided a guide for the schools’ ongoing activities (Deal and Peterson, 1999).

The following section will examine the characteristics that were common in each school during the implementation process and look at additional findings related to these stories of successful implementation of social media in the educational setting. While the implementation
process varies in every school, these outlined steps will provide educational leaders with a number of suggestions that may assist them as they move forward with the initiative in their own school.

**Benefits of principals who utilize and are passionate about social media.** Kouzes and Posner (1987) stated that the best leaders lead by example. Strong leadership impacts organizations (Fullan, 2002), and this statement holds true for the implementation of social media in school settings. Each principal leading the implementation of social media will do so with different levels of comfort and experience in utilizing these tools. These different levels of experience will also come with a varying degree of passion for social media, both of which will impact and shape the implementation process at each school. However, there are essentials that need to be in place prior to and during the implementation process. Deal and Peterson (1999) explained that culture is shaped by the belief and actions of its organizational members, and for principals to create a school culture that accepts and utilizes social media, they must model the use of these tools.

Administrative modeling, in relation to social media, is the degree to which the principal sets an example for the organizational members to follow that is consistent with the outlined vision the principal has communicated (Jantzi & Leithwood, 1996). This modeling will assist in the creation of a school culture that encourages and supports stakeholder use of social media. This will lead tools such as school Facebook pages, Twitter feeds and Principal Blogs to become common places for stakeholders to go to for relevant information and to become common place in the day-to-day operations of the school. In addition, the school and principal will begin to create social capital within the community and among stakeholders. This is accomplished through the timely communication of information utilizing modern communication tools. The
modeling of social media use by the school principal will assist in creating a culture that embraces and utilizes these tools (Fiore, 2004).

Another benefit of school principals using social media is that teachers in the school observe the use, which results in a willingness to take risks and utilize these tools because teachers understand that their leader has an understanding of the potential dangers associated with these tools and still opts to use them. The teachers at two of the participating schools commented that their principals led the implementation process and the principals’ use of these tools brought about an enhanced comfort level relating to their own use. These comments align with Norris (1994), who states that principals who encourage faculty to take risks and grow professionally impact the culture of their schools. Teachers feeling supported, comfortable and free to take risks with using social media will increase the chances of a successful implementation.

Finally, passion has been noted by Gurr, Drysdale and Mulford (2006) as a characteristic associated with successful school leaders. Education is known for undergoing initiatives that lose steam and focus shortly after implementation, only to later be abandoned. The passion demonstrated by principals who lead by example and use social media in their own work gives added motivation and commitment to the implementation process and provides an emotional attachment to the work (Crosswell & Elliott, 2004). The passion will also assist in marketing the initiative to staff and stakeholders as a sustainable commitment.

Passion for technology and social media and the consistent modeling of the use of social media tools are two traits that are beneficial to school leaders who are looking to undertake the implementation process. Both traits indicate that the principal is a technology leader in the school and wants the initiative to succeed. The success of the implementation is not dependent
on passion and modeling alone; rather, school principals need support from the district level, including explicit support from the superintendent of schools.

**Benefits of superintendent who supports technology and utilizes social media.**

Approval and support from the superintendent and central office staff is essential for assuring the successful implementation of social media. The support from the superintendent and central office personnel can come in many forms, including purchasing technology tools to assist with the implementation, using social media tools themselves, and providing positive feedback to district staff that utilize social media. At one of the participating sites, the teachers felt supported at the district level when the superintendent followed staff members on Twitter. In contrast, at another participating school, the participants remarked on the lack of social media use by central office. Support from the district superintendent provides additional motivation and support for teachers who are interested in using social media. It also shows a district commitment to supporting the schools’ implementation initiatives and leads to the spread of social media tools to schools throughout the district. The collaboration between the schools and district will be beneficial to both the district and staff, as stated by Anderson (2003):

> Collegial work groups, sharing of expertise, networking of teachers and principals across schools, cross-role leadership and school improvement teams at school and district levels – all these and many other configurations of professional educators collaborating with one another….are indicative of a common emphasis on teamwork and professional community. (p. 12)

The spread of social media throughout the district will assist in it transitioning from a school initiative to a district initiative and create a collaborative and sustainable district effort.
Having the support from the superintendent will assist in validating the initiative and creating a culture of support for the implementation of these tools. In addition to support from the district level, principals also need to get faculty and staff involved with the implementation of social media.

