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Storm Clouds

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Storm Clouds

This issue of *School Leadership Review* comes at a time when many states and territories are dealing with the aftermath of hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria. Unprecedented rains, catastrophic winds, and historic levels of sustained flooding have devastated many communities, as well as the schools and universities within them. These awful disasters brought the loss of lives as well as total destruction of homes, businesses, and campuses. Perhaps the historic ferocity of these storms is coincidental or, more likely, they were fueled by a warmer than ever ocean, but whatever the cause, the impacts of these storms leave immense structural damage with lasting repercussions to these communities.

Amidst these disasters, we have also witnessed the enormous generosity of people, including an outpouring of money, products, and manpower to affected areas. But the help doesn't just come from without; it also arises from within. Stories of courage, tenacity, and compassion are many. William Faulkner noted in his acceptance speech for the 1949 Nobel Prize in Literature that "I believe that man will not merely endure: he will prevail. He is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance." We've heard so many first-hand stories trickling up from our graduate students of that spirit rising up in classrooms, schools, and communities, that we can only agree with Faulkner: educators have souls and spirits capable of compassion, sacrifice, and endurance. These communities, schools, and students will survive, will carry on, and will prosper.

Still, as we see the catastrophic impacts of the hurricanes, we can not help but feel that there are several attacks to our public schools and the leaders of the schools that also have long lasting impacts for communities. There is a sense that we, as school leaders and those who prepare school leaders, need to prepare and be ready to know how to respond to an anxious community that wants the best for their children. In this issue, authors share what people need and what leaders needs in order to highlight good examples of school leaders helping guide and facilitate schools of learning. It takes awareness and also an application of knowledge in order to rebuild and restart good programs. As people look at ways to improve and respond to disasters, our educational preparation programs and current school leaders also reflect on and find ways to ensure that our public schools have success. This takes resilient and reflective leaders. Our communities need to show the same kind of compassion seen by those who helped people restart from hurricanes. Public schools need the manpower and resources to help all students, including students from poverty. It will take strong leaders to guide the schools to a strong structural organization.

Holly Manaseri and Christopher Manaseri in their article, *Preparing Educational Leaders for Social Justice: Reimagining One Educational Leadership Program from the Ground Up*, look at one educational leadership program as it reorganized from a small department of two faculty to a combined department with two other departments in education at SUNY college in New York. A self-study was conducted to present the efforts to place the educational leadership program with a strong foundation of social advocacy and social justice and the need to develop curriculum that guides leaders in the practical ways to work and lead in diverse schools. The authors examined course descriptions, interviews with faculty, and key assessments, curriculum maps and outlines.

Their findings showed a lack of courses with alignment to social justice and equity objectives prior to 2016. Their findings also showed that there was moderate alignment in six out of nine courses since 2016. It is concerning if the leaders need more practical strategies to lead in a higher diverse school that the coursework does not have more curriculum on social justice and advocacy.

Tara L. R. Beziat, Yvette Bynum, and Erin F. Klash wrote, *Metacognitive Awareness and Mindset in Current and Future Principals*. They studied 69 current Alabama principals and instructional leader students from one university with the use of a survey on Metacognitive Awareness Inventory for Instructional leaders (Balcikanli, 2011) and Mindset Quiz (Dweck, 2006). One area was shown statistically significant between the current principals and the students for their declarative knowledge of an instructional leader and their ability to understand how to plan to meet their goals. There was no significant difference between the groups on the Mindset Quiz.

Jonte' C. Taylor and Doris Hill in their article, *Leading through Following: Understanding the Intersection of Followership, Leadership and Collaboration* present on Kellerman's (2008) definition of followership as important in gaining effective leadership skills. The followership used in their article is as teachers follow or respond the administrators. The authors further share different responses and terms used for those responses as isolates, bystanders, participants, activists, and diehards. They determined that administrators should foster collaboration to foster followership. This type of distributed leadership shows the importance of developing relationships between administrators and teachers.

Shelby Davidson and Jennifer T. Butcher present *Rural Superintendents' Experiences in the Application of Principle-Centered Leadership at the Personal and Interpersonal Levels*, an in-depth qualitative examination of ten rural superintendents and their leadership. Their findings show the importance of developing trusting relationships that empower and align to a vision as defined by Covey. There have been many studies on superintendents but few are specific to the decision-making and leadership skills specific to superintendents in rural communities. The ten superintendents were Caucasian males ranging age from 43 to 68. All ten participants expressed that family and faith were a major part of their character development. Other important leadership skills were based on a servant leadership, continual learning, balanced life between work and family, encourager of others, building relationships of trust, empowering others, listening well, keeping promises and commitments, and modeling by example.

Amy R Ambrose, George W. Moore, John R. Slate, and Cynthia Martinez-Garcia wrote, *Differences in Dropout Rates as a Function of High School Size for Students in Poverty: A Texas Multiyear, Statewide Study*, in which they share their research on the difference in dropout rates of low socioeconomic students in different sizes of high schools. Two school years were examined and there was a statistically significant difference in dropout rate in different sizes of schools as defined as small (less than 400 students), moderate (401-1,499) and large (1,500 or more students). An ANOVA was used to determine that students in small schools had a statistically significant higher dropout rate. It is often thought that small school personnel can better know their students and thus should be able to prevent drop-outs easier. However, the

moderate and larger schools may have more resources and thus be able to meet the students' needs better to prevent drop out. Previous research has matched these findings that large schools had fewer drop outs.

M. Chad Jones, John R. Slate, George W. Moore, and Cynthia Martinez-Garcia, offer *Grade Span Configuration and Academic Performance for Students in Poverty: A Texas Multiyear Analysis*, to address the impact of two grade span configuration on the academic performance in reading and mathematics for low socioeconomic status students over two years. One grade span configuration was elementary with grades Prekindergarten through eighth grade and the other was secondary grades configuration with grades sixth through twelfth grades. Their findings showed that reading achievement was statistically significantly higher in the elementary grade configuration for 6-8th grade students. The mathematics achievement was also statistically significantly higher in the elementary grade configuration. The middle school students may lose some skills when transitioning to middle schools and therefore, the Prekindergarten through eighth grade may help so there is at least one less transition for students.

All of the articles in this issue offer practical strategies for preparing and equipping school leaders to weather the storms that have affected or may be coming to their schools.

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