

# THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE **research**

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THE MOST TRUSTED SOURCE ON BECOMING A BETTER LEADER

<b>TITLE</b>	Supportive Practices Principals Use that Influence Prospective Principals to Pursue Administrative Roles
<b>RESEARCHER</b>	Sandra M. Niemiera Department of Leadership, Educational Psychology and Foundations Northern Illinois University Unpublished doctoral dissertation: May 2006
<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	The purpose of the study was the identification of those supportive practices principals use to influence prospective principals to pursue administrative roles.

## METHODOLOGY

The respondents consisted of 118 of 318 individuals enrolled in their first or second year of a graduate level program at Northern Illinois University that would lead to administrative licensure (37% response rate). Two-thirds of the respondents were female (N=78), most in their first year (61.5%), and nearly all Caucasian (91%). They were nearly equally divided by age within the categories of 21-30, 31-40, and 41 years and above. The average years of experience was 8.9, with 32 percent reporting 11 or more years of work experience. In addition to providing demographical data, the respondents completed the Leadership Practices Inventory-Observer for their school principal. A modified version of the LPI was used to measure the prospective principal's perception of the importance that each leadership behavior had on their decision to pursue a graduate program leading to administrative licensure. Twenty-six students volunteered to participate in one of five focus groups and 18 principals were interviewed.

## KEY FINDINGS

While all five leadership practices were valued by the participants, their influential principals engaged in Enabling Others to Act and Encouraging the Heart more than the leadership practices of Modeling, Inspiring and Challenging. Similarly, Enabling and Encouraging were the two leadership practices reported as most influential by teacher leaders in their decision to pursue administrative licensure.

No significant differences were found in the leadership practices identified as important in their decisions between male and female respondents. No differences were found for either the type of district (unit, high school, or elementary) or type of community (rural, urban, or suburban) in which schools were located in explaining any differences in the leadership practices prospective principals perceived as important.

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In the focus groups participants identified both negative and positive ways in which principal behaviors influenced their decision to pursue administrative licensure. Transcripts were prepared and individual items were coded using the five practices of exemplary leadership framework. Of the 48 statements, 10 of them were categorized under Modeling the Way (21%) and of the 57 specific supportive practices their principals provided to them to pursue administrative licensure, 18 were categorized as Modeling (32%).

Six of these statements were related to Challenging (12%), one statement for Inspiring (2%), 17 statements related to Enabling (36%), and 19 statements related to Encouraging (39%). In terms of supportive practices, 10 percent were related to Challenging, 2 percent for Inspiring, 32 percent for Enabling, and 23 percent for Encouraging.

The principals' interviews were also transcribed and scored according to the five practices framework. The majority of specific things that they did to support teachers in pursuing administrative licensure were in the leadership category of Enabling (49%). This was followed by Modeling (20%), Challenging (20%), Encouraging (6%) and Inspiring (5%). In identifying things that they had learned from teachers that might influence their behavior in the future, the principals spoke mostly about Encouraging (33%), Enabling (29%), and Modeling (21%); followed by Challenging (13%) and Inspiring (4%).

"The results of this study reveal that the principals who were identified as being influential to teacher leaders engaged in each of the leadership practices 'fairly often'"(p. 113). "Principals who engage in enabling behaviors foster teamwork and collaboration within the school in order to create a learning environment. They provide opportunities for active involvement, remove barriers, and provide resources. According to the results of the responses given on the LPI, teacher leaders identified 'treating others with dignity' as a behavior that their principals engaged in more frequently than the other behaviors in this subset. Treating others with dignity is not about empowering individuals but rather about encouraging people to use the power and skills that they already have" (p. 114).

"In order to address the need for high-quality principals, school districts must aggressively identify teachers with leadership qualities and then systematically provide them with opportunities designed to help them grow as leaders" (p. 131).