

TITLE: Leadership Practices of Principals From Distinguished and Nondistinguished Middle Schools as Perceived by Their Teachers

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OBJECTIVE: Determine if a significant difference existed in the leadership practices of principals from distinguished and nondistinguished middle schools, as perceived by their teachers, in relation to various demographic variables.

METHODOLOGY: The population included the teachers and principals from five distinguished middle schools (receiving the 1993-1994 California Distinguished School award) in Ventura County along with five randomly selected nondistinguished schools. Each principal asked their teachers to complete the LPI-Observer and provide some demographic information (i.e., teacher's gender, years of experience, years with the principals, and grade level taught). One hundred and sixteen from distinguished schools participated (72 females and 30 males) as did 87 teachers from nondistinguished schools (57 females and 30 males).

KEY FINDINGS: Teachers from distinguished schools reported higher LPI scores (on all five practices) than did those from nondistinguished schools for their principals. These relationships were not moderated by either the gender or years of experience of the teachers. Most of the other relationships were not affected by the demographic variables, with these exceptions: teachers at distinguished schools with one to two years with the principal rated them as Challenging significantly more than those with three or more years experience; teachers from nondistinguished schools with one or two years with their principal rated all five leadership practices higher than those with three or more years; and, sixth grade teachers at distinguished schools rated the principal on Encouraging significantly higher than eighth grade teachers.

“This meant that principals from distinguished middle schools were seen by their teachers as leaders who possessed and used the leadership practices that Kouzes and Posner deemed necessary to produce effective and productive learning climates for students....it appears safe to conclude that teachers' ratings of principals are a viable indicator of the quality of a school” (p. 70).