

TITLE Leadership in Adult Education

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OBJECTIVE The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of leadership practices in adult education programs in the State of Maine as perceived by their Directors.

METHODOLOGY

Adult Education Directors (AEDs), from all 86 Adult Education facilities in the State of Maine were asked to fill out the Leadership Practices Inventory through the University of Southern Maine's SNAP online survey software, and 29 participated (34% response rate).

KEY FINDINGS

The author notes the following trends (pp. 21-22):

The two highest ranking statements in the survey for this set of AED's fell into the "Model the Way" category. 79% of respondents agreed with "almost always" for the statement, "I treat others with dignity and respect" and 76% respondents stated "almost always" for the statement, "I follow through on the promises and commitments that I make". Also in this category, almost half (48%) of the respondents stated, "I set a personal example of what I expect of others." which appears to indicate that AED's feel strongly that they lead by example.

Another trend appeared where excluding the category of "Inspire a vision," respondents did not use the ratings of "almost never", "rarely", and "seldom." In the category of "Inspire a vision," 10% of respondents answered "seldom" for the statement, "I show others how their long-term interests can be realized by enlisting in a common vision." Of all responses for "I describe a compelling image of what our future could be like," 3% indicated "rarely," 10% "sometimes" and 21% "fairly often." indicating that AED's may not be as focused on this aspect of the leadership challenge as the other four practices.

A trend in the "Challenge the process" category emerged with the highest ranking responses as "very frequently". This may indicate that AED's see themselves as people who think "outside of the box" and look to the future for the answers to improving the quality of their work. This is evidenced by the statement, "I talk about future trends that will influence how our work gets done", where 45% stated that they do "very frequently".

Enabling others to act was another category that had its highest majorities in the “almost always” response. 52% answered “almost always” for the statement, “I develop cooperative relationships among the people I work with” and 48% stated that they “almost always” “listen to diverse points of view”, appearing to indicate that AED’s feel strongly that they care about their employees and take into account their points of view. Also of note in this category is that 38% stated, “I support the decisions that people make on their own”, and “I ensure that people grow in their jobs by learning new skills and developing themselves.” supporting the idea that AED’s find professional development and autonomy valuable.

Trending in the final category of “Encourage the heart”, were the responses of, “once in a while”, and “usually”. For example, “I find ways to celebrate accomplishments” was answered “usually” for 31% of respondents and “I make sure that people are creatively rewarded for their contributions to the success of our projects” was answered “usually” for 35% of the respondents. In contrast, 41% answered “almost always” to the statement, “I praise people for a job well done”. This data seems to indicate that AED’s may take the time to verbally praise their employees, but there may not be consistency in the frequency of that praise. It could also mean that tangible or material rewards are not often given when it comes to recognition.