

**TITLE:** Elementary Teachers' Perceptions of Principals' Instructional Leadership Behaviors

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**OBJECTIVE:** To examine differences in teachers' perceptions of exhibited leadership behaviors of principals in higher achieving schools versus those in lower achieving schools.

**METHODOLOGY:** The population consisted of all 39 elementary schools within a smaller-sized urban school district in Colorado, scoring above and below predicted achievement levels based on pre- and post District Achievement Level Test (DALT) scores (focused on composite reading, math and language arts achievement levels in grade 3, 4, and 5) and the principal being the building administrator for at least two consecutive years. Eight schools met this criteria for participation; and seven agreed to participate. The LPI was modified slightly, requesting respondents to indicate both the importance of the various leadership behaviors as well as the extent to which they were exhibited. The LPI-Observer version was completed by teachers (N=100) within each school. The typical teacher was female (88%), 50+ years of age (50%), with 16+ years of teaching experience (62%), and a master's degree (52%). On-site visits to the schools also took place.

**KEY FINDINGS:** There were no significant differences in teachers' perceptions of their principals' leadership behaviors (for either most important or most exhibited leadership behaviors) based on age, gender, years of teaching experience or educational level of respondents. Teachers viewed the leadership behavior of treating others with dignity and respect as the most importance behavior. The top two of the ten most important were from the leadership practice of Enabling Others to Act, and three of the top ten were from the leadership practice of Modeling the Way. In terms of exhibited leadership behaviors the highest score went to clearly communicating a positive and hopeful outlook for the future (Inspiring). Four of the top ten most exhibited leadership behaviors were from the leadership practice of Encouraging the Heart and three from Enabling Others to Act.

The most important leadership behaviors reported by teachers in high-achieving, low SES schools had to do with Modeling the Way and Enabling Others to Act. Significant interaction effects of SES and achievement level on teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership behaviors were found on four of the leadership practices associated with Enabling Others to Act.