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Advancing Women In Leadership

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Women as School Executives: Voices and Visions
Beverly J. Irby, Ed.D., and Genevieve Brown, Ed.D., editors
Texas Council of Women School Executives
Huntsville, Texas: Sam Houston Press,
1995, 203 pp. \$10.00

The publication of the Texas Council of Women School Executives (TCWSE), *Women as School Executives: Voices and Visions*, edited by Beverly J. Irby and Genevieve Brown, explores the paradigm shift of women in executive roles in school administration. The editors have pointed to the changing landscape of leadership and found that inclusiveness is necessary in the educational work place and will enrich the fabric of the education of young people in America.

This book was written for a broad audience of educators and educational policy makers. It is straightforward and comprehensive in analyzing feminine leadership, and it examines hypotheses and provides a focus for moving forward in the area of gender inclusiveness. Irby and Brown present us with much to reflect upon if we seek an agenda for critical inquiry and substantive change in the structure of education involving women as executives.

Women as School Executives: Voices and Visions consists of 41 authors, men and women, contributing 32 chapters which explore the concerns and trials of leadership from an array of varied experiences. These authors' experiences cover elementary school principalship, superintendency, central office coordination of various programs, service center education specialization, and university administration.

The editors group the chapters into seven sections: voices from history, voices from the field, voices of power, voices of transformation, visions of power, visions for purpose, and visions for reflection. "Voices from History" examines the politics of gender relative to a span of more than 100 years. This section raises questions about needed information regarding how women compare as leaders, the lack of data

about the number of women in leadership, and the shortage of research related to gender communication patterns. Yet a discernment of these domains could serve the female leader well. "Voices from the Field" takes the perspective of leaders who are "out there" while examining attitudes towards their leadership and communication styles and the perceptions of how the feminine image affects the placement of women in powerful positions. "Voices of Power" analyzes the unique problems of women in the male-oriented culture of public schools and universities with emphasis on women of color. "Voices of Transformation" observes the particular ways that the feminine leader, through adaptive leadership styles, can contribute to administrative teams in these times of change. "Visions of Power" presents strategies for dealing with power structures and for valuing the skills of networking, communicating, and collaborating. Also examined are the unique strengths that women have in managing site-based decision teams. "Visions of Purpose" gives hope, as well as concrete ideas to women seeking executive positions. Investigated are equity issues and gender differences in regard to communication and leadership styles in school administration. Valuable insights and tips for obtaining and keeping a superintendent's position are included. "Visions for Reflection" ponders the transitional decisions women are faced with when charting career paths. Articles in this section relate to developing an administrative portfolio and overcoming barriers women face and would be beneficial to the professional seeking career change or enhancement. The articles are research based and contribute greatly to the literature concerning women in executive roles. Many current studies are reported in this book on subjects such as comparisons of leadership styles, attitudes toward women administrators among school board members, perceptions of parent involvement, and challenges for women of color.

Among these pages any young professional will find sound advice for mapping career moves, and balancing family and career, and he/she will develop an understanding of the history and future of women in leadership. Though the articles reveal that women have not advanced as much as might be thought, hope and direction can be gleaned from this book.

The book can be purchased for \$10.00 plus shipping and handling from:

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