



MARGARET GROGAN | CHAROL SHAKESHAFT

# Women and EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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JOSSEY-BASS LEADERSHIP LIBRARY IN EDUCATION



THE JOSSEY-BASS  
Leadership Library in Education

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Andy Hargreaves

*Consulting Editor*

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ANDY HARGREAVES is the Thomas More Brennan Chair in Education in the Lynch School of Education at Boston College and the author of numerous books on culture, change, and leadership in education.

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Margaret Grogan  
Charol Shakeshaft

Foreword by Beverly Hall

# Women and Educational Leadership

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*For the next generation of women leaders,  
we dedicate this book to our wonderful daughters,  
Klara and Emma*



# Foreword

I am honored to have this opportunity to introduce *Women and Educational Leadership*. Finally, a work that acknowledges what I've known all along: when I think of myself and other women who are leading districts and schools that are making dramatic gains, I don't see effective educational leaders who happen to be women; I see leaders who are effective in part *because* we are women.

For years, Margaret Grogan and Charol Shakeshaft have been studying and documenting women's ways of leading; how women's leadership styles tend to differ from the traditional "command and control" paradigm; and how gender plays out in educational leadership. In this important book, they team up to lay out the lessons that all leaders should learn from women's distinctive leadership styles—not just how it is different to "lead like a woman" but also how it is advantageous to do so.

Page after page of this book ring so true to my experience. I have felt the impact of women's historical status as "outsiders" in leadership circles. When I delivered my first "vision for education" speech before an audience of Atlanta's CEO-level leaders, there was only *one* other woman in the room. As a superintendent, I've had to do without much peer-to-peer mentoring because not many other female superintendents serving large urban districts have existed—particularly women of color. I spend a great deal of my

time mentoring new and aspiring superintendents now, in hopes that I can make it a little easier for women who come after me.

My personal drive to do what is best for children and to prove without a doubt that *all* children, regardless of who their parents are or where they grow up, can achieve at high levels is absolutely tied up with my history as a young girl in Jamaica. I grew up in a time before, as then-Senator Hillary Clinton put it in 2008, the glass ceiling “got about 18 million cracks in it.” But my personal ambitions have also always been balanced, as they are for so many women, by a deep commitment to my family. I chose not to step into a superintendency until my son was in high school, and I did not move to Atlanta until he was out of college.

Grogan and Shakeshaft capture not just these common experiences of women leaders, which shape our worldview—growing up female; motherhood; leaving our female peers behind as we move up through the ranks—but also how women lead with new methods and in new directions as a result.

The authors’ concept of collaborative leadership is not just what comes naturally to me; collective decision making produces superior results. It’s the only way to turn a large, dysfunctional bureaucracy into one that works for our children. Top-down mandates will move the organization only so far. We must get everyone “on the bus” to transform a static institution into one that is more dynamic.

One of the qualities that drew me to Atlanta in the first place was the public engagement of a coalition of corporate and community leaders in creating a vision for public education in Atlanta. Getting these leaders on the bus with total district reform was simple compared with the monumental task of changing the culture of the system, all the way down to the classroom teacher, where the real power lies in the education system. I knew I couldn’t accomplish this alone, so I focused on human capital, building a highly competent team of individuals—some recruited from outside and some developed from within. I had confidence in my own judgment, yes, but I also worked hard to empower my team

members to have confidence in their own judgment and in their abilities to be collaborative leaders as well.

I think the most important thing that Grogan and Shakeshaft's work can teach is that my own situation need not be seen as unique. It doesn't take magic, or some God-given birthright, to be an effective leader in education. What it takes is a sense of perspective, a belief that all children can achieve at high levels, a focus on team building, dedicated hard work to follow through, and a commitment to keeping oneself sane. These are lessons drawn from women's ways of leading, as presented in *Women and Educational Leadership*, lessons that all leaders—male and female—should take to heart in reaching toward our common goal of providing an excellent education for every child.

Beverly Hall  
*Superintendent of Atlanta Public Schools*  
*2009 National Superintendent of the Year*



# Introduction

## *Women Leaders Redefine Leadership*

Two years ago we accepted an invitation from Jossey-Bass to write a new book about women's leadership. We were asked to contribute to the Leadership Library in Education series, so we challenged ourselves to think about a new approach to leadership. The series editor, Andy Hargreaves, wanted a work that would draw upon our knowledge of the ways women lead and that would enrich the general understanding of educational leadership. The series takes a broad, eclectic view of leadership. Other titles in the series have included *Teacher Leadership*, *Sustainable Leadership*, *Ethical Leadership*, *Inclusive Leadership*, and *Distributed Leadership*.

We were very excited about this opportunity, believing that we could offer something distinctive to the conversation about leadership from ours and others' considerable research on women leaders over the past twenty years. We had already worked together with several coauthors on a comprehensive review of the literature on women principals and superintendents for the second edition of the *Handbook for Achieving Gender Equity Through Education*, edited by Sue Klein and colleagues (Shakeshaft et al., 2007). The breadth and depth of research that we all collected for that chapter made us realize how much U.S. women in educational leadership have been studied—qualitatively and quantitatively.

We felt very strongly that Andy's invitation was our opportunity to move away from what had become the major focus of research