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## A Comparison of the Leadership Practices of Principals of Making Middle Grades Work Schools as Measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory

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# Academic Leadership Journal

## Introduction

Leadership of the principal in schools continues to be identified as important to the success of the school and ultimately, the achievement of its students. Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004), in their research, affirm that leadership is critical if schools are to continue to improve. “Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school” (p. 5). Marzano, Walters, and McNulty’s (2005) also argue for better principals stating that if a principal were to improve their leadership practices, then student achievement would increase. In their research, they have identified 21 key factors that principals should spend their time. Focus on the right things and student achievement increases; focus on the wrong things, though, can have the opposite effect. The imperative, therefore, is to identify what the right things that principals should do to take advantage of the significant impact they can have on student achievement.

While there is a great deal of research about leadership in general, there appears to be little research focusing on the specific requisite leadership practices of principals of middle schools. For more than a decade, researchers have been working to identify the characteristics of good middle schools. Williams-Boyd (2005) summarizes the characteristics of effective middle schools as those that are academically excellent, developmentally responsive, socially equitable, and organizationally supportive. Williams-Boyd (2005) goes on to say that principals of effective middle schools are more like stewards than bosses, providing the necessary support, resources, and time to teachers so they can do their job. This study attempts to contribute to the body of research focusing on middle school principals, to identify the key practices of middle school principals, and to determine if supportive practices are more prevalent in the better middle schools through the comparison of Making Middle Grades Work (MMGW) schools in the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) network.

According to some research, the key principal leadership practices necessary in middle schools is collaborative in nature and distributes the leadership to many members of the school community. Larocque (2007), in her case study of a middle school in Florida, discovered that everyone from teachers, to parents, to community members are involved in a broad array of decisions to include personnel decisions and allocation of funds. She found, “The principal uses team planning, team input, and team leaders in the school’s day-to-day operations” (p. 159). The result was an improved school environment that translated into positive classroom cultures and a greater sense of ownership of their work. Another study also found that not only is collaboration itself important, providing a supportive environment to allow teacher relationships to develop is critical. Styron and Nyman (2008) studied high performing and low performing schools. One of their findings, “strongly suggest that middle school administrators should recognize the importance of teacher relationships and their impact on student performance” (p. 11). But while they found that higher performing schools had a less directive principal and more collegial staff, the lower performing schools had a more supportive principal and teachers were more committed. (Styron & Nyman, 2008). Collaboration, experimentation, support, and

commitment are all key characteristics of leadership necessary to improve schools. One leadership theory that has identified these key practices as a part of their overall leadership framework is based on the work of Kouzes and Posner (2007).

According to the research by Kouzes and Posner (2007), effective leaders focus on the right things to move their organization to excellence. Practices of these exemplary leaders fall in five categories. The first practice, modeling the way, states that the leader lives behaviors and values they want their organization to emulate and develops open, honest, and trusting interactions through their conversations and actions. Inspiring a shared vision, the second practice, is based on the belief that through the communication of significant ideas and causes that capture the attention, the organization's people will be more motivated. The third practice is challenging the process. The leader who practices this behavior is not necessarily the problem solver but rather the problem identifier. They seek out opportunities, encourage trying new ways of doing things, and support taking risks. The fourth practice is enabling others to act. These leadership practices attempt to inspire confidence in others through collaboration and to empower subordinates to act on their own ideas. The fifth and last practice is encouraging the heart. Leaders who practice this behavior show appreciation for their subordinates and maintain a caring, collegial community.

As a result of their research, Kouzes and Posner developed the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI). The LPI has been used in many education studies and has strong internal reliability and validity. Through 25 years of research and thousands of manager and non-manager responses, the LPI attempts to measure the five leadership practices mentioned above. The LPI comes in a Self form and Observer form. Both of these questionnaires are similar in their content and they both consist of 30 questions. Respondents answer each question using a Likert scale ranging from 1, almost never do what is described, to 10, almost always do what is described. The Self version is for the respondent to rate him- or herself, whereas, the observer is for the respondent to rate some other leader or individual.

