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## Voices of Women in the Field -- Advice from Women Rural Superintendents

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Maxwell Municipal Schools

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# VOICES OF WOMEN IN THE FIELD

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## Advice from Women Rural Superintendents

Kaye L. Peery

**Note:** This summary is based on interviews with women rural superintendents. As more women become superintendents, they will need information about their new roles. Often they do not have access to the network of other rural superintendents. This summary is a “quick” guide for the women who will enter their first rural superintendency.

### Grand Tour Question

How do female  
superintendents  
administer rural school  
districts?

### Sub-Questions

- How do rural female superintendents describe their leadership style?
- How do rural female superintendents build relationships?
- How do rural female superintendents implement and sustain change?
- What types of professional support and mentorship assist rural female superintendents?

### About the Author

*Kaye L. Peery, Ph.D.*, is superintendent of the Maxwell Municipal Schools in New Mexico.

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How do rural female superintendents describe their leadership style?

- Relational, collaborative, participatory
- Multi-task
- Establish relationships, enlist cooperation
- Always listening, explaining expectations
- Two persons stated that it's always changing as they continue to learn

How do rural superintendents build relationships?  
(with school board)

- Very personal; one-on-one
- Honesty, build trust
- Provide lots of advance information, prepare them
- Model positive behavior

How do rural superintendents build relationships?  
(with community)

- Be visible—attend events, belong to community groups
- Shop locally
- Be responsive—to complaints and/or requests

How do rural superintendents  
build relationships?  
(with media)

- Be responsive
- Always be positive—downplay negativity
- Establish relationship—easy since there is usually only one reporter!
- Use the media—to emphasize positive events/programs

How do rural superintendents  
build relationships?  
(staff, parents, students)

- Know everyone—know their families, needs, listen
- Recognize accomplishments—both formally and informally

How do superintendents build relationships  
while maintaining a personal life in a  
rural community?

- You don't—standards different for women
- Never, ever, ever go out to a bar or have a drink in public (men can do this, not women)
- Never live with your boyfriend (men can live with a girlfriend)
- Two superintendents grew up in their communities—both live in the country outside the community

How do rural female superintendents implement and sustain change?

- Use data to inform need for change
- Get information out to everyone, education
- Listen, get input from all persons—surveys, meetings, advisory councils
- One superintendent uses negative persons to implement pilot study

What types of support and mentorship Assist rural female superintendents?

- Other superintendents
- Draw from previous hands-on experience
- Some graduate courses in leadership

What advice from your experience would you share with an aspiring female rural superintendent?

- Be bold
- Be prepared to prove yourself; don't give up
- Communicate with the public
- Be a positive role model
- Be honest

Enjoy the beauty of a rural community and personalities. Be grateful. Enjoy the Blessings. Know the people. Turn everything around to the positive.