

# THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE **research**

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- TITLE** Leadership Integrated Curriculum for Junior High Family and Consumer Sciences Students
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- Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation: June 2007
- OBJECTIVE** The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of the integration of leadership development opportunities using a practical problem framework emphasizing childhood obesity on the self-perceived leadership practices of junior high school students.
- METHODOLOGY** Participants represented five groups of ninth grade Teen Living students in four different schools in Northern Idaho. The impact of leadership curriculum was assessed through a pretest/posttest design with both experimental and control groups as data sources. The experimental group received the integrated leadership curriculum, while the control group received the nutrition curriculum that is traditionally taught within secondary family and consumer sciences courses. The sample included ten family and consumer sciences classes totaling 203 students. Each school selected for the study has a family and consumer sciences course, Teen Living, offered to ninth grade students, who can range from ages 14-15.
- The students who participated in the course with leadership opportunities integrated within nutrition and wellness curriculum emphasizing childhood obesity were considered the experimental group and those who do not participate in the integrated curriculum the control group. Based on the enrollment numbers at

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the time of the study, the control group and the experimental group consisted of 100 students and 103 students, respectively. The Student Leadership Practices Inventory-Self (Kouzes & Posner, 2006) was used to measure the leadership practices of ninth grade students before and after implementation of the nutrition and wellness curriculum with an integrated leadership opportunity. Internal reliability of the S-LPI ranged between .75 and .88 in the pre-test and between .77 and .91 in the post-test condition.

### KEY FINDINGS

Significant changes were reported by those students participating in the experimental (leadership development) category with positive increase in all five of the leadership practices. For students participating in the control (traditional) group, the post-test scores on all five leadership practices did not significantly differ from the pre-test administration. The researcher concludes: “Even though the experimental group received a treatment over a short period of time, the nature of the integrated leadership opportunity challenged students and allowed for leadership roles to be assumed by all students. Students were provided the opportunity to use their voices in relation to a social issue through deliberating childhood obesity with parents/guardians, teachers, peers, and community members” (pp. 135-136). Regression analysis revealed that “the experimental leadership curriculum appeared to account for 12 to 20 percent of the differences in LPI posttest scale scores between the experimental and standard groups. With R Squared values ranging from .118 to .203, the conclusion can be made that the experimental leadership curriculum accounted for 12 to 20 percent of the differences in leadership practices” (pp. 135-136).

The four attribute variables studied – gender, number of work experiences, number of memberships in student organizations, and number of leadership positions held – were not significant predictors of LPI total pretest score. The researcher writes that:

Based on the findings of this research study, it was concluded that the integrated leadership opportunity increased students’ perceived leadership practices” (p. 154) and argues for the need to “Integrate leadership opportunities into current family and consumer sciences curriculum to develop and strengthen the ability of adolescent learners to display the five practices of leaders created by Kouzes & Posner (2003): Challenge the Process, Inspire a Shared Vision, Enable Others to Act, Model the Way, and Encourage the Heart (p. 161).

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