## Previous Research

The previous research conducted by the author (Author, 1998) compared the leadership practices of blue ribbon schools (BRS) with the leadership practices of non-blue ribbon schools as measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI). At the time of the study, schools that were recognized as blue ribbon school had to complete a rigorous process including a self-study, thorough application, subsequent visit, and ultimately selection process by a panel. Approximately 225 schools were recognized each year from both public and private schools. The findings of that study were that the leadership practices of principals of BRS schools do differ from the leadership practices of principals of non-BRS. Specifically, it was found that there was a statistically significant difference between the LPI scores between BRS principals and non-BRS principals for the leadership practices of Challenging the Process, Inspiring a Shared Vision, and Enabling Others to Act. The significant differences found were BRS principals focused the efforts of their school by promoting a shared vision, they were problem finders, always in search for opportunities for improvement, and they were the head cheerleader at their school, commending students and staff alike upon the achievement of significant milestones (Author, 1998).

The next research undertaken by the author (Author, 2009) was very similar to the first study. This research was a comparative study using High Schools That Work (HSTW) schools as the sample. The goals for this research were to determine if the self-reported and observed leadership practices of the

principals of the higher performing HSTW schools differ from the leadership practices of principals of moderate and lower performing HSTW schools as measured by the LPI, and to determine if the leadership practices scores as reported by HSTW principals were different from the LPI norms. There were five major findings of that study. First, although principals of high implementer schools did not score significantly higher on the LPI as compared to moderate or low implementer schools, they do praise their subordinates more frequently and are more supportive of their staff. Second, although teachers rated principals significantly lower for all factors, teachers perceive principals as modeling the behaviors principals want for their schools less frequently than principals feel they practice these behaviors. Third, doctorate prepared and female principals scored significantly higher for the factors inspiring a shared vision and challenging the process factors as compared to masters prepared and male principals respectively. Fourth, through analysis of principal scores, principals use more frequently the five leadership practices the more years they have of administrative experience, whereas, the more years the principals have in their current position, the less often they use the leadership practices. Lastly, although principals of all HSTW schools responding to the survey scored significantly higher than the Kouzes and Posner norms for all factors, the practice they use least is encourage the heart (Author, 2009).

## Purpose

The purpose of this study was to replicate a previous study conducted by the author with the hope to examine the generalizability of the results of the previous study as it applies to schools implementing the comprehensive school reform model Making Middle Grades Work (MMGW). MMGW is a comprehensive school reform model that is promoted by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB). There are nearly 300 MMGW schools throughout the country. This study attempts to contribute to the body of research focusing on middle school principals and to identify the key practices of middle school principals through the comparison of MMGW schools in the SREB network.

## Methodology

The analysis that was conducted for this research is a part of an overall study of the leadership practices of principals of Making Middle Grades Work (MMGW) schools as measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI). This purpose of this comparative study was to build upon previous research and to lay the groundwork for future research. The population of schools, from which the study sample was drawn, consisted of all schools that have implemented the Making Middle Grades Work (MMGW) comprehensive school reform model supported by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB). Participants included all MMGW schools based on a 2008 list provided by SREB. Of the population, there were 204 high implementer schools and 105 moderate or low implementer schools as defined by SREB guidelines.

One of the main assumptions in this study is that the high implementer schools must be among the best MMGW schools. SREB uses 10 factors to determine the extent to which schools have implemented the MMGW model. These factors include the extent schools have implemented MMGW academic core courses and the level of intensity literacy and numeracy across the curriculum, science, high expectations, guidance, extra help, and continuous teacher improvement. Schools can earn a minimum score of 0 and a maximum score of 65. Schools scoring 0-26 are considered "low implementer" schools, 27-34 are "moderate implementer" schools, and 35 and above are "high implementer"

schools.

