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A Qualitative Self-Study of Educational Philosophy Within the Context of a Structured Educational Framework

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A Qualitative Self-Study of Educational Philosophy

Within the Context of a Structured Educational Framework

by

Tiffany Young

A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Education

School of Education

A Qualitative Self-Study of Educational Philosophy

Within the Context of a Structured Educational Framework
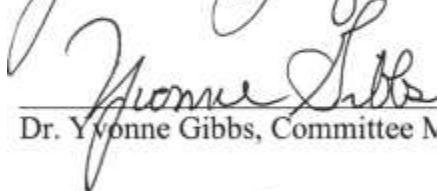
by

Tiffany Young

This dissertation has been approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Education

at Lindenwood University by the School of Education

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Dr. B. Pat Conley, Committee Member   3-29-'19
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Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work here at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree here or elsewhere.

Full Legal Name: Tiffany Young

Signature: _____ Date: 3/29/19

Acknowledgements

I would be remiss if I failed to acknowledge those who were instrumental in assisting me with the completion of this self-study. I would first like to thank my committee members: Dr. John Long, Dr. Yvonne Gibbs, and Dr. B. Patrick Conley. I would also like to thank Dr. Stephen Sherblom and Dr. Sherrie Wisdom. A thanks is graciously given to the participants of my study; I appreciate your honesty and time. Even still, I would like to give a monumental thanks to my mother (BJ) for availing herself in a multitude of ways as I worked toward my journey of completion. Lastly, I would like to thank "CC" for always understanding the importance of education, my goal and personal growth.

I take this moment to thank you all!

Abstract

This study came about as the result of my belief that my philosophy as an educator was no longer in alignment with that of the school district in which I taught. As a result, I decided to conduct a self-study that incorporated my own reflections of myself and my teaching, as well as those of my then-current and previous colleagues and then-current and previous administrators/building leaders. Participants varied in their positions and in their number of years of teaching experience, roles, age, gender, and then-current teaching status. It was important to me that I had people with whom I had worked previously as I wanted to know of possible changes I had made internally and externally; I wanted to learn how others viewed me and this data would assist me in my conclusions about myself, my philosophy and its congruence with that of my school district. I created a 'Perspective' template for uniformity in the manner in which I reflected upon specific teaching events and a survey for my participants, as well as interviews. My findings were that there may have been slight or minute differences in philosophies of education and of a teacher's role; however, there were vast differences in the prioritization of goals, missions, commitments, and visions. This difference in prioritizations and the timeliness in which commitments were fulfilled created frustrations and triggered an inordinate amount of stress and continuous trauma of varying types. In this dissertation, I will discuss my research, as well as the calculated measures I took to obtain data to help me determine if my philosophy was in accord with that of my employer. In addition, I will also make suggestions for those who may extend my study or use it as a foundation for future studies.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction

Each year tens of thousands of college undergraduate students graduate with degrees in education. The graduates leave with the intention of obtaining jobs as teachers in school districts. Mentors are assigned to assist with navigating red tape and to help new teachers become seasoned, veteran teachers who fully understand the 'procedures' of the district and building. What new teachers do not expect is that 'if' they can make it past the first five years of teaching without resigning or failing to be offered a contract, they must soon contend with reality — the reality that being a teacher may not be exactly what was initially thought or portrayed in college classrooms. What happens when one's philosophy of teaching seems to differ from that of the district in which one works? Does the individual resign? Does he or she seek advice from a mentor? Should the individual have a candid conversation with the boss? Should the person go home and reevaluate life? These are all options that one would naturally seek, but when extreme emotions dissipate and clarity is reached, one is ultimately stuck in what Peele (2017) would call a 'sunken place' — only in this case, not a place that seeks you because of your race, but one that nonetheless devours no matter how hard help and assistance are sought (Peele, 2017). When you are in the trenches and one who is desperately trying to fulfill the duties and expectations of your position, what do you do when there appears to be a direct conflict with your professional expectations and your own identity and personal philosophy? When your philosophy and that of your organization collide, what does a person do?

The objective of this study was to evaluate the dilemma of what a teacher encountered when his/her professional or personal philosophies seemed to differ from that of the district in which he/she worked. This dichotomy of philosophies brought about an internal and external grappling that the Researcher confronted and ultimately resolved. In the case of this study, it was essential for the Researcher to gain insight from multiple perspectives — the Researcher's self-view, how colleagues viewed the Researcher, and how the Researcher was viewed by superiors. Analyzing the commonalities of these perspectives provided insight to help determine whether personal and district/building philosophies differed.

There has been a teacher shortage in the United States for several years (Aragon, 2016, p. 1.) One could attribute the shortage to a difference of perception of roles and a lack of a sense of being fulfilled by one's job. In short, many teachers left the profession because they felt as though what they were conflicted with what they deemed best to do. In their article titled, "Teachers' Career Decisions: Perspectives on Choosing Teaching Careers, and Staying or Leaving," Howes & Goodman-Delahunty (2015) specifically noted that some of participants of their study experienced, "conflicts in values . . . with current developments in education" (p. 26). Furthermore, Howes and Goodman-Delahunty (2015) found that teachers and former teachers of their study ultimately felt that the work environment and climate, feelings of being unsupported, an excessive workload, and stress were all factors that either contributed to teachers resigning or teachers considering leaving the field (p. 26). Although this study related to teachers and their potential inner conflicts, the conflict of philosophies between employee and employer can occur in any career field.   In the case of teachers however, this divergence

of philosophies often left the teacher feeling inadequate, unsupported, frustrated, and stressed; these feelings caused some to leave their profession. For others, a daily life of mundane existence ensued. Even still for others, health concerns arose. Not only did this pose challenges and obstacles for the employee or teacher, but it also posed a great deal of challenges for the employer. For the teacher, there is the possibility of lack of, or reduced productivity, lack of effectiveness, and even lack of adherence to school or employer policies and protocol. For the school district, the challenges include high turnover, increased need for substitutes, and even increased benefits payouts.

The field of education faced the incessant problem of a teacher shortage. This problem was exacerbated by disillusioned and dissatisfied certified teachers who left the field after succumbing to increased amounts of stress (Fisher, 2011, p. 29). Like the individuals discussed in Fisher's (2011) article, the Researcher for this study began to wonder: 'How do we get teachers who have gone through arduous coursework, training, and authentic on-the-job experiences to remain in the field, evaluate their philosophies, reflect upon their experiences, and remain committed to teaching?' This study addressed the lack of prolific information regarding effectively maintaining teachers and providing them with a systematic process of self-evaluation to aid those who believed their philosophies clashed with those of the district in which they worked. The study could serve as a model and guide for educators or an employee of any workforce field who believed that his/her personal work philosophy was colliding with that of the organization in which he/she worked.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to provide a systematic way to examine one's own values, compare them (values) to those of the organization in which one worked, and ultimately examine information to determine if one's philosophy was in accord with that of the employer. This study was designed to serve as an initial, primary resource. It should be utilized as a platform and aid for individuals in any career field who were evaluating their then-current position as a result of incongruent philosophies between them and their employers. "By actively considering our thoughts and actions we become aware of the power of reflective thinking as a tool for continuous improvement and this obviously has implications beyond the personal" (Helyer, 2015, p. 22). The 'beyond the personal' referenced by Helyer (2015) can easily be transferred to the organization in which one works.

Research Questions

There were three specific research questions I posed. I felt these three questions could be the key to confirming ideals and thoughts that I had but was unsure of.

Research Question 1 (RQ1): How is the researcher, as an education professional, perceived by colleagues, administrators/supervisors/professional leaders, and staff members with regard to her philosophy of education, as compared to the mission, vision, commitments, values, and policies of the educational institution for which she works?

I sought responses concerning missions, visions, commitments, values, and policies from individuals who fit these nomenclature categories — those with whom I worked at the time of this writing, as well as those with whom I had previously worked. I

surmised that if I could garner insight from individuals regarding this specific research question, I would be able to compare my own perceptions of myself with those of my colleagues.

Research Question 2 (RQ2): How is the perception of the researcher's colleagues congruent with the researcher's self-perception?

I believed this question would allow me to 'self-assess' and derive conclusions of congruence or incongruence contingent upon the responses of the participants. I believed it was critical that I reflected upon specific events I experienced, as I thought those specific experiences truly impacted my professional and personal philosophies regarding my position as an educator.

Research Question 3 (RQ3): How does the researcher's self-perception of her own educational philosophy align with her colleagues' perceptions of the mission, vision, commitments, values, and policies of the school district?

Through data, I believed this question would help me understand and analyze whether my professional philosophy and understanding of district missions, visions, commitments, values, and policies were parallel to that of the district.

Research Question 4 (RQ4): How does the researcher's self-perception of her own educational philosophy align with her colleagues' perceptions of the mission, vision, commitments, values, and policies of the school district?

Limitations & Assumptions

As with any research, there were limitations in my study. One limitation was my ability (perhaps even inability) to connect with and contact former colleagues, supervisors, and fellow staff members. I felt it was important to attempt to determine if

my self-concept and teaching propensities had changed over the years; having co-workers from previous positions would assist me with this. Even still, in an attempt to preserve anonymity to the best of my ability, I had to repeatedly send reminders to the personal emails and other social media outlets seeking participants. As a result, even those who may have agreed to participate were part of the 'participant pool' I continued to seek consent from. This action, yet needed, may have perturbed some potential participants or even those who had agreed to participate. Some participants began the online survey, but chose not to answer all of the questions. I included the caveat that a participant could answer any or all of the questions on the survey, because I determined that any amount of authentic data was better than none; hence some chose to invoke their right and answer only some survey questions. One final limitation was the fact that only a small number of participants agreed to participate in the interview portion of my mixed-methods study.

Just as there were limitations in my self-study, there were also assumptions. I assumed that the number of participants coupled with my personal documented reflections (Perspective Sheets) were adequate points of data to draw reasonable conclusions for my self-study. Another assumption was that the participants responded candidly and honestly — that their responses were sincere and accurate to the best of their knowledge and recollection. Additionally, as stated earlier, all participants had the same opportunities to answer all, some, or none of the questions asked of them. My third set of data was derived from my self-created Perspective Sheets. I created these sheets in response to experiences that I deemed most incongruent with my personal philosophies and values system at the time of my study, for there had been numerous events and occurrences that forced me to reevaluate the alignment of my philosophy and that of my

district. One final assumption in this study was that the school district in which I worked

wanted student needs to direct and guide decisions.

Definitions

There were several terms that were repeatedly used as they were essentially the

tenets that I used to analyze congruence of my philosophy and that of my employer.

These terms should be interpreted through the use of their customary definitions. Still,

there were other terms that were reinforced in trauma-sensitive schools and mental health

organizations. However, the term 'token toll' was one I used to describe the feeling and

price that was often paid by 'singletons' in any position, job, or organization. The key

terms are listed below:

Goals. Something, tangible or even intangible, that was sought after; typically,

efforts were purposefully taken to accomplish the goal.

Commitments. Something to which a person declared, dedicated, and/or

honored.

Mission. A task that one sought to accomplish.

Perspective Sheet. Form and template created by the Researcher to input

information regarding potentially incongruent experiences. The intention was that after

inputting information into the Perspective Sheet template, one could easily use the tool as

a visual and systematic procedure to determine actual congruence of one's own

philosophy and that of his employer.

Trauma. An experience that caused mental, emotional or physical angst or injury.

Trauma sensitive school. An educational institution that was aware of and

cognizant of the adverse impact of trauma. As a result, the school actively pursued ways

to reduce, circumvent, or even eliminate trauma waged upon the constituents it served and those who provided services to the constituents and stakeholders.

Token toll. This was a term the Researcher used/coined to describe the seemingly insurmountable 'price' — typically not financial — people of color seemed to pay for being the 'only' employee of a specific race in an organization. This term could also be used, generally, to describe the 'price' any single, anomaly pays in an organization. The notion was that one may break the (color) barrier, if you will, which may mask itself as progress or achievement, but there was a valuable toll that must be paid as the 'only,' or token.

Summary

My study titled, *A Self-Study of Educational Philosophy, Within the Context of a Structured Educational Framework*, arose as a result of my belief that there was a direct conflict between my personal educational philosophy and that of my employer — a school district. I was convinced that my unique experiences had created an inner grappling that resulted in a dismal outlook of my position within the district and the outlook of my continued employment with the district. It became very challenging to go to work every day and work within the dictated protocols and building environment that I felt inhibited my professional growth and stagnated my disposition. As a result, I began to reflect deeply on observations and personal experiences. Ultimately, I began to question myself and ask myself, 'Who am I?' This questions plagued me daily! I truly believed I had changed and that my values had been compromised to remain in alignment with my employer's goals, mission, commitments, and values. This was very difficult for me, as it impacted my morale, self-esteem, and outlook. It was not in my character to

remain idle and do nothing. I knew the only option I had was to try to obtain relief from

this stressful, daily, state of being.

I began to review my district's goals and aspirations for its students and staff and

I was even more confused, because I felt there was a true line of demarcation between my

philosophy and that of my district and building. This posed a major problem for me. I

did not know where to begin, but I knew I had to address the critical question of whether

I had changed. The only way to do this was to seek answers to these questions and ask

then-current and former co-workers their perceptions of me as a professional. I also

thought it was necessary for me to reflect upon and analyze some of the most

confounding experiences I had — ones that were still reeling in my mind. I knew I had

to devise a precise, consistent method to evaluate and analyze these experiences. I

thought about the values that I knew to be important to me. I knew I had to also have

some sort of 'rating' system or Likert-style fashion to determine if in fact my perception

of experiences were congruent with my district. I could not find any analysis template I

could use for each experience that would account for all the facets I wanted to evaluate.

As a result, I created my own template that I called my Perspective Sheet. In the study, I

used this template for each of the experiences I analyzed and eventually arrived at a

decision of congruence or incongruence for each of these experiences. There were also

interviews that were handled by a non-biased party unaffiliated with the district, but one

who had office and managerial skills and who — by trade — understood the importance

of discretion. The comments and data from these interviews were 'scrubbed' before

being presented to me to use in the study. I then gathered all the data and began to look

for themes and commonalities. Schutt (2011), author of *Investigating the Social World*,

suggested that during the 'coding' stage of a qualitative research study, "the analyst identifies important categories in the data, as well as patterns and relationships through a process of discovery" (p. 322). Themes, trends, and tendencies were noted, as were anomalies.

This study was further organized into four additional chapters. Each chapter focused on and highlighted the systematic measures taken to complete this self-study. Chapter Two is the Literature Review. During this phase of the research study, scholarly articles, as well as other resources, were reviewed to understand my research journey. This chapter also served as a guide and directory, so-to-speak, to learn of other research in multiple fields in which differing philosophies impacted an employee's outlook and perception of himself or herself, as well as an impact of their perception of his/her employer. For me, there was little to no information regarding specifically what to do when a person, as the educator, felt as though his/her philosophy was in direct conflict with that of his/her district or school building in which he/she worked. Furthermore, I was unable to find any available instrument to help determine congruence of philosophies, nor could I find any resource to offer solutions of what to do with the feelings I was having as an educator. There was a wealth of information, articles, and data about the longevity of educators' and teachers' careers and what individuals surmised as being the reasons teachers left the field at such alarming rates. However, there was nothing that offered solutions to determining congruence. This was what I needed and subsequently created for myself — the Perspective Sheet.

An outline of the specific steps I took to review my study's data was outlined in Chapter Three. I provided steps that I utilized to break up the different categories I

evaluated (Goals, Mission, Commitments). I even went as far as to create participant data tables, which were used to help me compare participant responses in a visually, concise, and clear manner. This proved to be helpful, because I could easily isolate a question from the survey to compare across participants. Similarly, I created the same type of table for participants who were interviewed. These, in addition to my self-created Perspective Sheets, served as my data points.

Chapter Four allowed me to report my findings and new understandings. Ultimately, I learned that although I was initially convinced that I and my district were completely and utterly incongruent, we were more congruent than I had thought. I concluded that the factor that jaded my view was 'time.' In numerous experiences evaluated on my Perspective Sheets, I realized that I was granting 'priority' to specific events that I truly believed to be essentially egregious; I felt as though these issues needed to be tended to and resolved immediately. My district and/or building administrators, however, may have considered the issues important just as I did, but they seemingly (district/building administrators) did not ascribe these issues as a priority, as I did. The difference between my and their priority status was what often led me to believe there were incongruences in every experience I referenced in this study. The results regarding congruence can be found in this chapter.

The last chapter in the study, Chapter Five reveals my conclusions and suggestions for future research. I truly believe my study adds to not just the educational arena, but to the category of careers in general. Although my self-study was about an educator who found herself to have differing philosophies than that of her school district, the Perspective Sheets, as well as the systematic process I devised to reflect could be

beneficial to any employee who was grappling with the same notions I had. I also believed my study touched on how being a token takes a toll on the individual who was defined as a 'token' in his or her workplace. The idea of paying a toll — mental, spiritual, physical, financial — simply because you were the 'only one' in a place of employment could be staggering. This fact, of being an 'only,' added to the additional demands of a job or position and could lead to many adverse thought processes — the belief of being incongruent and out of sync with an employer was one. The other was the possibility of experiencing trauma of some form. I would encourage anyone who wishes to extend my study or anyone who wishes to embark upon a self-study to include a component of perceived personal trauma in his or her workplace, as well as the impact of being the 'only' has on an individual — in essence, the 'toll' that one pays as a token.

Chapter Two: The Literature Review

Introduction

In Chapter Two the theoretical background of self-study is presented. Included are sections on philosophies ranging from individual to institutional. Finally, the research on the implication of incongruent philosophies is explored.

Ontology

The theory of 'ontology' has been described as, "Our view (whether claims or assumptions) on the nature of reality, and specifically, is this an objective reality that really exists, or only a subjective reality, created in our minds?" (Flowers, 2009, p. 1). Consequently, ontology was a key component of a self-study. Viewing things through an ontological lens assisted the researcher in determining her viewpoints on not only herself, but also herself in relation to whatever was being analyzed. In the case of this study, the researcher viewed events and data through an ontological lens in relation to how this view either blended with those of her organization or diverged from those of her organization. "We all have a number of deeply embedded ontological assumptions which will affect our view on what is real and whether we attribute existence to one set of things over another" (Flowers, 2009, p. 1). Hence, when developing a research study, it was essential that the researcher understood that "different views exist regarding what constitutes reality, another question must be how is that reality measured, and what constitutes knowledge of that reality" (Flowers, 2009, p. 2).

