

TITLE: An Investigation of the Leadership Style of Principals and Its Relation to Teachers' Perceptions of School Mission and Student Achievement

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OBJECTIVE: To expand the definitional and theoretical aspects of transformational leadership as it relates to the leadership behavior of school principals.

METHODOLOGY: The sample was selected from 50 public elementary and middle schools in North Carolina each, who had been categorized, based upon public data, into high, average, and low performing groups. Each principal was asked to complete the LPI and have five teachers complete the LPI-Observer, and each principal was asked to complete the School Mission Questionnaire (Evers & Bacon, 1994) and provide demographic information. The overall response rate was 46 percent, with 25 responses from the principals of high-performing schools, and 24 and 20 responses respectively from the average and low performing school principals.

KEY FINDINGS: LPI scores from principals were not significantly different from those of the teachers. What was interesting was that the principals' perception of the frequency in which they engaged in these five leadership practices was inversely related to the performance of their schools, and just the opposite was true for the average teacher LPI scores. That is, in the high performing schools, the teachers gave their principals the higher LPI scores than did the teachers in average performing schools, and the latter gave higher scores in turn than did the teachers from the low performing schools.

A statistically significant relationship was found between teachers' perceptions of their principals' leadership behavior on all five practices and the teachers' perceptions of school mission. However, the relationship of leadership behavior and school mission to improved student achievement was not demonstrated by the results of the study. The author concludes: "The model of transformational leadership behavior presented by Kouzes and Posner seems to be supported in schools as indicated by the results of the hypotheses tested (p. 103).....and support the use of the model in public school settings" (p. 104).