

TITLE: The BIA/Contract School Administrator: Implications for At-Risk Native American Students

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Presented at the National Rural and Small School Consortium Meeting, 1990.

OBJECTIVE: The study investigated the type of leadership exhibited by secondary school administrators in Bureau of Indian Affairs-Contract schools (the primary educational delivery system to Native Americans residing on reservations).

METHODOLOGY: Surveys were sent to 54 secondary school administrators as identified in the Education Directory of the Office of Indian Education Programs. Twenty-two useable LPI-Self responses were received (41% response rate). Most respondents were men (80%). About two-fifths (38.5%) were Native American Indians. Other than ethnicity and degrees of experience few demographic differences were found between the Indian and non-Indian school administrators. The majority in both groups identified instructional leadership as their primary job, and indicated very similar schedules in the daily operation of their schools.

KEY FINDINGS: The findings suggested that the principals responded to the desire to be instructional leaders but acted, instead, primarily as managers. Only thirteen percent were in classes on a daily basis; seventeen percent were not in classes even on a monthly basis.

No statistically significant differences were found on the LPI between Native American Indian administrators and their non-Indian counterparts. Compared to the normative sample, both groups scored relatively high (70th percentile) on the Inspiring and Modeling leadership practices. The Indian administrators scored above the seventy percentile on Challenging the Process. Both groups scored in the moderate range in Enabling and Encouraging.

Chance concludes: "The administrators perceived an ability to inspire and model, and for one group to challenge, yet failed to enable their subordinates and sufficiently recognize them when they achieve. In other words, both the LPI and the demographic questionnaire indicated an ability to 'talk the talk' but a functional failure in 'walking the talk'."