However, it could be argued that more important than the ontological lens was the hegemony lens, which homed in on "the roles that dominant discourses and systems of power play in shaping our understanding of and our relationships in this world (Meyer,

2011, p. 3). Viewing oneself and one's philosophy in comparison to another's in an

organization may be insightful; however, the true critical analysis of one's philosophy in

relation to that of the organization, and even still, why one has the perceptions of self,

might be answered in a more thorough manner. In a study conducted with eight female

teachers, Meyer (2011), concluded that the 'society within' a school culture had a greater

level of negative impact on the participants than their own personal philosophy. Meyer

(2011) wrote, in an article titled, "Critical Ontology and Teacher Agency," "It was as if

teachers' eyes are covered by institutional and social barriers that tell them . . . not to

intervene. However, their internal motivators often encourage them to see and to act in

spite of these strong external barriers" (Meyer, 2011, p. 6). Clearly Meyer was

describing incongruent philosophies between the teachers and the institution in which

they worked. Samaras and Freese (2006) agreed with Meyer (2011). Samaras and Freese

(2006) wrote, "Teachers often recognize a disparity in what they believe and what they

actually do in practice" (p. 13) According to Koetting and Malisa (n.d.), this

incongruence or contradiction of philosophy was observable thorough critical inquiry (p.

1009). They went on to write in their article titled, "Philosophy, Research, and

Education," that, "Education is a moral undertaking and therefore our practice within

education must be open to inquiry . . . Critical inquiry is a mode of philosophical inquiry

that questions reality, looking for contradictions" (Koetting & Malisa, n.d., p. 1009).

Koetting and Malisa's (n.d.) thoughts were in concert with Samaras and Freese's (2006)

belief that a self-study, "Allows teachers to assess their personal and practical theories in

a situated context or in a particular setting. This reflective assessment contributes to their

development as a person and as a professional and extends the knowledge base of teaching." (p. 13).

Educational Philosophy

The question that must be pondered and answered was 'What is a personal educational philosophy?' A teacher's personal educational philosophy was comprised of one's own personal values, beliefs, and experiences which ultimately — either consciously or unconsciously — dictated his way of teaching and his perspective on educational issues. This statement was affirmed by O'Farrell (n.d.) in her article, "Writing a Teaching Philosophy Statement." In her article, O'Farrell (n.d.) wrote, "This statement of reflection is a philosophical framework of your personal approach to teaching and the rationale behind what guides your practice." (O'Farrell, n.d., p. 55). University of Michigan professor, Coppola (2002) would agree. In his article titled, "Writing a Statement of Teaching Philosophy: Fashioning a Framework for Your Classroom," Coppola (2002) wrote, "It [Philosophy Statement] should give the reader a glimpse into your motivations and practices as an instructor, your sense of values regarding and learning." (p. 450). One's values were an integral part of his educational philosophy. "These educational philosophies are largely driven by specific values that individual teachers hold, which are derived from the teacher's internal assumptions" (Essentialism & Perennialism, 2008, p. 3). Hence, one's teaching philosophy was essentially a reflection of one's personal values. The University of Texas at El Paso's Center for Effective Teaching and Learning concluded, "Teaching is a value-laden activity. What one teaches — and who one teaches, and perhaps even how — is a personal expression of professional goals and values" (The Center for Effective Teaching

and Learning, n.d., Philosophy as Values and Goals, p. 1). Thus, it can be argued that even despite one's organization's policy and procedures, one — inherently and perhaps even unknowingly — taught what he, himself deemed important. "One's educational philosophy, and not external standards, determines how a teacher teaches" (Moss & Lee, 2010, p. 36).

Validity of a Self-Study

It would be erroneous to believe that a self-study was merely one's personal recordings and recollections of personal experiences; for this was the superficial definition of 'self-study' — perhaps even merely the combination of the definitions of the two words, 'self' and 'study." A self-study was much more. Authentic self-studies focused on the "Self and the arena of practice, between self in relation to practice and the others who share the practice setting. Each self-study researcher must negotiate that balance" (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 15). In their article, Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) offer what they term 'guidelines' for a self-study. Guideline six provides particular insight to the benefits of self-study to the general population and educational arena at large. "The autobiographical self-study researcher has an ineluctable obligation to seek to improve the learning situation not only for the self, but for the other[s]" (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 14). This essentially was what many would term the 'so what' of research; the self-study of one individual can in fact help clarify and advance the comprehension and learning of others. Furthermore, self-studies can help an individual — particularly an educator — determine if he was practicing what he was preaching and ultimately provide insight as to whether there was congruence between what was said (philosophy or theory) and what was done (actions or behaviors). In an article titled,

"The Methodology of Self-Study and Its Theoretical Underpinnings," by LaBoskey (2004), one read, "Educational researchers need, therefore, to be explicit about our theoretical stance and take steps to ensure that our methodologies are consistent with those theories" (p. 817). Committing to a self-study can solicit and yield an immeasurable amount of knowledge about oneself and perhaps even rationale as to why one has specific beliefs and tendencies. This was affirmed by Kitchen and Stevens (2004) who collaboratively conducted research on the impact of reflection. They wrote, "We anticipate that if other action researchers were to consider incorporating journaling and other forms of reflection into their research methodologies and data collection, they would experience greater understanding of themselves as practitioners" (Kitchen & Stevens, 2004, p. 4).

Self-Reflection

Very few educators failed to acknowledge the importance of teacher reflection (Collins & Pratt, 2011, p. 359). In fact, educators reflected for a host of different reasons — some out of inquisitiveness, some out of compulsory reasons, and others as a result of their intrinsic analytical desires. "Most simply presume it a worthy and appropriate task, perhaps assuming it will provide a better understanding and more equitable judgment of teaching" (Collins & Pratt, 2011, p. 359). It was this presumption of enhancing one's 'understanding and judgment' and assessing the reflection results, so-to-speak, against the "Singularity of good in teaching . . . implies a false promise of opportunity to be different from the dominant view of teaching" (Collins & Pratt, 2011, p. 359). Having a philosophy that differs from the mainstream may help to solidify one's own individual philosophy. "When you examine a philosophy different from your own, it helps you to

'wrestle' with your own thinking. Sometimes this means you may change your mind.

Other times, it may strengthen your viewpoint" (Cohen, 1999, p. 1).

Reflection was essential to analyze one's thoughts, perspectives, and beliefs in

one's daily or employment practice (Francis, Owens, & Tollefson, 1998, p. 268). In their

article titled, "It Comes Together at the End': The Impact of a One-Year Subject in

Nursing Inquiry on Philosophies of Nursing," the authors followed, "A teacher educator

with two nursing science educators in an attempt to create 'spaces of freedom' for first . .

. philosophies" (Francis, et al., 1998, p. 268). The premise of the research was the belief

that if one deconstructed one's philosophy, said philosophy could be better understood

and hence confirmed, altered, or denied. As a result of the new lens through which one

viewed his/her own philosophy, a better and improved philosophy would be developed,

internalized, and ultimately utilized to dictate actions. The outcome should be —

similarly — a better and improved individual and employee. (Francis, et al., 1998, p.

269). Francis, Owens, and Tollefson (1998) had multiple 'phases' in their study and

honed in on two questions which illuminated differences within the phases: 1) "What

factors influenced the construction of the personal and professional philosophy?" and 2)

"How much change had occurred in the philosophies?" (p. 269). The research conducted

by these three individuals revealed that their data indicated, among other things, that "the

separation of personal and professional thinking was a contributing factor that inhibited

change" (Francis, et al., 1998, p. 271) between one's own initial philosophy and one's

current philosophy.

An Individual's Philosophy

Francis et al. (1998) also noticed that their subjects' first philosophies "were standards of belief [and] the second linked beliefs to previous work experience and work relationships (p. 275). This observation was in concert with the notion that one's philosophy — even teaching philosophy — was likely to change as one acquired more experiences. The authors arrived at the fact that professionals — in their research with nurses — should continually reevaluate, deconstruct, and rebuild their philosophies, as this process aided in authentic professional growth. "As we, as educators, address the reconstruction of our theories, research, and our curriculum in Nursing Inquiry we see that it doesn't 'come together at the end' — there is no end, only an ongoing process of reconstruction and reflection" (Francis, et al., 1998, p. 277). This final statement of the authors suggested that theories, and thus philosophies, should continually and continuously be evaluated for their merit and usefulness in one's current and present practice.

The difference between what was taught and what a teacher or educator taught or employed may lead to great turmoil. "The guiding philosophies of education reflect not only the internal assumptions of the individual teacher, but they also construct the culture of schools and school districts" (Essentialism & Perennialism, 2008, page 1). This ideal may prove to be difficult when one has a personal view and perspective of what was 'good' for students and teaching and that individual's perspective conflicted with that of the organization in which he belongs. This precise 'difference of philosophy' between the Ferguson-Florissant School District and its former Superintendent, McCoy, proved that philosophical differences can yield grave consequences. In referencing the district's

decision to place the superintendent on administrative leave, Ferguson-Florissant School

Board President Morris stated, "This decision reflects differences in focus and philosophy

between the board and superintendent and is not an indication of wrongdoing" (Bock,

2013). This action proved, "Clashes occur when guiding philosophies conflict"

(Essentialism & Perennialism, 2008, p. 1).

One can conclude that there had to be a symbiosis between one's personal views

and that of the organization in which he belongs. Otherwise, incongruence of views

could result in negative repercussions. In Worsham and Olson's (n.d.) article, the authors

touched upon the phrase, 'paradox of freedom.' This was the notion that for freedoms to

exist, there had to be a system of restraints already in place. For, if there were no system

of restraints, one would not need to seek freedom — it would already exist (Worsham &

Olson, n.d., p. 3). This belief of freedoms and restraints can be applied to educators as

well. Teachers may have a sense of autonomy in the classroom and teach in a fashion

that was in accord with their teaching philosophy (freedom), but this was only contingent

upon the fact that a teacher's philosophy was in accord with that of the school (restraint).

As a result, there must be a symbiosis between freedom and power; the symbionts —

personal philosophy and ways of teaching and thinking and the limitations of a school or

district's policy and procedures. "Such ontological investigations require an examination

of how power intersects with the ways educators make meaning of ourselves and the

contexts in which our teaching and our identities are embedded" (Meyer, 2011, page 1).

When one seeks the definition of 'educational philosophy,' it can be concluded

that one's educational philosophy "represents answers to questions about the purpose of

schooling, a teacher's role, and what should be taught and by what methods" (Sadker &

Zittleman, 2005, Chapter 9). Having said that, it was likely that one's educational

philosophy derived from one of four major philosophies: Essentialism, Perennialism,

Progressivism, and Behaviorism (Essentialism & Perennialism, 2008, p. 1). The

International Journal of Critical Pedagogy's 2010 article titled, "A Critical Analysis of

Philosophies of Education and INTASC Standards in Teacher Preparation," stated that

teachers with an Essentialistic philosophical approach to education primarily believed

that "standardized testing is seen [by essentialists] as an ideal benchmark for assessing

students and holding teachers accountable for student achievement" (as cited in Moss &

Lee, 2010, p. 38). Similarly, Moss and Lee's (2010) assessment of teachers whose

philosophy aligns with that of Perennialists probably believed, "All students are supposed

to pursue the same curriculum regardless of individual differences" (Moss & Lee, 2010,

p. 38). In stark contrast to the uniformity so-to-speak with these two philosophies, Moss

and Lee (2010) pin teachers with a progressive philosophy as those who might "argue

that schools are miniature societies and should focus on real-life problems students face

in school or will face in the future. Therefore, education should revolve around authentic

activity in a social setting and cater to student needs" (Moss & Lee, 2010, p. 39). Still,

progressivist teachers in their true essence might be those Labaree defined in his 2005

article, as those who establish a classroom which "bas[es] instruction on the needs,

interests and developmental stage of the child; it means teaching students the skills they

need in order to learn any subject . . . it means promoting discovery and self-directed

learning by the student through active engagement" (Labaree, 2005, p. 277).

Behaviorism was the final educational philosophy that many educators established as a

premise of their personal philosophy. Members who ascribed to this philosophy believed

that, "Given the right environmental influences, all learners acquire identical understanding and that all students can learn" (Weegar & Pacis, 2012, p. 2). Each of these educational philosophies served as a foundation for the personal philosophies of educators around the world.

Although the act of teaching was a physical activity that one did independently, unless in a co-teaching setting, teaching was an act that was rooted in one's personal experiences. These experiences were the result of a multitude of things: what one read, believed to be true, has done, learned, and what one has heard. These experiences become the base of one's philosophy. "Sources for your educational philosophy are your life experiences, your values, the environment in which you live, interactions with others and awareness of philosophical approaches" (Cohen, 1999, p. 1). In essence, teaching can be regarded as "a personal activity that is socially mediated, culturally authorized, and historically situated" (Collins & Pratt, 2011, p. 360). As a result of the intimacy and personalization of teaching in one's own classroom, it is important to reflect. "Increasingly, teachers at every level and in every context are being asked to articulate and reflect on their approach to teaching" (Collins & Pratt, 2011, page 359). However, what does that term, 'reflection' truly mean? "We might encapsulate reflection as a self-critical, investigative process wherein teachers consider the effect of their pedagogical decisions on their situated practice with the aim of improving those practices" (Tripp & Rich, 2012, p. 679).

Categories of Reflection

If this was an accepted definition of 'teacher reflection,' there was a necessity to reflect on specific categories of teaching to solicit relevant, current, and practical reform.

These categories were as follows: Transmission, Apprenticeship, Developmental, Nurturing, and Social (Collins & Pratt 2011, p. 364). Collins and Pratt (2011), in their article, "The Teaching Perspectives Inventory at 10 Years and 100,000 Respondents: Reliability and Validity of a Teacher Self-Report Inventory," focused on two essential questions in their effort to help educators create research questions which encompassed ensuring fidelity and accuracy in self-inventory and discovery. The two question areas: 1) Can selected utterances be refined and restated such that teachers; endorsements of different statements reflect their dominant teaching perspectives and distinguish them from non-dominant or recessive perspectives? and 2) Can such an inventory demonstrate acceptable standards of reliability and validity? (Collins & Pratt, 2011, page 361).

Ultimately, a 45-question online inventory was created and encompassed Belief Statements, Intention Items, and Action Declarations — all in an effort to assist educators who thirsted for a credible instrument which would provide insight on their own personal education philosophies, beliefs, and tendencies (Collin & Pratt, 2011, page 362). Hence, the Teaching Perspectives Inventory (TPI, Pratt & Collins, n.d.) emerged. "The TPI has been the instrument of choice for dozens of master's theses, doctoral dissertations, and research projects in the United States and Canada and around the world" (Collins & Pratt, 2011, p. 371). By April of 2009, over 100,000 individuals had taken the inventory (Collins & Pratt, 2011, p. 362). For results and data regarding reflection to be internalized and inculcated, it was important for individuals to be able to see and agree that what was said coincided with what was done. In their 2010 article — about philosophies in the nursing field — titled, "Creating workplace environments that support moral courage," LaSala and Bjarnason wrote (2010), "Professional practice models

illustrate the alignment and integration of nursing practice with the mission, vision, and values that nursing has adapted" (para. 16). But what happened when one failed to see or observe this 'alignment?' Whose stance was correct and to which philosophy did you adhere?

No one person's perspective supersedes another. Again, teaching, and moreover one's teaching perspective and thus philosophy, was personal. The fact that "Different people have different profiles confirms that there is more than one acceptable way to think about teaching" (Collins & Pratt, 2011, p. 370). As mentioned, the TPI was a valid reflection tool that withstood the test of time. "When a person's TPI profile is used . . . conceptual differences about teaching can be clarified before judgments are made about the quality of someone's teaching" (Collins & Pratt, 2011, p. 372). Self-reflecting tools, such as the TPI, reassured people that having differing perspectives than others should not lead them to conclude that one should alter or change his perspectives; it should merely provoke them to arrive at ways to "improve [their] teaching without having to change [their] perspective on teaching" (Collins & Pratt, 2011, p. 373). Jordi (2011), in his article, "Reframing the Concept of Reflection: Consciousness, Experiential Learning, and Reflective Learning Practices," would agree with Collins and Pratt's outlook. In fact, Jordi (2011) wrote, "I will argue that reflective practices . . . integrate a range of cognitive and nonconceptual elements that make up our experiences and consciousness" (p. 182). Essentially, Jordi (2011) believed that reflection was comprised of what people had done and what they thought they knew. "Biology provides us with the capacities, and we make the choices, develop the inclinations, and harden the patterns

psychologically, socially, and culturally" (Jordi, 2011, p. 182). These capacities that Jordi referenced became the foundation of our independent philosophies.

"Educational theorists agree that values are at the foundation of a philosophy of education" (Prabhu, 2011, p. 1728). The questions that remained were, 'What are values and how does one go about creating his own values system?' Values were comprised of our own beliefs of what should and what should not be. Values were at the crux of our conscious and dictated both our thoughts and actions. According to Prabhu, author of the 2011 article titled, "Human Values in Education: Reflecting on the Core," values were "stable motivational constructs that represent broad goals and apply across contexts and time" (p. 1728). In short, there was a symbiosis between values and identity. People were made of their values and values were made of people. Values created philosophies of education (Prabhu, 2011, p. 1728). Teachers must know who they were and be confident in their philosophies of education. In the article titled, "Teachers Work Intensification and Educational Contradictions in Aboriginal Communities," Wotherspoon referenced a 2002 study of Aboriginal diversity in the country of Canada. Wotherspoon expressed the need for faculty to "know who they are, what they stand for" (Wotherspoon, 2008, p. 397).

