

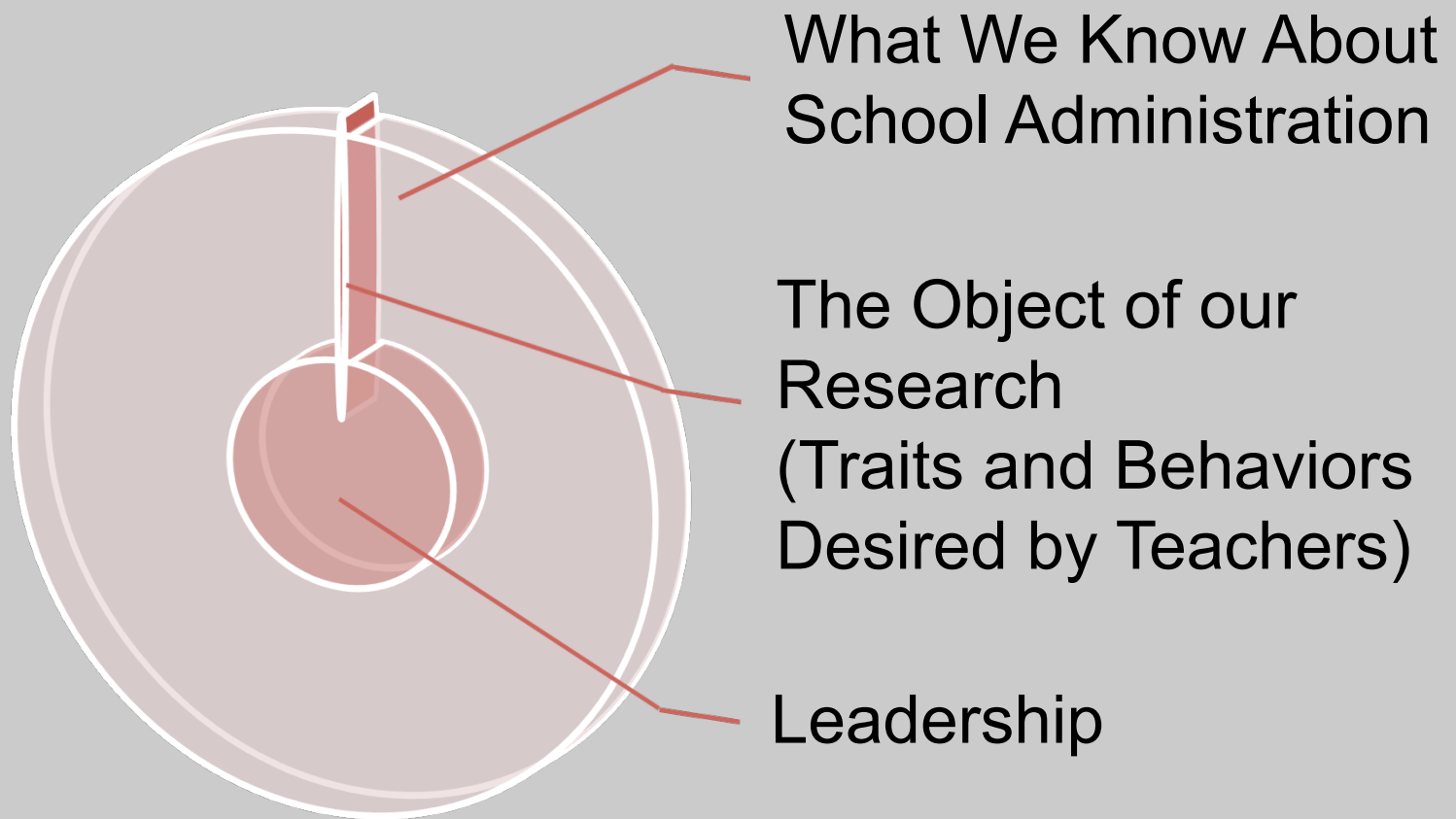


# The Preferred Principal:

Leadership Traits, Style, and Gender  
Characteristics School Teachers Desire in a  
Building Leader

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# What Educational Research Looks Like



# Purpose of Study

- To determine teacher's preferences of a building leader in regard to:
  - Gender
  - Leadership traits
  - Leadership style
- Determine the traits principals believe are most important, and evaluate which leadership style is most frequently practiced by principals.

