

Title: Perceptions of the Developmentally Responsive Leadership Practices of Principals that Contribute to Achieving Adequate Yearly Progress in High and Low Achieving, High Poverty Middle Schools

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine how teachers perceive the developmentally responsive leadership practices of selected Pennsylvania public middle school principals in schools with populations of high poverty students. A high poverty designation was determined by a student population of 30% or more receiving free or reduced lunch. Comparisons of teacher's perceptions of developmental responsiveness of building principals in high and low-performing schools with high poverty student populations were made. In addition, this study compares the principal's perceptions of their developmentally responsive leadership practices with those of the faculty. Schools were selected based upon their designation as having achieved or failing to achieve adequate yearly progress for two consecutive years.

The Anfara (2006) developmentally responsive leadership framework attempts to gain insight into the behaviors of middle school principals in three primary areas: responsiveness to the developmental needs of young adolescents, responsiveness to the needs of the faculty to work in a supportive organization that promotes a strong sense of community, and

responsiveness to the needs of a middle school to have organizational structures such as grade level teaming, an advisory program and interdisciplinary curriculum.

Teachers from low performing schools tended to rate their principal more favorably in all three subsections of the MLLQ than did teachers from high performing schools. Principals who completed the MLLQ tended to rate themselves more favorably than teachers in high or low achieving, high poverty schools. Teacher perceptions of the principal's leadership behavior, on average, fell within the *Fairly often* to *Sometimes* range. This is exactly opposite of the results that were anticipated at the beginning of the study. The data seem to indicate that teachers value certain distinct activities and behaviors of their principals. But it appears teachers in higher performing schools did not perceive certain principal behaviors as acutely as teachers in lower performing schools. According to teachers' perceptions, their principals all exhibit leadership behaviors that tend to characterize a middle school. What is not clear is the impact of these leadership behaviors on overall school achievement.

