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Fostering Leadership Capacity in Three South Carolina High Schools: An Exploratory Study

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ABSTRACT

Some states include fostering leadership in principal evaluations, so principals need to provide opportunities for their staffs to assume leadership roles. Yet, less is known about the specific ways principals develop leadership capacities of others. In this exploratory study we examined how principals in three South Carolina high schools intentionally fostered the capacities of leaders to enhance their schools' organizational capacities.

INTRODUCTION

Distributed Leadership

- Sharing leadership activity
- Also called participative, collaborative and democratic leadership
- Principals build capacity

(Hallinger & Heck, 2010, Louis et al, 2010)

Building capacity

- Influences student achievement
- Leads to organizational change
- Successful if thoughtful and purposeful

(Stoll and Bolam, 2005)

Previous Studies

- Distributed leadership and built department chairs' capacities (grant-funded) (Klar, 2012)
- Leadership distributed to teachers who sought new roles- needs to be clearly defined (Margolis & Huggins, 2011)

WHAT'S MISSING?

1. What does distributed leadership look like when it happens naturally?
2. How do principals identify potential leaders at their school?
3. Once identified, how are leaders supported in their new roles?

METHODS

- Purposefully selected 3 principals and 3 leaders from each school
- Semi-structured interviews of 60-90 mins
- Inductively and deductively coded using NVivo 10
- Selectively coded around two major themes: Identifying leaders and Supporting Leaders

STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Kuranda High School	Haymont High School	Gantt Circle High School
1500 students; 92% white; 6% Black; 2% Hispanic	1650 students; 64% white; 34% Black	1550 students; 65% white, 22% black, 10% Hispanic, 3% Asian
William Moore (Principal)	Nancy Jones (Principal)	Mason King (Principal)
Emily Harris (AP- Freshmen Academy Director)	Diane Lewis (Freshmen Academy Director)	Cole Hunt (athletic director)
Anthony Taylor (AP)	Jill Smith (Graduation Coach)	Amy West (English Tchr/ Student Council Advisor)
Jane Kelly (AP)	Brad Evans (Academic Coach)	Rachel Carter (Science Tchr/ Science Dept. Chair)

CONCLUSIONS

How leaders were identified:

1. Leaders indicated a desire to go into a formal leadership role
2. Leaders had good inter- and intra- personal skills and rapport with students and parents
3. Leaders demonstrated persistence and willingness to work hard in their previous role
4. Leaders were effective teachers
5. Leaders showed enthusiasm and care for students
6. Leaders had a particular knowledge or skill

How principals intentionally supported leaders

1. Mentored or coached others to leadership
2. Scaffolded opportunities to lead
3. Trusted leaders to make the right decisions
4. Allowed leaders to make mistakes
5. Matched opportunities to leader's skills, knowledge and dispositions

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