

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRINCIPAL RESPONSE TO ADVERSTIY
AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

By

Mark W. Williams

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Abstract

The Relationship Between Principal Response to Adversity and Student Achievement

This study examines the relationship between a principal's response to adversity and student achievement, the relationship between principal and teacher's response to adversity, and principals' perceptions of adversity in education.

Research emphasizes the importance of the principal in influencing student achievement through the management of meaning within school culture, the nurturing of a collaborative work environment with teachers, and the fostering of a resilient school culture (Deal, 1987; Sergiovanni & Moore, 1989; Horne, 1997). A principal's adversity response plays a crucial role in the development of successful school climates and student achievement (Rosenholtz, 1989; Stoltz, 2000).

Using an ex post facto non-experimental research design, principals (n = 17) and teachers (n = 79) from the Flagstaff Unified School District of Arizona were asked to complete an Adversity Quotient (AQ) measure (Stoltz, 1997). AQ scores were compared to standardized student achievement data from the past two years. Additional qualitative data were gathered through five principal interviews.

The results of this study showed that students attained higher achievement scores in schools with higher AQ principals. The study also found that teachers' perceived control over their work environment may influence principal/teacher relationships and student achievement.

These findings suggest that principal response to adversity may influence school climate, teacher self-efficacy, and student achievement. The interview data supports the quantitative findings, and adds a rich description of the manner in which principals view educational adversity and their response to it.

These findings are important because individual adversity response is learned, and therefore can be changed and improved (Stoltz, 1997). By increasing educators' knowledge and understanding of educational adversity and AQ, school culture, teacher self-efficacy, and student achievement can be positively influenced, ultimately resulting in a more successful school.