Often, the needs of parents, students, the district, and the community are taken into account for the selection of a principal. While teachers' desires are sometimes considered, there is usually no systematic approach to collecting specific data about their preferences.

# The changing role of the school administrator

- Prior to current educational reform initiatives and high-stakes accountability: building manager.
- Today: a dynamic, multi-faceted leader who takes into account both the personal and professional needs of all stakeholders, capable of ensuring high educational standards and instructional leadership, and capable of helping his or her school meet the requirements of current educational mandates.

*According to Bass (1990), leadership is often regarded as the single most important factor in the success or failure of institutions such as schools.*

# Teachers...

- have long been recognized as having the most significant impact on student learning (Wright, Horn, & Sanders, 1997; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005);
- behaviors are influenced by the behavior of the principal (March & Simon, 1993);
- are more likely to support school goals when their beliefs and contributions are considered important (Sheppard, 1996);
- need strong instructional leadership for their school to be successful (Horng & Loeb, 2010);
- become contributing, developing members of the learning community when they are treated as partners in the process (Melton, 2007).

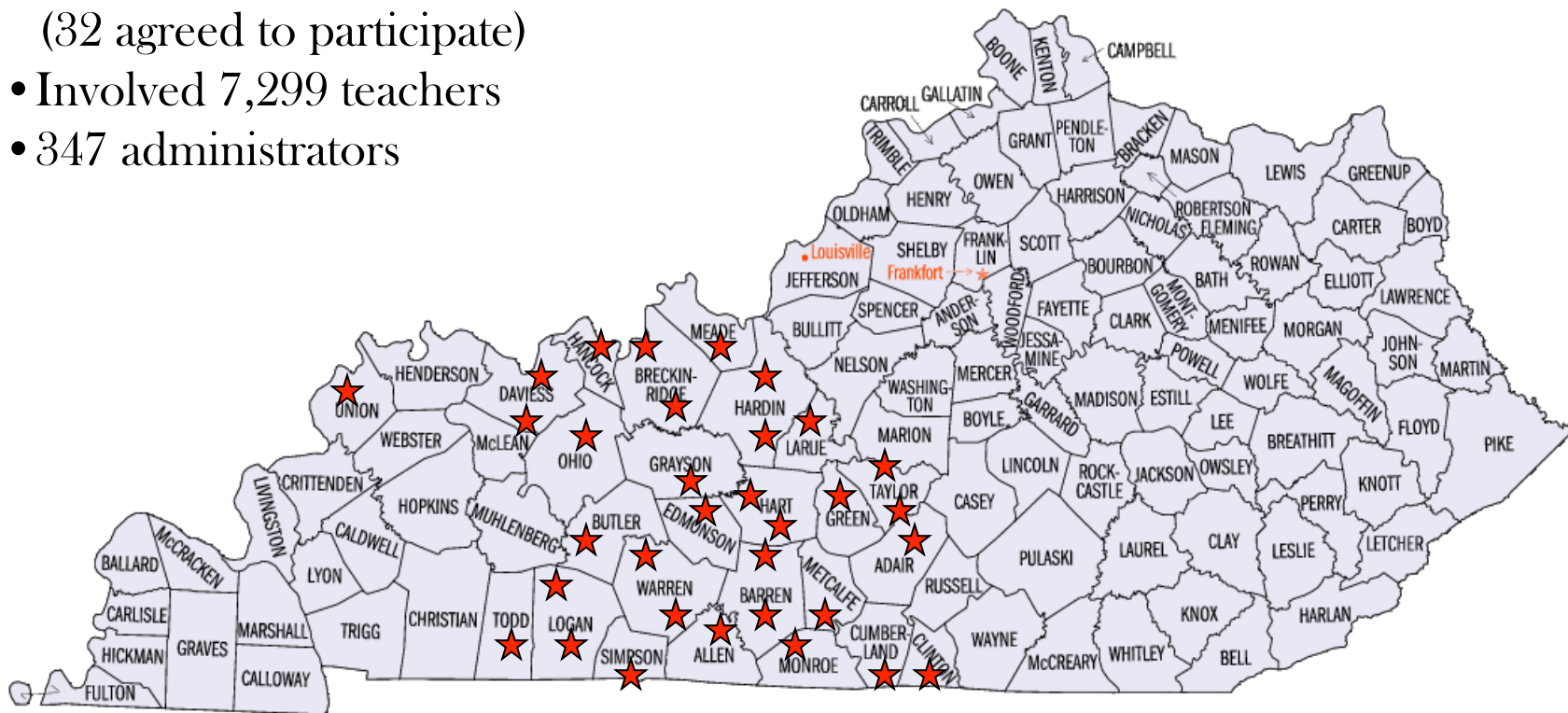
*Manders (2008) found that teachers intuitively know what they want in an effective leader, but this is rarely communicated to the principal.*

