

# Teachers' and Principals' Perspectives of Leadership: A Search for Within-School Alignment

Tara N. Gabriel, Honors Student  
Adriana L. Medina, PhD



## Background and Purpose

### Background Problem

- School Administrators struggle to find a reliably efficient and effective way of stabilizing academic reform implementation within educational institutions (Anderson, 2017; Cooke, 1985; Ravitz, 2010)
- Research has indicated that various methods of applying personal leadership techniques, attributes, and skills can help school administrators promote and sustain school reform (Cooke, 1985; Fullan, 2014; Heck et al., 1990; Lowenhaupt & McNeill, 2019)
- Not only is it more beneficial for a leader to have leadership characteristics and skills, but it is imperative to be able to use them to collaborate as a team and share responsibilities to successfully implement change (Cooke, 1985; Klar, 2013)
- Along with strategies and personal leadership characteristics, leadership management influences team commitment, preparation, and student achievement (Anderson, 2017; Cooke, 1985)
- There is lack of research in middle school leadership, specifically regarding transformative leadership practices

**Purpose:** To further the field's understanding of educational leadership by analyzing survey responses related to how middle principals and teachers perceive leadership responses.

### Research Question and Framework

**Question:** How close do teachers' and principals' perceptions of leadership practices align with the same school?

The research applied a Transformational Leadership Theory Framework lens, as well as an interpretive epistemological perspective to understand the participants' responses from the questionnaire.

## Literature Review

### Transformational Leadership

- Leadership Styles (Atasoy, 2020)
- Leadership Attributes (Cooke, 1985)
- Leadership Behaviors (Heck et al., 1990)
- Distributive Leadership (Cravens, 2014; Klar, 2013; Ishimaru, 2013; Lowenhaupt and McNeill, 2019)

### Organizational Reform

- Schoolwide Reform (Desomine, 2002; Klar & Brewer, 2013)
- Implementation of Organizational Reform (Heck et al., 1990)

### Community Influences

- School Size (Klar & Brewer, 2013; Ravitz, 2014)
- Community Communication (Ishimaru, 2013)
- School Setting (Klar, 2013; Lowenhaupt & McNeill, 2019; Ravitz, 2010)

### School Influences

- School Culture focuses on the faculty relationships that support whole-school growth
- School Climate is the environmental atmosphere between students, teachers, and the community in relation to school endeavors
- Scholarly articles stated that researchers:
  - Underrepresenting or misunderstanding school and/or community populations, or
  - Completely overlooking the importance of the environmental influences
- To combat this, the primary investigator reviewed existing state and district reports to further understand the demographics, location, academic proficiencies at each participating school (Atasoy, 2020; Heck et al., 1990; Klar & Brewer, 2013; Lowenhaupt & McNeill, 2019)

## Methods



2 SCHOOLS



2 PRINCIPALS



Principal Questionnaire  
15 open-ended questions



Teacher Questionnaire  
13 open-ended questions



6 TEACHERS



Time Span  
September - October



REVIEW OF ARCHIVAL DOCUMENTS



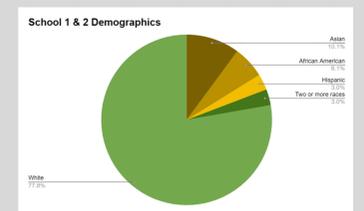
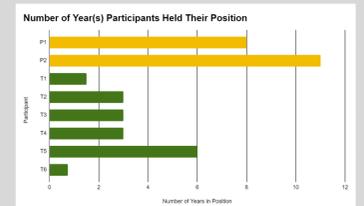
QUALITATIVELY CODED RESPONSES



CROSS-COMPARISON BETWEEN TEACHERS & PRINCIPALS



FORMULATED CATEGORIES & THEMES



## Findings & Discussion



Metz et al. (2019) created caretogies of transformational leadership to progress school change:

- Humane Characteristics: demonstrating compassion toward others
- Communication: verbal or written discussion
- Collaboration: multiple individuals working together
- Shared Vision: multiple individuals agreeing to achieve one or more goals
- Supportive Characteristics: supporting others to progress school change

### Overarching Themes

#### Leadership

**School 1:** School teachers define leaders as individuals having qualities that fall under all of these five categories, whereas the principal sees a leader who possesses qualities that fall under only two of these categories (Humane & Supportive).

**School 2:** School teachers define leaders as individuals having qualities that fall under all of these five categories, and the principal sees a leader who possesses qualities that fall under four out of the five categories (excluding Shared Vision).

