

SECTION I

Content

The Knowledge Base

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CHAPTER 1

Welcome!



Perseverance is not a long race; it is many short races, one after another.

—Walter Elliott

In the state of Texas, as in many other states, there is a rigorous certification examination that potential administrators must pass before they are eligible for certification. In Texas this test is called the TExES (Texas Examination of Educator Standards). There is tremendous pressure on future leaders to pass this test. Without it, they cannot become certified. There is also tremendous pressure on preparation programs for their students to do well because their programs are judged based on their pass-fail rates. Potential test takers from both inside and outside the state are looking for tools to help them achieve their goal of certification and reaching the principalship. This book describes how to become the world's best principal through awesome leadership preparation.

Universities and alternative preparation programs are working hard to address both the knowledge and the philosophical bases on which TExES is framed. The new 268 TExES Exam for principals is built on a foundation of eleven competencies within six domains. Its creators assume that test takers have received knowledge and research preparation through their educational providers. This book supplies needed supplemental resources for the knowledge base, but it is not intended to substitute for a quality master's degree. It focuses, however, on the philosophy necessary to think like a learner-centered principal. Many students find it difficult to make the transition from thinking like a teacher to thinking, reflecting, reacting, and responding like a principal. All the knowledge in the world is useless if a test taker cannot think in

the way the test was developed. *Passing the Principal as Instructional Leader TExES Exam: Keys to Certification and School Leadership, Third Edition* addresses this philosophy as well as the skills that principals must have within each of the six domains and eleven competencies. It provides test-taking tips for before, during, and after the exam. Specific attention is given to in-state and out-of-state test takers. The volume also provides practice test questions grouped into decision sets within a mini test. Each competency chapter concludes with additional resources that are helpful to students as they develop the knowledge and philosophical bases necessary to pass the test and pursue careers as lifelong learners.

Finally, this third edition is written in an informal, first-person voice. There are real-life stories and applications integrated into each competency to help the reader tie concepts to reality. It is absolutely necessary that test takers apply their knowledge and skills to the test—as well as to life in general. In a friendly, supportive manner, *Passing the Principal as Instructional Leader TExES Exam* helps test takers and others interested in learner-centered leadership integrate TExES competencies and domains into real-world application. The original 2002 edition, as well as the second edition, became an instant Corwin best seller and remains as such to this day. It is used by universities and alternative preparation programs, as well as individual students, across the state. This third edition continues to be based on domains and competencies provided through Texas law and developed by the Texas State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) and the success of the two previous editions. It is written based on the years of experience Wilmore has as a teacher, counselor, principal, professor, and school board member and providing popular, successful, and inspiring TExES preparation seminars at universities, webinars, regional service centers, and other training sites around the state. In addition, this updated version also includes updates to the TExES exam and additional test-taking strategies developed since the original printing.

Let's see how.

BASIC CONCEPTS

The principal TExES is divided into six domains with eleven competencies.

These domains are as follows:

- School Culture
- Leading Learning
- Human Capital
- Executive Leadership
- Strategic Operations
- Ethics, Equity, and Diversity

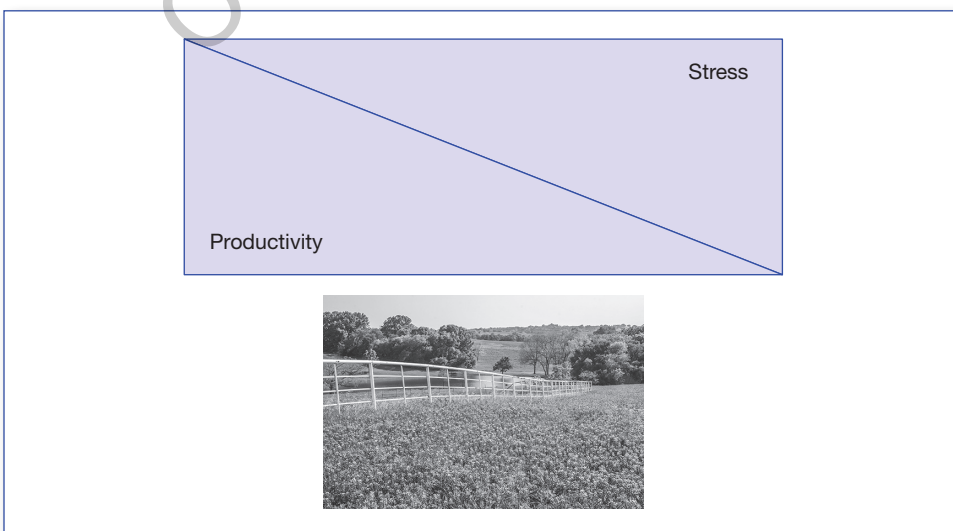
Questions on the test are designed to address specific competencies. They are not evenly divided, but every competency is addressed. The number of competencies per domain are shown in Figure 1.1.