# The study

- Was fully developed after pilot was conducted in three Warren County Schools.
- Links to the online surveys for the study were distributed to teachers and administrators in 32 school districts within the GRREC region.
- Teachers were surveyed regarding their preferences for:
  - Gender of principal
  - Leadership traits (based on the 21 Responsibilities of School Leaders)
  - Leadership styles (transformational or transactional)
- Principals were surveyed to determine:
  - Which leadership traits (of the 21) they believe are most important
  - Which leadership style behaviors (transformational or transactional) they most often exhibit
- Survey link was sent to 7,299 teachers; 2,802 were completed (38.4%)
- Survey link was sent to 347 administrators; 127 completed (36.6%)

# Green River Region Educational Co-op

- Consists of 33 school public K-12 districts (32 agreed to participate)
- Involved 7,299 teachers
- 347 administrators



# Male or Female Leadership?

RQ1: What gender preferences of building-level leaders exist among teachers?

- a. Do male teachers prefer male or female leadership?
  - b. Do female teachers prefer male or female leadership?
- Teachers were asked to choose which gender they preferred to work for.
  - Results were categorized by gender.



# Male or Female Leadership?

- This study found that that the majority of male and female teachers, both as separate groups and as a whole had no preference in regard to gender.
- More than 65% of females had no preference for either male or female leadership while 56.85% of males agreed.
- Female teachers also had a slightly higher preference for female principals (8.17%) than males (4.15%), while a much higher percentage of males (39.00%) preferred male leadership as compared to females (26.64%)

<b>RESPONDENTS</b>	<b>PREFER FEMALE %</b>	<b>PREFER MALE %</b>	<b>NO PREFERENCE %</b>
Male	4.15	39.00	56.85
Female	8.17	26.64	65.20
Combined	7.50	28.79	63.74

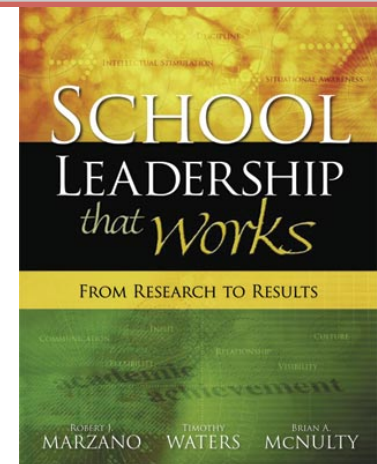
# Teacher's gender preference as related to experience with male and/or female principals

Teachers were asked which gender they had worked for, and which gender they preferred to work for:

