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TITLE Exploring the Relationship between Christian School Teacher and Administrator Perceptions of Essential Leadership Characteristics and Practices and Their Perceptions of Success in Fulfilling the School's Mission

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OBJECTIVE The purpose of this study was to explore, within Christian elementary schools, the perceptions of teachers and their site administrators in relation to the essential leadership characteristics and practices that facilitate fulfillment of the institution's mission.

METHODOLOGY

The population consisted of 95 Association of Christian Schools, International members schools (in California), from which 15 schools (16% response rate), represented by 16 administrators and 221 teachers, participated in the study. Ten of the administrators were women. Respondents completed the LPI and the School Mission Survey (SMS; developed by the author for this study). Internal reliability for the LPI in this study was .96 (overall). In the qualitative portion of the study four schools were visited and interviews were held with the administrator and three teachers.

KEY FINDINGS

The most frequently engaged in leadership practice was Model the Way, closely followed by Enable Others to Act. Inspire a Shared Vision was ranked third most frequently, followed by Challenge the Process and Encourage the Heart. In general, all five leadership practices were significantly correlated with the five subscales of the School Mission Survey (content and evaluation, communication and accomplishment, stakeholder collaboration, administrator impact, and teacher's collaboration) but most strongly correlated with the subscales "communication and accomplishment" and "administrator impact."

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The author points out “substantial evidence through both the quantitative and qualitative components of a strong correlation between the perceived (leadership) practices exemplified by an administrator and the perceived measure of success in accomplishing the school’s mission” (p. 235). An exploratory factor analysis revealed that the five leadership practices factor accounted for 45.5 percent of the variance and the SMS accounted for an additional 24 percent. “These findings provide indication of a strong relationship between the leadership practices exemplified by a school administrator and the perceptions and administrators of success in fulfilling the school mission” (p. 177).

The author recommends that “principals receive training in effective leadership practices, as well as the development and implementation of a mission” (p. 256). Furthermore, she says that “it behooves each person in leadership to reflect upon and evaluate his or her personal style, character traits, behaviors and attitudes to determine areas that need to be strengthened or changed in order to enhance effectiveness” (p. 256).