



Narrative and Phenomenological Case Study of K-8 Education Leadership

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ABSTRACT

This is a narrative and phenomenological case study of K-8 education leadership with the researcher as a participant observer. The study analyzes the roles of four school teams comprised of a superintendent of education, principals, viceprincipals and instructional coaches deploying six turnaround leadership strategies in four focus schools to produce significant improvements in student academic achievement as reflected in higher standardized test scores, overall student wellbeing, and school culture and camaraderie.

For the context of this research, focus schools are defined as underperforming schools in low socioeconomic status (SES) neighborhoods that are transformed into high performing schools. This narrative and phenomenological case study had the twelve members of the education leadership teams in the four focus schools respond to a prepared questionnaire about their actions and lived experiences. The questionnaire feedback provided insight on the interplay and actual structures implemented to improve student outcomes and identified the key ingredients of success stemming from the concentrated support of this education leadership team in the focus schools.

The research revealed that these six turnaround leadership strategies - focused leadership; creation of a team; designing learning conditions; setting direction; identifying standards of practice; rethinking leadership - are turnaround tools which can be instrumental when creating a new path to reimagine what is needed to improve academic performance in low SES schools. Ultimately, a paradigm shift is required in terms of thinking, leading, and reassessing what it takes to make a focus school.

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