TITLE	Barriers and Supports to Implementation of Principal Leadership for School Change
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OBJECTIVE	The purpose of this study was to examine the supports and barriers to K-12 public school principals' implementation of key research-based leadership practices.

METHODOLODY

The study population included seven public school principals, from small-city, urban school districts in the Northeast, and 29 teachers in their schools. Respondents completed the Leadership Practices Inventory (Self and Observer forms). The principals were also interviewed and kept an electronic journal. Of these schools four had between 250 and 500 students, and three had between 500 and 700 students. Three principals had less than five years of experience in their job, two from 6 to 10 years, and two for 11 to 15 years. Six had been a teacher prior to becoming a principal and one was a school psychologist. Of the seven, only three had been a teacher for more than 10 years, two for 5 to 10, and one for 5 years. Four had received mentoring their first year as a principal, and two had received coaching. Six had experiences as an assistant principal prior to becoming a principal; however, all seven had prior supervisory experience. Only one principal identified past professional development experiences as being geared specifically toward principal leadership roles and responsibilities to a high degree; the other six acknowledged that this occurred infrequently.

KEY FINDINGS

The most frequently practiced leadership behavior was Model the Way, followed by Enable, Encourage, Inspire, and Challenge from the perspective of the principals. The teacher's perspective was fairly similar, with the most frequently engaged in leadership practice reported as Enable, followed by Model, Encourage, Inspire, and Challenge.

The interviews suggested that there were common supports perceived to positively impact implementation of the five leadership practices. The support of interpersonal relationships appeared consistently as a perceived support to the implementation of every leadership practice. The supports to implementation were predominantly categorized as internal supports. Moreover, of the 22 supports identified across the five practices, 14 supports were categorized as internal and directly within the principal's control, six supports were categorized as internal and directly influenced by the principal's behavior, and only two were categorized as external structures within the building. It is important to note that no supports driven by external forces were identified.

Perceived barriers to the using these five leadership practices included both internal and external categories. For the three leadership practices most frequently engaged in (Model, Enable and Encourage) the least number of barriers were present. For these three practices six of the 10 barriers were categorized as external barriers related to structures within the building and one was an external, systems-driven barrier. The systems-driven barrier was the teachers union within the district, which principals perceived as strong and resistant to change. Only three of the 10 barriers were categorized as internal. Of those barriers, time was a key barrier across all three of the practices. The leadership practices of Inspire and Challenge had numerous barriers according to the principals. For both practices a lack of central office support was identified by all participating principals as the top barrier to implementation. For these two practices, all of the external barriers were systems barriers.

The author concludes:

> Principals in this study implemented the key leadership practices to varying degrees. The implementation of all of the five practices was perceived to be within the capacity and control of the principal. There were external barriers that principals perceived to impact their abilities to implement leadership practices; however, the internal nature of the perceived supports indicated that it was within the school principal's capacity to overcome these barriers (p. 151).

> The key finding that the primary supports to implementing the key leadership practices (challenging the process, inspiring a shared vision, enabling others to act, modeling the way, and encouraging the heart) are primarily internal and within the principals' capacity to influence impacts the principalship, school structures, and professional development opportunities. Formally recognizing the inherent importance of relationships within the role of principal is a critical finding with significant social change implications. It builds a knowledge base for the behavior of the principal that should inform leadership preparatory programs and professional development experiences for principals. It implies that principals must enhance their skills and abilities in relationship to soft skills in their daily practice. Lastly, based on the identification of the supports and barriers to the successful implementation of key leadership practices, this study makes a contribution to the field in predictive knowledge about the field in predictive knowledge about individuals possessing educational leadership capacity. It suggests that sitting principals must have not only a sound comprehension of instructional leadership, but the capacity to employ soft skills (including fostering relationships and enhancing communication within the school building) (pp. 161-162).