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TITLE The Relationship Between the Leadership Practices of Elementary School Principals in South Carolina and Academic Success as Measured by Their School's State Report Cards

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OBJECTIVE The purpose of this study was to investigate the leadership practices of elementary school principals in South Carolina and the relationship between these practices and academically successful schools.

METHODOLOGY

The sample included 84 principals (response rate = 56%) who completed the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self, and 50 (60%) of these asked their constituents (2-3 teachers) to complete the LPI-Observer, of which 132 were returned (52% response rate). Forty-five schools (principals) were rated as academically successful as a result of receiving a score of average, good or excellent on the South Carolina Report Card, and 39 schools (principals) were rated as academically unsuccessful for not receiving this score. Responses from teachers came from 23 academically unsuccessful and 27 successful schools.

KEY FINDINGS

ANOVA results did not show any statistically significant difference in the leadership practices reported by principals between academically successful and unsuccessful schools. However, ANOVA results did show that the teachers in academically successful schools assessed all five leadership practices of their principals significantly and statistically ($p < .0001$) higher than those teachers working in academically unsuccessful schools. This pattern existed across all 30 specific leadership behaviors.

The author remarks: "The conclusion drawn from the principals' surveys suggest that principals perceive themselves as having excellent leadership practices, to the point of either being dishonest or unrealistic" (p. 84) and that "one factor that stands out above the rest is that the principals of academically unsuccessful schools did not take any personal responsibility for the

academic failure of their schools. The principals' self-reported scores indicated they did not believe their leadership practices had any relationship to the success or failure of the school" (pp. 84-85). "Finally, the principals may have rated themselves so high because of their lack of self-assessment skills" (p. 91).

Indeed, "the researcher concludes that the principals' self-reported scores on the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self survey do not accurately reflect scores for principals of academically unsuccessful schools. The principals failed to realize the connection or relationship between their leadership practices and the academic success of the school " (p. 91). On the other hand, she notes that "The teachers reported scores reflected an understanding of the relationship between the principals' leadership practices and the academic success of the school" (p. 92).