Differing Philosophies

However, 'What happens when an individual's philosophy differs from that of the organization in which he is an affiliate?' Was it wise for the individual to disassociate himself with that organization? Was it prudent for the individual to seek counsel for this divergence of thought? Or, was it advantageous to reflect upon one's own belief and values system and compare it to that of the organization in which he belonged?

Wotherspoon (2008), in his article, "Teachers' work intensification and educational contradictions in aboriginal communities," wrote, "Schools . . . are diverse workplaces in which teachers experience varying degrees of strain among particular policy demands and relations between professional autonomy and system regulation" (p. 411). Here, Wotherspoon (2008), clearly expressed his belief that there were times when there was a divergence or incongruence between a teacher's "autonomy and system regulation" (p. 411). In conducting a study with science, teachers who had differing philosophies of the co-teaching model, Gallo-Fox, Wessell, Scantlebury, and Juck (2006) found that a variance of ideologies about co-teaching silenced some participants — as these individuals wanted to be professional and allot for everyone's beliefs to be heard. Yet this same allowance for 'openness' simultaneously caused others to 'shut down' (Gallo-Fox, Wessell, Scantlebury, & Juck, 2006, p. 4). By the end of their study, these researchers began to wonder, "Can we ever expect all participants in a project to be likeminded in philosophy and committed to the objectives of our research? In many ways, this seems impossible" (Gallo-Fox, et al., 2006, p. 10). Again, in such instance, what should one do?

Reber (2011) wrote of taking the time to examine one's teaching philosophy. He even suggested that during the reflection process, teachers solicit information from their students (Reber, 2011, p. 109). In his article, he encouraged teachers to "critically evaluate their teaching philosophies by writing them down and carefully examining the taken-for granted assumptions they make about teaching and learning. This may help teachers identify any points of incongruence" (Reber, 2011, p. 102). This incongruence or difference in teaching philosophy, if not addressed, can reduce "the quality of the

educational experience" (Reber, 2011, p. 103).   Reber (2011) offered four steps to assist

teachers in their journey to understanding one's own philosophy in comparison to others'

philosophies of education and finally, improve one's teaching ability. These steps

"attempt to make the critical thinking process explicit by focusing on teachers' beliefs

about teaching and learning and how well those beliefs fit their actual practices in the

classroom" (Reber, 2011, p. 106). Hence, self-reflection and self-studies were crucial

when one's teaching and/or educational philosophy differed from that of the organization

in which he worked or belonged.

Importance of Self-Studies

Self 'assessments' and self-studies were necessary for educators to grow. They

were, in fact, auditing instruments and tools that educators can use to evaluate whether

their actions were in accord with their philosophies. "Conscientious pedagogical

reflection is necessary to produce a complete, well-developed teaching philosophy. The

absence of pedagogical reflection can result in daily instruction which fails to reflect an

instructor's teaching philosophy or instructional belief system accurately" (Titus &

Gremler, 2010, p. 182). When an educator failed to teach what was in alignment with his

philosophy, he became susceptible to frustrations and ineffectiveness (Scheib, 2006, p.

9). Self-studies can help remedy this dilemma.

Self-studies, which relied on multiple forms of reflection were encouraged.

"Activities such as educator interviews, peer teaching observations, teaching journals or

case records, videotaping, role playing or the use of personal inventories" (Titus &

Gremler, 2010, p. 184) were all methods of accurately acquiring data for an authentic

self-study. A self-study can help educators solidify a firm philosophy of teaching, which

was echoed in the classroom through lessons and lesson planning. "In particular, a congruent teaching style reflects instruction that is theory driven and for which the planned learning activities support the stated learning objectives" (Titus & Gremler, 2010, p. 184). The teaching of activities which supported one's educational philosophy was difficult, and some might even argue impossible, when one's philosophy was not parallel with that of the school or district in which he worked.

Incongruent Philosophies

One might ask: 'How does one end up having an educational philosophy which differs from that of his employer?' This question was easily answered by Scheib (2006). He wrote, "The classes and courses offered to them as undergraduates—both how and what they have been taught — greatly shape their understanding of what education should look like" (Scheib, 2006, p. 7). However, the question remains:

> What happens when what one learns and has deciphered to create his own philosophy differs from that of his evaluating supervisor or even district? There ultimately arises an inconsistency in teaching philosophies. The curriculum . . . in the 20th Century . . . serves to liberate the human spirit and also to confine it. (Scheib, 2006, p. 7)

Still, when determining if one's personal philosophy was congruent with that of the organization in which he worked, one still needed to think about conflict in general and the impact of conflict in the workplace. In Balay's article titled, "Conflict Management Strategies of Administrators and Teachers," Balay (2006) maintained that, "Educational institutions are extremely vulnerable to conflict due to the stresses of the environment, nature of work and the diversity of interactions, members and tasks" (p. 6). Similarly,

Holz and Harold (2010) stated that oftentimes, when an employee felt he had suffered

from what they termed 'interpersonal injustice' at the workplace, the employee would

exhibit behaviors based upon his values system (p. 7). "By failing to act in accordance

with important personal values people experience a host of psychological consequences

including guilt, shame, reduced self-esteem, and compromised self-identity" (Holz &

Harold, 2010, p. 7). Not only did this type of incongruence of values and thus

philosophy have the possibility to adversely impact employees and ultimately the

workplace, this type of incongruence — in the field of education — also had the potential

to negatively impact student achievement. In a 2012 article titled, "Effect of Teacher

Administration Conflict on Students Academic Achievement," Nafees, Masood, and

Ashraf-Tahirkheli (2012) concluded that their study of teachers and administrators'

behaviors and actions led to school inefficiency which detracted from student

achievement and, "both principal and teachers try to avoid fulfilling their duties honestly"

(p. 215). The inefficiency referenced by Nafees, Masood, and Ashraf-Tahirkheli (2012) is

echoed in an article written by Dorado and Zakrzewski (2013). In their article titled,

"How to Support Stressed-out Teachers," Dorado and Zakrzewski (2013) articulated the

negative impact educators may face by the sheer nature of their jobs as teachers; but,

even more so, Dorado and Zakrzewski (2013) wrote of the adverse impact and potential

ineffectiveness of teachers when they [teachers] work with students who face trauma.

The authors wrote, "Many educators who work day-in and day-out with youth who have

experienced trauma find that they begin exhibiting symptoms similar to those of their

students — even when they haven't had to endure trauma themselves" (Dorado &

Zakrzewski, 2013, p. 1). They went on to add, "When we don't attend to their [teachers]

stress and vicarious trauma, they can become worn out and less effective" (Dorado & Zakrezewski, 2013, p. 5).

Educators may be trapped in a conflicting state, and as such they will face 'colliding ideologies.' "Ideologies collide when opposing forces have different interpretations regarding the purposes of schools, education, or teaching" (Scheib, 2006, p. 8). In her research findings titled, "Teachers' Perspectives on Providing Support to Children After Trauma: A Qualitative Study," Alisic (2012) found a common thought existed for teachers and their experiences with students who had experienced trauma and whose students exhibited social-emotional behaviors in the class. This finding was that teachers of her study felt ill-equipped to assist students in an appropriate manner. In fact, Alisic (2012) went on to write that "the most prominent themes in the participants' narratives reflected uncertainty about, or a struggle with providing optimal support to children" (p. 54). Alisic (2012) stated that teachers in her study specifically articulated "the emotional burden of working with children after trauma" (p. 54). Clearly, Alisic's (2012) data proved that, when teachers do not feel they are equipped or supported to help students effectively, a collision occurs with what is expected of a teacher and what a teacher can do. What some might term as the 'fallacy of teaching' was exacerbated with the notion of teaching as being a 'profession.' "Teachers are led to believe they are members of a profession — the profession of teaching. A key component of a profession is the autonomy of its practitioners" (Scheib, 2006, p. 11). When teachers are prohibited or inhibited from teaching in a manner in which they choose, teachers may feel undermined. Hence, the incongruence will be illuminated. Scheib (2006) further contended that "Studies that look into the training of both administrators and teachers

would be useful to better understand the birth of ideological differences between the two

types of school personnel [teachers and administrators]" (Scheib, 2006, p. 12). However,

for some, the incongruence of these two philosophies (teacher's and administrator's)

resulted in the educator leaving the field of education all together. These differing

philosophies between what teachers were trained to do and what schools decreed that

teachers must do (perhaps even as it relates to the social-emotional state of students) may

create secondary trauma for teachers and staff. This divergence of thought within a

school building or district could negatively impact the number of teachers who remain in

the field. "The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future proffers starker

numbers, estimate[ing] that one-third of all new teachers leave after three years, and 46

percent are gone within five years" (Kopkowski, 2008, p. 1). This statistic seemingly

held true for the state of Missouri; in merely one school year, Missouri lost more than six

percent of its certified teachers. By February 2010, the Missouri Department of

Elementary and Secondary Education reported similar findings:

> Personnel records show[ed] that in 2006, Missouri school districts employed
>
> approximately 59,800 full-time teachers, of whom 9,550 had left their schools the
>
> following year to retire to take teaching positions elsewhere or to leave the
>
> Missouri public education system altogether. (as cited in Harrington, & Grissom,
>
> 2010, p. 1)

Although the type of research of training programs that Scheib (2006) mentioned

may not have been presented to the educational world yet, what was known was that self-

reflection as a means to improve teaching ability and to establish a firm educational

philosophy and framework was a strategy which had proven itself over time. Self-

reflection as the foundation of self-studies has become a widely-accepted form of educational research and methodology. The proof of its efficacy and authenticity has earned it a place alongside more traditional methods of research. The researcher has used self-reflection methods to acquire data and used the data in a systematic procedure with proven steps and processes to conclude the possible options for individuals to take when their philosophies are incongruent with those of their organizations. The impact of a difference of philosophies within one workplace can have devastating effects on the employee, the employer, and their constituents. Self-reflection can assist one with analyzing and clarifying his personal values system and philosophy. This can be done through a self-study.

Conclusion

A review of the intellectual and research basis of self-study was vital to establishing both the importance and validity of the current study. With grounding in philosophy as well as practice, the self-study is established as an important method of examining personal philosophy and institutional philosophy and structures. Chapter Three will outline how this study was conducted including the research questions, participant selection, tools, and limitations.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

Chapter Three outlines the purpose for conducting this self-study. This is followed by the methodology for selecting and recruiting the participants to the study. A thorough explanation of the tools used to gather data, as well as how the data were collated, and analyzed follows. Finally, the limitations of the study are discussed.

Purpose

The purpose of my study was to determine if a self-study was beneficial when one believed his personal philosophy was incongruent with that of the organization in which he worked. I selected this as a research study because there were times within my almost 20-year career where my personal educational philosophy seemed to differ from that of my employer, and as a result, this potential incongruence created a substantial amount of soul-searching for me. I believed my study would add to the entire 'workplace' field. I believed it would transcend careers as it was without question that employees of all fields and careers undoubtedly have believed at some point that their philosophies were not in sync with that of their employer. I could confidently say this because the whole premise of my study was using 'self-reflection' in an effort to determine if one's personal work philosophy was in accord with that of the organization in which one worked. This concept was not new nor was it unique to the educational field. Scholarly articles delved into this dilemma. These articles proved that researchers delved into this concept of incongruence, as well. In fact, this topic — incongruence of philosophies — was evident in the education workplace (Scheib, 2006, p. 5), the nursing workplace (Francis et al., 1998, p. 268), and even in the U.S. military system (Military discharge in the United

States, n.d.). Committing to self-reflection, self-discovery, and analyzing one's own philosophy in comparison with how co-workers viewed one had the potential to assist in determining if one's philosophy was aligned with the company in which one worked. This study helped answer the question of: Can a self-study assist one with determining whether one's personal philosophy is congruent with that of the organization in which he works?

This qualitative self-study can help further the field of education and the workforce at large in a multitude of ways. Committing to such self-reflection and engaging in a self-study can help first year teachers as they grapple with a host of new ideals, personalities, and perspectives in their first year of teaching. It can also serve as a resource to any subject area teacher or any individual who has been placed on a performance improvement plan. It may even save school districts and organizations money and reduce their turnover rates. Furthermore, my study brought awareness to the fact that as people gain experience, they almost inherently change and alter their philosophy; for this was what schools and teachers expected students to do — extend their learning through the exposure of concepts and thus confirm or confute their initial beliefs. Sometimes those beliefs will be in accord with the organization, and other times those beliefs will be incongruent with that of the organization. In essence, my study will help individuals with professional development. The study will offer a systematic approach to self-reflection which in turn, could provide insight to both congruent and incongruent philosophies. This systematic approach included annotating one's own notes and journals and writing reflections on meetings and events, directly and indirectly involving the researcher by creating visual representations, which depicted values called

into question and values which were confirmed — all ultimately focused on and used to compare personal and organizational philosophies.

After researching scholarly articles on incongruent philosophies and self-studies, I concluded that not only was it important for me to reflect upon my own beliefs and actions, I also needed to obtain data and information about how others viewed me; this would help with the validity of my study. "Self-study research allows you to openly ask questions about your teaching practice" (Legge, 2006, p. 5).

Research Questions

The research questions were:

RQ1: How is the researcher, as an education professional, perceived by colleagues, administrators/supervisors/professional leaders, and staff members with regard to her philosophy of education, as compared to the mission, vision, commitments, values, and policies of the educational institution for which she works?

RQ2: How is the perception of the researcher's colleagues congruent with the researcher's self-perception?

RQ3: How does the researcher's self-perception of her own educational philosophy aligns with the mission, vision, commitments, values, and policies of her district of employment, as self-perceived by the researcher?

RQ4: How does the researcher's self-perception of her own educational philosophy align with her colleagues' perceptions of the mission, vision, commitments, values, and policies of the school district?

Recruitment and Selection

To obtain the data appropriate for answering the Research Questions, I thought about the optimal individual(s) to assist me with this task and I decided that I would survey my previous co-workers. I first generated a list of the different districts for which I worked — I even went back as far as the semester in which I did my student teaching. I also thought about the multitude of positions I had within the districts in which I taught. It was essential that I gathered information and data from not only those I worked with closely and intimately, but I also wanted to obtain data from co-workers I saw on a regular or even daily basis, yet did not necessarily work directly with. As a result, I soon compiled a list of previous mentors, custodians, team teachers, team leaders, administrators, administrative evaluators, directors, and even committee members and leaders. I then recalled that in my state, many educators' salaries were considered public information; more importantly, the districts in which they worked the previous year was attached as said 'public information.' Each year, one of the local newspapers posted this information on its website. As a result, I visited that website and began to enter each individual's name I wrote down as a possible resource. This provided me with the last school district that person worked. From there, I had a starting point as to where to reach and contact co-workers from my past.

For me, it was important to generate a list of people with whom I had previously worked. My rationale behind that was that I did not want to solicit information from individuals with whom I then-currently worked, because I did not want anyone to feel discomfort or refrain from being as honest as possible while taking the survey. After all, these were individuals with whom I had to continue to work and with whom I had to

continue to cultivate a working relationship. Although the survey was completely anonymous, I did not want the fact that we 'then-currently worked together' to be an obstacle to me obtaining the information that I needed to further my professional development and essentially, help me to determine whether a self-study could be beneficial if an individual believed that his philosophy could be incongruent with that of the organization in which he belonged. As such, it was crucial that I included previous co-workers to participate in my study. Arriving at this decision led me to write a letter to my former co-workers to introduce them to my survey and provide a little information as to why they were being contacted. I wanted the letter to precede the survey, so that my participants were not caught off guard. I sent the email one week before I sent them the link to the online survey. I also wanted to solicit data from individuals which I then-currently worked. I solicited these co-workers in a similar format; I ensured that the contact was made outside of contractual work hours and via their own personal contact information, to reduce any hesitance or reluctance to participate.

Participants

I garnered authorization from the Institutional Review Board to conduct my research for a period of one calendar year. "Whilst reflective practice can be a solitary pastime, peers have a definite role to play in helping and supporting each other" (Helyer, 2015, p. 23).

I solicited a total of 27 participants via personal email addresses, social media, and personal telephone numbers. Of the 27, I had a total participant number of 13; they were encouraged to answer each of the survey questions, but they had the option of skipping any question they did not wish to answer or even select, *I Don't Know,* as a

response option, as well. The 13 participants equated to approximately 48% of the total

number of individuals asked to participate. Of the 13 study participants, 11 agreed to take

the survey. Two of the survey respondents printed the survey and sent their responses via

hard copy. Additionally, two respondents (of the 13 total) agreed to take the time and

participate by answering interview questions. The interview questions were derived from

the same online survey and the exchange from those two respondents were handled by a

third, unbiased professional who was not in the field of education; this individual was a

secretary by trade. The information from these two respondents was 'scrubbed' of

identifying information, typed, and then given to me to include in my research. Barring

two males, the participants were all female; however, other males were invited to

participate. The racial demographic of the participants were individuals who identified as

Latino/Latina, African-American, and Caucasian. Participants of the study held

numerous positions. These positions ranged from administrators, to teachers, to

department leaders, to counselors, to professional learning community members, to team

members, to cooperative teachers, and to paraprofessionals. Their experience ranged

from second year educators to educators with over 25 years of experience.

Survey

The survey consisted of 17 statements, and participants were asked to select from

four to five choices which best reflected their thoughts of the statements. In all but one

statement, the response choices were: Never, Occasionally, Frequently, All of the time,

or I don't know. In addition, the participants were allotted an opportunity to denote their

thoughts and rationale regarding their selection. I used the Missouri Educator

Evaluations System's Teacher Sample Survey as a guide to help me arrive at the

questions on the survey for this study (Missouri Department of Elementary and

Secondary Education [MODESE], 2013, p. 2-5); the majority of my survey was adapted

from MODESE's survey and rephrased to meet my need. This was rational to me for

several reasons: 1) I am a certified teacher in the state of Missouri. 2) The sample

survey was released by MODESE (2013) in May, which was very recent in comparison

to the approval date to begin my study. 3) The sample survey questions were aligned

with the state's Teacher Standards, thus providing credence to the questions themselves.

