

Leading for Educational Equity

Alison G. Reeves

Research on the effect of principal leadership behaviors on school achievement is becoming established in the literature and has resulted in research-based frameworks that describe behaviors with a relationship to increased student achievement (Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Yet, to date, the large majority of studies measuring the impact of principal leadership on student achievement have looked at the leadership behaviors that improve average achievement at a school. But, a critical aspect of the No Child Left Behind act (2001) is the requirement to disaggregate achievement data by subgroups including race, language status, and socio-economic status to allow comparison of achievement gains of one sub-group relative to another; availability of these disaggregated data has resulted in increased attention to “achievement gaps” which is a key indicator of inequity within the educational system. This project investigates the values and practices of Illinois principals with regard to “leading for equity.” Additionally, this study seeks to determine whether there is a relationship between principal practices and other school indicators that are related to increased student achievement. For the purposes of this project, “Educational equity” is defined by “raising the achievement of all students while narrowing the gaps between the highest and lowest-performing students; and eliminating the racial predictability and disproportionality of which student groups occupy the highest and lowest achievement categories” (Singleton & Linton cited in Ross, & Berger, 2009, p. 463). This study extends current understandings of effective principal leadership by providing insight into the factors of culturally competent leadership that predict success in improving equity for all students.