### Categorized Themes



SHARED VISION



COMMUNICATION



COLLABORATION WITH COMMUNITY



SUPPORT THROUGH RESOURCES

## Limitations & Implications

Only Middle Schools

Small Sample Size

Short Time Span

Elementary, Middle & High School; Various Geographical & Demographic Settings

Larger Sample Size of Principals & Teachers; Parent & Community Perspectives

Longer Time Span

School 1		School 2	
Principals	Teachers	Principals	Teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"[D]iscussed monthly" by the SIT and "weekly in PLCs"</li> <li>"We are one team with one goal and no excuses"</li> <li>indicated that teachers have goals that relate to the SIP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vision and mission needed to be implemented by all leaders</li> <li>One teacher: "I make sure to do my part"</li> <li>Make goals that align with the school goals;</li> <li>Include them in their daily lesson plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"[I]ncorporated in everything"; mentioned in staff meetings, daily announcements</li> <li>"[D]edicated person" for implementing the vision/ mission</li> <li>Administrators holds monthly SIP meetings and embed the SIP goals into their PDP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers did not mention consistent practices, instead, "several times a year" they revisit the mission and vision statements</li> <li>One teacher: "I am not sure of the school's vision or mission"</li> <li>Teachers also embed the SIP goals in their PDP and lessons</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using various large and small group meetings (i.e., SIP meetings, department meetings, and PLCs) as methods to communicate with school staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All teachers were satisfied with the amount and type of communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Frequent meetings in smaller settings; "find more success in starting changes" when meeting with grade levels and departments rather than whole staff meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The majority of teachers were not completely satisfied with the form and frequency of communication</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acknowledged importance of the community involvement, "a lot of community history, several generations of families have gone to school there"</li> <li>Strong generational continuity led to "there have not [being] any radical changes"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Want an increase of parental and student involvement and more communication to families.</li> <li>Seemed to be misalignment between administration and the teachers' perceptions of community communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community's influence is embedded into school changes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two teachers' responses aligned with the administration's ideas; they teach with a focus on local issues and community events.</li> <li>One teacher felt the School Board influenced the school's changes, not the community itself</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School offers "early release professional development days" and staff meetings (e.g. grade level meetings)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers either satisfied or indicated with accessible resources.</li> <li>Teachers are satisfied with educational training to further professional development</li> <li>Different understanding of the term "[A]ssessible resources"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hold "monthly and weekly meetings"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The teachers' responses varied between dissatisfied to satisfied</li> <li>Teachers felt either neutral or satisfied with the professional development, regarding educational training</li> <li>resources seem to be insufficient in meeting all teachers' needs</li> </ul>

## References

Anderson, M. (2017). Transformational leadership in education: A review of existing literature. *International Social Science Review*, 83(1). <https://digitalcommons.northgeorgia.edu/issr/vol93/iss1/14>

Atasoy, R. (2020). The relationship between school principals' leadership styles, school culture and organizational change. *International Journal of Progressive Education*, 16(5), 256-274. (EJ1273161). ERIC. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1273161>

Cooke, G. (1985). Striving for excellence against the odds: A principal's story. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 54(3), 356-368. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2295070>

Cravens, A. C. (2014). The cross-cultural validity of the Learning-Centered Leadership framework and its assessment instrument for principals. *Journal of Educational Administration*, Vol. 52 No. 1, pp. 2-36. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-09-2012-0102>

Desomine, L. (2002). How can comprehensive school reform models be successfully implemented? *Review of Educational Research*, 72(3), 433-479. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543072003433>

Dionne, S.O., Yammarino, F.J., Alwater, L.E. and Spangler, W.D. (2004). Transformational leadership and team performance. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, Vol. 17 No. 2, pp. 177-193. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09534810410530601>

Fullan, M. (2014). *The principal: Three keys to maximizing impact* (1st ed.). ProQuest Ebook Central. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/unco-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1603261>

Heck, R. H., Larsen, T. J., & Maroulides, G. A. (1990). Instructional leadership and school achievement: Validation of a causal model. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 26(2), 94-125. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X9002600202>

Ishimaru, A. (2012). From heroes to organizers: Principals and education organizing in urban school reform. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 49(1), 3-51. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X12448250>

Klar, H. W. (2013). Principals fostering the instructional leadership capacities of department chairs: A strategy for urban high school reform. *Journal of School Leadership*, 23(2), 324-361. <https://doi.org/10.1177/105268461302300205>

Klar, H. W., & Brewer, C. A. (2013). Successful leadership in high-needs schools: An examination of core leadership practices enacted in challenging contexts. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 49(5), 706-806. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0013161X13482577>

Leithwood, K. (1994). Leadership for school restructuring. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 30(4), 498-518. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X9403004006>

Lowenhaupt, R., & McNeill, K. L. (2019). Subject-specific instructional leadership in K-8 schools: The supervision of science in an era of reform. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 19(3), 460-484. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15700763.2018.1453937>

McCommons, D. P. (2014). Aim higher: lofty goals and an aligned system keep a high performer on top. *Journal of Staff Development*, 35(1), 12-14. (EJ1030999). ERIC. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1030999>

Merriman, S. B. & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). Wiley.

Metz, S., Pro, J. S., Nowak, H., & Cosentino, P. (2019). Transformational Leadership: Perceptions of building-level leaders. *Journal of School Leadership*, 29(5), 389-408. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1052684619858843>

Patton, M. O. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice* (4th ed.). Sage.

Ravitz, J. (2010). Beyond changing culture in small high schools: Reform models and changing instruction with project-based learning. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 89(3), 290-312. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956X.2010.491432>

Saldana, J. (2011). *Fundamentals of qualitative research*. Oxford University Press.