

TITLE: Comparison of the Transformational Leadership Practices of Principals of Charter Schools and Principals of Traditional Public Schools in Louisiana

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OBJECTIVE: The purpose of this study was to determine if charter school principals differed in their leadership with principals of traditional public schools.

METHODOLOGY: The sample consisted of all charter schools in Louisiana and a matched sample of traditional public schools stratified by grade levels served and matched on the factors of (a) percentage of at-risk students, and (b) percentage of school attendance, and (c) percentage of certified faculty teaching. Forty-five percent (N=9) of the charter school principals participated, as did the same percentage of traditional school principals. They completed the LPI-Self. For charter school principals, 38 percent of the teachers completed the LPI-Observer (N=77) and 26 percent completed the LPI-Observer (N=212). Demographic and institutional data were also collected. A follow-up phone interview was conducted with each principal.

KEY FINDINGS: All of the principals, regardless of whether from charter or traditional schools, reported LPI scores statistically higher than the Kouzes Posner normative database. Between charter and traditional school principals, the leadership practices of Modeling, Inspiring, Challenging, and Enabling were not significantly different. Traditional school principals reported more Encouraging than did their charter school counterparts.

Within schools, there were no statistically significant differences between the leadership scores of the principals and their teachers, with one exception. Traditional school principals reported more Encouraging than did their teachers. No significant differences were found for leadership practices based upon the principal's gender, certification status, years of administrative experience, or instructional expenditures per student. Similar non-significant differences were found based upon teacher demographics.

When asked to describe their leadership style, all principals used terminology indicative of transformational leadership practices: I lead by empowering teachers to teach their students, I lead by involving teachers in collaborative decision-making, and our school uses site-based management in making decisions.