The principal of each school was emailed an introductory letter outlining the study. The principal was asked to complete a Self version of the LPI and a demographic survey online using SurveyMonkey.com web site to host the surveys. The principal was then asked to forward the email to all teachers and staff so that they may complete an Observer version of the LPI and demographic survey also on SurveyMonkey.com. The demographic survey requested information on the principal's school, his or her professional background, and personal information. In order to avoid confusion, the principal instruments were accessed via one link and the teacher instruments were accessed via a separate link. In addition, the high implementer schools had two different links from the low and moderate implementer schools to ease the comparison of the responses.

After the questionnaires were returned, the data was input into a desktop computer. SPSS statistical analysis program was used to perform statistical analysis on the data. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were used to test hypotheses comparing means. Pearson correlation and regression analysis was also conducted to determine if there were any significant relationships among principal or school factors. The .05 percent confidence level was used as the criteria to reject the null hypothesis. The hypotheses were stated in the null form. Tests for significance were set at .05 level of confidence. The statistical analysis conducted for each hypothesis was a t-test or analysis of variance (ANOVA), as applicable. The following seven research questions were developed:

Research Question #1: Do the Kouzes and Posner mean scores (for the five practices) differ between principal self reported and teacher/staff observer responses of high implementer, moderate implementer, and low implementer schools?

Research Question #2: Do the Kouzes and Posner mean scores (for the five practices) differ between principal self reported of high implementer, moderate implementer, and low implementer schools?

Research Question #3: Is there a difference between the self-reported leadership practices scores of principals in the current study and the Kouzes and Posner norms for these leadership practices?

Research Question #4: Do the scores differ between the principal self reported scores and teacher/staff observer scores?

Research Question #5: Do the Kouzes and Posner mean scores (for the five practices) differ between principals based on their gender, degree, and years of experience?

Research Question #6: Do the Kouzes and Posner mean scores (for the five practices) differ among principals based on school location or size?

Research Question #7: Is there any relationship between the Kouzes and Posner mean scores (for the five practices) and principal personal or school factors?

## Discussion of Findings

### Descriptive Data Analysis

An analysis of the descriptive data was first conducted. Of the 309 MMGW schools invited to

participate in the research study, principals from 53 of the schools responded to the survey resulting in a 17.2% response rate. Of the 53 principal responses, 4 surveys did not include demographic information and were excluded from any analysis based on demographic factors. As was realized in the previous research, using email to illicit survey responses will result in a lower rate of return than what might have been realized if the surveys were distributed using regular mail. Nonetheless, there were sufficient principal responses to glean statistically significant differences. The next two tables summarize the descriptive statistics of the principal information only.

Table 1: Principal descriptive statistics for age, gender, and highest degree

	Age		Number of principals based on gender				Number of principals by highest degree			
	Mean	Median	Male		Female		PhD		Spec	
			Nr.	%	Nr.	%	Nr.	%		Nr.
Low	51.7	53.0	6	85.7%	1	14.3%	0	0.0%	3	
Moderate	50.0	50.0	10	43.5%	13	56.5%	3	13.0%	8	
High	45.7	45.0	13	68.4%	6	31.6%	1	5.3%	3	
Total	48.6	50.0	29	72.5%	20	27.5%	4	8.2%	14	

Table 2: Principal descriptive statistics for number of years in present position and experience.

	Number of years in present position		Number of years in predominantly administrative positions		Number of years in predominantly teaching positions	
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
Low	5.7	2.0	12.4	12.0	21.3	24.0
Moderate	6.9	3.0	10.8	9.0	14.2	15.0
High	5.7	4.0	9.5	8.0	13.9	13.0
Total	6.3	3.0	10.6	9.0	15.1	13.0

The next table summarizes the demographics of the schools in which principals responded.

Table 3: School descriptive statistics

	Number		Enrollment size		Geographic location				
	Nr.	%	Mean	Median	Urban		Suburban		Nr.
					Nr.	%	Nr.	%	
Low	8	15.1%	590.1	565.0	1	14.3%	3	42.9%	3
Moderate	23	43.4%	715.0	600.0	5	21.7%	8	34.8%	10
High	22	41.5%	678.3	650.0	0	0.0%	7	36.8%	12
Total	53	100.0%	683.0	600.0	6		18		25

From the 53 schools in which principals responded, 420 teachers and staff from 31 schools responded to the survey. Of the valid observer responses, 80.2% of the respondents were teachers and 9.8% of the respondents were non-teaching staff, and 67.1% of the respondents were from moderate and low implementer schools and 32.9% of the respondents were from high implementer schools.