<b>TEACHER CATEGORY</b>	<b>PREFER FEMALE PRINCIPAL %</b>	<b>PREFER MALE PRINCIPAL %</b>	<b>NO PREFERENCE %</b>
Female, only worked for male principals	3.18	24.06	72.76
Female, only worked for female principals	13.83	7.91	78.26
Female, worked for male and female principals	8.90	30.63	60.47
Male, only worked for male principals	0	44.00	56.00
Male, only worked for female principals	2.08	14.58	83.33
Male, worked for male and female principals	6.76	40.21	53.02

# Responsibilities of School Leaders

- Derived from Marzano, Waters, & McNulty's (2005) twenty-one responsibilities of school leaders.
- Research Question #2:
  - What is the relationship between gender and teachers' preferred responsibilities of a school leader?
    - Which responsibilities are most preferred by male teachers?
    - Which responsibilities are most preferred by female teachers?
- Teachers were asked to rate each responsibility as:
  - Not important (1)
  - Somewhat important (2)
  - Important (3)
  - Very important (4)
- Results were categorized overall and by gender.



## 21 Responsibilities Listed in Order of Correlation with Student Academic Achievement

RESPONSIBILITY	<i>r</i>
Situational Awareness	0.33
Flexibility	0.28
Discipline	0.27
Monitoring/Evaluating	0.27
Outreach	0.27
Change Agent	0.25
Culture	0.25
Input	0.25
Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment	0.25
Order	0.25
Resources	0.25

RESPONSIBILITY	<i>r</i>
Contingent Rewards	0.24
Focus	0.24
Intellectual stimulation	0.24
Communication	0.23
Ideals/Beliefs	0.22
Involvement in Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment	0.20
Optimizer	0.20
Visibility	0.20
Affirmation	0.19
Relationships	0.18

*r* = Correlation with Student Academic Achievement

## Leadership responsibilities most highly preferred by teachers, categorized by gender and overall

MALE TEACHERS	FEMALE TEACHERS	OVERALL
Communication (3.77)*	Communication (3.87)	Communication (3.85)
Discipline (3.76)	Discipline (3.81)	Discipline (3.80)
Culture (3.72)	Culture (3.79)	Culture (3.78)
Visibility (3.70)	Visibility (3.76)	Visibility (3.75)
Focus (3.67)	Order (3.75)	Order (3.73)
Order (3.64)	Focus (3.74)	Focus (3.73)
Situational Awareness (3.53)	Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment (3.72)	Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment (3.67)
Monitoring/Evaluating (3.51)	Input (3.66)	Input (3.63)
Input (3.50)	Situational Awareness (3.64)	Situational Awareness (3.62)
Affirmation (3.50)	Monitoring/Evaluating (3.64)	Monitoring/Evaluating (3.61)
Relationships (3.49)	Resources (3.62)	Affirmation (3.59)
Outreach (3.47)	Affirmation (3.61)	Flexibility (3.59)

\* Number in parenthesis is mean score

# Transactional vs. Transformational Leadership

- Burns (1978) described *Transformational Leadership* as a process by which "leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality". He contrasted this with *Transactional Leadership*, which he said occurs when an individual "takes the initiative in making contact with others for the purpose of an exchange of valued things."
- Transformational leadership instills intrinsic motivation.
- Transactional leadership is an exchange between two or more people.

*"Transformational leadership" captures the heart of what school administration should become (Leithwood, Feb. 1992).*

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# Transactional and Transformational Behaviors

- A list of eight transactional and eight transformational behaviors were developed based on the research of Bass (2008), Burns (1978), Kouzes & Posner (1987, 2007), and Yukl (1987).
  - Transactional:
    - Close monitoring/supervision of employees
    - Rewards (tangible or intangible) are given only when employees meet goals, expectations, standards, and levels of performance
    - Consequences for failure to meet goals, expectations, standards, and levels of performance
    - Clear boundaries, procedures, and duties for all personnel
    - Individual accomplishment is recognized over group accomplishment
    - Hands-off leadership
    - Workers are given instructions and directions to follow
    - Risk-taking is not encouraged



# Transactional and Transformational Behaviors

## – Transformational:

- Employees are given autonomy to manage themselves
- Rewards (tangible or intangible) are given when employees make progress toward goals, even before they have been met
- Leadership works with staff to find answers for failure to meet goals, expectations, standards, and levels of performance
- Boundaries, procedures, and duties are sometimes flexible or shared
- Group accomplishment is recognized over individual accomplishment
- Active, participatory leadership
- Workers are empowered to act and make decisions
- Risk-taking is encouraged

# Transactional vs. Transformational Leadership

RQ 3: What is the relationship between gender and teachers' preferred leadership style?