**Strategies used to Gain Staff Member Support**

Stakeholder involvement in the decision making process if often cited as best organizational practice (Fullan, 2006 & Peterson and Deal, 1999). However, in the case of the three participating schools, there was minimal stakeholder involvement in the decision to implement and utilize social media at each school; however the enthusiasm of each principal related to social media assisted in gaining staff member support for the initiative. While the implementation was successful at each participating school, stakeholder involvement in the implementation process will allow for the initiative to spread faster in both the community and among the staff. When trying to establish a school culture that accepts and utilizes technology, collaboration throughout the process will allow for a spread of new ideas and uses for social media in the school and classroom. Gruenert (1998) believes effective leaders must encourage collaboration and allow teachers in the school to plan together, observe and discuss practices relating to social media, and develop an awareness of the practices of other teachers. This collaboration will allow staff to take ownership of the implementation process and is a key to developing and sustaining goal consensus, shared beliefs, and commitment to the initiative (Anderson, 2003). Once principals have staff members invested in the initiative, they must market the school use of social media tools to both internal and external stakeholders. This step will assist in increasing stakeholder use of these tools and assist in validating them as important sources of school information throughout the community.
**Promote the use of social media tools to all stakeholders.** To implement successful change, schools must build relationships with outside stakeholders (Leithwood et al., 2006). The participating principals all frequently communicated to parents and community members relating to the use of social media in their respective schools. This communication included encouraging stakeholders to follow them on Twitter and “friend” the school on Facebook. One participating principal sent a letter home to parents prior to the creation of the school’s Facebook page, outlining the rationale for the page and sharing how it would be used. Teachers must also be made aware of the benefits of social media. This includes improved relationships with students, increased engagement with parents and collaboration with peers as well as the establishment of social capital with stakeholders. This promotion of social media to stakeholders is an important step in the successful implementation of social media tools into a public school. Leithwood et al. (2006) acknowledges this importance when stating that connecting to the wider environment allows the school to use new ideas from the community and helps resources flow into the school. Communicating the implementation of social media to stakeholders and encouraging them to become active participants in its use will assist in assuring its relevance and sustainability in the community.

**Social media use needs to be voluntary for staff members.** At each of the participating schools, the use of social media by staff members is voluntary. This declaration has reduced teacher stress and created an environment that allows teachers to explore and take risks at a pace dictated by personal comfort level. This aligns with the work of Knight (2009), who stated, “Obtain commitment by offering teacher’s choices and valuing their voices. The more teachers can have a say in how and what new practices they implement, the more likely they will be to embrace new ways of teaching” (p. 513). Despite some teachers’ lack of participation, this
strategy has led to an increase in teacher collaboration and resulted in creative and innovative ways in which social media tools are used by teachers to communicate with students and enhance classroom teaching and student learning. Another potential benefit of social media use being voluntary is that it may eliminated teacher push back and union resistance. This was non-existent at each of the three participating schools. By allowing teachers to use social media at their own discretion, educational leaders increase the odds of a successful implementation process and reduce the odds of teacher resistance to a new initiative. While not every staff member will opt to utilize social media, they should all have some knowledge of how to use these tools and the benefits associated with their use.

**Frequently discuss the use of social media tools at faulty and department meetings.** Fullan (2002) believes that it is the duty of a transformational leader to create and share knowledge so individuals in a school develop. This is the case with social media implementation as well. Principals need to dedicate time to staff to allow for discussions, presentations and collaboration relating to social media. In the three participating schools, faculty, department and team time were utilized to examine how social media can enhance curriculum and instruction and serve as a communication tool for reaching a variety of school stakeholders. Knight and Cornett (2009) suggest that teachers rarely implement change without sufficient support, including explanations, modeling, and feedback. By providing time for administrators to meet these teacher needs, principals will increase the chances of a successful implementation.

**Allow teacher leaders to lead.** Top principals encourage an environment that promotes teachers sharing and learning from one another (Terry, 1999). Teachers have a wide range of experiences relating to the use of technology, and specifically social media; therefore, it is imperative that teachers who are familiar with using these tools train and mentor staff members.
who are not. Elmore and Burney (1997) support peer training in stating, “shared expertise is the driver of instructional change” (p. 61). In each of the three participating schools, teacher empowerment led to increases in staff ownership of the implementation and also assisted with the development of new teacher leaders. Principals who utilize teacher leaders and work closely with staff to provide professional development will allow for a better understanding and assimilation of new practices through shared support and cooperative learning (Anderson, 2003).

