

Scout Private School

A Guidebook For Organizational Communication in a Private K-12 School

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to provide organizational communication recommendations for private K-12 schools. A private K-12 school is an educational organization that serves kindergarten through 12th-grade students with the skills and knowledge they need to become functioning working adults. A K-12 school is made up of students, teachers, administrators, support staff, and parents.

Communication within an educational organization like a private K-12 school is very important because there is constant interaction with students, teachers, and parents, there are different age groups with different needs (elementary, middle, and high schoolers), a strong need for effective collaboration between teachers and administrators, safety concerns, academic accountability, and communication the community. This guide applies to teachers, principals, administrators, department heads, and school board members, and it is not for universities, colleges, trade schools, government agencies, or businesses.

2. Key Contexts in Organizational Communication for Scout Private School

a. The best structure for a K-12 private school would be a classical management approach. This is because when it comes to policies and overall structure, using a clear chain of command that uses top-down communication starting with the school board, then moving to administrators, principals, assistant principals, teachers, and then students helps things run smoothly and stay organized. This structure also allows teachers to focus on specializations like grade level or specific subjects rather than trying to multitask across different disciplines. Discipline and order are also important aspects of this approach and are important for private

schools because they typically have less government involvement in what they do, so this ensures that there is a disciplined learning environment where students and staff understand boundaries and expectations. Altogether, following this structure ensures a higher quality educational experience, which is helpful in justifying things like the cost of tuition.

While a classical management structure is important in the day-to-day operations of a private school, using the human relations development and human resource approaches is important because quality education depends heavily on teachers who are motivated and staff who feel respected and involved in decision-making. For example, administrators could meet with teachers on a regular basis to discuss things like classroom policies or the curriculum to see how it is impacting students since teachers interact with them day-to-day. These approaches can help give teachers more of a voice and while allowing them to expand their skill/approaches level beyond the basic requirements.

Overall, to operate efficiently and effectively, having a structured system using the classical management approach can help keep things orderly and effective when it comes to policies and school rules, while also incorporating humanistic approaches to encourage belonging, skill development, and a more diverse learning experience in the school.

b. In a private K-12 school, important information like academic policies, safety procedures, and school goals work best if they flow in a downward (top-down) communication style. This is because these things need to be established and consistent across the entire school, and the people who make these decisions are usually the ones at the top of the chain, such as school board members and administrators. For example, the school board might make a change to school start times for the year to administrators, who then explain the changes to teachers, who

then talk to parents and students without a lot of direct communication between the school board and parents/students.

Information should also flow upwards in a private K-12 school because parents, students, and teachers are the ones who are most impacted by changes, so this allows them to provide feedback to administrators and school board members on suggestions, concerns, or challenges that they may be having. For example, parents may communicate with principals and administrators on the types of extra-circulars being offered or sub-par lunch meals, things that are not set policies and can be open to change or negotiation.

Communication in a K-12 school should also move horizontally, with many teachers in the same grade level or same academic department communicating with each other on the curriculum and other issues that impact them as a group. For example, all 5th-grade teachers might collaborate on how to best move through the required curriculum to best serve parents and students and make sure that students are prepared for the next grade.

Overall, to have good organizational communication, a private K-12 school should have a mix of downward, upward, and horizontal communication. It's important for administrators to communicate downward on strict policies or procedures that are often required by law, that need to be set in stone, and cannot really change. On the other hand, communication should flow upward for any concerns about changes that the school has made, so teachers, parents, and students can feel that they have a voice. Lastly, horizontal communication is important in a K-12 school because there are so many moving parts to successfully run a school; that having a team or department to communicate with can help when small issues arise or when additional support is needed. All together, these types of communication are important to understand because schools often function as a system theory of interconnected parts rather than just one individual,

so that is why communication is so important to make sure the rules, beliefs, and values of the school are being followed.

c. In a private school, it is important to have order and structure in policies, procedures, and curriculum when it comes to certain standards that have to be met or laws that have to be abided by. In these areas, people who directly work with the school, like board members, teachers, and students, do not have much of a say because this has to do more with higher government officials. However, it is still important for teachers, principals, and support staff to contribute their ideas and have a voice in shaping policies that directly affect their work. In a private school, there is usually more flexibility in how the school can be run, but it is important for employees to have a say in the structure and flow of the school so they can stay engaged and be motivated to give their best efforts to students. For example, the administrators can involve teachers in classroom policy decisions or student support programs rather than making all the decisions on their own. This can help teachers feel a sense of belonging and self-esteem to be able to fulfill their role beyond the standards that need to be met.