I merely adapted MODESE's survey and made it specific to data I was seeking, while

still maintaining the essence of the original, Missouri survey question (MODESE, 2013,

p. 2-7). Because MODESE set the standards and domains in which classroom teachers

were assessed, it seemed only practical and rational that their sample teacher survey be

used as an instrument for my research data. Although the questions in my participant

survey were not verbatim, the first 24 of the 26 were adapted from MODESE's sample.

The survey was distributed through Google Survey. This was my choice because

it allowed for anonymity, the results would be provided to me in a professional and

organized fashion with accurate data on my specific survey. A researcher who used

Google Survey would be able to look at data from numerous different perspectives. For

example, the results of a survey could be viewed question by question, by a single

anonymous participant, or a researcher could also opt to look at data of a single question

from all participants. I thought this would be helpful when I began to analyze my

responses. One of my university professors was familiar with Google Survey and

assisted me with setting up the survey template. I was certain to link the survey with my

university student account and not a personal account; I wanted to make certain I took all

measures possible to protect 'human subjects' — the survey was completely anonymous and no names or information isolated any individual to a point in which he/she could be individually identified.

Self-Study Tools and Procedure

In an effort to better understand a self-study and the impact of reflection, I researched the Teaching Perspectives Inventory (TPI, Pratt & Collins, n.d.), because "the inventory can be used in aiding self-reflection, developing statements of teaching philosophy, engendering conversations about teaching, and recognizing legitimate variations on excellence in teaching" (Collins & Pratt, 2011, p. 358). Furthermore, TPI had been self-administered for over a decade and in over 100 countries. Its database included more than 100,000 participants (Collins & Pratt, 2011, p. 358). This fact led me to ascribe merit to its fidelity, as hundreds of individuals in nearly half of the world's countries had taken the TPI and found it beneficial and helpful when trying to analyze one's own teaching philosophy. I believed that using TPI as a starting point could prove to be helpful; furthermore, I knew I could also use it to continue my journey of reflection and growth at any point in my teaching career.

Information from the literature review helped me conclude that developing a systematic way to collect and analyze my data, and essentially myself, was integral to a successful self-study. I knew it was important for me to reflect in a multitude of ways. I opted to collect my own data in four different ways. These four ways were: 1) to annotate my own personal notes from my department meetings and reflect on them, 2),to create a collage or graphic each month which would serve as a visual representation of values I felt were affirmed and disregarded during that month, 3) to reflect twice each

month and contemplate the prompt of — 'This past month, my personal philosophy was/was not congruent with that of the organization's,' and 4) to create and maintain a listing of events and occurrences which would focus on the prompt of — 'My personal philosophy and that of my organization were congruent/were not congruent this week.' With regard to the listing of events and occurrences — these became the cornerstone of my journal, for if my philosophy were congruent with that of my employer's, I would describe and substantiate with examples how the two were congruent. Similarly, if the two philosophies (that of my own and that of my employer's) were incongruent, I would again reflect upon values and use a research tool, Perspective Sheets (see Appendix B) — to arrive at a determination of congruence or incongruent.

I thought in depth as to what I could use as an instrument and resource to assist me in remaining calibrated with each 'reflection.' From this thought, emerged the Perspective Summary and Perspective Reflection Sheets (see Appendix B). The purpose of the Perspective Sheets was to serve as a consistent, organized, template used to reflect upon specific events, which seemed to clash with one's own personal philosophy — hence, the format. Not only was there a checklist of values for one to consider, ponder, and rationalize, there was also a space for one to consider the Level of Impact & Satisfaction. A selection of 'Level 1' indicated the greatest level of dissatisfaction (Dissatisfied). Conversely, a selection of 'Level 5' indicated the greatest level of satisfaction (Thoroughly Satisfied). Finally, at the conclusion of each Perspective Reflection sheet is the researcher's ultimate decision as to whether the evaluated event was or was not congruent with that of the researcher.

Additionally, on the Perspective Sheet, there was also space allotted for the researcher to compare what his initial point of view and philosophy were about the event with what his final, reflective philosophy was on the event. Using this template for each event afforded consistency and essentially forced the researcher to focus on the goals, missions, commitments, and visions of the organization, as well as consider specific values and perspectives regarding the event. Considering plausible alternate perspectives, based on values, compelled the researcher to initiate the values of respect (respect of others' beliefs and philosophies about the event), care (expressing concern for others' opinions, beliefs, and thoughts about the event), and empathy (anticipating and internalizing how others may feel about the event). The completion of the Perspective Reflection Sheet, in combination with the preceding actions, helped the researcher determine whether her philosophy regarding the event was in accord with that of the organization. There were some events the Researcher experienced that were so compelling they seemed to reincarnate themselves and metastasize themselves to other events and occurrences. It was essential to include them on the Perspective Summary and Reflection Sheets, for they became the precipice of which other events were hinged and were believed to create incongruence.

Determining Congruence

Considering the process described, there were essentially five steps the researcher had to take in an effort to determine congruence: 1) Complete all except the last two questions of the Perspective Reflection Sheet (satisfaction level and 'final' determination of congruence at the bottom of the sheet), 2) review data from the online survey, 3) review data from interviews, 4) review self-survey data of online survey, and 5)

complete Part 3 of the Perspective Reflection Sheet (satisfaction level and 'final' determination of congruence at the bottom of the sheet). To remain consistent and to allow the data to truly be ablated, the researcher must follow this procedure with each and every conflict in question. Once the Perspective Sheet was completed, the researcher would have a full overview of one event, as well as an assessment of the event and a final decision of whether the event was in accord with his personal philosophy. Over the course of the research period, the researcher collected a host of completed Perspective Sheets, which were tallied into two categories; those categories were Congruent and Incongruent. Tabulating the percentages provided a specific percentage of time — when the researcher's philosophy was called into question — when the researcher's philosophy was incongruent with that of his organization. Furthermore, the researcher could extrapolate and obtain even more data from the Perspective Sheet by tallying the number of times each of the 11 Values played a role in incongruence. Even still, the researcher analyzed the data according to the Level of Impact. Each of these categories (Incongruence, Value questioned, and Level of Impact) were important in analyzing one's own philosophy and self.

Limitations

One major and integral component of this self-study methodology was to select participants from a specific pool of people. This pool consisted of co-workers and supervisors with whom the researcher previously and then-currently worked. This was purposeful, as the researcher did not want to establish or create an uncomfortable work environment with participants. In addition, the researcher believed that, despite the fact that the survey was anonymous, conducting research solely with those who were then-

current co-workers may have inherently solicited responses which were not as honest as they could be. The researcher recognized that for some, these factors may be considered a limitation. The possibility that the researcher had changed, developed, or evolved subsequent to working with the participants cannot be ignored.

Summary

The systematic procedure of collecting data and reflecting upon it was created to ensure that each event thought to be incongruent with that of the researcher was performed in the same way. This system of procedures aided in ensuring the researcher concluded the study with information and data that could be compared to one another without reluctance, hesitation, or question, as the manner in which data was obtain was consistent and uniform. Calculating the percentages of congruence and incongruence, different levels of impact, and different values called into question helped the researcher further delineate where his own and his employer's philosophies diverged. The inclusion of notes, annotation, and reflection, visual representations of values, and journaling helped the researcher better understand her own philosophy and possible reasons why her philosophy was congruent with her employer's in some ways and was incongruent in other ways. Ultimately, this self-study aided in the professional development of the researcher and provided better understanding of her then-current philosophy and outlook on work and life.

Chapter Four: Results

Introduction

Chapter Four contains the results of the surveys and interviews from my colleagues. These results were guided by the research questions. The various instances of identified incongruence were also explained.

Research Questions

The purpose of this self-study was to determine whether there were incongruences between my own self-perception and educational philosophy and that of my co-workers and school district. The research questions were:

RQ1: How is the researcher, as an education professional, perceived by colleagues, administrators/supervisors/professional leaders, and staff members with regard to her philosophy of education, as compared to the mission, vision, commitments, values, and policies of the educational institution for which she works?

RQ2: How is the perception of the researcher's colleagues congruent with the researcher's self-perception?

RQ3: How does the researcher's self-perception of her own educational philosophy align with the mission, vision, commitments, values, and policies of her district of employment, as self-perceived by the researcher?

RQ4: How does the researcher's self-perception of her own educational philosophy align with her colleagues' perceptions of the mission, vision, commitments, values, and policies of the school district?

Data

After concluding my surveys, reflections, and interviews, I began to sift through my data in an effort to glean information, while simultaneously thinking about trends in the data, comments that would warrant further reflection by me, and the most effective way to write-up my data. I decided that I needed to review the data in a multitude of ways. I first wanted to review the data of each participant. Then, I reviewed and analyzed the commonalities among participants and kept a 'tally' of the responses overall. Ultimately, my analysis would yield statistical information and numbers that I would use to find percentages of common responses, outlier responses, and differences in Likert-scaled answers. I wanted to be able to clearly view the response to each question posed and the key words and terms from the question, as well as focus on whether I thought the question focused on a goal, a mission, a commitment, or a value. This was important because it would allow me to reflect on my own personal thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes toward the question, so that I could then compare my thoughts with those of the participants. I ultimately wanted to know — and this is the second pillar of my self-study — if my thoughts and beliefs were congruent with those of my colleagues, supervisors, and co-workers.

As a result of my data focus, to first view each participant's responses individually, I tallied the information from each participant's individual survey or interview and created grids that denoted participants' responses. I then took my own personal responses and transferred them in the same document/grid format for me personally — separate from the responses of my participants. This helped me organize and analyze my data. Table 1 illustrates the key words and phases of each question in the

survey. It also denotes how I categorized each question — as a question relating to a

goal, a mission, a commitment, or a value.

Table 1

Key Phrases

Question #	Key Words & Phrases	Category (G, M, C, V)
1	Quality Education	G,O
2	Self-Assured, Skilled, Inquisitive Learners	M
3	Prepared for Post-Graduate Life	V,G
4	Equal, Quality Education	G,O
5	Student's C Social Needs Met	
6	Equitable Learning Among Populations	G
7	African-American Teachers	G
8	Hispanic-American &/or Latino(a)-American Teachers	G
9	Teachers Mirror Ethnicities	G
10	PLC Respectful	C
11	Department PLC Respectful	C
12	Teachers Professional Manner	C
13	Helps all students	M
14	Adjusts Instructional Strategies	G
15	Transfer of Knowledge	V, G
16	Creativity & Individuality Fostered	C
17	Participant in PLC	C

When comparing my survey responses to those of Participant I, I found that

Participant 1 and I responded the same precise way on nine of the 17 questions. Two

questions, questions 14 and 15, were not answered by the participant (responded I Don't

Know). So, of the six questions in which we had differing opinions, Participant 1 and I

didn't vary completely; our responses varied to the degree. For example, question

number four, asks about one's perceptions of whether 'all students receive an equal, quality education.' Participant 1 responded 'D' (disagree). I, on the other hand responded, 'SGD' (strongly disagree). Hence, my previous statement that when comparing my congruence with Participant 1, that although there were multiple times in which our responses did not mirror each other, our responses were similar; they differed only in degree or Likert-level. I used this process of analyzation for each of the survey participants. I then, ultimately created a grid of responses from all of my survey respondents. This allowed me to view my data both as a whole and by question. From this grid, I learned that my responses were in close alignment with all the participants who took the survey.

Interviews

There were two participants who agreed to partake in an interview instead of a survey. In an effort to alleviate confusion, these two individuals will be referred to as respondents. There were eight primary questions asked of the two respondents, and then there were secondary questions that solicited more specific responses to the initial question.

Journal

My third set of data was a result of personal journals I kept for cathartic purposes, which included reflections of experiences I had as a professional educator over the past couple of years, previous to this study. I took my raw, in the moment accounts of feelings and experiences, and created what I call Perspective Sheets (see Appendix B). These sheets helped me truly focus on the experiences, events, and my thoughts regarding each incident. The Perspective Sheets allowed me to state whether I thought

the events and experiences to be in accord with my educational philosophy and if I

deemed the incongruence a divergence of a goal, mission, commitment, or vision. The

Perspective Sheets were very inclusive and allowed for a synopsis of the event, as well as

the opportunity to determine whether there was a goal, mission, commitment, or vision in

question. They also afforded me the opportunity to discern which value I thought

impacted my perception. These values were rigid; with each Perspective Sheet, I could

select only from the same set of values: Acceptance, Care, Cooperation, Courage,

Curriculum Knowledge, Honesty, Integrity, Respect, Responsibility, and Stewardship. I

also allotted for my own rationale and thinking process to be present. Finally, at the close

of each Perspective Sheet — after thinking through and reflecting upon everything

written on the Sheet — I used a Likert Scale to determine my satisfaction with my job at

the time of the event, and I also determined whether there was congruence between my

view and that of my employer. There were 10 crucial events that I believed to have

impacted me, my thoughts, my perceptions, and my notion that my philosophy and that

of my employer were not congruent. These 10 events became the crux of the Perspective

Sheets. Of the 10 events I homed in on — after completing the Perspective Sheet — I

concluded that although I initially thought my lens to be totally different and incongruent

from that of my school and district, ultimately, there was congruence 60% of the time.

Four of 10 specific events revealed an incongruence between my perspective and that of

my school and district. I will first focus on data from these four events.

The first event is titled, 'IEP Student Placement.' In this particular incident, a

student with an IEP was assigned to my roster. This student had a disability — Tourette

Syndrome — and one symptom of the disability was 'tics' which would result in racial

slurs. There was a meeting just before the school year began. I was not invited or included in that meeting. Despite the student's special services facilitator's recommendation to place this student in a class that was not taught by a teacher of color, the administrator decided the student should be placed in my classroom — the only district-employed, certified African-American teacher in the building. The Perspective Sheet for this event titled, IEP Student Placement, indicated that, at that time, I was befuddled as to how an administrator could conclude it in the best interest of a student to make such a classroom placement? The Perspective Sheet showed that I questioned whether I would be a 'trigger' for this student? It also included my concerns as to the potential for classroom disruptions for other student learners. When one views the Perspective Sheet and sees the Value of 'Respect,' the category of Rationale includes that, "I felt completely disrespected with this administrative decision . . . the [special services] case manager apologized to me on the first day of school and stated that he/she was ultimately, 'out-voted'." The Stewardship value further described in its corresponding Rationale category how at that time, I felt that the adults and administrators failed to mitigate challenges for the student and for me as the teacher. At that time, my job satisfaction was at a Level 1 — Dissatisfied — and my perception was not congruent with that of the organization which I belonged.

The second incongruence was described in the Perspective Sheet titled, Diverse Staff.' This Perspective Sheet included the fact that in a building of over 1,600 students, there was only one African-American certified, district-employed teacher who taught in the building. The Personal Notes section of the Perspective Sheet goes on to add that despite the fact that there were other African-Americans in the building, none of them

were certified teachers (hired by the district and not the 'partnering' district) who were actively teaching. There were other individuals identified as African-American, yet these individuals were not in teaching capacities nor were they educators who were outsourced and were not employees of my same district. When one views the Values that I believe came into question with this experience, it is noted that Integrity and Responsibility were two that I believed to be lacking. This is explained in the Rationale category when I — the Researcher — asked, "How can one push 'diversity' of thought, and acceptance of others?" I did not believe the district goal of a diverse staff was being prioritized, as I was the only African-American district teacher in a building that participated in an educational desegregation program for nearly 30 years. Furthermore, at that time, there were approximately 300 African-American students (both residential and transfer combined). The rationale for the Value of Responsibility clearly stated, "My building's staff does not represent our student population." My job satisfaction for this specific Sheet was a Level 2 — Somewhat Dissatisfied — and again, my perception was not congruent with that of my organization with this particular challenge.

'Culturally Responsive Teaching & Gap Groups' is the title of yet a third incongruent perspective between me and my employer. Personal notes on this Perspective Sheet detailed that in the Back to School Teacher Orientation Meeting, staff were informed of the discrepancy of achievement between students of color and students who received additional services in comparison to their counterparts. Our building principal presented us with graphs, charts, and data regarding this academic gap. However, despite what many would call the staggering data, one could easily argue that there was no building-wide initiative to address the situation. The faculty and staff were

merely encouraged to be more cognizant and aware of the facts of the data and provide as much support as possible to these two demographics of the student population. One major component of not only our district vision, but our building vision was to ensure all of our students were achieving and succeeding. At the time of this orientation meeting, I could not believe that there was no building-wide initiative to remedy or attack this situation, other than a suggestion (essentially) to 'try harder this school year.' I could not understand how we had the data, but the plan and solution was to put forth individual special efforts to help these building populations. The Perspective Sheet calls into question the values of Courage, Curriculum Knowledge, Responsibility, and Stewardship. I believed each of these values were lacking and even perhaps non-existent with the challenge of being culturally responsive and working to help gap groups reach the same heights as other student populations in our building. When it came to Rationale, I could not understand why we were not being trained — as a building since this was a building challenge — in Culturally Responsive Teaching. By the close of this Perspective Sheet, I realized that my job satisfaction was a Level 1 — Dissatisfied — and my perceptions were not congruent with those of my building and district.

The final Perspective Sheet which indicated an incongruence of philosophy between me and my employer surrounded the question of whether the district should amend our present mission. The question was if the word 'caring' should be added. In the Perspective Sheet titled, 'Do They Really Care About Us?' we acquire a better understanding of the inner grappling and complete incredulity that consumed me when I heard that there were talks of including 'caring' in our district mission. The values of Care, Integrity, and Respect were the precise values that diverged — in my mind — and

here the district was thinking about proclaiming 'caring' was a value that it was placing

at the helm of its core. I could not understand this. It was difficult for me to believe that

this may in fact become a part of our mission, for in my eyes and in my experiences with

those I worked, care was a value that seemed to be virtually nonexistent.

There were also six events through which I initially thought I was

incongruent with my employer; however, after reflection and completion of the

Perspective Sheet, I learned that I was, in fact, congruent with my district. These six

instances are later described in depth.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Reflection

Introduction

In this final chapter I triangulate data from all three data sources: surveys, interviews, and Perspective Sheets, to identify similarities and differences among the three data sets. Also include my personal reflection on these results. Finally, I make recommendations for both the Lindenwood Program and possible future research.

