TITLE	The Relationship between Leadership Practices, School Culture, and Student Achievement in Southwest Mississippi Schools
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OBJECTIVE	The purpose of this study was to determine the individual leadership practices and cultural practices most frequently employed by principals in high performing schools.

METHODOLOGY

The participants in the study included educators in 12 school districts in Southwest Mississippi. Four high performing, four average performing, and four low performing school districts were selected to participate. Approximately 310 educators were randomly drawn from the 31 schools participating in the study. Two-hundred and sixteen (70% response rate) completed the devastating Leadership Practices Inventory and the School Culture Survey (Gruenert &Valentine, 1998). Approximately 88 percent of the participants were female, 79 percent were Caucasian, 41 percent had nine or less years in the educational field, 63 percent had been in their current position for five or more years, and 56 percent had a master's degree.

KEY FINDINGS

MANOVA analysis confirmed a significant difference in all five leadership practices of principals in high, average, and low performing schools. For Model, Inspire, Challenge, Enable, and Encourage a significant difference was revealed between principals in (a) high performing schools and low performing schools and (b) high performing and average performing schools.

In a multiple regression analysis of school culture, four of the five leadership practices (all but Model) made significant contributions to explained variance; accounting for 36 percent of the variance in collaborative leadership, 22 percent of the variation in teacher collaboration, 27 percent of the variance in professional development, 24 percent of the variation in collegial support, 29 percent of the variance in unity of purpose, and 15 percent of the variation in learning partnership. The results indicated that (a) Inspire was a significant predictor of collaborative leadership, professional development and unity of purpose, and (b) Enable was a significant predictor of teacher collaboration. The only significant relationship found between school culture and student achievement was for learning partnership. None of the five leadership practices significantly related directly to student achievement measures (although Model approached statistical significance at ($p <.059$).

The author concludes:

> The results of this study suggested that principals in high performing schools employed all five leadership practices more proficiently and frequently than principals in lower performing schools. Kouzes and Posner (2007) stated that leaders who utilize the five exemplary practices effectively will attain better results than those who do not. Furthermore, principals who employ the five practices will improve the school culture and increase student achievement (Abu-Tineh et al., 2008; Saban & Wolfe, 2009). These findings are in agreement with the conceptual framework for this study (p. 133).

> The findings of this study suggest that leaders do not have a direct impact on student achievement. However, this research suggested that school leaders have a direct and positive impact on school culture. Therefore, principals indirectly impact academic achievement through their influence on school culture. This is consistent with the conceptual framework that leaders who use the five leadership practices will improve the school culture and ultimately the academic achievement of students (pp. 135-136).