Principals looking to implement social media tools into their school need to be passionate about social media, model its use, gain superintendent and stakeholder support and consistently market it to staff and other stakeholders. However, despite following the recommended steps, they still face a number of obstacles. Outdated school and district technology policies, staff with varying degrees of comfort relating to technology use and stakeholder expectations regarding the use of social media tools are three of the main hurdles school leaders must overcome prior to completing the implementation process.

**Obstacles that Impeded the Implementation Process**

Principals must be prepared for obstacles that may impede the implementation process. To best avoid any potential setbacks, leaders should examine school and district policies relating to social media, provide staff trainings and be prepared for any potential online behavior issues that may arise.

**The school policy on personal electronic devices and social media must reflect the use of these tools.** The acknowledgement of the need for social media policies to be included in each handbook aligns with the work of Lusk (2010) and Lenhart (2007). Both researchers proposed examining school policies, as many schools only reference social media in online bullying and harassment policies. While there is a need to maintain these policies in each
handbook, schools must also look at other infractions that may occur on social media sites and be prepared to safeguard against them. Each participating school in this study had similar policies relating to the use of personal electronic devices (PED). Each school’s policy banned the use of PEDs in school unless authorization was granted by a staff member or administrator. These policies did not confront potential dangers that may arise from the use of social media. These dangers include infractions such as inappropriate posts, identity theft, freedom of speech issues and rumor spreading (National School Boards Association, 2007). School policies need to not only include rules outlining use of social media tools, but also must reflect these potential hazards and outline consequences if violations do occur. The policies also must outline appropriate classroom use as well as identify areas throughout the school where social media is allowed to be accessed on student personal devices. Despite the safeguards many schools already have in place, problems may arise and administrators and staff must anticipate these types of issues and implement practices to prevent them. Detailed school handbook policies that outline social media rules and the disciplinary actions for the violation of these rules create a solid foundation for the implementation of social media in a school. In addition, to assist with the prevention of potential incidents, teachers will need training on how to effectively utilize social media as an educational tool and prevent dangerous online behaviors.

**Provide relevant professional development targeted at individual teacher needs and comfort levels.** Some of the teachers involved in the study cited the need for professional development centered on both technology and the use of social media. The professional development must be tailored to meet a variety of teacher needs and skill levels in both areas. As teachers involved in this study were all comfortable with social media, their professional needs would be a lot different from those of their colleagues who are trying to master basic skills like
using email or accessing the internet. The need for differentiated professional development can start with peer collaboration and support, but it must evolve into a more formal process which includes direct instruction. Examples of this type of professional development may include staff presentations, workshops and conferences. This will allow the school to meet the needs of a staff with diverse technology skills. While peer sharing is an effective system of support, training needs to be provided to allow teachers with different technology competencies to experience technology related growth. Intellectual stimulation through professional development results in increased teacher collaboration and promotes faculty action toward reaching school goals (Brown, 1993).

Social media can assist with professional development because it allows for access to things like Webinars, YouTube videos and Podcasts that can provide learning opportunities that meet the needs of a staff with diverse technology needs (EdWeb, 2010). In addition to professional development related to social media, schools must provide teachers with training on the technology tools they are purchasing for them to use in the classroom and assist them with their ability to solve problems (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999). Through peer collaboration and multi-tied professional development offerings relating to both technology and social media, all teachers will be provided with the opportunity to experience professional growth in each area and allow for the implementation and use of social media to be more effective

**Classroom teachers must establish and communicate clear expectations and boundaries related to the use of social media.** Leithwood et al. (2006) outlined the importance of providing clear expectations. This is the case with social media use as well. Teachers must outline online behavior expectations to both students and parents. This will allow for the online communication to remain focused on teaching and learning and prevent personal communication
between students and teachers and other inappropriate postings, such as…. Creating a set of expectations about how social media will be used in class, as well as when and to what purpose teachers will access it outside of school, is essential. At the participating schools, the teachers noted that students were trying to contact them at all hours of the night. This became overwhelming for the teachers, who wanted to respond to each student. Two of the participating teachers shared that the creation of personal boundaries allowed them to stop checking social media at a designated time and not have to worry about missing student or parent questions or inquiries. This process streamlined the communication between the teachers and stakeholders. It is also important that these expectations be communicated to students and parents prior to using social media in class. The creation and communication of classroom rules and expectations relating to social media use will assure that teachers are contacted in an appropriate manner and have support in establishing time boundaries that protect them from student and parents making inquiries throughout the evening.