- Do male teachers prefer a transactive or transformational leadership style?
  - Do female teachers prefer a transactive or transformational leadership style?
- Teachers indicated their preference level for 16 behaviors (8 transactional, 8 transformational)
- Behaviors were scored as:
  - Not preferred (1)
  - Somewhat preferred (2)
  - Preferred (3)
  - Highly Preferred (4)
- Teacher results were categorized by gender and the grand mean score for each gender was found. Behaviors falling above the grand mean for males and females were determined to be the most highly preferred.

# Preferred Leadership Style Behaviors

- Findings indicate that both genders most highly prefer transformational behaviors
- However, one transactional behavior (Clear boundaries, procedures, and duties for all personnel) ranked 1<sup>st</sup> out of the list of 16 (mean rating of 3.43 out of 4)
- One transformational behavior (Rewards, tangible or intangible, are given when employees make progress toward goals, even before they have been met) was ranked very low- 13<sup>th</sup> out of 16 (mean rating of 2.35 out of 4)

# Male Teachers' Top Twelve Preferred Leadership Behaviors

LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR	TRANSACTIONAL/ TRANSFORMATIONAL	MEAN RATING
Leadership works with staff to find answers for failure to meet goals, expectations, standards, levels of performance	Transformational	3.39
Clear boundaries, procedures, and duties for all personnel	Transactional	3.36
Workers are empowered to act and make decisions	Transformational	3.27
Employees are given autonomy to manage themselves	Transformational	3.20
Active, participatory leadership	Transformational	3.19
Risk-taking is encouraged	Transformational	2.96
Group accomplishment is recognized over individual accomplishment	Transformational	2.91
Boundaries, procedures, and duties are sometimes flexible or shared	Transformational	2.91
Rewards are given when employees meet goals, expectations, standards, and levels of performance	Transactional	2.74
Consequences for failure to meet goals, expectations, standards, and levels of performance	Transactional	2.58
Workers are given instructions and directions to follow	Transactional	2.52
Close monitoring/supervision of employees	Transactional	2.42

# Female Teachers' Top Twelve Preferred Leadership Behaviors

LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR	TRANSACTIONAL/ TRANSFORMATIONAL	MEAN RATING
Clear boundaries, procedures, and duties for all personnel	Transactional	3.44
Leadership works with staff to find answers for failure to meet goals, expectations, standards, levels of performance	Transformational	3.40
Active, participatory leadership	Transformational	3.39
Workers are empowered to act and make decisions	Transformational	3.23
Boundaries, procedures, and duties are sometimes flexible or shared	Transformational	2.92
Employees are given autonomy to manage themselves	Transformational	2.92
Risk-taking is encouraged	Transformational	2.83
Group accomplishment is recognized over individual accomplishment	Transformational	2.72
Rewards are given when employees meet goals, expectations, standards, and levels of performance	Transactional	2.67
Close monitoring/supervision of employees	Transactional	2.56
Workers are given instructions and directions to follow	Transactional	2.47
Consequences for failure to meet goals, expectations, standards, and levels of performance	Transactional	2.38

# Transactional vs. Transformational

- ANOVA was used to determine whether significant difference existed between grade level categories. Tukey's post-hoc test was used to identify where significant differences existed.

