

## **Middle School Principals: The Relations Between Gender and Years of Administrative Experience to School's Academic Growth Trends**

**Morris Brooks, Jr., EdD**  
Durham Public Schools

**Linda Wilson-Jones, PhD**  
Fayetteville State University

---

### **ABSTRACT**

**The purpose of this study was to determine whether there was a relationship between middle school principals' gender and years of administrative experience and schools' academic growth trends. The study was guided by the following research questions: (a) is there a relationship between the gender of an administrator and their schools' academic growth trends? and (b) is there a relationship between years serving as an administrator and school's academic growth trends? Data was analyzed by t-test, and the results found a significant relationship to principals' gender and the years serving as an administrator and the school's academic growth trends in reading and mathematics. The results further revealed that women who had served for 15 years and above had higher academic achievement growths than their male counterparts. Actually, the overall results showed that a larger percentage of women administrators had higher achievement growths than male administrators regardless to years' of experience as an administrator.**

---

The perceptions of leadership effectiveness have changed over the years and this change is significant enough to warrant further exploring. School leaders are faced daily with making decisions about accountability and academic achievement, especially when their schools are not making adequate growth. Improving students' performance is a challenge for many educational leaders. Effective leaders ensure that all students receive a quality education (Alberta, 2006). The implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act of (2001) and other state accountability measures are now making schools more accountable for its academic achievement. Although, many decisions are not seen as agreeable to the school and community, the overall intent is to increase students'

performance. However, according to Martin (2006) the implementation of federal regulations and accountability tend to make stakeholders more accountable. In recent years, all 50 states have implemented accountability measures in response to the increasing concerns about the quality of American education. The issue of accountability is a legitimate reason for concern in regards to students' academic achievement. Over the past decade, public schools have been the source of the dissatisfaction in education, especially with the implementation of standardized testing and new federal mandates (Binggeli, 2001). Data from schools report declining test scores and many require more intensive assistance to addressing academic achievement growth issues.

Leithwood and Riehl in 2003 concluded that school leadership significantly impacted student learning, and this was second only to the impact of curriculum and instruction. Studies conducted at exceptional schools indicated that school leaders' influence on learning was related to their support for teachers' and students' success (Togneri & Anderson, 2003). Research repeatedly showed that principals played a key role in the instructional change in schools and this level of involvement often dictated the success of instructional change (Riordan, 2003).

The purpose of this study was to determine whether there was a relationship between middle school principals' gender and years of administrative experience and schools' academic growth trends. The study was guided by the following research questions: (a) is there a relationship between the gender of an administrator and their schools' academic growth trends? and (b) is there a relationship between years serving as an administrator and school's academic growth trends?

### **Methodology**

A quantitative research design was selected as the most appropriate method for this study. Principals' gender and years of experience as an administrator were examined to determine whether these variables were related to their schools' academic achievement growth. Schools' three-year reading and mathematics test results were used to determine their three-year academic growth trends. Therefore, it was a criterion of the study that only those principals who had been serving in their schools for three years or more were selected to participate. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire was administered to North Carolina middle schools principals, however for the purpose of this study; only the demographic data was analyzed to address the research focus.

The data to determine the schools' growth trends were retrieved from the North Carolina Public Schools website. The educational website contains data on each school's overall progress, including students' performance, class size, and teacher quality. The website provides the annual End of Grade (EOG) test scores for grades six through eight and End of Course (EOC) scores for grades nine through twelve. This study gathered information on middle school principals' gender and years of administrative experience and data on their schools' academic achievement. A survey instrument was administered to obtain demographic information on each middle school principal.

A t-test determined whether there was a relationship between the gender of an administrator and years serving as an administrator and their schools' academic growth

trends? Each participant was chosen through the following selection criterion: (a) principals serving in middle schools with grade configurations of six, seven and eight, (b) principals who had served in those schools for three years or more, and (c) middle school principals in North Carolina public schools. Data showed female principals had the highest end of grade (EOG) scores for mathematics and reading for the academic years of 2005, 2006, and 2007. The study had (N=39) female principals and (N=38) male principals.

### Results of the Study

The results revealed that female principals had higher growth trends in reading and mathematics across the three year academic span for 2005, 2006, and 2007. In regards to whether gender and years of experience of middle school principals impacted the academic growth trends of North Carolina schools, the results showed that both had a significant impact on schools' academic growth trends. Principals were asked to provide demographic information on the number of years experience serving as an administrator at their current schools, the responses ranged from (b) 3 to 5 years, (c) 6 to 9 years, (d) 9 to 15 years and (e) 15 years or more. Based on responses, the majority of the principals had served at their current school an average of 3 to 5 years. Results further showed that female principals' three-year academic growth trends were overwhelming higher in reading and mathematics than their male counter parts. Data also revealed that those female principals with fifteen years or more had higher gains in their academic achievement growths than those male principals with equal or more years of service as an administrator. It is recommended that further research be conducted on administrators in various geographic locations to examine whether the findings on gender and years of service as an administrator would be similar.

### References

- Alberta Education (2006). Principal quality practice: Successful school leadership in Alberta. Retrieved from <http://www.teachers.ab.ca>
- Binggeli, B. T. (2001). *An analysis of issues that helped shape Florida public schools: Accountability legislation (1989-2000)*. Florida.
- Leithwood, K., & Riehl, C. (2003, Autumn). *What we know about successful school leadership* (Laboratory for Student Success). Philadelphia, PA: National College of School Leadership.
- Leithwood, K., Louis, K.S., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom, K. (2004). *How leadership influences student learning*. New York, NY: The Wallace Foundation.
- Martin, A. (2006). *The change nature of leadership* (Research Report). A center for creative leadership (ccl) research report, North America, Europe and Asia.
- Riordan, K. (2003). *Teacher leadership as a strategy for instructional improvement: The case of Merck Institute for Science Education* (Merck Institute for Science Education). Philadelphia, PA: Consortium for Policy Research in Education.

Togneri, W., & Anderson, S. (2003). *Beyond islands of excellence: What districts can do to improve instruction and achievement in all schools- A leadership brief* (Office of Education Research and Improvement, US Department of Education). Washington, DC: Learning First Alliance.