FIGURE 1.1 Domains and Competencies

DOMAIN	# OF COMPETENCIES
DOMAIN I: School Culture	2
DOMAIN II: Leading Learning	2
DOMAIN III: Human Capital	2
DOMAIN IV: Executive Leadership	2
DOMAIN V: Strategic Operations	2
DOMAIN VI: Ethics, Equity, and Diversity	1

There is no absolute number of questions per competency or domain. My goal is for *all* my students to get *all* the questions correct, regardless of which domain or competency a question comes from. Nonetheless, a student does not have to score 100% to pass the test. For many students, simply realizing they do not have to earn a perfect score on the test helps take off some of the pressure. This is a benefit because half the battle of passing this test is your mindset. In other words, you must know that you can, and will, succeed. It is my intention for everyone reading this book to win the mind game. You should walk in to take the test feeling cool, calm, collected, confident—and even downright cocky; you should walk out feeling the same. This mental attitude is necessary to lower your level of stress. When your stress level goes up, your productivity goes down (see Figure 1.2). We want your stress level down and your productivity to be way up. Therefore, you should be cool, calm, collected,

FIGURE 1.2 When Stress Goes Up, Productivity Goes Down



confident, and downright cocky throughout both your preparation and the test-taking experience.

Many people place great emphasis on discerning exactly which competency each question addresses. Although I discuss this strategy, it does not receive undue attention. Remember, if our goal is to get every question correct, why do we care from which competency the question came? We do not; we want to get all the questions right. Nonetheless, upon becoming thoroughly familiar with each of the competencies, as you will by reading Chapters 5 through 15, you will recognize key words and concepts that will guide your selection of the appropriate answers to get all the questions right—or at least enough questions right to pass.

In addition, there is significant overlap of key themes within the competencies. Since the test is largely a timed mind game, why would you want to get stressed out, with the clock ticking, by worrying if a question is addressing competency 001 or 003? Who cares? The important thing is to understand, integrate, and live the competencies. Make them your “school administrator’s bible.” Beginning this minute, let your walk match your talk in modeling these competencies in your daily life. Then on the day of the test, walk in there and ace TExES because you are already “walking the talk!”

LEADERSHIP: A SKILL OR AN ART?

There has been, and likely always will be, considerable discussion of whether good leadership is a skill that can be studied or an art that is practiced as diligently as master painters practice their own art form, working hard to produce a masterpiece. For years, researchers such as Kent Peterson, Lee Bolman, and Terrence Deal have presented a view of school leadership that blends concepts of skill and art. Indeed, leadership is a blend of art and skill. Skills are absolutely necessary for good leadership, but they must be practiced and nurtured into the nuances of an art. Never forget that leadership is a talent. Develop it. Nurture it in yourself and in others. Your school, as well as you personally and others whom your leadership affects, will benefit.

Think of leadership as a really good jazz band. As the musicians practice before a performance, they individually sound like a whole lot of noise. They are all doing their own thing, warming up, and getting ready for the concert. But once the performance begins, everything comes together. The musicians play as a team. They are people who have worked hard, practiced together, and who have the common goal of producing really beautiful music. Because they have done those things, the concert begins, and their skills turn into an art as they blend together, bending and flowing with the crescendos and decrescendos, the tempo, and the dynamics of the music to produce something truly beautiful.

Our schools deserve leaders who are orchestrating a wonderful jazz band. As long as everyone in the school is doing their own thing, independent of each other, it is just noise. Although some progress may be made, everyone's skills are acting independently. They are not making beautiful music. But with a great leader—a learner-centered leader with passion, vision, and purpose—the school of musicians can win a Grammy. Every child in every school deserves to be a part of that jazz band, the jazz band that produces artful music, not noise. Every child deserves to be a part of a learning team. Every child deserves to be a part of a school whose staff members are focused on their success in every facet of their lives. Every child deserves the chance to come away a winner.

For too many students today, there is little hope for the future. It is my goal that you become the leader of your school's jazz band. You will be the leader who does what is right instead of what is easy or bureaucratic. You will be the principal who facilitates your school in developing a common vision and a solid purpose built on identified common values. You will be the one to change the world . . . or at least your campus. You will become an awesome principal, or I will come back and haunt you.

But first, you must pass the TExES. Are you ready to get started?

GETTING STARTED

Section II of this book includes Chapters 5 through 15. Chapter 2, "Standing on the Promises," provides the global overview of how you will achieve your goal of passing this test. It is merely a gatekeeper designed to see that you have a specific learner-centered philosophy of school leadership as portrayed in the domains and competencies. It requires entry-level administrative skills and expectations, and it is a passable test. You *will* pass this test.

I teach school leadership. I also teach TExES preparation seminars and webinars all over the state. It brings me great joy when students from any of them contact me to let me know they passed the test. I get really excited! After all, that means there is one more human out there ready to join my journey toward improving the world. And when you pass, you can send me chocolate (plain Hershey bars, please), roses (I prefer pink), or ice cream (Blue Bell, of course). Chapters 5 through 15 give detailed attention to each of the eleven learner-centered competencies. If you have never even heard of them up to this point, that is all right. By the time I get through with you, you will be living and breathing them. If not, you are in a coma. Check with your doctor. It is time to wake up to get ready for this test. You are going to know those competencies inside out. You will be reciting them to your families and friends. If you do not have family or friends, I strongly suggest finding some. They will be a

great support system—and they’ll be there to celebrate when you pass the test!

Section III addresses the integration and application of all you have learned in Section II. You will become skilled at how to analyze data, learn specific test-taking strategies, create your own Personal Success Plan, and then tie it all together in Section IV, “That’s What It’s All About.” By the time you walk in to take the TExES exam, you will be so well prepared that all you will want to do is go in and pass it so you can go forward to improve the world and eat more chocolate. My goal is to help you pass the test so you can help change the world one school at a time. This test is just a nuisance to get in your way until then. So let’s get rid of the nuisance by passing the test the first time.

Are you ready? Let’s go!

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