### Statistical Data Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

Research Question #1: Do the Kouzes and Posner mean scores (for the five dimensions) differ between principal self reported and teacher/staff observer responses of high implementer, moderate implementer, and low implementer schools?

A three-way ANOVA statistical test was conducted to determine any differences between high, moderate, and low implementer schools using all of the responses for principals, teachers, and staff. The responses for high and moderate implementer schools were higher than low implementer schools for all practices and there was a significant difference between the three groups for all leadership practices except inspire a shared vision. Combining the responses for high and moderate implementer schools into one group lead to similar results except there was also a significant difference for inspire a shared vision. Combining the responses for the moderate and low implementer schools yielded a very different result. Although the responses for high implementer schools were higher than moderate and low implementer school response, there was a significant difference for only enable others to act. A summary of the analysis is presented in the next three tables.

Table 4: Teacher/staff and principal analysis by Low, Moderate and High Implementer Schools

	Low Implementer Schools	Moderate Implementer Schools	High Implementer Schools	F	P
Model the Way	47.22 (13.051)	50.94 (8.499)	49.45 (9.723)	4.735	0.009*
Inspire a Shared Vision	46.74 (13.557)	49.33 (9.202)	48.34 (10.599)	2.128	0.120
Challenge the Process	45.48 (13.589)	48.69 (9.354)	47.92 (9.182)	3.416	0.034*
Enable Others to Act	45.91 (14.887)	51.22 (8.508)	51.42 (8.344)	11.626	0.000*
Encourage the Heart	45.67 (15.956)	50.25 (9.699)	50.11 (9.843)	6.520	0.002*

\*Significant at the .05 level of significance

Table 5: Teacher/staff and principal analysis by Low versus Moderate and High Implementer Schools

	Low Implementer Schools	High and Moderate Implementer Schools	F	P
Model the Way	47.11 (13.053)	50.29 (9.099)	8.263	0.004*
Inspire a Shared Vision	46.63 (13.567)	48.90 (9.448)	3.922	0.048*
Challenge the Process	45.38 (13.606)	48.36 (9.269)	6.904	0.009*
Enable Others to Act	45.79 (14.902)	51.33 (8.420)	24.388	0.000*
Encourage the Heart	45.54 (15.970)	50.21 (9.751)	13.915	0.000*



\*Significant at the .05 level of significance

Table 6: Teacher/staff and principal analysis by Low and Moderate Implementer versus High Implementer Schools

	Low and Moderate Implementer Schools	High Implementer Schools	F	P
Model the Way	49.36 (10.788)	49.45 (9.723)	0.008	0.929
Inspire a Shared Vision	48.11 (11.333)	48.34 (9.728)	0.049	0.825
Challenge the Process	47.28 (11.406)	47.92 (9.182)	0.382	0.537
Enable Others to Act	49.14 (11.742)	51.42 (8.344)	4.874	0.028*
Encourage the Heart	48.34 (12.714)	50.11 (9.843)	2.415	0.121

\*Significant at the .05 level of significance

A three-way ANOVA statistical test was also conducted to determine any differences between high, moderate, and low implementer schools for the individual questions of the LPI. The next table summarizes the questions that were significantly different by practice of the LPI.