To overcome the obstacles needed for a successful implementation of social media, principals must be prepared to update and change the school’s social media policy, research impactful professional development opportunities relevant to social media and assist teachers with creating online rules and expectations for their classroom. Being proactive and completing these tasks prior to the implementation of social media in a school will prevent potential disruptions throughout the process.

**Conclusion of the Findings**

School principals play an important role in the implementation of social media and must take the appropriate steps to ensure success. Principals must not only advocate for the use of social media tools, but also model the use of these tools on a consistent basis. This will help
garner staff investment and demonstrate a commitment to the use of these tools. In addition, the utilization of social media must remain voluntary for staff members. District and school mandates, relating to teacher use of social media, will result in anxiety and potential resistance from staff. By allowing teachers to collaborate and move at their own pace, principals will create a non-threatening environment that encourages staff to take risks and explore in relation to the classroom use of social media. In addition, with a passionate and supportive principal leading the initiative, staff members will be more willing to try social media tools knowing that the principal understands the risks and believes in the benefits.

District leadership must also support the use of social media at both the administrative and classroom levels. In addition, it is beneficial to staff if central administrative personnel are actively engaged and committed to the use of social media. District support must also come in the form of updated Acceptable Use Policies relating to the use of social media and PEDs in the school and classroom. Lastly, district leadership must show support by providing updated and relevant technology tools, access to social media sites in the classroom and on school computers and fund professional development options aimed at meeting the needs of a diverse adult learning population.

For classroom use of social media, administrators and teachers must present clear expectations to students and parents regarding the use of these tools. In addition, if there is a commitment to using social media, all stakeholders must be willing to reflect on their own practice, step outside personal comfort zones and be willing to utilize these tools on a consistent basis. This requires each group to examine how they have traditionally gone about communicating, teaching and accessing information, and they must be willing to try new
methods despite potential fear and trepidation. Support, training and consistent use will aid each group in transitioning to the use of these new tools.

While no formal plan was needed to implement social media at the three participating schools, research reveals that a plan can be beneficial. The plan for an effective implementation should focus on organizational commitment, school and district leadership modeling and enthusiasm, a climate conducive to risk taking, and communication of the benefits of social media to the entire learning community. By undergoing these key steps, school principals will ensure a successful implementation of social media in their school.

**Future Research**

The role of social media in education is constantly evolving and therefore creating new and exciting opportunities for future research. Future studies may want to examine how students and parents are impacted by the use of social media as both an instructional tool and as a communication tool. A similar study focusing on the impact social media has had on classroom instruction and student achievement would provide meaningful information to teachers and school leaders as would an investigation related to the additional afterhours workload and challenges placed upon teachers who utilize social media in their classroom.

In addition, this study was conducted at the secondary school level at three schools located on the southeast coast of Massachusetts. Conducting a similar study in different geographic location or at the elementary school level may result in new information. The study also identified professional development as a support for staff members during the implementation of social media. A research study that examined educational technology and social media professional development options to determine effectiveness and impact on professional practice would provide school leaders with information to assist them with
professional development planning and with the implementation of social media tools in their schools.

Lastly, the study referenced the importance of the role district administration plays in the implementation of social media tools. A study focused on the use of social media tools by central office personnel and the impact it has on both faculty and community stakeholders would be a worthwhile endeavor. It would provide valuable information related to the effectiveness and methods used by district leaders and school committees to communicate with stakeholders.

Implications for Practice

The findings reveal that the implementation of social media in a public school requires principals to take a number of important steps to ensure success. These steps begin with a building principal who is both knowledgeable and passionate about the use of social media. The passion must be accompanied by an understanding of the importance of utilizing social media to support instruction and communication and a willingness to support teachers who utilize these tools to enhance instruction and communication. Furthermore, an understanding is needed that the use of social media tools is not for all staff members’ and the implementation process must be voluntary with an expectation that at some point all teachers will need to utilize this technology. The following findings will assist principals seeking to implement social media into their school by outlining steps needed for success.

