

# Heirs through HOPE

A photograph showing two hands, one from the left and one from the right, holding the word "HOPE" in large, bold, black letters. The hands are silhouetted against a bright, hazy sunset or sunrise sky with soft clouds. The word "HOPE" is the central focus, with the hands positioned as if presenting or supporting it.

**E**ach week at the end of the church service I attend, the final prayer describes the petitioners as “heirs through hope of thy everlasting kingdom.” Please know this initial sentence does not preface a religious theme. Rather, I have always gravitated toward this phrase and thought it would make a great title. Now that I have more time to ponder, I think I’ve made a connection. This column has always dealt with the “oh so human” side of our profession, not as a way to lambast or criticize, but rather to underscore predictable pitfalls. However, my faith in school leaders has been unswerving, and despite what seems like increasingly desperate times, my cockeyed optimism remains firmly intact. Succinctly, dear readers, I believe in you, remain confident of your commitment, and am grateful daily for your efforts on behalf of the next generation.

So who are the “heirs through hope?” Is it the current group of learners, who are indeed our “hope for years to come?” Rightfully, we spend our careers trying to equip them for a future in which they will be the leaders. Hopefully, we wish their lives will be tangibly better or at least as full as our own. Despite the increasing ambiguity of careers in this brave new world, we strive to strengthen their cognitive abilities for adjusting and thriving in a constantly changing arena. And while we acknowledge they will be the torchbearers of our values and the progenitors of progress, can they comprehend this? Do they own this responsibility? Are they legion? One would hope so, but rather I think “heirs through hope” is really descriptive of each wave of professional educators.

I entered education 47 years ago and was “on fire” in making a difference initially for students with special needs. Over the decades, the context expanded, but the flames didn’t diminish. Not for a minute

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do I think my experience is unique. In every stage, I was surrounded by others who dazzled me with their creativity, passion and resilience. Their actions and commitment inspired and yes...***gave me hope.*** As a school leader, I felt challenged to uncover, nourish and celebrate pockets of excellence wherever my career led. It was easy and joyful work. Here’s but one example:

I was working as a “second appraiser” (Remember those?) in small rural districts, where the principal was the only certified provider. The current mandate required a second opinion for every teacher, so I advertised my services, and was booked solid for several years. During that time, I observed and recorded thousands of lessons. I started each morning wondering, “What magic will I encounter today?” While the numbers were daunting, and the recording tedious, I never was disappointed. Indeed, even in places with meager resources, someone would be tripping the light fantastic for kids. One week, working ▷ page 16

# Association News

## Recognize Excellence in the Profession: Nominate an Outstanding School Leader

Following are opportunities to honor excellence in the profession. Visit [www.tepsa.org](http://www.tepsa.org) for more information.

### National Distinguished Principal

The prestigious Texas National Distinguished Principal (NDP) award recognizes exemplary school leadership. The award recipient represents Texas at the NDP program in Washington, D.C. and receives \$10,000 from Mentoring Minds. Nominees must meet all criteria for selection. Nominations for 2018 are due December 14.

### National Assistant Principal of the Year for Texas

In partnership with the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) one 2017-2018 TEPSA Region Assistant Principal of the Year will be selected as the National Assistant Principal of the Year for Texas.

### TEPSA Region Assistant Principals of the Year

Selected by their peers at the TEPSA region level, this award recognizes assistant principals for their efforts to improve student learning. Recipients may apply for the national award. Contact your TEPSA region officers.

### Region TEPSANs of the Year

Selected by their peers at the TEPSA region level, this award recognizes school leaders for outstanding service to the association. Contact your TEPSA region officers.

### Schools of Character

Recognizes PreK-8 schools and districts demonstrating outstanding character education initiatives that yield positive results in student behavior, school climate and academic performance. Application due early December.

### H-E-B Excellence in Education Award

Honors outstanding public school teachers, principals and school districts. Nominations due early December.

### Special thanks to TEPSA partners:



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in a tiny town with no motel or even convenience store, I discovered three such magicians. As per my role, I shouted their glories to the rooftops with the principal (who admitted never observing lessons until required by law), to the superintendent (who **GOT IT!**), and to the Education Service Center (who needed exemplars). My only distress in these great finds was their disturbing isolation. Undiscovered, they were not seen as invaluable resources to others. Wizard #1 was achieving great things with homogeneously grouped students needing remediation. She was literally next door to a teacher who was “dying on the vine” and killing kids with worksheets. Wizard #2 was charismatic with huge leadership potential. Thankfully, the superintendent made her principal when her doofus predecessor retired at the end of the year. Wizard #3 was a non-degreed Ag teacher who not only prepared Future Farmers of America students to be articulate spokespersons in their communities, but also taught

inspirational art lessons. The latter was something he hid under a bushel and didn’t show me what the world should know until the third year of my coming to that district! Time lost.

I could go on at length. Careers in education have enormous potential for impacting the future. In the tyranny of top down mandates and the tedium of routine, school leaders strive to keep hope alive. We are the heirs. Our actions kindle the flames.

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*After 46 years in education, Dr. Grant W. Simpson retired last year as Dean of the School of Education at St. Edward’s University.*

Read more from Dr. Simpson in the Resources section at [www.tepsa.org](http://www.tepsa.org).