

TITLE: An Examination of Factors Contributing to Exemplary Schools in an Urban Public School District in the Midwest

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OBJECTIVE: To compare the elements of identified exemplary schools with elements of those which were identified as developing schools.

METHODOLOGY: Exemplary schools were identified as those which met the criteria for selection: positive growth in test scores, the presence of the same administrator for the past 4 years, positive reported parent involvement, identification by the Michigan State Department of Education as Summary or Interim accredited, and the recommendations of the Directors of Elementary Schools and developing schools were at the opposite end on these criteria. There were 64 elementary schools in this urban school district; and 11 were selected from this set as exemplary and 11 as developing. Of these, 10 principals from exemplary and 8 from developing schools participated. Teachers and other staff members completing the survey totaled 84 from exemplary and 87 from developing schools (67% response rate). In addition to completion of the LPI (Self and Other), respondents completed the School Assessment Survey (Wilson, 1985a). Surveys were completed at each location at a staff or special meeting called by the principal.

KEY FINDINGS: Principals in exemplary schools reported significantly greater use of the leadership practices of Inspiring, Enabling, and Modeling than did those from developing schools. Teachers from exemplary schools perceived their principals engaging in the leadership practices of Challenging and Modeling significantly more than did those teachers in developing schools. In addition, "the staffs of the exemplary schools were statistically more in agreement with their principals regarding leadership than those of the developing schools" (p 51). The results of the School Assessment Survey indicated that these exemplary schools have in common at least five characteristics that are significantly different from those of developing schools: goal consensus, student discipline, centralization of authority, vertical communication, and facilitative leadership.