The principal must become the lead user and advocate of social media use in the school. To attain staff and stakeholder confidence and commitment to the implementation process, principals must develop the confidence and skills to articulate the benefits of using social media tools and model their use on a consistent basis. Through an enthusiastic approach towards the use of social media, along with a clearly articulated vision related to its use, the
principals will set the groundwork for a successful implementation. In addition, the foundation will be set for a school culture that is supportive and encouraging to staff who use these tools. The steps for success, as relating to the principal as the social media leader of the school, are as follows:

1. Expand your knowledge on social media in a school setting and create a social media vision for the school.
2. Share this vision with both internal and external stakeholders.
3. Utilize social media tools on a consistent basis and share your use with stakeholders.
4. Be enthusiastic when discussing social media with stakeholders.
5. Making time for learning and building the necessary teacher supports

The principal must provide teachers with a pressure free and supportive environment, which will assist in facilitating the use of social media tools in the classroom. To create an environment that allows for teacher collaboration, exploration and risk taking, the principal must create opportunities for faculty discussion and growth. This will be accomplished by mandating staff meeting time for professional development, teacher collaboration and mentoring, and faculty discussions relating to social media use. Principals must also be certain to communicate to staff that the use of social media is voluntary. This will alleviate stress and allow teachers to implement these tools based on personal comfort levels. In addition, teachers who are skilled at social media use in the classroom and willing to mentor those that are not must be identified and utilized. These steps will assist in creating a culture of teacher collaboration and support, while encourage staff to step outside personal comfort zones when utilizing social media. The following steps will create a supportive environment for staff during the implementation of social media:
1. Make the implementation of social media tools voluntary for staff.

2. Set aside faculty, staff and team meetings and devote the time to group and staff discussions about social media.

3. Provide professional development related to technology and social media to meet the needs of a diverse teaching staff.

4. Identify and utilize teacher leaders to work with staff members less confident with technology.

5. Build stakeholder awareness regarding the benefits of using social media.

The principal needs to understand that the implementation of social media in a school is a collaborative undertaking and requires support from district leadership in addition to parents and community members. To assure that the implementation is successful, principals must start by gaining support from district personnel and the school superintendent. Having backing from the superintendent will provide a commitment from the district and help the initiative gain momentum. Once the superintendent is onboard with the implementation of social media tools in their school, principals must promote the use of these tools to parents and the community. By communicating the different social media medians that the school will be utilizing and sharing how each will be used, the principal will begin to direct stakeholders to the different sites, leading to gains in both the momentum of the implementation and stakeholder use of such sites. Investment from the different stakeholders will lead to additional resources, initiative sustainability and an understanding of where and how school information can be accessed. To increase stakeholder investment and involvement in the implementation of social media, principals need to follow the following steps:

1. Gain support from the school superintendent and district personnel.
2. Communicate and market the school’s social media presence to parents and the community and encourage them to utilize these sites to access information.

3. Encourage district leadership to utilize these tools.

The principal needs to review the school handbook and access to technology websites to assure that the school is ready to implement social media. Principals need to be proactive in addressing potential online behavioral issues that may arise and predict network problems that may occur prior to implementation. These steps will require principals to review other school handbooks and social media policies to gain an understanding of what other schools are doing and then adapt and create policies that best meet their school and community needs. In addition, principals need to pilot the use of social media tools on different computers throughout the school to be certain that there are no technology related restrictions that would hamper student and teacher use. Lastly, principals need to assist teachers in the creation of classroom rules and expectations as it relates to social media use may help prevent future problems that could arise.

To prevent obstacles that may potentially deter the implementation process principals should follow the following steps:

1. Review other school and district handbooks social media policies to gain a deeper understanding of different online/social media expectations.

2. Update school handbook and social media policy to reflect their social media vision.

3. Pilot the use of social media sites throughout the school to eliminate potential glitches.

4. Provide direction to teachers as they create classroom rules and expectations.

School principals must be knowledgeable, collaborative and enthusiastic about the use of social media tools in their school. To lead a smooth implementation of these tools, the principal must be willing to empower and support staff, providing them with a pressure free environment
to explore and take risks. The leader must also understand the value of social media as an educational and communication tool and communicate their vision to a variety of stakeholders encouraging them to utilize these tools to both give and receive information. Lastly, the principal must be willing to adapt to obstacles and policies that may threaten to deter the implementation process and lead the organizational learning.

Conclusion

As school and districts throughout the country focus on creating curriculums that both emphasize 21st century skills and prepare students to be college and career ready, they can no longer ignore social media. Sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn have become mainstream communication tools in businesses, colleges and throughout society; however public schools have not been as accepting of these tools. Educational leaders must understand the impact social media can have on communication, classroom instruction, and on student learning and become an advocate for the use of these tools in their school. In addition, the principal must become a user of social media and model its use to staff to improve instruction, enhance communication with stakeholders, and create personal learning networks. While the popularity of these tools in public education is growing, their use needs to become standard in all public school districts and schools.

