

TITLE: Identifying and Analyzing the Factors Utilized by Superintendents in Achieving Their "Personal Best" in Education

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OBJECTIVE: To identify and analyze the factors utilized by superintendents in achieving their "personal best" in education.

METHODOLOGY: Kouzes and Posner (1987) "Personal Best" survey, with slight modifications, was sent to 100 superintendents from California, Missouri, Iowa, and New York (52% responded). Typical superintendent had been in position for eight years in a district of 6,400 students. Inter-rater reliability for coding personal best cases was .90.

FINDINGS: "Each superintendent in the study had at least one leadership story to tell" (p. 30). Twenty-five percent of the personal bests were in the category of "improving climate," closely followed by "growth and expansion" (21%), then "effective schools projects" (12%) and "curriculum improvement" (12%). Most important contributor to "personal best" success was involvement of others (33%), followed by taking risks (16%), and envisioning the future (16%). Enabling Others to Act was the most important leadership strategy of the superintendents, followed by Inspiring, Modeling, Encouraging, and Challenging. No statistically significant relationships were found between school district size and the personal best endeavor, practice, and strategies.

"The actions of superintendents who achieved their personal best, parallel those found in Kouzes' and Posner's research. Superintendents apparently utilized similar types of strategies to accomplish their personal best" (p. 75). Superintendents were more likely than CEOs to Encourage the Heart informally (thank you's) rather than formally (awards and dinners). In conclusion, Long asserts that leadership actions of superintendents challenges traditional thinking about what constitutes superintendent effectiveness.