At the same time, it is important for students to also have need fulfillment, and while they have the least amount of say based on everyone who is directly involved with the school (parents, teachers, principals), they still have academic, social, and emotional needs that have to be met. A private school can help fulfill these needs by offering open communication for students to express needs/concerns, having a student government to help with organizing school events and advocating for student needs, and providing support like school/career counselors so students feel safe and supported during the day and throughout their time as a student.

Overall, for private schools to function efficiently, they need to give teachers the power to advocate for students' needs and to have influence on certain parts of the curriculum so they can

fulfill their needs beyond physiological and safety to make their job meaningful. In congruence with that, fulfilling student academic, social, and emotional needs can help them also achieve need fulfillment and make them more likely to be engaged in their education. As a result, this can lead to a healthier school environment and culture.

d. Teamwork and collaboration are very important in the overall success of a K-12 private school. Teams allow staff, parents, and students to manage different responsibilities so the school can function better. Typically, the school should have several primary work groups throughout the building. This might include every teacher in the grade level, specific to the subject, administrators, like principals and vice principals, or even elementary, middle, and high school primary work groups. Committees are also important to address ongoing school needs and should be made up of a variety of people, including administrators, school board members, teachers, and parents. Task force teams are also important because they come together when organizing things like school events or charity auctions and are usually made up of parents, students, and teachers.

To effectively manage these teams in a private K-12 school, everyone should be aware of the role they serve and the goals they are trying to accomplish. These groups usually have a leader who is either the head of the department or the chair of a committee that helps keep things organized and makes sure everyone understands the tasks at hand and there is no role confusion. For these groups to function well, there should be consistent meetings and/or opportunities for discussion so people can make their voices heard and feel like they are contributing to the overall success of the school. Teams are especially important in private schools because they effectively operate as an independent institution and coordinating communication, sharing responsibilities,

and teamwork are all important in making sure that students are receiving the best possible education for their money.

e. In a private school, organizational culture is very important because it influences the beliefs, ideals, and values that shape how students, parents, teachers, and administrators interact within the school environment. In this private school, key aspects of the culture theories include respect, academic excellence, kindness, collaboration, and a strong sense of community. This is important to understand regarding how power and oppression are accounted for throughout the school.

Ultimately, the main power resides with the administrators and the school board, with them having the most influence over policies and decisions. However, since private schools are not funded by the government and rely heavily on tuition and parent satisfaction, parents also play a significant role in decision-making. From a critical theory perspective, this can often cause teachers to be out of the loop in decision-making and put them in situations where they feel their voices aren't heard.

As a result of these potential power imbalances, it is important for private schools to create a culture that encourages open communication, which can be achieved through things like committees or staff meetings to ensure that everyone involved in the school feels respected, valued, and heard.

f. When it comes to recruitment at a private school, focusing on the teachers and types of students that will be coming in is very important in the overall success of the school. When hiring new teachers, it is very important for private schools to look at human capital and the knowledge, skills, and abilities a potential new teacher will bring to the school. Often, people who come to private schools are looking for a more intensive, well-rounded education, so finding

teachers with those qualities is important. This means they need to not only be diverse in their academic abilities but also be willing to participate in leading extracurricular activities, sponsoring a club, and being able to support a variety of student needs, whether that would be social, academic, or emotional. Often, these teachers are recruited through referrals from peers/universities, job boards, and seasonal hiring events. Socialization for teachers often occurs through informal mentorship and onboarding to learn all about the culture, expectations, and beliefs of the school. New teachers are also socialized by vocational anticipatory socialization and seeking information from family, friends, and staff at the school on what it would be like to work there, and metamorphosis when they become fully part of the school and participate in team discussions and advocating for the school.

