TITLE  A Study in Perceptions of Elementary School Principals’
Engagement Levels in Best Leadership Practices and Student
Achievement

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OBJECTIVE  The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship
between Southern California elementary principals’ self-
perceptions of their engagement in best leadership practices,
teachers’ perceptions of their principals’ engagement in best
leadership practices, and student academic outcomes as measured
by California’s Academic Performance Index (API) between the
school years 2010-2011 to 2012-2013.

METHODOLOGY

Ten Southern California elementary principals out of 61 (16% response rate), and 63 of
their respective teachers (52% response rate), grades one through six, representing six
Southern California unified school districts, participated in this study. Respondents
completed the Leadership Practices Inventory. Among the principals, nine were women,
seven lead Title 1 schools, and enrollment ranged from 365-939 students, with staff size
ranging from 13-39 teachers at the school.

KEY FINDINGS

Enable was the leadership practice which principals reported using the most, followed by
Encourage and Model, and then Challenge and Inspire. The rank order of the leadership
practices as viewed by teachers was Enable as most frequent, followed by Model and
Inspire, then Challenge, and Encourage. However, the correlations between the
leadership practice frequency scores reported by principals and teachers were strong, with
nearly all above .77. No significant relationship was found between principal overall LPI
scores and API three-year academic achievement scores, although a significant,
moderate, correlation was found for teacher scores and student academic achievement ($r$
= .65).

The author concludes:

This study suggested the principals’ self-perceptions of their engagement in best
leadership practices bore no significant relationship with student achievement,
while the teachers’ perceptions of their respective principals’ engagement in best
leadership practices implied a moderate significant relationship with student
Staff development for principals in the traits of transformational leadership and the best leadership practices, Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart as researched by Kouzes and Posner (2013) should be completed. This study suggested teachers had somewhat stronger perceptions of their principals’ leadership practices than the principals. Principals need to be more cognizant of their own daily leadership behaviors, which would lead to the betterment of the entire school. Districts should collaboratively seek out ways to improve principals’ leadership practices through additional instruments that promise 360-degree feedback (p. 95).

Principals should receive professional development in the area of capacity building, especially in the area of sharing a vision and empowering stakeholders to stay focused and set goals to obtain the vision. Additionally, capacity building training should inform the principals how to encourage teachers through public recognition and appreciation of the teachers’ contributions towards student excellence (p. 95).