Research Questions

RQ1: How is the researcher, as an education professional, perceived by colleagues, administrators/supervisors/professional leaders, and staff members with regard to her philosophy of education, as compared to the mission, vision, commitments, values, and policies of the educational institution for which she works?

RQ2: How is the perception of the researcher's colleagues congruent with the researcher's self-perception?

RQ3: How does the researcher's self-perception of her own educational philosophy align with the mission, vision, commitments, values, and policies of her district of employment, as self-perceived by the researcher?

RQ4: How does the researcher's self-perception of her own educational philosophy align with her colleagues' perceptions of the mission, vision, commitments, values, and policies of the school district?

Triangulation of Results

The results of my data were overall, affirming. I realize that there are many individuals with whom I have and then-currently worked with who were experiencing the same feelings and challenges I had. I must admit I was shocked to see such a high

percentage of congruence between my Likert-scaled responses, as well as open-ended responses, in comparison to Respondents A and B. I believed I could ultimately conclude that my view of myself and my coworkers' views of me were more aligned than I thought. These shared perspectives proved to me that I am the educator I thought I was — one who exhibited all of the values on my Perspective Sheets.

Personal Reflections

When I stopped and reflected upon my data from the study, I reviewed each of the Perspective Sheets. Again, these sheets allowed me to recall and reflect on events that I felt were the most incongruent with my district's goals, missions, commitments, visions, and values. Of the 10 specific events included in my study as Perspective Sheet events, there were six with which I realized I was in fact, congruent; however, my district's prioritization of these events proved to be divergent from mine, and thus although the urgency differed, my district and I were likeminded in the fact that issues surrounded six specific incidents. The first Perspective Sheet is noted under the title, 'Building Entry.'

As educators and simply citizens of the United States, educators in my district and state vicariously learned of tragedies in schools. There, unfortunately, had been numerous tragedies that occurred within the past couple of years previous to this writing, and knowing this was precisely the reason I was flabbergasted by the lack of physical and visual response to one of the public-school tragedies that occurred in 2012. When this tragedy struck in December of 2012, I was encouraged by one of my building administrators to refrain from engaging in conversations with students about the event. This directive placed me in a precarious situation, because some students needed (and essentially asked) to discuss their thoughts, fears, anxieties, and questions about the event

and in that moment — as many in my classroom had cellular devices and could see and were being texted about what had happened — needed to 'release.' One student asked a question and I did my best to try and accurately answer the question to the best of my ability in an effort to at least quell negative thoughts, while simultaneously comfort students. One student wanted to go to the counselor's office to reduce her anxiety and I immediately obliged her and asked if any other student wanted to see a counselor. Within approximately three minutes, one of the building administrators arrived at my classroom door and informed me that teachers were not to engage in conversations with students and their questions about the tragedy. I acquiesced, followed instructions, and told the students that we could not discuss the event and returned to our academic subject matter, despite the fact that I — the teacher — had a difficult time teaching course material that day, because students were consumed with and longed for answers (and perhaps comfort) regarding the event. We had been given a directive and order to stifle and harness our human emotion; we did.

What was unsettling to me was not so much the fact that one of the building administrators informed me to cease conversations about the event that clearly preoccupied the minds of students, but the thought that, if this is such a taboo subject — current events if you will — give us (teachers) instructions as to how to handle this type of topic when students crave and initiate such inquiry and conversations in our classrooms. In this particular case — for me and my students — barring the one student who asked to speak with a counselor, when I asked if any other student wanted to speak with a counselor to talk things through there was an instantaneous "No!" by the rest of the students in the class. I gathered the abrupt response of, "No!" was because they felt

comfortable in a class setting discussing or listening to conversations of their peers. Perhaps it was easier to digest the tragedy in the class setting as opposed to a one-on-one conversation with a counselor. Even still, this thought led me to a more important thought: Are we safe in this building? Yes, we have lockdown drills and the like, but how easy (or difficult) was it to gain access into our school building? I began to visualize the layout of our school building. I thought: 'There are probably an excess of 20 plus doors in this school building. Are they always locked?' I continued to think along those lines and began to observe our building in a much different manner. I realized: 'Our front doors are not locked and secured; in actuality, anyone could gain entry inside our school building by simply walking up, opening the door, and walking in.' This was a problem for me. I then reflected and realized that although students (and staff) have identification cards, they are not visible. Neither students nor staff are required to wear them. I reflected even more. There had in fact, been a student who came to our school from one of our other district high schools and he roamed freely around the building for over an hour and a half. How? Because students do not wear IDs. I began to think and realize that our failure to have a 'buzzer' system for entry was, no pun intended, but an open door for anything to occur. Furthermore, I was confident that all of the doors needed to be locked from the outside — one could exit in case of an emergency, but no one should be able to enter from the outside. In my mind, these safety measures were crucial.

The Perspective Sheet titled, 'Building Entry,' proved to me that we had a long way to go as far as safety measures went. It took until the 2015-2016 school year for us to obtain a secure system which required visitors to be 'buzzed' in and allowed entry by

school staff. It is incidents and events such as this that led me to the conclusion that my

district and I may not have been completely incongruent in our philosophies of education,

but the prioritization of goals, missions, commitments, visions, and values were miles

apart. Because of the vast differences of our prioritizations, I initially believed our

philosophies were not congruent.

An incident surrounding a Social Justice Sponsorship was yet another event that

opened my eyes and led me to think my employer and I had differing philosophies. The

Perspective Sheet titled, 'Social Justice,' summarizes different opinions in the values

categories of Cooperation, Courage, and Respect.

At the start of the school year, my evaluating administrator approached me and

asked me if I was interested in being our school's district liaison for a social justice

committee that the district's superintendent formed. I had a few questions and after

getting answers, I agreed as I thought it was very forward-thinking and would yield

differing perspectives and ultimately make our schools better for students and staff. The

logistics and scheduling for the monthly meetings came from Central Office and were

disseminated to each school's liaison; as a building representative, it was my

responsibility to attend, fully participate, and take any necessary information back to my

respective building. Since each building's calendar was in alignment with the district's

calendar, there were two dates that year that 'conflicted' with building professional

development. On those two specific conflicting dates, I attended the Social Justice

meetings as scheduled by Central Office. It was my belief that I could 'catch up' on

anything in my building PLC Professional Development (PD) meeting, because there

were six or seven of us in a group; I assumed that surely one of them would be able to

catch me up to speed, so-to-speak. I figured had I not gone to the Social Justice meeting with the superintendent and liaisons from other buildings in the district, there would not have been anyone there to represent my building. The problem arose when my PLC leader spoke with our department's evaluating administrator and informed the administrator that I was 'absent' from these two meetings. I knew nothing about this conversation until I went to my end-of-the-year summative evaluation with my evaluating administrator and read in my summative that I was absent in two professional development meetings that school year and that my commitment to Social Justice had taken me away from building meetings. The administrator went on to write that I was 'learning to balance' these two commitments. I was taken aback. First, I didn't think anything adverse could be written and 'documented' in your summative that you had not already been informed of and given the opportunity to resolve. Secondly, I did not ask to participate in this committee, this precise same person — my department evaluator — was the one who asked me to be our building representative. Furthermore, I did not select the dates for the meetings; Central Office selected the dates. If anyone was aware of our building calendar, certainly it was Central Office who created the calendars for the entire district! Essentially, I felt as though I was being punished, as a negative comment was written in my summative evaluation that year, for being on a committee that a principal had asked me to join. To me, this was absurd. Even more so, the fact that remained was no one had said anything to me about this until the end of the year!

In this case, my district and I both understood the importance and impact that a district-wide Social Justice Committee could have on our students and staff; however,

again prioritization was what divided our thoughts and beliefs and led to my belief that we were incongruent.

Differing beliefs about our role with content selection proved to be another diverging belief for me. As outlined in the 'Curriculum Fiasco Perspective Sheet,' there proved to be one specific lesson that individuals in my PLC chose to teach and ultimately created factions of beliefs among me, our curriculum chair, and some parents. The topic of the piece was controversial and because our PLC and department at that time made decisions based on '"majority rule;' the majority won and the controversial piece became a part of our lessons for that semester. At the time of the discussion and by the time our curriculum chair and building principal were involved, several teachers in our PLC had taught the lesson. Again, it was not that the lesson or its delivery was controversial; the topic was deemed controversial. Nonetheless, of the teachers who had taught the lesson, one parent asked and requested an alternate assignment for his/her child; the teacher would not provide an alternative assignment and maintained that this was a lesson and assignment that the PLC had agreed upon and that it was what the teachers were teaching. The parent was dissatisfied with the teacher's decision to not simply provide an alternate assignment. The parent and the teacher could not come to an agreement and soon after, the building principal and the curriculum chair were involved. This difference of philosophy between the teacher and the parent resulted in a larger meeting with other staff members, administrators, and the curriculum chair. As a parent myself, I agree that the topic was a sensitive one and I, too, would have wanted to be the one to initiate such conversation with my child where I could have the opportunity to speak candidly about my own and our family's personal thoughts on the topic. In my opinion, the topic was

not one that should have been discussed [for some students] for the first time in a

classroom setting with peers and teacher. However, the majority ruled, and the lesson

was taught. This curriculum fiasco resulted in a debate among the curriculum chair,

building administration, and staff members of 'how much autonomy over content do

teachers have in their lessons?' This event surrounded the values of Acceptance,

Curriculum Knowledge, and Stewardship. After reflecting on this event, I realized my

perception and philosophy was in accord with my district; however, I do see both

perspectives — that of my curriculum chair and the parent as well as the perspective of

my PLC.

For educators — teachers in particular — life was so much easier when there was

'vertical alignment' in the curriculum. This means that if a teacher is an eighth-grade

teacher, he/she knows or has an awareness of what is taught in both seventh grade and

ninth grade. This awareness was essential and critical because these two grade levels and

their content was what guided — and some might argue, dictated — what was taught in

the grade in which the eighth-grade teacher teaches. In this scenario, the ultimate and

ideal goal would be to have students arrive to eighth grade having the necessary

foundation for eighth-grade level standards and learnings. Similarly, the eighth-grade

teacher's students — because of the awareness piece — who would be rolling up to

ninth-grade would be prepared and have their foundational, prior knowledge necessary

for high school as well; content would be vertically aligned! Of course, there will be

varying levels of abilities within the new eighth-grade class and the new ninth-grade

class. However, as a result of vertical alignment, the degree of variance would be

drastically reduced, barring anomalies. In some schools and school districts, there were

professional development days when teachers met and collaborated with both sets of teachers (seventh grade and ninth grade in this scenario). They talked. They discussed. They planned. They inquired. They adjusted their lessons and expectations according to what they gleaned and learned from the seventh and ninth grade teachers, coupled with what they were observing in class from the eighth-grade students. This type of alignment would happen at every grade level for every course. Many districts would also establish and create Professional Learning Communities, which were essentially a cadre of teachers who teach the same or similar courses.

These collaborative activities and professional development planning helped to establish vertical alignment. Vertical alignment assists in ensuring equity among teachers. Department chairs and building administrators would not want everyone in Teacher X's class to excel and learn about one thing, while students in Teacher Y's class did not fare as well as Teacher X's students, nor were they taught the same things as Teacher X's students; this would be an inequity of teaching and learning. Hence, the belief by many educators and districts of the power of vertical alignment (and curriculum alignment). It is my belief that teachers should have some assurance of what was taught the previous year as this would serve as a foundation and starting point for the current year's teacher. Needless to say, the lack of an 'authentic' vertical and curriculum alignment became an issue in my building. I initially believed I was incongruent with my district regarding this curriculum strategy, but once again, it was prioritization that divided us.

Overall, students in my building had always performed very well on national standardized assessments, such as ACT and SAT. There are probably a multitude of

factors that are linked to that success. One philosophy of my building that was frequently

touted and articulated was the fact that teachers in our building valued individuality and

differentiated instruction and it was believed that was the key to success for our students.

Essentially, teachers had the autonomy to teach in ways they deemed necessary to yield

success for students. Superficially, this sounds like an optimal philosophy and a

philosophy that was forward-thinking, one that placed students at the center and focal

point of teaching and learning, and one that allowed teachers to do what they set out to do

— teach! Ideal right? Not so much. The problem arose one year when a few teachers in

our large department (nearly 20 teachers in one department) announced that they would

be implementing Standards-Based Grade Reporting. This meant that teachers did not

ascribe a percentage to each and every assignment or assessment, which was in turn

entered in a grade book, added up at the end of the semester, and divided by the number

of assessments to be combined with other assignment scores and ultimately resulted in

the final percentage and grade for the student. Standards-Based Grade Reporting called

for a teacher to prioritize several standards, strands, or objectives for students and those

objectives become the targeted concepts for assessments during the semester. In

addition, although those objectives were taught in a variety of ways and forms over the

course of the semester, there were essentially only four scores that a student could earn:

'Advanced,' 'Proficient,' 'Basic,' 'Below Basic.' This means that students 'pass' an

objective when they consistently score Advanced or Proficient. Conversely, if you

consistently score Basic or Below Basic, you do not 'pass' that objective; as you have

failed to 'master' the objective. Standards-Based Grade Reporting could have different

'titles' of categories for passing and failing and there could be different and multiple

'titles' of categories for failing. But what was consistent no matter how teachers decide

to term their categories of assessment, was the fact that success and failure were

determined by the consistency of passing each objective in the course.

Teachers could easily and with fidelity calibrate their own 'system' of Standards-

Based Grade Reporting when they pair or link with a colleague who teaches the same

course and teaches the same material, objectives, assessments, pacing chart etc. I would

assume calibration, if you will, may prove to be a challenge if you were the only teacher

in your PLC or department utilizing and implementing such a system of grade reporting.

Nonetheless, in my building, when some teachers began to use Standard-Based Grade

Reporting and others (because teachers have autonomy to teach in the fashion in which

they deem best) did not, there was confusion among students and parents regarding end

of the semester scores. This variance in semester score is because two students with the

precise same scores on each and every single assessment could end the year with two

very different overall, final grades; in this case and in my opinion, the fact of whether

your teacher chose to use Standard-Based Grade Reporting could have a tremendous

impact on your overall grade. It is my belief that implementing Standards-Based Grade

Reporting was a situation that would better suit students and parents if the teachers had

adopted Standards-Based Grade Reporting as a department and not by individual teacher

preference. I feel this type of grading system inherently created inequities among

students. For example, if a student had a teacher who used this form of grading system,

there were only four different grades he/she could earn on each assessment: Advanced,

Proficient, Basic, and Below Basic. Of these, two 'yield' passing (Advanced and

Proficient) and two 'yield' failure (Basic and Below Basic). However, for a student

whose teacher did not use Standards-Based Grade Reporting, there is a litany of percentages and scores between 100% and 60% (lowest score to pass) that would allow a student to 'pass.' It is my belief that this was where the confusion laid.

Furthermore, if a student is a freshman and is really not thinking toward senior year and cumulative grade point averages, this difference of scoring options may be futile and meaningless. However, senior year, when there is literally two-hundredths of a percent that separate valedictorian and salutatorian, suddenly the impact of having a Standards-Based Grade Reporting system may prove crucial. The grading system used by one teacher over another may have been an issue or confusing, but more importantly, vertical alignment or lack thereof was an even more important issue. As indicated in the Perspective Sheet denoted 'Vertical Alignment,' it took several years before my department even began to discuss the need for Vertical Alignment. It took three years 'after' those conversations for vertical alignment to even become a glimmer of a possibility for my department. Curriculum Knowledge and Integrity were the values I initially believed to be important in this divergence of educational vision.

My school building claimed that it was a 'data-driven' building. This meant that what was taught to students was dictated by student scores or student data. The dictating data could be scores of an individual student, it could be on a whole class, it could be on multiple classes that one teacher teaches, and it could be as a whole PLC. This data-driven philosophy was in concert with our goal to help each student reach his/her greatest potential. However, the more important question is: Who is privy to student data?

In my building, we were exceptionally privileged to have a building employee who was a 'data guru.' One primary role of this individual was to take numbers and

'crunch' them to easily review data and make decisions of all kinds. This individual was a remarkable resource and I do not believe that many schools in my metropolitan area had such an employee right there in the building who could expeditiously provide said information. The fact that this data person was right there in my building every day was precisely why I was taken aback when it took over three weeks to inform me that requested data could not be given to me and that I had to get authorization from an administrator before the data I requested would be provided to me.

This was unbelievable to me, as the data I was requesting seemed — in my opinion — to be simple data that a teacher might want. After all, in our Domains of Evaluation, one of the categories in which we were evaluated each year encouraged us to seek 'multiple' ways to improve our teaching abilities and, in my estimation, acquiring this data was one of the multiple ways. The data was to inform me as the teacher so that I could in turn make necessary adjustments in my planning and/or delivery of my lessons. That is why I needed the data. I could not understand why I was being refuted readily available data and was informed I had to seek administrative authorization.

What confused me even more, when I reflected, was the fact that an individual in my Professional Learning Community was able to approach the same data guru and obtain the same data I requested. In fact, the PLC member obtained the information, analyzed it for her need, and shared her conclusions and the quantitative data of every PLC member to us in a meeting. I could not, for the life of me, understand why it was that when I asked for this exact data about our PLC numbers I was refused, yet a fellow PLC member was able to obtain it and even share it. This disparity was irrational to me and brought into conflict my belief of the values of Acceptance and Responsibility.

It was obvious it was our responsibility to view the data as it was requested (by this PLC member) the following semester and again, we are evaluated — to a degree — on our ability to seek multiple ways to improve our craft. Was I not entitled to request the data? And if not, why not? We were a data-driven building. I began to question if I was truly accepted and valued as a member of the staff and department. My job satisfaction level had definitely been reduced to 'dissatisfied' after this experience.

I experienced a final pivotal event and I was completely convinced my philosophy differed from that of my employer; but, after reflecting I concluded it was actually a difference of prioritization surrounding the topic of Bullying. When thinking about bullying, I initially thought it was absurd to think that I, an adult who actually professed to be an advocate against bullying and protected students who were bullied, would ever allow myself to be bullied. However, when I reflected in depth on what I had experienced, I realized and admitted to myself that I really believed that I had been bullied by some of my fellow colleagues. I can honestly say I do not believe my experiences were simply differing opinions or styles of professionalism.

