What are the research-based practices of effective superintendents?

District leadership is connected to positive student achievement, and the role of superintendent is critical. Marzano (2009, p. 6) points to the following five research-based best practices for district level leadership responsibilities:

1. Ensuring collaborative goal setting
2. Establishing nonnegotiable goals for achievement and instruction
3. Creating board alignment with and support of district goals
4. Monitoring achievement and instruction goals
5. Allocating resources to support the goals for achievement and instruction

Further, Marzano (2009) states the importance of principals in supporting district goals explicitly and implicitly. District and building leaders must get behind the work together. Writes Marzano (p. 7): “Implicit support means that building-level administrators do nothing to subvert the accomplishment of those goals such as criticizing district goals or subtly communicating that the goals the district has selected are inappropriate or unattainable.

Recent research entitled, *An Exploratory Study of Central Office Best Practices in Washington’s Top 5% Performing School Districts* (Ansingh, 2012) relates to the topic of best practices for effective superintendents in high-performing districts and discovered the following four common leadership themes:

1. Builds capacity through instructional leadership
2. Builds coherence through systems thinking
3. Demonstrates transparency of interactions
4. Provides for ongoing, contextual professional development

Iowa’s Superintendent evaluation document looks at the following components, many of which support or connect to these findings:

**Superintendent Evaluation Overview:**

1. A superintendent is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students facilitating the development, articulation, implementation and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.
2. A superintendent is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional development.
3. A superintendent is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations and resources for safe, efficient and effective learning environment.
4. A superintendent is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.
5. A superintendent is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness and an ethical manner.
6. A superintendent is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding the profile of the community and responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economical, legal and cultural context.