



School and District Leadership in an Era of Accountability (International Research on School Leadership)

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A volume in International Research on School Leadership Series Editors Alan R. Shoho and Bruce G. Barnett, University of Texas at San Antonio Our fourth book in the International Research on School Leadership series focuses on school leadership in an era of high stakes accountability. Fueled by sweeping federal education accountability reforms, such as the United States' No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Race to the Top (R2T) and Australia's Performance Measurement and Reporting Taskforce, school systems around the world are being forced to increase academic standards, participate in high-stakes testing, and raise evaluation standards for teachers and principals. These results-driven reforms are intended to hold educators "accountable for student learning and accountable to the public" (Anderson, 2005, p. 2, emphasis in original). While policymakers and the public debate the merits of student achievement accountability measures, P-12 educational leaders do not have the luxury to wait for clear guidance and resources to improve their schools and operating systems. Instead, successful leaders must balance the need to create learning communities, manage the organizational climate, and encourage community involvement with the consequences testing has on teacher morale and public scrutiny. The chapters in this volume clearly indicate that as school leaders attend to these potentially competing forces, this affects their problem-solving strategies, ability to facilitate change, and encourage community involvement. We were delighted with the responses from colleagues around the world who were eager to share their research dealing with how leaders are functioning effectively within a high-accountability environment. The nine chapters in this volume provide empirical evidence of the strategies school leaders use to cope with problems and negotiate external demands while improving student performance. In particular, the voices and actions of principals, superintendents, and school board members are captured in a blend of quantitative and qualitative studies. The breadth of studies is impressive, ranging from case studies of individual principals to cross-district comparisons to national data from the National Center for Education Statistics. To highlight important findings, we have organized the book into five sections. The first section (Chapters 2, 3, and 4) highlights the problem-solving strategies used by principals and superintendents when pressured to turn around low-performing schools. In the second section (Chapters 5 and 6), attention is devoted to ways in which school leaders act as "buffers" by reducing the impact of external demands within their local school contexts. Next, Chapters 7 and 8 explore creative ways in which financial analyses can be used to assess the cost effectiveness of programs and services. Chapters 9 and 10 examine how principals enact their instructional leadership roles in managing curriculum reforms and evaluating teachers. Finally, in the last section (Chapter 11), Kenneth Leithwood synthesizes the major themes and ideas emerging across these chapters, paying particular attention to practical issues influencing school leaders in this era of school reform and accountability as well as promising areas for future research.

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