



Source Episode #7

A Conversation on the Calm During Crisis Research Report

Episode Highlights

In collaboration with the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (STF), this special edition podcast episode explores the findings from STF and the University of Regina's research report, [*Calm During Crisis: Leading Saskatchewan Schools Through Covid-19*](#).

Pamela Rogers, CTF/FCE Director of Research and Professional Learning, and University of Regina's Dr. Pamela Osmond-Johnson delve into the report and discuss key themes, including changes to instructional leadership, gender-based perceptions of leadership, and addressing mental health and well-being in schools.

Jane Macleod and Carol Sarich, members of the STF Principal/Vice Principal Advisory Committee, also join to discuss the importance of the research.

How did the pandemic alter instructional leadership?

Dr. Pamela Osmond-Johnson (POJ): For many of them, the instructional leadership piece, the getting in the classrooms with kids and with teachers, that's what drives them to want to be administrators. They want to be with the kids and with the teachers and engaged in the learning process and supporting professional development of teachers and all of those things, but they just felt that there were challenges around the logistics of being able to do that with cohorts and with wanting to keep things kind of as buttoned down as possible in the early days, specifically in terms of who was being around each other and limiting numbers.

Were there any gender differences in terms of how women-identified leaders were perceived?

POJ: There certainly were some comments by some of the administrators who identified as women around how parents were perceiving their leadership during this time. One participant talked about how she was the principal of one of the schools in the community and the other principal of the other school in the community was a male. And even though they were sending the same messages, sometimes to the same parents who had children in both schools, that there seemed to be, or at least her perception was that, she was being questioned a lot more by the parents in terms of the decisions that were being made and that she was receiving more pushback than her male counterpart. However, that was one person's experience so, it's not to say that it was every person's experience.

What did the research reveal in terms of what school leaders need for support, whether that is for their own mental health and well-being or for their school environments more generally?

POJ: There needs to be more conversations, specifically with school divisions, paying attention to the needs of school administrators and creating a culture where it's okay for school administrators to talk openly about the things that they're struggling with... Yeah, there needs to be more financial support for school divisions to even be able to respond to some of these things, but I do think that the first step, which really doesn't cost anything, is being able to have that conversation.



What was the rationale for this research?

Carol Sarich (CS): It became very apparent to the STF Principal / Vice Principal Advisory Committee that there was a lot happening for administrators that no one was really aware of. The Advisory Committee decided we needed to gather some data in regards to what was happening, especially since documentation was happening in other parts of our country and was showing the impact of COVID-19, not only on our students, but on our staffs as well as administrators.

What are the implications of this research?

Jane Macleod (JM): It validates the experience of Saskatchewan principals in that their workload has been incredibly impacted by the pandemic...what was really important is that when the principals would come together in a focus group from all around the province, they would hear each other's stories and they would say, "Oh, I'm not the only one". And getting everyone on the same page is really important for the work of the STF, but also important for the principals to know that they are being supported and they are being heard.