

TITLE Leadership Practices and School Climate: What is the Relationship?
Promotions

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OBJECTIVE The purpose of this study was to assess the use of transformational leadership behaviors displayed by principals in the specified district, in particular by collecting data that would provide insights into how principal behavior aligns with the Tennessee Transformational Leadership Alliance framework.

METHODOLOGY

The population of this study included seven principals and 85 teachers in a small suburban K–6 school district in Tennessee. Leadership Practices Inventory, the Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning Survey (administered by the state), and the school district had conducted surveys via AdvanED regarding school climate. Four principals and 11 teachers also participated in interviews.

KEY FINDINGS

The leadership practices reported by principals as used most often Enable, Model, and Encourage, followed by Challenge and Inspire. However, teachers in six of ten schools reporting that Challenge was the leadership practice used most often by their principal. However, no significant differences were found in the frequency of use of the five leadership practices between the viewpoints of leaders and teachers.

The researchers note: “When asked whether leadership behaviors influence school climate, 100% of teacher participants indicated a belief that they do. Teachers who noted that their school climate was negative also described how their principal’s leadership had directly affected the school climate” (p. 87).

The authors conclude:

As a district, the principals who participated represented three of the five leadership practices included in The Leadership Challenge. The representation of multiple practices is a positive result. The practices can speak to the comfort level of each principal with a certain aspect of leadership. In this district, several principals are comfortable sharing their values (“Model the Way”), recognizing others’ contributions (“Encourage the Heart”), and building relationships that can lead to productive collaboration (“Enable Others to Act”). The district can leverage these strengths and comfort levels and delegate work in a way that promotes the use of strengths (p. 112).

The results also indicate that the district's participating principals do not perceive themselves as challenging the status quo or developing a vision that all staff can support—both aspects of leadership that are invaluable to the principal role. Lack of comfort with those aspects of leadership could significantly affect the schools in the district (p. 112).