Leadership behavior	Elementary Mean	Middle Mean	High Mean
Close monitoring/supervision of employees	2.61 <sup>A</sup>	2.54 <sup>A</sup>	2.40 <sup>B</sup>
Active, participatory leadership	3.44 <sup>A</sup>	3.32 <sup>AB</sup>	3.25 <sup>B</sup>
Consequences for failure to meet goals, expectations, standards, & levels of performance	2.34 <sup>AB</sup>	2.49 <sup>BC</sup>	2.51 <sup>C</sup>
Employees are given autonomy to manage themselves	2.90 <sup>A</sup>	2.98 <sup>AB</sup>	3.08 <sup>B</sup>
Hands-off leadership	1.59 <sup>A</sup>	1.77 <sup>B</sup>	1.86 <sup>B</sup>

\*Means with the same letter are not statistically different.

# Principal's Preference of Traits

RQ4: Which of the 21 leadership responsibilities do principals feel are most important?

- Principals were asked to rate each responsibility as:
  - Not important (1)
  - Somewhat important (2)
  - Important (3)
  - Very important (4)
- Behaviors falling at or above the grand mean for the average score of all 21 leadership traits ( $M = 3.62$ ) were determined to be the most highly preferred.

# Principal's Preferences of Responsibilities

- RQ4: Which of the 21 leadership responsibilities do principals feel are most important?

Leadership Trait	Mean Rating
Communication	3.92
Visibility	3.86
Culture	3.85
Focus	3.74
Discipline	3.73
Situational Awareness	3.71
Monitoring/Evaluating	3.69
Affirmation	3.68
Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment	3.63
Relationships	3.63



# Comparison Between Principals' and Teachers' Preference of Traits

<b>PRINCIPAL PREFERENCE</b>	<b>TEACHER PREFERENCE</b>
Communication (3.92)	Communication (3.85)
Visibility (3.86)	Discipline (3.80)
Culture (3.85)	Culture (3.78)
Focus (3.74)	Visibility (3.75)
Discipline (3.73)	Order (3.73)
Situational Awareness (3.71)	Focus (3.73)

# Principal's Preferences of Responsibilities

- Situational Awareness has the highest correlation with student academic achievement, and was rated reasonably high for principals.
- Similarities among teachers and principals in regard to highly preferred traits is a positive finding.
- Principals with 21+ years of experience (N=8) were the only group to not give communication the highest rating (3.63/4).
- Female principals (N=49) gave Culture, Communication, and Visibility equally highest ratings (3.94/4).
- Otherwise, all categories of principals (and teachers) gave communication the highest average rating.

# Most Frequently Practiced Principal Behaviors

**RQ5:** Which transactional or transformational leadership behaviors do principals most often exhibit?

- Principals self-analyzed the frequency at which they practiced each of 16 behaviors (8 transactional, 8 transformational).
- Behaviors were scored as:
  - Rarely or Never Practiced (1)
  - Occasionally Practiced (2)
  - Frequently Practiced (3)
  - Very Frequently Practiced (4)
- The average score for each behavior was calculated and ranked from highest (very frequently practiced) to lowest (rarely or never practiced). Those falling above the mean score for all behaviors were determined to be the most highly exhibited behaviors.

# Most Frequently Practiced Principal Behaviors

<b>Leadership Behavior</b>	<b>Transactional/ Transformational</b>	<b>Mean Rating</b>
Active, participatory leadership	Transformational	3.41
Leadership works with staff to find answers for failure to meet goals, expectations, standards, levels of performance	Transformational	3.33
Workers are empowered to act and make decisions	Transformational	3.30
Clear boundaries, procedures, and duties for all personnel	Transactional	3.22
Risk-taking is encouraged	Transformational	3.16
Employees are given autonomy to manage themselves	Transformational	3.10
Group accomplishment is recognized over individual accomplishment	Transformational	3.01
Close monitoring/supervision of employees	Transactional	2.97

\*These behaviors were self-rated

## To sum it all up...

- It is important to consider the leadership traits and behaviors your teachers desire in order to be a more effective leader
- Consider using this or a similar survey to determine teacher preferences, attitudes, satisfaction and needs.
- For more information, contact Dan Costellow at:  
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