

TITLE Factors Beyond Instruction That Impact School Performance: Leadership Practices and School Culture in High Achieving and Low Achieving Public Schools

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Unpublished doctoral dissertation: December 2017

OBJECTIVE The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between principals' leadership practices, school culture, and student achievement as perceived by elementary school teachers.

METHODOLOGY

The sample involved two population samples within a single Texas independent school district. One consisted of 79 teachers (response rate = 36%) from six elementary schools designated as high-achieving by the Texas Education Agency and the other consisted of 75 teachers (34% response rate) from six elementary schools designated as low-achieving. Participants completed the LPI-Observer and School Culture Survey (Gruenert, 1998). Seventy-seven percent of the teachers were women; 41 percent were Hispanic, 25 percent Caucasian, 27 percent African American, and the remainder were with American Indian/Alaskan Native or Asian/Pacific Islander. Most were classroom teachers (70%) and all held a college degree. Almost two thirds of the teachers in high-achieving schools (66%) indicated they would return to this school next year. In low-achieving schools, 41 percent of teachers reported they would return to this school next school year.

KEY FINDINGS

No statistically significant differences in the teachers' perceptions of the principals' leadership practices were found between low-achieving schools and high-achieving schools (and the same results were found for the six dimensions of school culture).

The results of the correlational analyses for high-performing as well as low-performing schools revealed significant relationships, and "in general, the results suggested that if teachers perceived that their principals exhibit leadership practices, they tend to state that principals frequently use cultural practices" (p. 94).

The author notes:

...teachers are perceptive of the leadership practices of their principals regardless of the overall ranking of the school at which they are employed. The importance of leadership outweighs the effects of the school, which supports the literature that emphasizes the importance of the role of leadership at schools (Pugh et al., 2011; Watkins & Moak, 2011; Wilson, 2011). Teachers' awareness of leadership practices at their schools not only indicates the importance of leadership, but also the scope of influence that leadership has over teachers (p. 102).