

TITLE: The Leadership Practices of Exemplary Superintendents That Influence Principals to Lead School-Based Improvement

RESEARCHER: Patrick J. Sweeney
Department of Educational Management
University of La Verne (California)
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OBJECTIVE: To identify the leadership practices and behaviors most important and most commonly used by exemplary superintendents to influence principals to lead school-based improvement as perceived by superintendents and principals.

METHODOLOGY: The sample involved 17 of 18 superintendents of California public schools (N=1005) nominated by an expert panel of school leaders as exemplars. Each completed the Leadership Practices Inventory, along with a random selection of one of the principals from their school districts who had worked with them for at least three years. Each principal (N=16) completed the LPI-Observer. All respondents also indicated the degree of importance they attached to each of the leadership behaviors for influencing principals to school-based improvement, and provided demographic information.

KEY FINDINGS: The most commonly used leadership practices of superintendents to achieve school-based improvement, as reported by superintendents, was Enabling, followed by Challenging, Modeling, Inspiring and Encouraging. The perception of principals of the most commonly used leadership practices by superintendents was Modeling, followed by Enabling, Encouraging, Inspiring and Challenging. None of the differences between superintendents and principals was statistically significant; that is, the two groups tended to agree that all five leadership practices were commonly used.

In terms of what leadership behaviors were perceived to be most important in influencing principals to lead school-based improvement by superintendents was Enabling, followed by Modeling, Encouraging, Challenging, and Inspiring. From the perspective of principals, the most important leadership practice was Enabling, followed by Modeling, Encouraging, Inspiring and Challenging. As with the previous questions, there were no significant differences between these two groups in terms of the importance of these leadership behaviors and practices.

All in all, the author concludes: "The data collected on the perceptions of superintendents and principals reveals more similarities than differences. The superintendents tended to perceive themselves as using the practices and behaviors that they and the principals rated as important" (p. 100-101).