

Public Abstract

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Research indicates that impoverished school districts face a unique set of barriers in regard to school achievement. However, there are schools that would be considered impoverished that are ranked in the top ten in regard to sustained performance on the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP). This study examines the leadership characteristics of a building leader of a high-poverty, high-performing public school in Missouri.

A qualitative case-study model was implemented in this study, utilizing structured interviews of faculty and staff, parents of students, and the building leader. In addition, field notes documenting observations and reflections from the researcher's four day visit to the site were compiled and pertinent documents were reviewed.

Prominent themes that were identified describing the leadership at the school were presence, hands off leadership, golden communication, power source, high expectations, hiring the best, students first, values individuals, caring and fairness.

A synthesis of those themes led to the identification of specific leadership roles embraced by the building leader: human resource director, academic leader, and culture facilitator.

The following implications for educational leaders were discussed: the necessity to develop a vision for the school beyond yearly achievement test results; the impact of fully embracing the philosophy of developing life long learners; the need for leaders to develop a culture within their school of high expectations accompanied by support.

Implications for programs designed to train educational leaders included the development of programs that more thoroughly prepared leaders in the area of personnel selection, induction, and evaluation.