

2019 WASA Women in Leadership Conference

"In the workplace, women are expected to get ahead by some mysterious combination of femininity and intelligence, while simultaneously getting things done and disguising drive"
—Julie Holland, MD, 2017

Lessons from the Field Discussion Group Activity

Dr. Glenys Hill

Based on "Where Are All the Women Superintendents?" by Thomas E. Glass, the results of AASA's most recent 10-year survey (2000).

Table Time Protocol

- 1) Review the AASA finding assigned to your group.
- 2) Does the finding align with either your career experiences or those of women with whom you have worked? What have been your professional observations?
- 3) If the study finding is correct, how might women mitigate this in order to keep their career options open?
- 4) From your group, pick a reporter to share key points from your discussion with the full group.

Findings

1. Women are poorly positioned

Women are not in positions that normally lead to advancement. The study refers to superintendents, but can this be generalized to other positions as well? How might women who do not aspire to senior leadership avail themselves of opportunities to "grow" their leadership skills?

2. Women lack credentials

The study refers to superintendency—women are not gaining superintendent credentials—but this may include other degrees and certificates as well (Ph.D., Ed.D., Principal Credentials). Is this true?

3. Women are not as experienced nor as interested in districtwide fiscal management as men

Findings indicate that while school boards claim keen interest in the instructional program, they see the management of fiscal resources as critical. Why? How might aspiring women leaders mitigate lack of fiscal experience?

4. Women are not interested in the superintendency (or other senior-level administrative positions) for personal reasons

Are women “opting out,” or have life circumstances prevented them from making a choice to opt in to the pipeline? (Role of wife, mother, caregiver for aging parents, i.e.). What has been your experience?

5. School Boards are reluctant to hire women superintendents

Most school boards still contain a majority of men. Women also seem to have a less-developed mentoring system compared to men. This is important because mentors also provide in-district mobility opportunities for women. Do you agree? What has been your experience?

The study refers to superintendency but this may be generalized to other positions.

6. Women enter the field of education for different purposes

Along with nursing, teaching long-represented one of the two most accessible professions for women who, until recently, were largely excluded from such professions as accounting, dentistry, medicine, engineering, and law. What has been your experience? Do women and men enter the profession for different reasons?

7. Women enter the field too late in life

Women are older than their male counterparts when they enter the superintendency—they have had more teaching experience. Why might this be the case? What have you experienced or observed?