The purpose of this study was to examine how school principals have gone about implementing the use of social media in their schools and provide steps to guide those looking to initiate the use of these tools. I was drawn to this investigation as an educational leader who understood the importance of social media in society, but was unsure where it fit in public schools. I was aware that as social media grew in popularity it would find a way into the schoolhouse, but wondered how it would happen. While it is difficult to ignore the obstacles
confronting schools looking to implement social media, it is also hard not to acknowledge the benefits. The best way to gain an understanding of how schools successfully overcame these obstacles and implemented these tools was to examine relevant literature related to social media in education and also study schools which are currently utilizing these tools.

What I learned from the literature review is that social media’s presence in education lags behind its use in other areas of society. This is a result of perceived dangers such as online bullying, sexual predators, and identity theft. While these dangers do exist, the odds of many these incidents occurring online are roughly the same as then occurring within the school. The school’s that do utilize these tools have discovered a cost effective way to communicate with stakeholders, extend the school walls, increase student collaboration and create comfortable learning environments for students.

The conversations, document reviews and observations at the participating sites revealed that social media could be implemented in a variety of ways. While the participating schools did not have a formal plan and the implementation was different at each site, the research revealed that a plan may be beneficial. Each of the participating schools created an environment that allowed teachers to experiment with social media at their own pace. The lack of administrative mandate created a culture that promoted risk taking and teacher collaboration. Lastly, each participating site had a principal who believed in the benefits of social media and advocated for its use to both central office and school staff.

The outcomes of the research reveal that there are a number of steps a principal should follow to assist with the implementation of social media. The principal must be knowledgeable and passionate about the use of social media and be willing to model the use of these tools for staff members. The principal must also be willing to empower teachers to be active partners in
the implementation process and provide relevant opportunities for staff member growth relating
to the use of technology. Lastly, the principal must have the foresight to address potential
obstacles before they occur. While these suggestions will prepare and guide a principal
throughout the implementation process, each school is a different and flexibility and
commitment is required.
References


*Elsevier, 56, 370-378.*


Appendix A: Invitation to Participate Letter

Participant Invitation

Northeastern University, College of Professional Studies, Department of Education

Name of Investigators: Michael Lovecchio, Doctoral Student
Dr. Jane Lohmann, Principal Investigator

Title of Project:
The Principal’s Experience through the Process of Implementing Social Media in Schools

We are inviting you to take part in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, and the researcher will explain it to you as well. You may ask this person any questions that you have. When you are ready to make a decision, you may tell the researcher if you want to participate or not. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, the researcher will ask you to sign this statement and will give you a copy to keep.

You are being asked to participate in this study as an administrator or teacher that was in this position when your school began to implement social media tools and therefore can provide knowledge and experiences that is important to this research. We are hoping that your participation will lead to an understanding of how school leaders have gone about with the implementation process and what were some highlights and areas that could have done differently during the implementation. I am hopeful that the findings of the study will assist in providing a template for future educational leaders looking to utilize social media in their school.

If you agree to participate in the study you will be asked to take part in a 60-90 minute interview, at your school, relating to the social media implementation process. You will have an opportunity to review the notes from this interview at the conclusion of the session. Observations and document reviews will also be part of the research. The observations may take place in classrooms and in the hallways of the school and the documents being reviewed may include items such as the school improvement plan, faculty meeting agendas and district strategic plans. There are no foreseen risks or harms associated with participation in this study or specific benefits to you for your participation.
Please also note that your identity, your schools identity and any personal data will not be known by anyone except the primary researcher. No reports or information related to the study will match you with your responses. Pseudonyms and codes will be created by the researcher to protect identities and maintain confidentiality throughout the reporting of findings and discussions relating to the research.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are allowed to quit at any time. Please note that no special arrangements will be made for compensation or payment for treatment solely because of participation in this study. If you have additional questions about the study and/or your invitation to participate, please contact Michael Lovecchio at MLovecchio@Hotmail.com. If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant, please contact: Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: irb@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

If you agree to take part in the research, please fill out the following:

