The Relationship Between Principals' Leadership Characteristics and Colorado’s Standardized Test Scores

Wayne Wolf

Walden University, wayne.wolf@waldenu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/symposium2018

Recommended Citation


https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/symposium2018/33

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Research Symposium at ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in 2018 Program & Posters by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu.
The Relationship Between Principals' Leadership Characteristics and Colorado’s Standardized Test Scores

Wayne Wolf, PhD

Problem
The popular answer to the question of what can be done to improve standardized test scores is to raise expectations. However, high expectations do not always result in high test scores (Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2010). The problem was a lack of research on when high expectations are productive and when they are not. Transformational leadership is embraced by principals, but exactly what behaviors that entails could be more fully explained.

Purpose
The purpose was to study specific principal leadership characteristics in order to find which behaviors best predict state standardized test scores. Specifically, the study was conducted to find the relative importance of high expectations and transformational leadership behaviors.

Significance
In order for the “popular antidote” to poor performance - high expectations - to be effective, the leader must supply what is needed in order for followers to meet expectations. Many teacher training texts consider raising expectations as the most important thing a teacher can do to improve academic achievement (Lemov, 2010). This is a serious problem if in fact raising expectations can be detrimental when the commensurate support is not there.

Relevant Scholarship
Jantzi and Leithwood (1996) developed a principal survey to better understand transformational leadership. Valentine and Bowman (1989) developed a principal survey to assess the effectiveness of managerial and instructional leadership. I added the categories of shared leadership, high expectations and transactional leadership. The result was a survey with nine categories and 32 items.

Analysis
An analysis of research support for high expectations as a catalyst for improvement on test scores included Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968), a criticism of their work by Flashhoff and Snow (1970), and a rebuttal by Rosenthal and Rubin (1971). My conclusion was that research on high expectations does not justify the popular thought that high expectations always leads to higher test scores. Carter’s (2008) doctoral dissertation details the negative effects of a mentor who had high expectations, but did not pay attention to the needs of the mentee.

Research Question
To what extent, if any, is there a correlation between principal leadership characteristics and results on participating middle schools’ CMAS 2016 math scores?

Findings
Principals who were high in transformational leadership characteristics and had high expectations correlated with high scores on Colorado standardized testing. Principals who scored lower in transformational leadership characteristics and had high expectations correlated with low scores on Colorado standardized testing.

Interpretation
Principals and other leaders who practice beneficial modeling, inspirational motivation, systems thinking, individualized consideration, and empowerment will enable students and other followers to achieve more. When these five behaviors are used then high expectations are productive.

Limitations
Eight participants was less than ideal. However, the data was such that it could be statistically analyzed. Similar results with more participants would add to external validity.

Recommendations
Along with high expectations a leader must supply followers with what is needed to achieve success. Followers need relevant materials and a good environment. The good environment includes a leader who provides transformational leadership characteristics. I would like to do this study again with more participants. I recommend that similar studies be done in other states.

Gold Star Leadership
- Beneficial Modeling
- Inspirational Motivation
- Individualized Consideration
- Systems Thinking
- Empowerment
- Appropriate Expectations

Acknowledgements
Dr. Mary Brown, Committee Chairperson
Dr. Victor Ferreros, Research Member
Dr. Anne Hacker, University Reviewer

Social Change Implications
Implications for social change include public policy maker’s support for relationship building with educators to make sure teachers and students have what they need in order to meet high expectations.