The Changing Landscape of Leadership

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Leading a campus is not what it used to be (nor is teaching a class, being a student, or raising a child for that matter). The increasing pace of societal and technological change provides an ever-evolving backdrop against which educational leaders view and conduct their work. Overlay a culture of accountability enacted amid budget cuts, surging enrollments, and shifting demographics, and the roles of school leaders become clouded with uncertainty, imbued with responsibility, and demanding increased personal commitment and professional and technical knowledge. One principal preparation student recently commented that her teaching colleagues routinely asked her, "Why in the world do you want to do that?" Upon reflection, it's a valid question we should all answer.

Fortunately, the research provided in the selections of this issue of *School Leadership Review* begins to address, if not the "whys," at least the "hows" of improving leadership in this new landscape. Among the many evident changes in leadership, this issue focuses on how both leaders and leadership preparation programs can adjust their roles to respond effectively to changing needs and demands. Primary among these is a continued focus on instructional leadership under new accountability standards and achievement tests, such as the STAAR test in Texas and similar high-stakes exams in other states. Additionally, in Texas, as in other states, preparations are underway for new principal and teacher appraisal systems, driven to meet NCLB demands. These accountability measures relentlessly increase while the demographics of our students have changed to a larger percentage of minority, second language, and economically-disadvantaged students. This change has resulted in the need for enhanced leadership skills in cultural competence.

These changes in the leadership landscape require leaders to determine how research can inform their practice. The pace of learning must increase for leaders and one way to make this happen is for leaders and researchers to share their knowledge, both with each other and with the broader educational community. The research presented in this edition, generated by both researchers and pracitioners, leads others to increased knowledge so that there is quality in changes for leaders. These are strong examples of ways to meet the changing needs of leaders today.
The Impact of High Stakes Testing on School Leadership by Yanira OLivera-Ortiz describes a principal's view of changing classroom environments because of the state of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) test. Further, the author shares instructional leadership viewpoints of campus principals and proponents and opponents of high-stakes testing. This mixed method study surveyed 20 principals from four large school districts in Texas to understand their perceptions of changes in their leadership practices working under accountability practices. Additionally, five of these principals were interviewed to validate the survey results. The results showed that the majority of principals surveyed perceived that the STAAR was detrimental to classroom instruction and the pressure to obtain higher achievement scores negatively impacted their ability to lead.

The Augmentation of Bilingual/Bicultural Courses in Educational Administration Core Requirements by Ava J. Muñoz emphasizes the importance of teaching cultural competence in principal preparation programs. This quantitative study found that 75% of Hispanic Serving

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Institutions (HSI) offered one bicultural core course while non HIS in Texas showed only 45% offering one bicultural core course. Even less prominent were bilingual courses.

Measuring Up Teachers' Perceptions of a New Evaluation System by Darnisha Rigsby and Jennifer T. Butcher explores teachers' perceptions of a new appraisal system through a phenomenological narrative study. Their findings uncovered themes that the new system was more objective, had a clear purpose, and better monitored progress with than the prior appraisal system.

A Phenomenological Narrative Study: Elementary Charter Principals' Role as an Instructional Leader by Ahmet F. Cetinkaya presents a study of the instructional leadership behaviors of six elementary charter school principals. The findings showed that principals demonstrated their belief in the importance of instructional leadership by scheduling data meetings, supporting teacher morale, focusing on student learning, providing viable curriculum, and providing professional development.

Five Critical Skills Necessary for the Interim Superintendent in Texas by Susan J. Nix and Gary Bigham is a phenomenological study examining the critical role of an interim superintendent. These researchers found five critical skills for interim superintendents as experienced in Texas schools, including time and flexibility, attitude and commitment, problem-solving, and the willingness to do hard things. The authors also reflect on the political and emotional importance of the interim superintendent, as that individual bridges the past with the future.

The five articles in this issue all address, in one way or another, the continuing and emerging challenges faced by educational leaders in the changing landscape that is today's schools. But with every challenge comes an opportunity: an opportunity to change, to grow, to develop, and to lead others to be better tomorrow than they were today. As leaders, we accomplish those tasks in part by continuing our own learning process, by seeking out new ideas and putting them into practice. Sharing and promoting actionable ideas is the purpose of the *School Leadership Review*. Learn; grow; lead.

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