

Thurman, S. (2004). *The glass ceiling as a mirror: How do women secondary principals support school improvement?* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Abstract

This exploratory research study sought to describe the work of three women secondary principals in relation to the ISLLC Standards and measures of their school performance. A survey was adapted from the Kentucky State of Education to provide a 360° descriptive analysis from key individuals working directly with each of these three women. Furthermore, a descriptive analysis was conducted on student performance outcomes to see how well achievement is supported in each of these three school settings. In addition, the study integrated school performance outcome data, comparative mean, Chi-Square, and factor analyses on open- and closed-questions from the survey to see similarities and differences as well as comparisons against present research of women in educational leadership to describe how women leaders are affecting their schools. The following conclusions were made: 1. The 6 ISLLC Standards are strongly correlated to one another and are a viable measurement of principal performance. The organization of the 6 ISLLC Standards and their 97 performance outcomes are not generalized to school community stakeholders in the way they were designed. Ohio's State Report Card Indicators and this study's School Performance Profiles give a strong indication to how these principals lead their schools. 2. In the study's three schools, the School's Performance Profile is supported by the strong leadership of these three women principals. 3. The general population of teachers at these three schools perceives that "Ethics, Fairness, and Integrity" is the most important quality of their principal's performance is related to 4. Similar to the responses of the teachers, principals placed the importance of "Ethics, Integrity, and Fairness" as their most important quality of leadership. The principals in this study tended to be more critical of themselves than the other key individuals working with them. This was not the case in the "Continuous Improvement" school (as rated by the State of Ohio for meeting 50% of the twelve performance indicators), due to a significant statistical difference in perception among the principal and her staff based on how "Ethically and Fairly" she is perceived as leading. 5. All three supervisors felt that the strongest characteristic of these principals' leadership was how they ethically and fairly lead their respective schools with integrity. 6. Principals must be the instructional leaders of their buildings and meet the needs of their diverse student populations. Visibility, modeling, creating less traditional programs, valuing diversity and relationships, inviting parent and community partnerships, and being student-centered are key factors in the success of these high schools. 7. Successful leaders know that the job of the principal cannot only exist within the boundaries of their office walls. Enlisting, courting, sharing power, and creating a welcoming environment have proven successful for these women principals. 8. Women can and do lead high school communities with integrity, ethics and fairness. High levels of achievement are obtained in conducive learning environments that are student-centered include sharing of power, creating a welcoming environment, and enlisting parental support. The information in this study has implications for the following audiences: college preparation institutions who have the authority to license principals, the feminist researcher, and aspiring and practicing principals interested in how women high school principals support school improvement.