

Public Abstract

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Title:Practices that Constitute Successful School Superintendent Leadership: Perceptions from Established Rural School Superintendents

This study was to determine which leadership practices are the most important in helping school superintendents be successful as school leaders. The study contained an explanation of its justification based upon the need to provide information to help superintendents be better prepared to carry out their duties.

The study was qualitative and involved interviews with six rural Missouri superintendents to see which leadership practices they felt were most important and which ones needed most of their time. The study's research questions included: (a) What leadership practices are perceived by established school superintendents to be crucial to successful school leadership? and (b) What do established superintendents perceive are the leadership practices that warrant the most attention from the school superintendent?

A review of the existing literature about school and organizational leadership identified nine commonly used research practices: vision, communication, visibility, inspiring followers, shared leadership and collaboration, professional growth, ethical behavior, political awareness, and building relationships.

The interviews focused on the impressions, the perceptions, and the experiences of the superintendents as answers were sought concerning which leadership practices were considered the most crucial. The findings of the study provided evidence to support recommendations for superintendents concerning communication, having an ethical focus, being effective managers, and utilizing combinations of leadership practices.

The implications from this study indicate that the school superintendent must make great efforts to utilize effective communication and a strong sense of ethics in doing what is good for the students, and also that leadership practices are intertwined with many other factors. It is recommended that superintendents, or any leader, spend time in reading, study, and personal reflection about the leadership practices.

This study provided a starting point for such professional enrichment. Throughout the study, the intention was to provide information that could potentially help superintendents as they carry out their duties. It generated findings worthy of further consideration and reflection for school superintendents in particular and for leaders in general.