Table 7: Summary of Individual Questions with Significant Differences

Model the Way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sets a personal example</li> <li>Follows through on promises and commitments</li> <li>Builds consensus around common set of values</li> </ul>
Inspire a Shared Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paints the “big picture” of what we aspire to accomplish</li> <li>Speaks with genuine conviction</li> </ul>
Challenge the Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seeks out challenging opportunities</li> <li>Sets achievable goals, makes plans, and establishes</li> </ul>

	milestones
Enable Others to Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develops cooperative relationships</li> <li>Actively listens to diverse points of view</li> <li>Treats others with dignity and respect</li> <li>Supports decisions that people make on their own</li> <li>Gives people freedom to decide how to do their work</li> <li>Ensures people grow in their jobs</li> </ul>
Encourage the Heart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Praise people for a job well done</li> <li>Lets people know about his/her confidence in their abilities</li> <li>Publicly recognize people committed to share values</li> <li>Celebrates accomplishments</li> <li>Gives lots of appreciation and support</li> </ul>

Research Question #2: Do the Kouzes and Posner mean scores (for the five dimensions) differ between principals of high implementer, moderate implementer, and low implementer schools?

A three-way ANOVA statistical test was conducted to determine any differences between high, moderate, and low implementer schools using only the responses for principals. Although the principal responses of low implementer schools were higher than the responses for principals of high and moderate implementer schools, there were no significant differences between the three groups for all leadership practices. A summary of the analysis is presented in the next table.

Table 8: Principal only scores

	Low Implementer Schools	Moderate Implementer Schools	High Implementer Schools	F	P
Model the Way	54.00 (4.071)	53.57 (4.273)	52.32 (4.236)	0.696	0.503
Inspire a Shared Vision	51.63 (6.567)	51.52 (4.010)	47.55 (7.170)	2.972	0.060
Challenge the Process	49.63 (6.501)	51.17 (4.271)	46.82 (6.980)	3.133	0.052

Enable Others to Act	55.13 (4.086)	54.17 (3.845)	53.45 (3.949)	0.563	0.573
Encourage the Heart	54.63 (4.274)	52.30 (4.781)	51.50 (4.887)	1.265	0.291

Research Question #3: Is there a difference between the self-reported leadership practices scores of principals in the current study and the Kouzes and Posner norms for these leadership practices?

Next, a single sample t-test statistical analysis was conducted to determine if the self reported leadership practices of principals differed from the norms for the LPI instrument. As summarized in the next table, the self-reported leadership practices of all HSTW principals was significantly different than the Kouzes and Posner norms for all practices.

Table 9: Single sample t-test comparison of self reported principal practices with Kouzes and Posner norms

		N	Mean	SD	t	p
Model the Way	Principal	53	53.11	4.205	10.55	0.000*
	Norm	1256	47.02	7.10		
Inspire a Shared Vision	Principal	53	49.89	6.110	6.609	0.000*
	Norm	1252	44.34	8.79		
Challenge the Process	Principal	53	49.13	6.102	3.594	0.001*
	Norm	1257	46.12	7.22		
Enable Others to Act	Principal	53	54.02	3.890	8.644	0.000*
	Norm	1256	49.40	6.42		
Encourage the Heart	Principal	53	52.32	4.783	8.007	0.000*
	Norm	1255	47.06	8.20		

\*Significant at the .05 level of significance

Research Question #4: Do the scores differ between the principal self reported scores and teacher/staff observer scores?

An ANOVA test was conducted to determine if the teacher observer scores differed from the self reported scores for the principals. As summarized in the next table, there was a significant difference between teacher observer and principal self-reported scores for Model the Way, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart. According to Kouzes and Posner, it is not unusual that subordinate scores will be less than self-reported scores. This necessitates a rank order analysis to determine if ranking of practices differ. When conducting a rank order analysis of the responses, the order for teachers/staff and principals were exactly the same for all five practices. A summary of the analysis is presented in the next table.

Table 10: Teacher/staff and principal analysis

	Teachers/Staff			Principals			F	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank Order	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank Order		
Model the Way	48.93	10.873	2	53.11	4.205	2	7.702	0.0
Inspire a Shared Vision	47.97	11.237	4	49.89	6.110	4	1.483	0.
Challenge the Process	47.30	11.119	5	49.13	6.102	5	1.392	0.
Enable Others to Act	49.41	11.210	1	54.02	3.890	1	8.812	0.0
Encourage the Heart	48.52	12.370	3	52.32	4.783	3	4.900	0.0

\*Significant at the .05 level of significance

Research Question #5: Do the Kouzes and Posner mean scores (for the five dimensions) differ between principals based on their gender, degree, and years of experience?