I had never been in a building that did not seem to understand that 'conflict' is inevitable and could sometimes be a good thing. In addition, in other buildings where I had taught, when there was a conflict between two teachers, the two teachers simply talked about it and moved on, because the goal was to help students be the best they could be. My previous experiences had spoiled me, I guess. In his article titled, "Confronting Ethical Dilemmas in The Workplace," Boatwright (2013) wrote that in the financial field of work, "conflicts are built into the structure of many financial institutions, the challenge for employees are not necessarily how to avoid conflicts, but,

rather, how to manage them in an appropriate manner" (p. 8). I agree with Boatwright! The same point could be argued for those in the field of education.

This building however, was nothing like any other building in which I had taught. My department and its 'issues' (which all departments in any organization is certain to have) ran deep; they had begun nearly a decade before my arrival. I was not accustomed to colleagues sending seething emails to one another. I was not accustomed to colleagues refusing to talk about differing ideas and thoughts. I was not accustomed to colleagues seemingly recruiting their 'friends' from within and outside of the department to pretend not to hear you when you walked down the halls and said, "Good morning" or "Hello." I was not accustomed to people you work with setting up meetings to 'overthrow' individuals in our departments who had leadership roles.

This situation was unbelievable to me. I felt like I was a middle-school student — scrutinizing everything I did, said, and was cautious about who I 'hung out' with in the building. I did not want to be the next one in the department to get iced out! Finally, I reflected and concluded that essentially, I had been bullied.

I had allowed others to dictate my thoughts and actions. I was not myself. I thought, 'What in the heck have I done? Why did I accept a position here? There is no way I will be able to remain here for another 15 years!' When I take the time to stop and reflect upon my final year at this particular school building, which caused such great inquiry of incongruence, I cannot help but conclude — despite my statistical and quantitative data — that obviously while I was questioning my own personal professional philosophy and its place in the building, administrators were also reflecting upon my philosophy. I confidently state this because ultimately, I was informed via an email with

a letter attached, that after reflecting on events that occurred in my department over the past several years and what was deemed as efforts to 'resolve' issues in my department, I would be reassigned the next year to a different building in the district. In this same email I was informed that this decision was a decision that was made and thought to benefit not just the department (as I interpreted it), but also students and me! Needless to say, the email took me by total surprise, as I had no inkling that such a measure to seek department 'harmony' would be made, but in retrospect, I believe it was the best decision administration could have made; I wished it had been made years earlier when I first spoke personally with building administration about what I believed to be inequities among staff, lack of building security, lack of building diversity, and trauma I believed to have been inflicted upon me as a result of administrator decisions. Oddly, I was reassigned to a building I had inquired about earlier in the year. I did not have to interview for the position. I was assigned to it. So, in that regard, I was pleased. I suppose there are times when things happen, you accept them, and you move on. In my case, for years I had felt that my philosophy was slowly but surely becoming increasingly distant from that of the building in which I taught. I originally believed my philosophy was not in accord with that of my employer; but their decision proved that our philosophies were very much in sync.

As a result of the administration's decision to reassign me to a different building and building climate, I have to conclude that despite my empirical data indicating that my philosophy was not as incongruent as I thought, coupled with my conclusion that the differences between our philosophies were more about prioritization incongruence than anything else, I still keep reverting to my narrative that when one's core values seem to

collide with what is dictated by an employer, that individual will experience inner turmoil; this is what happened to me. I went as far as to apply for positions in other districts and was offered employment. However, I was unable to accept the offers because I was a veteran teacher with decades of experience, yet the prospective district(s) were only willing to pay me a maximum of eight to 10 years of experience. This would financially cripple a teacher, as one would essentially have a greatly reduced annual salary — nearly 1/3 reduction. Hence, moving to a different district in which you believe your philosophy would be more aligned was not a prudent financial option. I felt that leaving the building was necessary, but I was faced with the prospect of, 'What may happen if I jump from the skillet to the fire?' Until I learned of the salary discrepancy, going to a different district seemed a viable option. I know that administrators within any organization talk amongst themselves and did not see transferring to a different building as an option until things became so troubling for me that it [the transfer request] became my only option. Thus, I inquired about a position in my district and ironically, as stated, was later reassigned to that position. I believed that I had been intimidated and bullied in my building, even if bullied through isolation. I did not have very much hope. This feeling of hopelessness and these thoughts crept into my thoughts for years. Hence, the Perspective Sheet titled, 'Teachers Bullying Teachers.' An experience that contributed to my conclusion that my philosophy was incongruent with that of organization in which I belonged was the fact that each year, teachers were mandated to undergo training. The topic of these trainings varied from being aware of signs of student abuse, to what to do if an intruder gained access to our building, to appropriate teacher usage of social media, to students bullying peers and the effects of bullying.

What I do not understand is if our district sees the importance of us protecting students from being bullied, what safeguards were put in place to protect teachers and staff from being bullied by colleagues and peers in the building? Not only am I convinced that I had been bullied by a fellow colleague, I am certain, beyond a doubt, that I have witnessed teachers bullying other teachers in my building. Cooperation, Respect, and Responsibility are key values that were lacking with this topic. If our main goal and shared vision was to help students succeed, we had to work together and value each other as individuals first. This Perspective Sheet and topic was one that required the least reflection for me because evidence, experiencing, and witnessing bullying among my own peers was undeniable.

When I began this study, I thought there was no possible way that my philosophy of education could be congruent with that of my district. The previous six events from my study's Perspective Sheets proved me wrong. However, even after reflection and pondering deeply about four other events, my belief of incongruence remained true. I reflected upon these four events and finally concluded that my philosophy and that of my employer were not in alignment.

In the Perspective Sheet titled, Do They Really Care About Us, I thought about an incident that I just could not let go. In my mind, it was atrocious because it was hypocritical. My district had established committees to reevaluate its goals, missions, commitments, and visions. It [the district] solicited input from multiple groups of stakeholders. There were regular meetings and discussions and from those meetings and discussions, I learned that there were talks of including the character education trait of 'care' to our district goal. I was dumbfounded. I could not believe this may come to

fruition, because I had not witnessed or experienced a great deal of an authentic sense of 'care.'

It was difficult for me to believe that a district, and therefore a building, would incorporate a goal of ushering care to its belief system. I must admit, I had witnessed friendly and even kind acts. I had been the recipient of cordial salutations; but, to profess that a caring disposition and belief was or would emanate from the halls and buildings of our campus was something that I just had not seen, nor could I believe.

Even more so, it (care) was something that I just could not envision. My department was divisive. It had cliques. It was tumultuous. It was turbulent. Virtually every year we had a new evaluating administrator. Without coherent and consistent active goals and protocols, chaos ensued. I could not believe this place was considering inculcating the term 'care.' How? The experiences I had were the antithesis of care. I had spoken to administrators on numerous occasions and for numerous years regarding equity in the classroom among teachers—to no avail. I had tried to help and assist with social justice in our district. The term 'restorative justice' was being thrown around like a dart at a billiards hall trying to land on the bullseye, yet what I was seeing and hearing was light years away from true, authentic restorative justice. And again, we were considering adding the term 'care' to our goal! Unbelievable. Was this serious?

In my belief, this was a farfetched goal that, at that time and perhaps even now, was too lofty of a desire for us; we had foundational things to clear up before attempting to add superficial — yet important — ideals, such as care. I thought and still do believe, we are out of our league with this one. Ironically, on my Perspective Sheet for this event, I believed the values of Care, Integrity, and Respect were called to question. My job

satisfaction level regarding this event was a '1'—Dissatisfied. My beliefs were not congruent with my district.

IEP Student Placement is a second Perspective Sheet that confirmed for me that my values system differed from my employer. In this specific event, I was assigned a student who had an individualized education plan. The student's plan indicated a diagnosis of Tourette's Syndrome. The IEP also indicated that a symptom of the syndrome was racial slurs and/or racial epithets. This was concerning. Being that this student was new to our building, certified special education teachers and administrators met to establish an educational plan, as well as prepare a course schedule for this student. The problem arose when it was decided that the best and optimal placement for this student would be in my classroom; the classroom of the only African-American certified district-employed teacher in the building.

Not only was I taken aback, the special services area coordinator must have been taken aback as well. Shortly after the meeting, during Orientation Week, she saw me in the hall, approached me, and informed me that it was not her recommendation that the student be placed in my class; she stated she was against the student being placed in my class due to the student's diagnosis and involuntary propensity to spew racial epithets; but, that the ultimate scheduling decision was not hers to make.

I could not believe that a team of educators or administrators could be thinking about the success of the student in this particular incident. Furthermore, they could not have my best interest as a teacher and authority in the classroom in mind either. I thought: 'What was I to do if the student was triggered? How would my students respond

to an outburst of racial slurs waged against their teacher?' These were questions that went through my mind virtually every day that entire school year.

More importantly, how could my school, my district, and my evaluating administrator place me in this potentially precarious situation? Even after reflecting on this event, I could not come to the conclusion that I and my district had congruent philosophies. I felt as though the values of Care, Cooperation, Respect, and Stewardship were amiss. My job satisfaction level was a '1' and I was completely dissatisfied with my job. To this day, I believe this to be the most egregious act that was hurled at me.

For over six years, I was the only African-American certified, district-employed teacher in my building's classrooms. The few other African-American aides and teachers in my building did not work for my district; they were outsourced and worked in my building with students who had special needs. They were employed by a different district and were merely housed in our building to serve our students with individualized educational plans. This demographic disparity was difficult to comprehend. We had upwards of 1,600 students in our building and only one African-American certified, district-employed teacher. Unbelievable!

This ultra-minority status was so unbelievable to me because individuals and leaders in my district would frequently describe the district and our student body as being 'diverse.' The question of the hour was: 'How can you consider yourself diverse with only one African-American district teacher in a building of over 1,600 students?' Surely there was more than one African-American student in the building. One of the goals in our district's brochure was to have staff represent or mirror the student population within a stipulated number of years. That specified 'deadline' came and went. I could not

understand how a state with at least one Historical Black College and University (HBCU) could fail to recruit, hire, and retain African-American teachers (or perhaps even simply 'teachers of color'). Surely the district could recruit the absolute best graduating student in the college of education at a HBCU — could they not? Integrity and Responsibility were the core values that I believe came into play with this divergence of ideals and I was somewhat dissatisfied with my job regarding this ongoing issue and challenge. My perception remains incongruent with that of my organization.

Culturally Responsive Teaching may have been a buzz word in education, but for me, a person of color, this was not merely a term or trend that would soon pass. To me and for me, Culturally Responsive Teaching, particularly when it came to gap groups in our building, was a necessary and inconsistently-present key to student success. During the 2014-2015 school year, we were presented with information regarding the marked academic educational gap among different populations of students in our building. It was painfully obvious that some groups of students such as, African-American, Hispanic-American, English Language Learners . . . were far behind their Caucasian peers. Even though this was brought to our attention and we were asked by administration to be cognizant and aware of this fact as we taught that year, there was not one, single, solitary evidence-based plan or strategy to curtail and thwart this dismal fact. There was no formal committee disseminating information or researched teaching strategies. There was nothing formally given to us, yet we knew we had this challenge. If this was important to us, would we not and should we not have arrived at some plan as we had with other building challenges?

This seeming lack of problem solving was bewildering. I could not understand. Was it deemed too large of a 'problem' to tackle? I have no idea of what a rational response to that question might be. However, what I do know is that this dilemma and educational obstacle and our lack of an immediate plan to remedy it left me only one conclusion: despite the data, it was not a building initiative for us that year.

Was it not a building initiative because these populations of students were so small that we could still earn our awards and accolades for academic success? Again, I do not know the answer to this question. I do know that Courage, Curriculum Knowledge, Responsibility, and Stewardship were all values that I believed we needed to hone in on to attack this academic gap, but we did not do so. Thus, my job satisfaction level was a '1,' and I was Dissatisfied. Ultimately, I had no other choice but to arrive at the decision that my employer and I did not have congruent philosophies.

I also obtained data from individuals with whom I worked, and worked via open-ended questions, as opposed to merely a survey. This set of eight plausible initial or primary responses were insightful, as well. Although I, along with the help of an assistant to maintain anonymity of respondents, attempted to obtain participation of at least five colleagues; however, we were only able to solidify confirmation and participation of two. Despite the reduced number of merely two respondents for this portion of my qualitative data, the information was still useful and allowed me to, again, reflect on how others viewed and interpreted expectations, policies, and protocol. In addition, I saw how they viewed me compared to how I viewed myself and how I viewed and interpreted expectations, policies, and protocol.

The eight-plus opportunities for responses varied from questions surrounding the on-goings, goals, missions, commitments, and visions of the district, and respective teaching building(s), to questions and comments about me as a teacher and individual. The initial component of each of the questions for this set of respondents was similar to the possible Likert-scaled responses of those who participated in the survey. These two respondents had the opportunity to select from the following for the Likert-scaled portion of the questions to which they responded: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree, or I Don't Know.

The eight questions which could then lead to additional responses and evidence to support the response were: 1) In my school, all students are prepared for post-graduate life in whatever they have chosen to pursue (ie: military, college/university, trade school), or intend to pursue, 2) In my school, all students receive what they need socially to become confident individuals, 3) In my school, the ethnicities of the classroom teacher demographic percentages seem to mirror the ethnicities of the student demographic percentages, 4) Professional Learning Communities in my school seem to respect the opinions of each member, 5) During the school day, teachers in my building seem to conduct themselves in a professional manner around each other, 6) The Researcher conducting this survey seems to have/had a sincere interest in helping all students learn and achieve, 7) The Researcher conducting this survey/interview uses or used classroom strategies which allow[ed] students to transfer and utilize their knowledge both in and outside of the classroom, and 8) The Researcher conducting this survey/interview strive(d) to establish and nurture the creativity and unique abilities of each individual student

Respondent A and I had a great deal of congruence and similarities of responses to the eight posed questions which allotted for eight additional individual clarifications; this totaled 16 responses to this set of questions for respondents. Three of the eight times or 37.5% of the time (see Appendix), we shared precisely the same Likert-scaled responses. Of the five remaining questions, Respondent A and I were in agreement three of the five times, which calculated to 60% congruence; however, the depth or degree of agreement was within one selection. For example, questions one, four, and eight highlighted our foundational agreement on these questions. However, in questions one and four, Respondent A was noted as selecting the Likert-scaled score of 'Disagree,' whereas I selected the Likert-scaled score of 'Strongly Disagree' for both questions. Hence, I concluded that although we agreed on these two questions, the depth of agreement between the two of us varied slightly. For the Likert-scaled portion of question seven, Respondent A did not respond; however, there was a specific comment made regarding question number seven that caught my attention. Question number five — surrounding the topic of professionalism — was the only question that Respondent A and I did not agree on; however, much like question seven, there was an incongruence of only one Likert-scaled response that separated the two of us.

What is perhaps even more important for me were the specific comments, statements, and observations Respondent A stated regarding the questions asked. In question number one, Respondent A made mention of the importance of data to inform teachers and administrators of student needs, which in turn assisted with decisions about programing and professional development. I, too agree that data is important. It is particularly important when a school considers itself to be a 'data-driven school' (and

district) which is why I was so confounded about the refusal of my request to obtain data, as denoted in my Perspective Sheet titled, 'VIP Data.' Progressive schools and districts used data to inform their instruction. I believe this to be critical.

Question number eight for respondents surrounded the notion of me nurturing the creativity and individuality, as well as strengths of students, revealed a difference of opinion, but only within one Likert-scaled response. Respondent A selected 'Strongly Agree' and I selected 'Agree.' When I look back at the response to this, I think I have an explanation for the divergence of opinion, if you will. I think I simply consider this teaching attribute (bolstering and playing to the strengths and individuality of students), as a 'given.' I believe this is something teachers should automatically do to help students. I attribute my assumption of this teaching strategy and skill as habits instituted by all teachers and perhaps this is why there is a difference of one Likert-scaled score between the two of us.

What I gathered from Respondent A's comment is that this was not necessarily a given; and furthermore, this trait was something that was my 'forte,' as dictated by the respondent. I think this trait is so engrained in me as a teacher that it is difficult for me to recognize that I am 'exceptional' at it. Again, I believe this is my mindset, because I believe this is something that all teachers should be doing as a requirement or expectation of their jobs. Perhaps this is why Respondent A and I narrowly disagreed (although in my favor, if you will) on this question.

Respondent B and I differed more times than Respondent A and I did. Unlike Respondent A, Respondent B and I were only 'spot on' with responses one time; that was with Question three which inquired about the percentages of teacher ethnicity mirroring

that of the student population. The two questions following number three (Question 4 and Question 5) revealed a difference of opinion of more than one Likert-scaled level; Respondent A and I never deviated by more than one Likert-scaled level. Question four referenced Professional Learning Communities and Question five referenced the level of professionalism displayed in the building by staff members. In Question four, Respondent B indicated a response of 'Somewhat Agree,' and I — quite conversely — indicated 'Strongly Disagree.' Question five solicited a response of 'Agree' with Respondent B, yet for me the response was 'Somewhat Disagree.' These two questions, respectively, indicated a three and two Likert level-scaled difference. Outside of these two questions that yielded more than one level difference, Respondent B and I were within one level on five of the eight total questions posed.

I also thought it prudent and revealing to compare Respondent A and Respondent B's answers with one another. I learned that in four questions (50% of the time), the two respondents gave precisely the same Likert-scaled response; these were for Questions one, three, six, and eight. For two of the questions, they were within one Likert-scaled level difference — questions two and five. Question four — Professional Learning Communities in my school seemed to respect the opinions of each member — was the only question that yielded a Likert-scaled level difference of two or more. Respondent A answered 'I Don't Know' to question seven; and therefore, I was unable to ascribe a difference in Likert levels. This set of data yielded that six out of eight times (75%), these two respondents were within one Likert response of one another. I would argue that this data point had the potential to be even higher, but again, I was unable to compare — in depth — the response of 'I Don't Know' from Respondent A with the definitive

response to the same question from Respondent B. Twelve and a half percent of the time, these two study participants deviated in responses by more than two Likert-scaled levels. Thus, I conclude that the two of them were more in alignment with each other regarding the Likert levels than I was with either of them individually.

