

TITLE: An Investigation of Transformational Leadership Behaviors in South Carolina Elementary School Principals

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OBJECTIVE: The purpose of this study is to investigate transformational leadership as a set of principal leadership behaviors in selected South Carolina elementary schools that directly associated with school achievement outcomes.

METHODOLOGY: The sample consisted of South Carolina elementary school principals in both effective and ineffective schools as determined by student achievement scores, with schools stratified according to their performance level on the South Carolina School Report Card for 2001 and 2002.. All participating schools contained a student population with a poverty index greater than fifty percent. Ten randomly selected teachers and the principal completed the Leadership Practices Inventory in 32 state-wide Elementary schools (53% response rate). The average number of years as principal of the school was 5.9 and the average total number of years in education was about 19. The percentage of females was 53 percent, African-Americans 41 percent, and most in the 40-60 age range (59%).

KEY FINDINGS: No significant differences were found on the principals' LPI-Self scores when comparing effective and ineffective school principals. However, principals from effective schools do report engaging in "actively listening" and "treating others with dignity and respect" significantly more than do their counterparts in ineffective schools.

Teachers' scores on the LPI-Observer reveal a different story, with significant differences on all five leadership practices when comparing effective and ineffective schools. For example, in effective schools there were no differences between the principals' LPI scores and those from their teachers. For ineffective schools, on the other hand, the scores of principals were all significantly higher than those reported by their constituents. Teachers in effective schools scored their principals significantly higher on all five leadership practices than did the teachers from ineffective schools. For principals striving to increase their "transformational leadership behaviors may well lie in the empowerment of teachers to make decisions and grow professionally" (p. 89).

There were no significant differences between the leadership scores when comparing the effective and ineffective schools in reference to male and female principals, ethnicity, age or highest educational degree obtained of the principal.