Next, analysis focused on the demographics of the principals. In all cases, ANOVA statistical test was conducted to determine if there were any significant differences between principals of schools based on different demographic factors. To conduct the analysis for the demographic factors except gender and highest degree, principal responses were grouped into two groups using the median for the particular factor to separate the responses. Except for years of administrative experience, there were no significant differences found for any of the other principal demographic factors. As summarized in the next table, there were significant differences for all leadership practices given the number of years in administrative experience.

Table 11: Principal only analysis based on years of Administrative Experience

	Principals with less than or equal to 9 years of administrative experience		Principals with more than 9 years of administrative experience		F	P
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation		
Model the Way	51.65	3.969	54.78	3.668	8.140	0.006*
Inspire a Shared Vision	48.19	5.455	52.17	5.646	6.291	0.016*
Challenge the Process	47.35	5.885	51.57	5.115	7.083	0.011*
Enable Others to Act	52.65	3.867	55.57	3.043	8.418	0.006*
Encourage the Heart	50.77	4.786	53.87	4.203	5.736	0.021*

\*Significant at the .05 level of significance

Research Question #6: Do the Kouzes and Posner mean scores (for the five dimensions) differ among principals based on school location or size?

Finally, analysis was conducted based on the demographics of the school. To conduct the analysis for the school size, the principal responses were grouped into two groups using the median which was 600. Upon analysis, there were no significant differences in the leadership practices between

principals based on the location of the school and the size of the school as measured by student enrollment.

Research Question #7: Is there any relationship between the Kouzes and Posner mean scores (for the five dimensions) and principal personal or school factors?

Next, an analysis was conducted to determine if there was any relationship between principal or school factors and the LPI responses. Pearson correlation was conducted on the individual variables to determine if there were any correlations. The next table confirms there were some weak correlations between the scores of a number practices of the LPI and years in present position and years in predominantly administrative positions, and a weak correlation between for the practice Enable Others to Act and school size based on student enrollment.

Table 12: Pearson Correlations for Principal and School Factors

		Years in present position	Years in predominantly administrative positions	Years in predominantly teaching positions	Age	School size
Model the Way	Pearson Correlation	.396*	.418*	-.070	.005	.271
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	.003	.633	.974	.059
Inspire a Shared Vision	Pearson Correlation	.312*	.309*	-.135	.036	.141
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.029	.031	.357	.804	.334
Challenge the Process	Pearson Correlation	.247	.332*	-.166	.036	.150
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.087	.020	.255	.809	.303
Enable Others to Act	Pearson Correlation	.288*	.330*	.012	-.006	.295*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.044	.021	.937	.965	.040

Encourage the Heart	Pearson Correlation	.214	.273	-.034	.143	.204
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.139	.057	.818	.326	.160

\*Significant at the .05 level of significance

### Recommendations for Practice

The principal has been identified as key to school improvement. Principals who spend time on the right things realize commensurate increase in student achievement. Conversely, principals who focus their efforts on the wrong things can see the opposite results in student achievement. Identifying what the right things that principals should do has been the quest of many researchers to include this author.

The purpose of this research was to determine if there were any differences between the leadership practices of MMGW schools and to identify any relationship between principal and school factors and the leadership practices as measure by the LPI. As a result of this research, it was determined that there is a significant difference between the leadership practices of principals of high and moderate implementer schools and low implementer schools. In addition, when comparing the leadership practices of all MMGW principals to the Kouzes and Posner norms, MMGW principals are practicing the five leadership practices significantly better than the norm. Finally, there exists a weak correlation between the leadership practices of principals and years of administrative experience. As a result of these findings, the following four recommendations are provided.

