

TITLE: Leadership Style: Do Male and Female School Superintendents Lead Different?

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OBJECTIVE: This study examined gender-based differences in the leadership styles of school superintendents.

METHODOLOGY: One hundred superintendents from Massachusetts (38% response rate) and the school administrators who report to them (N=425) completed the Leadership Practices Inventory. Seventy-six percent of the superintendents were male while 51 percent of the constituents were male. The typical superintendent was between 50 and 60 years of age (69%) while typical school administrators were older than 50 (71%). Fifty percent of the latter were principals.

Cronbach alpha coefficients of internal reliability were .88 Challenging, .91 Inspiring, .88 Enabling, .88 Modeling, and .92 Encouraging. Factor analysis using principal components analysis generated five factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, which replicated the Kouzes and Posner conceptual model.

KEY FINDINGS: No gender-based differences in the leadership styles of superintendents were found. Although the mean scores of females were higher than males, but not statistically significant, the scores of male superintendents had greater variance and range than those of their female counterparts.

“School administrators do not perceive their superintendents to lead differently based on the superintendent’s gender. Additionally, the sex of the administrator (rater) did not play a role in the way in which they rated their superintendent. Male and female administrators reported equal perceptions of the superintendent’s leadership style, regardless of the sex of the superintendent” (p. 93).