For the open-ended responses to questions asked, I sifted through Respondent A and Respondent B's answers and identified key words in each of their individual responses, as well as themes and trends in each of their individual responses. I then compared the two. I found commonalities in responses for questions two, three, and six. Question Two asked: 'In my school, all students receive what they need socially to become confident individuals.' Both respondents included statements about some or even a sector of their student populations feeling isolated. Respondent B noted that, although there were a good number of clubs and activities that seemed to be great opportunities for students to connect with their peers and feel a sense of belonging, there were still a number of students who feel 'isolated.' Respondent A noticed the same thing and indicated that it was his/her belief that minority students seemed to feel more 'emotionally unstable' than their counterparts — particularly during and after the Michael Brown tragedy in Ferguson, Missouri. Question three seemed to provide a glimpse into the potential need to increase the number of teachers of color in all schools. The question was: 'In my school, the ethnicities of the classroom teacher demographic percentages seem to mirror the ethnicities of the student demographic percentages.' Both answered Strongly Disagree and specifically spoke of the disparaging number of African-American teachers in their respective buildings. Respondent A stated that although there were African-American employees in the building that students regularly saw, there were

only four certified staff members; the others were in non-teaching roles. The third

question that respondents shared similar responses to occurred in Question six. The

question was: 'The Researcher conducting this survey seems to have/have had a sincere

interest in helping all students learn and achieve.' In Respondent A's response, words

and phrases such as 'passionate,' 'looks out for the underserved,' and 'tries new

techniques' were included. Respondent B similarly used words and phrases, such as [the

Researcher] 'consistently works with students below grade level and who have 'life

challenges.' These two were referencing their observations and knowledge of the

demographic of student who was and had been frequently assigned to my roster.

'Underserved' and consistently working with 'below grade level and students with life

challenges' were the commonalities I observed in this specific question.

What I observed and took away from this was the observation that, although my

beliefs and thoughts quite naturally did not coincide precisely with those in the same field

as I, there was data that proved our beliefs — or at least our perceptions on the then-

current education ideals — were in the same range and warranted notice. For me, this

validates the notion that many of the concerns and challenges I had with the state of my

work environment, could have created conflicts for others as well. I had perfect

congruence with Respondents A and B, approximately 25% of the time. Fifty percent of

the time, I was within one Likert level of Respondent A and B, and 12.5% of the time, I

was more than one Likert level away from what Respondent B selected. This data was

telling. I walked away, having learned that for approximately 75% of the questions,

Respondents A and B had virtually the same mindset as I. Essentially, how I perceived

myself, how others perceived me, and how others perceived then-current education topics that I deemed obstacles were very similar.

Oddly, because I had been essentially declaring these ills for quite some time to administration, I did not feel vindicated by the data results at all. I felt saddened and despondent. Unlike President Barack Obama, I did 'not' feel as though I had the 'audacity to hope.' This was because I had desperately tried to have a voice for so long — years — and I felt as though my voice was being stifled. As a result, I decided to look inward and try and calibrate my thoughts and feelings with those around me; after all, collaboration and teamwork were keys to success, right? However, I could not. There seemed to be a great incongruence between my philosophies and those of my employer, which resulted in a (nearly) daily inner grappling for me. It was making me physically sick. It created a great deal of work-related stress and adversely impacted my outlook. To see the results of the data from Respondents A and B were bittersweet. The respondent data was simultaneously affirming and distressing.

Recommendations to the Program

I believe Lindenwood's Educational Department — particularly the doctoral program is one that is extensive and compels its doctoral candidates to think deeply and critically about a myriad of topics and factors. For this they should be commended. I believe there is an entire cadre of professors, both adjunct and full time, who have a great deal to contribute to a graduate student's holistic development at all phases of the program. There are however, some recommendations and suggestions that may prove beneficial to the Department of Education as well as graduate students seeking a doctorate degree.

First, I believe it should be the responsibility of the university to find a balance between student autonomy as it relates to clusters of courses to take and courses that one's academic advisor is suggesting. In fact, there should be a pacing guide of courses and a strongly-suggested order in which to take them. Deviations from this 'pacing guide' may occur, but only after a student has taken the time to meet personally with the academic advisor and a conversation has been had regarding the next cluster of classes to be taken. For example, if a graduate student is on the fast track and is a full-time student, he/she should have one pacing guide which indicates clusters of courses to be taken each semester, both with and without summer course options. Similarly, if a graduate student is on a reduced load or part-time level, his/her pacing guide should indicate the cluster of courses that should be taken each semester for the duration of the program — again, both with and without summer course listings.

I took my courses in a random order that I thought would benefit me. I allocated time at the start of my program to outline which courses I would take and when I would take them contingent upon what was going on in my personal life, along with what was transpiring in my professional/work life. However, the time, effort, and due diligence that I took to prepare could have been alleviated a bit had there been a starting point for me to begin; hence, in my opinion, the recommendation of a pacing guide.

Affording at least two graduate credit hours for each semester; a student's Capstone III course is not completed, but enrolled and paid for, two graduate credits per semester, is a second recommendation. One could easily argue that paying for a course and not receiving any credit at all, while simultaneously working towards completion and yielding success in that course, is quite unfair; this could also be interpreted by some as

being unsupportive. It is difficult for me to believe that a graduate student could actually

pay for an 'extension,' if you will, continue to work and collaborate with his/her

committee chair and other members of his/her committee, and yet not yield any course

credit. The least that could be done is granting the student elective graduate level credit,

even if it is only one or two graduate, elective credits each semester. I would suggest

Lindenwood go back and look at its data and ask, 'How many doctoral candidates

actually complete Capstone III and do not have to enroll (and pay for) in at least one

extension?' If the university researches and finds this number to be less than anticipated,

and I project this percentage to be far less than 20% of the departmental graduate

students, then it should be considered unreasonable to establish this as an expectation (to

complete the program without needing an extension). Furthermore, it would seem that it

would also be irresponsible of the university to charge students this fee without any

'compensation,' when there is data to support the fact that only a small percentage of

doctoral students do not need an extension. I can even understand putting a cap or limit

on the number of elective graduate credits one can receive, as to encourage students to

complete expeditiously, but to not award any credit at all is unfair.

A third recommendation that I have surrounds the notion of adding a unit, or

perhaps merely one lesson to the Capstone I course of the program. Were this done,

perhaps more graduate students would consider self-studies as viable and valuable

choices; and thus, utilize their results, findings, and learnings as a form of professional

development. Reflecting upon one's actions, beliefs, and goals could be very useful in

evaluating one's own philosophy. I found my self-study to be rewarding, as it confirmed

some thoughts, dispelled others, and even enriched my mindset regarding my purpose as

a career educator. Had Capstone I, or one of my initial courses, introduced the rudiments of what a self-study entailed and the benefits it provided, perhaps some of my early follies could have been circumvented and some of my questions about the self-study itself could have been alleviated. My final recommendation mirrors a concern that I also had for my employer. It surrounds diversity of staff. I will make this recommendation as brief and clear as possible. I am an African-American female. I was a graduate student in the university's Department of Education for a total of almost eight years (this includes my Master's degree). I have never had an African-American instructor, professor, or advisor; not one single African-American has taught or mentored me in any way at Lindenwood University. This fact is embarrassing. Just as students in k-12 public schools need to have teachers who 'look like them,' I believe college and graduate students do as well.

Recommendations for Future Research

My study focused on four main questions: a) How is the researcher, as an education professional, perceived by colleagues, administrators/supervisors/professional leaders, and staff members with regard to her philosophy of education, as compared to the mission, vision, commitments, values, and policies of the educational institution for which she works? b) How is the perception of the researcher's colleagues congruent with the researcher's self-perception? c) How does the researcher's self-perception of her own educational philosophy align with the mission, vision, commitments, values, and policies of her district of employment, as self-perceived by the researcher? and d) How does the researcher's self-perception of her own educational philosophy align with her colleagues'

perceptions of the mission, vision, commitments, values, and policies of the school district?

Overall, what I found is that my research harkens to the immediate need for both teachers at all stages of their careers and the districts in which they work to incorporate a component of trauma in their professional development training — preferably annual training — but most importantly in their new hire training programs. I believe this is a necessary component of teaching and professional development, because I am confident that a major catalyst of my suppositions regarding a divergence of philosophy with my district was the result of a perception of lack of support for me by my district. This resulted in a contemplation of philosophies, and thus my conclusion that my district and I had incongruent philosophies.

It is my contention that, if there were mandated ongoing and perhaps even quarterly reflections of one's holistic self, one's position within the organization, and one's obligations and emotions as a result of holding said position in reference to trauma and its impact, I would have been able to acknowledge that a good deal of my 'dissention,' if you will, with my district was more than likely a result of secondary trauma. I believe I experienced this secondary trauma as a result of my classroom demographics, my firm belief in a team mindset, my commitment to my profession, my abilities, and my previous teaching experiences. When speaking about educators and other staff who work with students experiencing trauma, I learned it is quite conceivable that said employees may in fact, be exposed to secondary trauma — indirect trauma that is internalized as a result of students who are traumatized. The National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments created a "Secondary Traumatic Stress and Self-Care

Packet". This packet is geared towards understanding the impact of stress and reducing it. The packet outlines, "Individuals with symptoms severe enough could be diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Common symptoms of Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) include . . . fatigue and physical complaints . . . feeling powerless or hopeless about students and the work" (Trauma Sensitive Schools, n.d., p. 1). It is evident that the writers of this 'all staff handout' fully understand the impact of chronic, ongoing stress and its adverse effects on educators and other school employees.

Additionally, what I will further conclude from my study is that there were definite, vast differences in the prioritization of goals, missions, commitments, visions, and values between me and my district; it is my finding that the most important key to the prioritization differences and urgency was the secondary trauma which I was enduring and feeling — virtually on an annual basis. This secondary trauma was compounded, and although I tried desperately to seek assistance from administration and leaders in my building and within my district, those efforts seemed to me to be futile. In fact, those efforts became exasperating, because each time I sought help and assistance, then-current and previous events, as well as my feelings towards those events repeatedly fueled the whole gamut of emotions — anxiety, frustration, and anger etc. This occurred time and time and time again. So, although there may have been 'some' congruence in goals, missions, commitments, visions, and even values, I believe and conclude that because I was enduring secondary trauma as a result of several professional factors (primarily my class demographic and make-up), prioritization was crucial. Thus, agreeance and congruence on topics and implementation practices may have been evident about 60% of the time; the more important factor was congruence in prioritization.

For me, hiring more diverse staff members was essential. I often felt as though 'I had been invited to the party.' I even 'dressed up' in formal attire for the occasion. Yet, no one informed me that the party was casual attire, and thus at times, I felt as though I stuck out like a sore thumb. For me, this feeling was a result of a lack of diversity of staff, which my building and district agreed with me on; however, it took more than six years to hire a district teacher in the building who looked like me. Even still, when someone of my same demographic was hired, that employee left my building before completing two full school years of teaching.

The trauma I believed I experienced in this teaching position was soul-shattering. Although this study made me question a great deal of things professionally; it also helped me immensely. As a result of my study, I believe it to be in the most prudent and best interest of the employee and the employer that when workers are having regular, and in the case of educators — daily interactions, with students (clients), who are known or suspected to have experienced traumatic events or continuous trauma, not only is there a responsibility of the district (employer) to help and assist the student (client), but it is also crucial to support the educators (employees) who work directly with said students or clients.

Therefore, for anyone who would extend or replicate this study, I would encourage the researcher to delve deeply into the amount and frequency of secondary trauma of teachers, educators, counselors, and trainers who work with individuals who are known to have traumatic experiences that are, or may be currently, affecting them. I would suggest questions that inquire as to whether the researcher verbalized a divergence of beliefs or philosophies of the district, whether the researcher sought to collaborate or

converse with administration regarding a difference of belief, whether the researcher's family members noticed a change in the behavior or attitude 'after' expressing philosophical concerns regarding work.

It may prove to be beneficial to have the researcher include information regarding his/her knowledge of trauma and secondary trauma and its impact on those who work with individuals who have experienced multiple different or repeated incidents of trauma. I am convinced that I began to question myself and thus set out to learn of myself through a self-study, because I began to question myself as a teacher and question whether I was changing for the worse. I later realized and learned I was, in fact, changing as a result of differing philosophies between me and my district. However, even more so, I seemed to be changing as a result of the secondary trauma that I believed to be the result of my classroom make-up and the placement of students among teachers. Therefore, I remain steadfast that one extending or replicating this study must include survey questions not simply about actions and interactions among students and colleagues; but, a future researcher must also include discerning questions surrounding emotions and attitudes.

I believe I had become the token in my building. In my experience, this word 'token,' could reference race, as I was the only African-American district-employed teacher in the building for numerous years, and then again after only one and a half years of having an African-American teacher colleague. However, I contend that the term could also (and probably more accurately in my mind) reference that fact that I seemed to be the 'it girl.' I believed I became the teacher who was 'selected' to teach students that others — perhaps — could not or would not teach.

I cannot tell you how many times my administrator (and others) said and alluded to things like, "You really know how to build genuine relationships with students that lead to success in the classroom." I am a firm believer that this referenced attribute — authenticity — is one that is essential for all teachers. Why not simply send teachers who lack this attribute to professional development workshops, so they can learn how to better work with all students?

Continuing to enroll greater percentages of 'challenging' students or students with greater 'challenges' in my courses was not fair, was not just, was not ideal, and was not healthy! This is why I believe I had become the 'token' and in becoming (involuntarily) the 'token,' there was a toll that I paid. I had paid a price to being the token. That 'token toll,' as I will call it, led to the belief that my philosophy was not in accord with that of my employer. The toll I paid was a toll on my holistic health. The toll I paid was a toll on my spirituality and personality. I am convinced that I changed because of the toll I paid for involuntarily becoming the token. Should anyone replicate this study, one facet that a potential researcher might consider is including survey questions surrounding trauma and particularly what is termed as, vicarious and system-induced trauma. I believe questions surrounding these two terms would help the researcher gain a better understanding of actions, behaviors, and his/her own personal mindset.

Conclusion

When I take a moment to reflect over the purpose of this study, I am compelled to think about why I began this research. I wanted to conduct this study, because I wanted to know if my perception of myself was congruent with those with whom I have and then-currently worked. I also wanted and truly needed to know if my educational

philosophy and my understandings of my district's actions and implementations were conflicting, as I felt an internal grappling virtually each day with what I felt in my heart, what my head was telling me, and what my district was insisting upon and establishing as protocol.

Here, I had these three components that were supposed to have equal influence on my success as a teacher: my heart, my head, and [essentially] my employer. I thought of it as an equilateral triangle — one of, if not the strongest shapes. However, in my quagmire, a solid and impenetrable triangle was not created. For me, an unstable, volatile, unbalanced three-legged stool was created, and atop it was my success, my sanity, and my confidence.

For me, these three very necessary entities were in a constant state of limbo. Each day, each one vied to mark its territory as the proverbial 'alpha dog.' With this inner grappling came confusion, instability, and frustrations, as I tried desperately to express my thoughts to PLC leaders, department chairs, administrators, and colleagues. With nearly every attempt to help these individuals see my perspective, there came more frustration as it seemed as though these individuals were clearly seeing my points, yet no actions were taken to alleviate and quell concerns I was expressing.

My district's goals, mission, commitments, visions, and values sounded really good on paper. I just needed someone to answer the question of, "Yes, but are we really doing that with efficacy?" In my mind, this was one simple, single question, yet it stumped some, insulted many, and created factions among others. These responses further frustrated me. I thought educators should always reflect, reevaluate, and make necessary changes. Is that not what we tell our students to do? Do we not tell them that

reflecting yields growth and progress? Why would this not hold true for educators? All of these thoughts are what led to my interest — and quite honestly my need — to conduct a self-study, even if only for my own personal professional development purposes.

What I learned and now believe is that, although my district and building may have had good intentions in developing its goals, mission, commitments, visions, and values, the trajectory and sloth-like speed in accomplishing these goals, missions, commitments, visions, and values were probably what created a great deal of frustration for me and set the groundwork for personal internal grapplings, which resulted in my beliefs of incongruence between me and my employer. When you have whole, entire demographics of your population failing to exemplify your goals, missions, commitments, visions, and values, one can justifiably conclude that something is amiss. Superficially, you may remain and maintain your elite standing among others with similar characteristics, but what is indisputable is the 'pockets of percentages' which are far below the overall averages that you tout. It is my belief that my district — and I because I am a part of my district — had emulated Jackson in the infamous 2008 Monday Night Football game between the Philadelphia Eagles and the Dallas Cowboys (Loucks, 2014). Like Jackson of the Eagles, we too may have celebrated prematurely!

In the age of the No Child Left Behind & Every Student Succeeds Act, and as a result of these pockets of low percentages, we eventually thought it prudent to bring in consultants to assist us in identifying students who we may have overlooked and in fact, perhaps even left behind — students who may have benefited from being enrolled in advanced courses. In addition, we once again, solicited input from families, educators, administrators, and other stakeholders to revamp our goals, mission, commitments,

visions, and values. In my department, after [at minimum] seven years, we finally arrived at a consensus that our curriculum needed to be changed and updated.

After six years of having available positions, the district finally hired a second African-American teacher to teach in my building (who later left in the middle of the year after only 1½ years). These facts are evidence as to why I vehemently reiterate my belief that my district and building stagnated (possibly unknowingly) and we celebrated our success prematurely. Simply put, a school cannot have entire demographics of students failing to make the mark, so-to-speak, while simultaneously considering itself an exemplary success. Similarly, a school cannot have only one African-American teacher teaching in a building when its African-American student population far exceeds that sole, single one. The same goes for other ethnicities in my building.

I do believe that my district and I had many of the same goals, mission, commitments, visions, and values; but, what I learned from my study is that we differed vastly in the approach to accomplishing and prioritizing these goals, mission, commitments, visions, and values. This dichotomy of prioritization was what I believed created such frustration for me as an educator. Six or so years of begging and pleading for others to see, to understand, to validate my perspective was a long time.

