

SIMILAR DISTRICTS WITH DIFFERENT RESULTS: USING THE BALDRIGE
SCALE TO UNDERSTAND OUTCOME DIFFERENCES IN RURAL SCHOOL
DISTRICTS IN THE LOWER RIO GRANDE VALLEY

A Dissertation
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ABSTRACT

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The research for this study describes the organizational characteristics and the personnel behaviors distinctive to high-achieving rural school districts. A comparison between two rural school districts, one high-achieving and the other low-achieving was completed using a survey instrument. The Baldrige National Quality Program instrument was administered used as the instrument from which seven dependent variables were utilized: (a) leadership, (b) strategic planning, (c) student, stakeholder, and market focus, (d) measurement, analysis, and knowledge management, (e) faculty and staff focus, (f) process management, and (g) perceptions of organizational performance. Fifty-eight teachers and administrators were sampled from two rural school districts in the Lower Rio Grande Valley in Texas. The survey used had been modified from the Baldrige National Quality Program to meet the needs of rural school districts. The modifications were made by Dr. Philip Meissen and the modified version was renamed the "Meissen-Are We Making Progress?" The statistical analysis employed consisted of checking

reliability of the instrument, providing descriptive, exploratory, and confirmatory analyses.

Significant differences were revealed between two districts in the sub-constructs of leadership and process management. Univariate analyses were performed which confirmed differences, $p < .05$. In ANOVA the partial eta, η^2_p , is used for the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that is attributed to an effect size. Each respective effect size, measured by eta squared, was: .09, .08, .07, and .20. This shows that (1) leadership district mission=9% of the total variability, (2) leadership's academic values=8% of the total variability, (3) work environment=7% of the total variability, and (4) leadership communication=20% of the total variability for the sub-construct leadership. Process management sub-construct had two questions which indicated significance for both high- and low-achieving school districts. Each respective effect size measured by eta squared was: .14, and .09. This means that the total variability for this sub-construct was 14% due to educational materials and 9% was due to control of the teaching process. No significant differences were found with regards to strategic planning, student, stakeholder, and market focus, measurement, analysis, and knowledge management, faculty and staff focus, and business results.

The results of this study indicate that leadership and process management are different between high and low achieving school districts. Educational leaders in low-performing rural school districts may want to focus their attention on improving aspects of leadership and process management.