

Public Abstract

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Title:An Exploration of the Relationship Between Leadership Styles and School Culture in a Small Rural Southeast Missouri School District

Principals who understand and nurture positive school culture often experience academic and career success. This dissertation focuses on leadership styles and their relationship to school culture in a small rural school district in Southeast Missouri. The study answers the following questions: 1. What are the critical functions of effective leaders as perceived by both teachers and leaders? 2. As perceived by leaders and teachers, what impact does the leader have on the culture of the school? There is a great deal of literature regarding leaders and school culture in large school districts. This study fills in the gaps in literature regarding leadership and culture in small, rural school districts.

This study focused on a small rural school district in Southeast Missouri. The district has a K-12 enrollment of 330 students. There are 18 teachers and one building principal in the elementary school. The junior high and high school share 19 teachers.

Data for this qualitative case study was collected using semi-structured interviews. Four teachers from each building were interviewed. The building principals from both buildings were also interviewed.

The results of this study show that there is a significant relationship between the leadership style of the principals and the culture of each building. The findings indicate that the elementary principal is primarily an authentic leader. According to the data, her authenticity has led to a positive school culture. The staff also stated that the personal relationships sometimes interfere with student discipline.

The junior high/high school principal is primarily a transactional leader. His focus was managing the school as a business. His staff attributed his business mentality to positive changes within the school and culture and success in achieving goals. While they appreciated his attention to professionalism, they would like to get to know their administrator on a personal level.