

ABSTRACT

**DISSERTATION/THESIS/RESEARCH PAPER/CREATIVE PROJECT:**

Making the Grade: Behaviors of Elementary Principals Leading High Poverty “A”  
Rated Schools

**STUDENT:** Adam D. Drummond

**DEGREE:** Doctor of Education

**COLLEGE:** Department of Educational Leadership

**DATE:** July 2014

**PAGES:** 156

Today’s school leaders are faced with many responsibilities. From budgeting and staffing to evaluations and data-driven conversations, principals work in complex environments in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Schools serving great proportions of students in poverty have challenges including academic, less formal parental support, meeting emotional, physical, and basic needs, all the while building school performance.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the behaviors of principals in K-5 elementary schools in Indiana in high poverty, high-performing schools. In an effort to focus on a set of administrative behaviors, Marzano, Waters, and McNulty’s (2005) work was the foundation for this study. Their meta-analysis occurred across schools and districts of a variety of sizes, and socioeconomic statuses. In contrast, this mixed method study identified behaviors exclusive to high poverty schools with

demonstrated success. Research on specific leadership styles and the translation into classroom performance in high poverty, high achieving contexts was lacking.

Principals and teachers were asked to complete a 92-item questionnaire on administrator behavior (Marzano, et al., 2005). Both subgroups responded that administrators showed strengths in outreach, optimizing resources, and visibility within the school.

The qualitative study focused on the daily behaviors of the school leader to identify trends in their leadership behaviors. Nine administrators were selected to participate in the qualitative study. Through the analysis of the instrument and principal interviews, several themes emerged. Administrators stated that the role of the school leader was to: 1) develop the culture through high expectations, 2) recognize importance of visibility in the school setting, 3) build the affect and work ethic of the school administrator, 4) form relations with parents and community members, and 5) mitigate the effects of poverty with the expectations that all students can learn. This study illustrated how school administrators' behaviors influenced high poverty schools to perpetuate growth, success, and long-term cultural shifts. School leaders need to be visible in the classroom, interact with teachers about student data, create high expectations for faculty and students, and build on their understanding of state accountability to create high poverty, high achieving schools.