1) The leadership practices of high and moderate implementer schools as scored by principals, teachers, and staff were significantly different for four of the five practices. The practice used more frequently by principals of high and moderate implementer schools was enable others to act. Unlike the finding in HSTW high schools (Author, 2009), middle school principals go beyond just being supportive of their teachers and staff. They also develop cooperative relationships and allow teachers and staff to decide how to do their work. In turn, principals ensure their staff members grow in their jobs by developing their current abilities and learning new skills. Finally, principals of high and moderate implementer schools also take the time to actively listen to diverse points of view in deciding how things should be done at their school which in turn communicates a significant measure of dignity and respect to others.

2) As has been the case in other studies conducted by the Author (1998, 2009), principals of MMGW schools frequently use the practice encourage the heart. This practice was ranked as the number one practice by principals and teachers/staff separately and was the second most frequently used practice by principals of high and moderate implementer schools. As a result, principals of schools should frequently praise people for a job well done and look for ways to publicly celebrate accomplishments. At a minimum, principals need to say thank you for a job well done. Second, principals should show they are supportive of their staff and should convey confidence, where it is warranted, in the abilities of the teachers and staff at his/her school. One thing that does not appear to be done frequently at any MMGW school is to creatively reward people for their accomplishments. While I suspect most schools

have employee of the month and teacher of the year awards, principals need to look for other ways to celebrate accomplishments and reward staff for their achievement on specific jobs or school activities.

3) As was the case in the Author's HSTW study (2009), the leadership practices of MMGW principals were all higher than the Kouzes and Posner norms for the five leadership practices. For all five practices except challenge the process, the percentile rankings of the MMGW schools were also significantly above the 70<sup>th</sup>ile. Thus, MMGW principals should continue to maintain their leadership practices through reflection of their own leadership practices and the use the LPI as a guide. Unlike the principals of HSTW schools where there was a need to improve their leadership practice encourage the heart, principals of MMGW schools need to work on improving the use of the practice challenge the process. Although principals with more than nine years administrative experience have already realized the importance of this practice, all principals need to use this practice more frequently. While some research shows middle school principals are supportive and tend to allow more freedom for teachers and staff to decide how to do their jobs, principals of MMGW schools need to challenge people to get out of their comfort area and to try innovative ways of doing things in their classrooms and school. The principal, on the other hand, needs to take a leadership role in searching outside school for innovative methods and to constantly ask what can we learn when things don't go right. The bottom line is principals need to encourage people to take risks in order to continue to improve.

4) This study has confirmed that the more years of administrative experience will result in improved leadership practices as measured by the LPI. Data analysis revealed that there was a significant difference for all practices for principals with more years of administrative experience and a positive correlation for the majority of factors for more years in present position and more experience in administrative positions. As a result, districts need to work hard to retain principals to allow them to gain more experience and to provide the support so that principals can stay on the job for many years. This should include providing professional development opportunities to improve leadership practices as well as sabbatical opportunities to gain new insights and to pursue an advanced degree. If the need exists to fill a principal position from outside the district, officials should look to recruit qualified principals who already have a great deal of administrative experience.

### Limitations and Future Studies

As a result of this study, there are some limitations and opportunities for future study. The first limitation involves the population selected and sample responses received of the study. The population for this study was a convenience population – all MMGW schools. Second, the response rate was very low for principals and a low number of schools were represented in the teachers and staff responses. As a result, an important conclusion might not distinguish itself and the results gleaned from this study might not be representative of all public schools.

There are at least two opportunities for future study which are underway by the author. First, a follow-on study should be conducted to expand this research methodology to a sampling of schools that have implemented a comprehensive school reform model like MMGW. This study is currently underway using the Coalition of Effective Schools network. A goal of that study will be to determine if the leadership practices of principals of those schools are significantly different from the leadership practices of MMGW and HSTW schools.

Second, it is not unusual for observer scores to be lower than the self-reported leader scores as was



the case in this study in which the teacher/staff scores were all lower than the principal's self-reported scores. As a result, a follow-on research is underway using data from this study to determine if there is a relationship between the teacher/staff member's assessment of the effectiveness of their principal and how they rated their principal's leadership practices. In addition, this study will attempt to identify any particular leadership practices that are associated with a more effective principal.

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