New students in private schools are often recruited by open houses and hosting community events to show what the school has to offer. They typically look for people who are academically driven, have a wide variety of interests, and would be heavily involved in the school community. Typically, being tested on knowledge is also how to determine which students to recruit by offering an entrance exam to see if prospective students fit with the culture and standards of the school. Once accepted, socialization starts by doing a shadow day to immerse themselves in what it would be like to be a student. Then it moves on to having a welcome buddy to help get new students involved with clubs, extracurricular activities like sports, and student support groups.

Overall, to make sure that new teachers and students are recruited and socialized well, having an open line of communication is very important during the initial interview process, getting acclimated to the school, and well after to make sure they continue to feel supported and welcomed. For teachers, this could mean having a co-worker in their department be their support

system when dealing with the transition, and for new students, having a welcome buddy to ensure that someone their own age can help guide them through the day. This helps strengthen the organizational culture and contribute to a positive school environment that is connected.

g. In regard to effective leadership throughout a private K-12 school, it depends on who it is with, whether that is administrator to teacher, teacher to teacher, teacher to student, or student to student. For leadership between an administrator and a teacher, the best form would be charismatic leadership because it focuses on development beyond the status quo, which could be useful in encouraging teachers to think outside the box and creating a culture shaped by a shared vision of excellence. For teacher-to-teacher and teacher-to-student, the best form of leadership is usually situational leadership. This is because not all teachers and students are on the same level, so whether a teacher is helping a co-worker or a student, the type of leadership they need depends on their experience in the school, level of skill/abilities, and the way they learn. This could lead some teachers to lead by a telling approach with direct guidance, while in another situation, they give their co-worker or student a more selling approach if they can handle tasks more independently. Leadership between two students should be authentic because it helps build trust and confidence in each other, and since in private schools most people are with smaller groups of people for their grade, it can help ease any fear of judgment and create more integrity.

These leadership approaches are effective with a classical management style mixed with the human resource development and human relations approach because they allow leaders to maintain authority while meeting the needs of people. While a private K-12 school functions well if it is in a hierarchical system, that is not to say that leaders should not also help motivate and support their employees, peers, students, or friends. By having leadership approaches that

focus on relationships, mutual respect, and trust, private schools can maintain order and structure while keeping it a positive place to work and learn.

h. In a private school, there is definitely a lot of conflict that can arise. The main conflict that often arises is intergroup conflict between parents and teachers. What makes this conflict unique is that since parents pay a lot of money to send their kids to private school, they can use that as coercive power when conflicting over grades, discipline, or teaching methods, and use enrolling their children as a threat to get what they want. This can also lead to source blaming, with parents blaming the teachers for things that are sometimes out of their control. As a result, this can lead to teachers being more accommodating because their paycheck comes from their students' parents.

When it comes to students, there often can be a lot of personality conflict in a private school because many schools have specific beliefs and values, and when students or parents of those students with diverse worldviews interact, it can cause drama. There can also be a lot of competition and conflict in private schools for students because this school is academically very rigorous, and the pressure can put students against each other and cause friction for families that are highly competitive.

To manage these conflicts, administrators should have a clear set of policies on how to deal with issues that directly involve them or between teachers/parents and students. This way, everyone is aware of the standards and rules that need to be met, and it should reduce blame and blackmail by focusing on what is in the best interest of the students. This could be done by having a meeting with all parents, staff, and students several times throughout the school year to address any concerns and make sure everyone is on the same page. Specifically dealing with student conflict, the school should encourage students to resolve their own conflicts, but if it is a

problem bigger than they can handle, then they should step in and provide support when needed. By addressing concerns early in the year instead of waiting for issues to arise, they can encourage more respect and collaboration between parents, students, and teachers to create a more cohesive and respectful environment.

i. One major diversity problem in K-12 private schools is not having enough socioeconomic diversity within its students. Since private schools cost a lot of money, the average/below income family often do not make enough to send their children to a school like this. While there are scholarships available, it is usually not enough to provide a fair chance for students with lower income families to come to a school like this even if they are just as smart or smarter than kids with rich parents.

