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

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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.

**ABSTRACT**

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

**METHODS**

**STUDY PARTICIPANTS**

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

**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?