________________________________________________________________________

Printed name of person above

________________________________________________________________________

Signature of person agreeing to take part in study Date

________________________________________________________________________

Printed name of person who explained the study to participant named above

________________________________________________________________________

Signature of person who explained the study to participant named above Date
Appendix  B: Superintendent Letter Seeking Permission to Conduct Research in the District

Superintendent (NAME):

My name is Michael Lovecchio, I am an Education Leadership student in the College of Professional Studies at Northeastern University. I am writing to invite your district to participate in a research study titled, *The Principal’s Experience through the Process of Implementing Social Media in Schools*. The district was chosen as it possesses a principal who oversaw the implementation of social media tools and teachers who were in the same school during the implementation process. Initially, your district was referred to me by colleagues, who were aware of the school’s utilization of social media tools. I followed up the recommendation by reviewing the school’s website and speaking briefly to the school principal, which led to this formal invitation.

To gain a clearer understanding of the purpose of this study, I am looking to answer the following research questions:

- How have principals gone about integrating social media into their school?
- How do principals, who actively integrate social media into the school community, describe the implementation process?
- What strategies did principal utilize to gain staff member support?
- How do teachers describe the process of social media integration?

By answering these questions, I am hoping to provide school leaders with a better understanding of how to go about implementing social media tools in their own schools. To gather the necessary evidence and data to provide this information, I will be interviewing both school principals and teachers, reviewing documentary evidence and conducting general observations.

The interviews will take approximately 90 minutes. I will go through a list of questions and record answers utilizing an audio recorder and notes to assist with accuracy. Information shared with me during these interviews will be kept as confidential.
The risk in taking part in the interviews is minimal. I will not ask staff members to share sensitive personal information, but it is possible that some people may feel uncomfortable answering the questions. As a participant, they are not required to answer any question they are uncomfortable with. In addition, participants will be asked to review all responses at the conclusion of our interviews. District, staff members and school names will remain confidential, as I will use pseudonyms throughout the study. All information and evidence will be destroyed a short time after the conclusion of the study.

There are no benefits to your district participating in this research. However, it is possible that information from the study may help researchers and school leaders learn more about the implementation process of social media tools in education. Participants will not be paid for taking part in the study and are welcome to stop their participation at any time.

Please review the attached Informed Consent Document for additional information regarding the study, your participant rights and appropriate contact information.

If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about this interview, please let me know. You may contact me at: Mlovech@Hotmail.com or by calling me at 781-934-0205 (h) or (508) 933-8141 (c). You may also contact Dr. Jane Lohmann, the Principal Investigator at j.lohmann@neu.edu or 617-756-3237.

Additionally, if you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. You may also contact her at jrb@neu.edu or 617-373-4588. You may also call anonymously if you wish.

Thanks,

Michael Lovechio
Appendix C: Interview Questions

Northeastern University, College of Professional Studies, Department of Education

Name of Investigators: Michael Lovecchio, Doctoral Student, Dr. Jane Lohmann, Principal Investigator

Title of Project: The Principal’s Experience through the Process of Implementing Social Media in Schools

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (Principal)

12. How was the decision made to implement social media tools into your school?
13. How do you feel about the implementation process that occurred to get social media tools utilized in your school?
14. What do you think the benefits of social media are for your school?
15. What do you think are the drawbacks of utilizing social media in your school?
16. What kind(s) of changes (if any) did you notice with staff during the implementation of social media tools?
17. What impact did you observe the implementation of social media having on different stakeholders?
   a. District administration
   b. Teachers
   c. Parents
   d. Students
18. Do you think the implementation of social media went as you had initially planned? Why or why not? What would you do differently?
19. How did the school go about adapting to issues and resistance that arose during the implementation process?
20. Do you feel that the utilization of social media tools aligns with the school’s mission and core values?
21. Was there staff members/stakeholders involved in the implementation process? If so, how was this accomplished?
22. Is there anything that we haven’t talked about with regard to implementation of social media tools in your school that would be important to know?
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (Teacher)

12. How was the decision made to implement social media tools into your school?

13. How do you feel about the implementation process that occurred to get social media tools utilized in your school?

14. What do you think the benefits of social media are for your school?

15. What do you think are the drawbacks of utilizing social media in your school?

16. What kind(s) of changes (if any) did you notice with colleagues during the implementation of social media tools?

17. What impact did you observe the implementation of social media having on different stakeholders?
   a. District administration
   b. School Administration
   c. Parents
   d. Students

18. Do you think the implementation of social media went as the school had initially planned? Why or why not? What do you feel could have been done differently?