A way to combat this diversity problem is to do more fundraising for scholarships and also target messages for new student enrollment in lower-income areas, so people are aware they have a chance to send their children to a school like this. For many families, they may think private school is out of reach, but through consistent messaging and community events, it can help increase diversity throughout the school, which, as a result, could bring more perspectives and ideas to create a well-rounded education. This is important to teach kids at a young age because the world is not made up of rich people, and even some of the poorest people in the United States are still richer than a lot of people in the world, so this can teach students life skills of empathy, understanding, and to be more worldly.

j. One unique factor that could impact organizational change in a K-12 private school is the resistance from students. For example, donors who give a lot of money to the school might want the dress code a little more formal and go from wearing collared shirts and khakis to plaid skirts with collared shirts tucked in and stockings. Changes like this can sometimes cause

retaliation from students, and a way school officials could account for the change is by framing it in a way that makes it seem like a positive thing and directly communicating with students and parents on any concerns or questions they may have. This can help give them a better understanding of the situation and make them feel like they have some control. The school could also implement certain days of the week or month that are more casual dress if parents/students raise concerns about formal dress being too much all the time, which, as a result, allows them to offer suggestions and improve the overall school experience.

In regard to crisis management, one of the things that makes it unique is that most of the school is made up of minors, which, in this day and age, with all the technology and social media, can make it difficult to protect vulnerable children, stop cyberbullying, manage impacts on student health, and follow legal protections and privacy. A way to account for this is to implement a no-phone policy during the school day. Students can still bring their phones to school, but they must be tucked away in their bags until they are released, and while this won't solve every problem, it can still help with combating some of the issues during the school day. Also, communicating with students frequently about the impact of technology and the consequences if used inappropriately can provide understanding and help them realize the school has these policies for protection/safety, not because they want to make the students' lives miserable.

Another potential crisis the school might have to deal with is potential emergencies like floods, tornadoes, school shootings, fires, earthquakes, and hurricanes. A way to account for these situations is to send parents a clear crisis communication plan at the beginning of the school year, as well as having it on the website all year round. This allows parents to know what they should do to not only keep their children safe but themselves. For students, having

assemblies and drills on what exactly they should do in different situations can help them be more prepared while also reducing tensions/panic if these emergencies ever happen.

The most important part of these crises that could happen in school is having a post-crisis review plan on what went well and what didn't. Even if it was not a real crisis, learning from the past can help this school be better prepared in the future on how best to communicate with parents/students and what needs to be changed/alterd to provide the best protection for students and staff within the school.

3. Christian Worldview Application

For Christians in this K-12 private school, focus should be on biblical principals such as respect, humility, kindness, and treating everyone with grace. Most of all in a school setting, everyone whether that be the school board, administrators, teachers, students, or parents should come in with the mindset of servant leadership and not use their roles to dominate or dictate how they want things to be just because they are in a position of power or influence.

For example, when it comes to conflict with parents and teachers, instead of parents using coercive power to get what they want, they can respectfully raise concerns and actively listen to the perspective of the teacher who is trying to do their job to the best of their ability. For students and anyone else who might have an issue with authority, they can lean back on Peter 2:17, which describes showing respect to everyone and honoring those in a position of power.

When it comes to diversity in the school, Christians should treat all students, parents, and staff with respect because every person is created in the image of God. Having a Christian worldview doesn't mean that everyone is always going to agree with each other, but as

Christians, it is important to treat people with kindness, even if they have a different perspective and background than someone is used to.

For the organizational culture, students, parents, and staff should not only focus on academic success, but also on service to the community. This is important as Christians because when Jesus was on earth, he taught the importance of service and that it was the greatest expression of love. This is especially important in a private school because it is a privileged setting to be in, and focusing on service can help everyone in the school community love/serve their neighbor, just as God calls us to do. Additionally, it can help people step out of their bubble by learning from others' life experiences.

