TITLE        Examining the Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practices of Elementary Principals in Central New York

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OBJECTIVE  The purpose of the study was to look critically at the Kouzes and Posner leadership practices of elementary principals.

METHODOLOGY

The population consisted of 50 elementary schools from central New York school districts, of which 39 participated (78% response rate) by completing the Leadership Practices Inventory. The LPI Self was administered for the purpose of identifying those principals who had a high frequency usage of each of the five leadership practices. This identification process allowed for focus groups made up of only those principals who had a high frequency use in their professional practice.

KEY FINDINGS

Three major themes emerged from focus group Model the Way: Say and Do What You Believe, Build Trust, and Communicate. Three major themes emerged from focus group Inspire a Shared Vision: Visibility and Rapport, Communicate, and Support Change. Two major themes emerged from focus group Challenge the Process: Support New Initiatives, and Always Expect More. Two major themes emerged from the focus group Enable Others to Act transcripts: Eliminate Obstacles, and Build Trust. The last focus group generated one essential theme: Build a Community.

The author suggests that:

The results of this study come at a unique time in education. This study and the results are timely in that limited research exists to align principal practices with a validated research-based business framework. There was a gap in the literature in leadership practices specific to the application of Kouzes’ and Posner’s work to the practices of elementary principals. The study fills the gap between the leadership practices of Kouzes and Posner and their usefulness to the field of education, specifically with the elementary principal. The study results provide an evidence based elementary leadership framework that is explicitly described by principals and grounded in the leadership practices of Kouzes and Posner (p. 99).

Study results demonstrate that the leadership practices of elementary principals in central New York are not unlike the behaviors of leaders illustrated in the work of Kouzes and Posner in business. Many connections can be made between the leadership practice statements of K&P and those listed by study participants. This
suggests that leadership practices may be universal in education, business, and nursing (p. 103).

The author concludes:
the introduction of Kouzes and Posner’s leadership theory adds value to higher education curriculum. Principal and administrative leadership development could include study results and the process for developing this leadership framework in schools. The study results provide an authentic framework that can be applied to the practical requirements of most leadership development programs. The study results and process also have value for pre-service elementary principals and other administrators. The leadership framework can be taught and applied in practice. The study process and results make the K&P theory come to life in a genuine way. Linking the actual participant commentary to the Kouzes and Posner theory validates the study and its connection to the theory (p. 113).