19. How did the school go about adapting to issues and resistance that arose during the implementation process?

20. Do you feel that the utilization of social media tools aligns with the school’s mission and core values?

21. Was there staff members/stakeholders involved in the implementation process? If so, how was this accomplished?

22. Is there anything that we haven’t talked about with regard to implementation of social media tools in your school that would be important to know?
Appendix D: Informed Consent Document

Informed Consent Document

Name of Investigators: Michael Lovecchio, Doctoral Student, Dr. Jane Lohmann, Principal Investigator

Title of Project: The Principal's Experience through the Process of Implementing Social Media in Schools

Request for Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Dear potential participant,

I am preparing to begin my doctoral research project. The goal of this study is to examine how school principals and leaders have gone about implementing social media tools into their schools. The proposed study will seek answers to the following questions:

- How have principals gone about integrating social media into their school?
- How do principals, who actively integrate social media into the school community, describe the implementation process?
- What strategies did principal utilize to gain staff member support?
- How do teachers describe the process of social media integration?

These questions will be explored from the perspective of the educational leaders who lead the implementation of social media into their schools, the teachers who were at the schools at this time and through supporting school documents.

I hope that this study will further develop my understandings of how school leaders have gone about the implementation process and what were some highlights and areas that could have been done differently.
during the implementation. I am hopeful that the findings of the study will assist in providing a template for future educational leaders looking to utilize social media in their school. You are being asked to participate in this study because it is my belief that you have been part of this process and can provide knowledge and experiences that is important to this research.

I seek your consent to interview you in your current role regarding your experiences with being a school leader and teacher during the implementation process. I am also requesting access to non-confidential documents such as School Improvement Plans, School Improvement Team and Faculty meeting minutes, or other correspondence regarding issues of social media that you would willingly share.

As part of the informed consent process, you should know:

- There is no compensation being offered for participation in this study. You may, however, benefit from your participation by being provided the opportunity to share insights on your role in the implementation of social media tools in an educational setting.

- While I cannot guarantee with certainty complete confidentiality of your participation at the local level, I will not identify anyone by name in any published project results. The purpose of this research is not to evaluate your job performance or to generate personal profiles of any kind and it will not be used for these purposes.

- Your participation in this research project is entirely voluntary. You can refuse to answer any questions asked, request “time-outs” from observations and reserve the right to share only those documents you are comfortable with sharing. You may withdraw your consent to participate in the study at any time.

- You will be offered the opportunity to review the transcripts of any of your interviews and will reserve the right to request that any contributions be withheld from the analysis.

- All interviews will be digitally recorded and then transcribed for analysis. All digital recordings will be destroyed once they have been transcribed, verified and analyzed.

- As findings are developed, you will be provided the opportunity to review those particular to your participation and offer any clarifying information in order to help ensure the accuracy of my results. Your input here will be critical to strengthening the validity of my research. Any comments gathered during this review process will be incorporated into the research report.
• I do not foresee participation in this project posing any risk or harm to you or anyone else.

Specifically, I am seeking your consent for the following:

• Interviews: I plan to conduct a series of semi-structured interviews with you. The purpose of these interviews will be to gain a better understanding of the process that led to the implementation of social media into your school, its impact on stakeholders, and how the school went about handling difficulties that arose. The interview should take roughly 1-2 hours to complete and will be conducted at a time and place convenient to the participant.

• Document Review: Much of the evidence regarding school changes such as the implementation of social media tools in the educational setting is memorialized in school improvement plans, meeting agendas, meeting minutes, and hard and/or electronic correspondences between participants. I am requesting that I am provided access to all such documents. Access will be granted solely at discretion of the participants, but as with the interviews described above, these artifacts will be very important to fully understanding the process undertaken at your school.

I anticipate that the activities outlined here will take place during the fall of 2012 and that my final report will be completed by spring, 2013.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns about participating in this research. You may contact me at: Mlovechcio@Hotmail.com or by calling me at 781-934-0205 (H). You can also contact Dr. Jane Lohmann, the Principal Investigator at j.lohmann@neu.edu or 617-756-3237.
Additionally, if you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. You may also contact her at jrb@neu.edu or 617-373-4588. You may also call anonymously if you wish.

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Printed name of person above

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Signature of person agreeing to take part in study Date

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Signature of person who explained the study to participant named above

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Printed name of person who explained the study to participant named above

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Signature of person who explained the study to participant named above Date