Overall, a Christian worldview should impact every aspect of communication and leadership within a private K-12 school. Whether it is students, parents, teachers, administrators, or board members, everyone should be striving to reflect Christ through respect, honor, and service for others. By leading with service in mind, resolving conflicts with grace, respecting others with different backgrounds and perspectives, and creating a culture that strives for excellence beyond academics and focuses on service, the school can still remain structured and organized while honoring the Lord. Being a Christian is not always easy, and in a school setting, it can be difficult to stand firm on biblical principles, but being a Christian is not about what's convenient; it's about serving others and following God's teaching.

4. Conclusion and Synthesis

Altogether, organizational communication in a private K-12 school is very important to turn these students into functioning working adults and good members of society. Some of the key findings from this guide in regards to general structure and communication flow is that a

school like this needs to have structure and order, while providing a sense of belonging and opportunity for skill development for both students and staff to reach their maximum potential. Communication should be a mix of downward (policies and guidelines that have to be set and enforced), upward (concerns or suggestions parents and teachers have), and horizontal (having students and teachers in the same class, grade, or departments communicating with each other to support and encourage one another). Teamwork is also very important in this type of organization because grade levels and departments often serve as primary work groups since they interact and can support each other on a daily basis. Committees filled with everyone in the school community are also important to make sure that things are going well, and everyone, regardless of their role in the school, has a voice. Lastly, having good, authentic, and charismatic leadership in a K-12 private school is important because it can help with encouraging parents, students, and employees, as well as guiding conflict in an effective way, demonstrating respect to all types of people in the school, and being a firm foundation when a crisis or change occurs.

For this private K-12 school to be organized and communicate effectively, there are a few suggestions I have. The first is to have a clear organizational structure while valuing teacher input. Having a classical management structure can help keep things on track and organized, but it is important to incorporate humanistic approaches by involving teachers and other staff in decisions when it's appropriate. This can not only increase different perspectives and ideas, but also help teachers and staff get the needed fulfillment out of their job beyond basic needs. My second recommendation is to have open and effective communication. Having a mix of downward, upward, and horizontal communication can still keep things structured while allowing everyone involved in the school community to have a voice, and not just the school board and administrators. This can help with need fulfillment and creating a more positive school

culture. My third recommendation is to create opportunities for teachers, administrators, and other staff to work together on bettering the student experience and success. As the system theory showed us, the staff at a school like this are all interconnected, and the success of the school overall is dependent on everyone and not just one individual. By having the staff be able to lean on each other and support each other through ideas can help create a better environment for the students to learn in. My fourth recommendation is to build a positive and inclusive organizational culture that is based on a Christian worldview. Having a servant leadership structure in the school can be just as important as academic success, and it can teach kids and adults to be more respectful, worldly, and kind, through community service, volunteering events, and serving each other in the school. My fifth and final recommendation is to prioritize student success through good leadership and development. Having strong leadership throughout the school can help with socialization, increasing diversity, crisis planning, and conflict management because leaders of the school are the ones who set the tone to make sure academic, social, and emotional needs are being met. When children have good role models and leaders in their life, it can lead to them becoming better individuals and leaders themselves if they have a good example to follow.

The main themes throughout this guidebook are having effective communication, collaboration, and teamwork, prioritizing student success and development, being/creating strong leaders, and creating a community built on respect, service, and excellence. These themes all rely on one another to achieve the greatest success for the school. For example, effective communication can strengthen teamwork/collaboration, the staff being united can create better leaders which helps support student success, and a positive and respectful culture in the school can make it an environment where students, teachers, and families can thrive and develop into

better people. By focusing on these themes, a K-12 school can create an environment that is academically challenging, supportive, and service-minded in the school and the surrounding community.

Overall, the goal of organizational communication in a private K-12 school is not only to be an effective educational institution that creates good working adults, but also responsible functioning members in society. By using recommendations in this guidebook and focusing on communication, teamwork, leadership, and service, private schools can provide students with good academic success as well as personal growth. When these recommendations are consistently used, they can help create a more well-rounded generation of students who can be the start of better change in the world.

References

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