First Things First: Writing Strategies--The Gold Standard

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The "gold standard" in educational leadership journals is the research-based article. An article that is data-based will find a publication outlet much more readily than an opinion-based article. Although "N of 1" accounts are interesting, space in academic journals is a scarce commodity.

Since your writing time may be limited and you may have a promotion and tenure clock to spur your writing frenzy, you would be wise to focus your efforts on research endeavors. Consider that the timeline between the submission of a research manuscript and its publication in a refereed journal may be as long as 18 months. For those who are expected to "Publish or Perish," wise use of time and effort is critical.

For this reason, those who must publish should have at least three projects in motion at one time. This will allow for constant research, writing, and submissions so that the timeline will not pose a threat to publication success.

Another strategy that may be useful is using the national professional meetings cycle to pace the research, writing, submission process. By submitting a proposal for presentation at a national conference, one is spurred by the conference deadline to complete the research project, prepare the manuscript, and prepare the presentation. Feedback from conference attendees can strengthen the manuscript. After the conference, the goal must be to submit the manuscript to the appropriate refereed journal.

Often research studies result in two types of manuscripts. There is the research manuscript that is suitable for the refereed, research-based journal and there is the practitioner-based article that is suitable for the non-refereed, professional journal. These two types of articles are directed toward two very different audiences. The research journal reaches a small audience of academic scholars. The professional journal reaches a large audience of practitioners. Research conducted in the field of educational leadership should reach both audiences.