I have concluded that it is important and crucial that, in this day and time, with so much new awareness and knowledge of what students and educators endure on a day-to-day basis, that school districts continue to focus on students and their holistic well-being and health. I also conclude and contend that there — simultaneously — be a focus on the professional development for teachers as they (teachers) are the ones who work directly with students. In short, teachers and educators need to be holistically-healthy, as well.

This mindset is very similar to the preflight instructions flight attendants are mandated to state: [something to the effect of] Should we encounter a loss of cabin pressure; an oxygen mask will drop from above . . . be sure to secure your mask before assisting others.

I believe that at times, some districts in their quest to be stewards of education and knowledge, forget that, with that awesome responsibility of educating future leaders, they [districts] must also and simultaneously take care of and support those who are in the trenches helping to make those district and building goals, missions, commitments, and visions come to fruition.

I also believe that establishing a trauma-informed school culture (and trauma-sensitive school environment, if you are really transformative) is not merely a current, trending educational need or topic — it is an everyday way of life for not just the students we serve, but also for those of us who serve and educate those who have and do experience trauma. For some, the term trauma may be defined as a 'physical injury.' However, I believe there to be a deeper, and arguably, more accurate definition of the word 'trauma.' I would define trauma as any first-hand or vicarious experience which causes and leaves an adverse impact on an individual. My perceived incongruence between my personal and professional teaching and educational philosophies, and those [as well as directives] of the district in which I worked, seemed to clash vastly. I believe the result of my perception of what I thought a teacher's responsibilities to be, coupled with the experiences I had as an educator, yielded both primary and secondary trauma for me. It is very difficult to go into a workplace for 180+ days and perform a task that one believes to conflict with one's personal philosophies. Essentially each day, or at least in

the mind of the individual, that person is experiencing trauma. It is quite possible for the employee to experience a daily and constant inner grappling within him/herself.

If an educator is already having and believing there to be incongruence between his personal and professional philosophies and those of his district, and said educator is internalizing the secondary trauma of having 27% of the students who are deemed the most emotionally-disturbed in his building assigned to his roster, what other conclusion can be made other than an incongruence of philosophies? Or, compound that with a different class said educator teaches with the demographic of nearly 25% African-American students in a building with fewer than 15% African-American student represented in the population. This same class with 25% African-American student population would swell to a whopping 35% to 40% students of color, if other ethnicities were added (Hispanic-American, Pacific Islander, Asian-American). Again, keep in mind that this is a building in which an academic gap persisted. Or, consider an honors class that said teacher has. This honors class encroaches upon 28 students; yet, only one student is African-American. These factors and constant classroom and experiential situations that the teacher is trying to help the students learn, grow, and develop academically and holistically from, can levy enormous amounts of stress and trauma — both primary and secondary — upon educators. Even events that are reported on the nightly news, where there is no direct connection to the viewer can cause the viewer to lament and perhaps even momentarily feel despondent. Why is it not completely plausible for a teacher to internalize secondary trauma from the experiences, support, and empowering actions devoted to his students?

These accurate depictions of classroom demographics are precisely why I believe a potential researcher replicating this study should add four specific questions to the survey. The questions are: 1) Has the researcher of this study every vocalized that he/she felt suppressed by the work environment? [Yes, No, I Don't Know, I Don't Recall]; 2) Has the researcher every repeatedly (more than once) vocalized that there are policies, procedures, or protocol that seemed to be unfair or unjust? [Yes, No, I Don't Know, I Don't Recall]; 3) Have you ever heard the researcher state or allude to the fact that he/she felt traumatized/oppressed/suppressed by his/her job or work environment? [Yes, No, I Don't Know, I Don't Recall]; and 4) Has the researcher ever verbalized the belief that his/her personal or professional philosophies seemed to be incongruent with those of the employer's [Yes, No, I Don't Know, I Don't Recall].

In my opinion, each of these additional questions will help a future researcher determine if his/her philosophies are in alignment with those of his employer. In fact, it is quite conceivable these four questions may prove to be helpful in determining philosophical congruence with any employee on any career path or in any work field. These four questions might also comprise a study of their own as they shine a light on congruence of philosophies and trauma — which is what I believe was the result of my perceived incongruence. I am convinced that I experienced primary and secondary trauma as a result of my perceptions of personal and workplace incongruence. The data I received from respondents and participants confirmed for me that my perceptions were not completely askew. Although there may have been times when (as denoted on my Perspective Sheets (see Appendix B), I ultimately deemed that there was congruence between my philosophy and that of my employer; what was clearly incongruent was the

prioritizing and the length of time it took for my employer to 'remedy' and revise policies, tendencies, and mindsets that I believed to be incongruent with mine. For me, taking nearly seven years to come to a realization and put into action measures and safeguards to protect something that is your goal, mission, commitment, vision, or value is much too long. Hence, my perception of incongruence and my perceived reality of primary and secondary trauma.

I would also suggest that prospective researchers who wish to replicate this study research and include their findings on just how many ethnic statistical anomalies there are in school buildings around the nation and perhaps even in the world. What I mean by this is the fact that it is almost inconceivable to believe that when I began teaching in my building there was such a lack of diversity among certified teachers in my building hired by my district. This was mind-blowing that in the new millennium, in a time when the United States of America had elected its first African-American president, my building did not have any, not a single, sole, solitary African-American teacher who taught — in my building — and had been hired by the district to teach, other than me. Please understand that I am not being verbose when I state and repeat 'hired by the district.' I am emphasizing that phrase, because my district and many others in my state, outsourced for special education services. When I say special education services, I mean services for students who have Individualized Educational Plans. This means that for some teachers who teach, co-taught classes (classes with one general education teacher and one or more special education teachers in the same class); the special education teacher does not always work for the school district in which he/she is housed. He/she works for a school district which outsources its certified teachers (all with certifications in special education)

to local districts. With this type of teaching arrangement, the home district is the district in which a student is taught, receives a report card, and ultimately earns a high school degree; however, the 'services' dictated in a student's Individualized Educational Plan are taught and provided by the outsourced teacher in a co-taught classroom environment. The general education instructor is the teacher of record, yet the services and minutes of instruction are to be provided by the special education certified teacher in the class who teaches alongside the general educational teacher, hence the term 'co-taught' class. In the case of my building, there were African-American teachers who worked as outsourced teachers from a different district; however, those individuals were not hired by my district and serviced only a small student population — primarily those with individualized educational plans. They were hired, trained, and paid by a different district and then outsourced to my district. Again, this is a common hiring practice for some districts in my state, and perhaps in other states across the county.

The need for a mega study or study of a larger magnitude would help illuminate the need or (maybe even) lack of need for districts to seek, hire, and retain certified teachers of all racial backgrounds and ethnicities. In fact, a larger study could also illuminate the (and my) belief that as stewards of education and learning, educators must self-monitor and become proponents of the expectation that individual schools and districts as a whole must begin to adopt and enforce policies that require us to have a teaching staff that mirrors our respective student populations, as well as districts who support the mental well-being of staff. Only when a study is conducted on that scale will we learn of our current success in the area of teacher diversity or our plight in the area of teacher diversity. If a mega study were conducted, educators and educational leaders

could gain a more accurate understanding of and acquire a ballpark number of the ethnic

statistical anomalies that exist in schools across our nation. I believe a contributing factor

of my frustrations may have been the fact that, because I did not have a building teacher

colleague who worked for the same district as I with whom I could compare myself and

bounce thoughts, beliefs, and ideas off may have contributed to the dissonance I believed

to be between me and my district. Again, data from a larger study could help recruit,

prepare, and train diverse populations to become teachers and adequately prepare them

for the challenges they may encounter — particularly if they are 'singletons' in their

buildings like I was. I am vehement about the need for teacher diversity, because when

reflecting on my study, research, and experiences, I truly believed that being a 'singleton'

in my building further perpetuated my perception of philosophical incongruence. I must

wonder, if there is a lack of diversity among teaching staff in my building, could not this

be the case in other buildings? In other districts? In other states? Is my experience as a

singleton reflective of why there is little diversity in my building? Are there others who

are paying the token toll? These are all questions that can be posed in a mega study.

In the case of teachers however, this divergence of philosophies often left the

teacher feeling inadequate, unsupported, frustrated, and stressed; these feelings caused

some to leave their profession. For others, a daily life of mundane existence ensued.

Even still for others, health concerns arose. Not only did this pose challenges and

obstacles for the employee or teacher, but it also posed a great deal of challenges for the

employer. For the teacher, there is the possibility of lack of or reduced productivity, lack

of effectiveness, and even lack of adherence to school or employer policies and protocol.

For the school district, the challenges may include high turnover, increased need for

substitutes, and even increased benefits payouts.

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Appendix A

Table A1

Survey Question 1: In my school, all students receive the same degree/level of a quality education.

SGD	SWA	A	SWD	D
1	2	2	2	6

Note: SGD=Strongly Disagree. SA=Somewhat Agree. A=Agree. SWD=Somewhat Disagree. D=Disagree

Table A2

Survey Question 2: *In my school, all students are provided the education needed to become self-assured, skilled, and inquisitive learners.*

SGD	SWA	A	SWD	D
1	3	1	2	3

Note: SGD=Strongly Disagree. SA=Somewhat Agree. A=Agree. SWD=Somewhat Disagree. D=Disagree

Table A3

Survey Question 3*: In my school, all students are prepared for post-graduate life in whatever they have chosen to pursue (ie: Military, college/university, trade school…)*

SGD	SWA	SWD	D
1	5	1	3

Note: SGD=Strongly Disagree. SA=Somewhat Agree. SWD=Somewhat Disagree. D=Disagree

Table A4

Survey Question 4: *In my school, students of differing ethnicities receive the same quality of education.*

SWA	A	D	SGD
2	3	4	1

Note: SA=Somewhat Agree. A=Agree. D=Disagree. SGD=Strongly Disagree

Table A5

Survey Question 5: *In my school, all students receive what they need socially to become confident individuals.*

SGD	SWA	A	SWD	D
1	2	2	3	3

Note: SGD=Strongly Disagree. SWA=Somewhat Agree. A=Agree. SWD=Somewhat Disagree. D=Disagree.

Table A6

Survey Question 6*: In my school, I believe that barring intellectual differences, there is equitable learning within the student population.*

SWA	A	D	SGD
5	3	1	1

Note: SWA=Somewhat Agree. A=Agree. D=Disagree. SGD=Strongly Disagree

Table A7

Survey Question 7: *In my school, excluding Special School District Educators, there are at least three classroom teachers (NOT Counselors, Administrators, or other staff groups) hired by my district who are African-American.*

A	IDK	D
2	1	7

Note: A=Agree. IDK=I Don't Know. D=Disagree

Table A8

Survey Question 8: *In my school, excluding Special School District Educators, there are at least three classroom teachers (NOT Counselors, Administrators, or other staff groups) hired by my district who are Hispanic-American &/or Latino/Latina-American.*

IDK	D
2	9

Note: IDK= I Don't Know. D=Disagree.

Table A9

Survey Question 9: *In my school, the ethnicities of the classroom teacher demographic percentages seem to mirror the ethnicities of the student demographic percentages.*

SWA	SGA	D	SGD
1	1	4	5

Note: SWA=Somewhat Agree. SGA=Strongly Agree. D=Disagree. SGD=Strongly Disagree.

Table A10

Survey Question 10: *Professional Learning Communities in my school seem to respect the opinions of each member.*

SWA	A	IDK	D	SGD
2	3	2	2	2

Note: SWA=Somewhat Agree. A=Agree. IDK=I Don't Know. D=Disagree. SGD=Strongly Disagree

Table A11

Survey Question 11: *The departmental Professional Learning Community to which I belong seems to respect each member's opinion.*

SWA	A	SGA	IDK	SGD
6	2	1	1	1

Note: SWA=Somewhat Agree. A=Agree. SGA=Strongly Agree. IDK=I Don't Know. SGD=Strongly Disagree

Table A12

Survey Question 12: *During the school day, teachers in my building seem to conduct themselves in a professional manner around each other.*

SWA	A	SGA	SWD	D
3	4	1	2	1

Note: SWA=Somewhat Agree. A=Agree. SGA=Strongly Agree. SWD=Somewhat Disagree. D=Disagree

Table A13

Survey Question 13: *The Researcher conducting this survey seems to have a sincere interest in helping all students learn and achieve.*

A	SGA
1	9

Note: A=Agree. SGA=Strongly Agree

Table A14

Survey Question 14: *The Researcher adjusts instructional strategies in an effort to help students experience authentic learning which leads to a more thorough understanding of classroom concepts.*

A	SGA	IDK
3	7	1

Note: A=Agree. SGA=Strongly Agree. IDK=I Don't Know

Table A15

Survey Question 15: *The Researcher conducting this survey uses classroom strategies which allow students transfer and utilize their knowledge both in and outside of the classroom.*

A	SGA	IDK
3	6	1

Note: A=Agree. SGA=Strongly Agree. IDK=I Don't Know

Table A16

Survey Question 16: *The Researcher conducting this survey strives to establish and nurture the creativity and unique abilities of each individual student.*

A	SGA
1	10

Note: A=Agree. SGA=Strongly Agree

Table A17

Survey Question 17: *The Researcher conducting this survey is an active participant in at least one professional learning community and collaborates with colleagues which positively impacts students across all demographic areas.*

A	SGA
3	8

Note: A=Agree. SGA=Strongly Agree.

Table A18

Respondent A and Researcher Comparison Research Questions

Question Number	Respondent A	Researcher
1	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1A	Data, Student Performance, RTI Trainings	Data, Statistics, Anecdotes from Graduates, Observations
2	Disagree	Disagree
2A	Minority & Multicultural students do not fair well (emotionally unsafe), Ferguson tragedy exacerbated feeling of safety	Students arrive 4-5 minutes early to class, Students do not go to cafeteria, Students sit in other parts of building during lunch, Graduate's rationale regarding post-graduate selection
3	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
3A	2 African-American teachers, 2 African-American counselors, all other blacks in non-teacher roles but over 100 staff members, African-American student population exceeds 15%	Varying yearly percentage of African-American student (12-16% estimate), 1 African-American female teacher, 1 African-American male teacher who left after Spring Break and did not return .
4	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4A	In Professional Leadership Committee meetings professionalism and respect, but not in larger building meetings	Teachers have arguments in presence of students, majority rule is not consensus or compromise. At times, opinions of all do not seem to be valued
5	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree
5A	Most respectful and professional	Inappropriate attire, inciting emails, emails to whole staff, inequities in class make up & teacher duties

Continued

Table A18. Continued

6	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
6A	Passionate educator, focus on underserved, cares for holistic student, tries new techniques and materials	Focus on gap groups, focus on "outlier" students
7	I Don't Know	Strongly Agree
7A	Not observed researcher teach class, but know from coaching and conversations she seeks professional development experiences to better herself	Students and teachers say "we learned that in Ms. Young's class", teachers have said "that's my next unit", students have responded, "You were right, Ms. Young"
8	Strongly Agree	Agree
8A	Ever cognizant to plan for students who are "different" from others	Seek to find balance between comfort and "dis" comfort.

Table A19

Respondent B and Researcher Comparison Research Questions

Question Number	Respondent B	Researcher
1	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1A	Most, but some also blunder w/o plan, wait until last minute, not realistic with grades and scores	Data, Statistics, Anecdotes from Graduates, Observations
2	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree
2A	Lots of clubs and activities, but still lot who are isolated & self-isolate	Students arrive 4-5 minutes early to class, Students do not go to cafeteria, Students sit in other parts of building during lunch, Graduate's rationale regarding post-graduate selection
3	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
3A	About 12% African-American students and only 1 black teacher; "That's ridiculous"	Varying yearly percentage of African-American student (12-16% estimate), 1 African-American female teacher, 1 African-American male teacher who left after Spring Break and did not return
4	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Disagree
4A	Heard of conflicts, people just have to be firm with beliefs while agree to disagree	Teachers have arguments in presence of students, majority rule is not consensus or compromise. At times, opinions of all do not seem to be valued
5	Agree	Somewhat Disagree
5A	Real question is what happens when in groups; some more professional than others	Inappropriate attire, inciting emails, emails to whole staff, inequities in class make up & teacher duties
6	Agree	Strongly Agree

Continued

Table A19. Continued

6A	Gets students below grade level &/or with "life challenges", students speak highly of her, students say: sense of humor, she understands them, they can trust her, doesn't judge them	Focus on gap groups, focus on "outlier" students
7	Agree	Strongly Agree
7A	She's "real", realistic with students, teaches English BUT teaches life, students say what learn and discuss they use later in school & out	Students and teachers say "we learned that in Ms. Young's class", teachers have said "that's my next unit", students have responded, "You were right, Ms. Young"
8	Strongly Agree	Agree
8A	Past & current students go to her for school help and strategies to cope w/ life, adult soundboard, gives opportunities for all students to succeed	Seek to find balance between comfort and "dis" comfort.

Table A20

Goals, Mission, Commitments, Vision Participant Survey Correlation

	Goals	Mission	Commitments	Vision	Combination
Survey Question	6, 7, 8, 9, 14	2, 3	5, 10, 11, 12, 16, 17	N/A	1, 3, 4, 15
Percentage	29.41%	11.76%	35.29%	0%	23.52%

Note: The category of Vision does not have a survey question that correlates to it solely. Vision is represented in the "Combination" category under questions 3 and 15.

Table A21

Collective Survey Participant Most and Least Selected Likert Response Per Question

Question	Most Selected Likert	Least Selected Likert	IDK
1	6 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree	-
2	3 Somewhat Agree 3 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree 1 Agree	-
3	5 Somewhat Agree	1 Strongly Disagree 1 Somewhat Disagree	-
4	4 Disagree	1 Somewhat Agree 1 Strongly Disagree	-
5	3 Somewhat Disagree 3 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree	-
6	5 Somewhat Agree	1 Disagree	-
7	7 Disagree	2 Agree	1 IDK
8	9 Disagree	-	2 IDK
9	5 Strongly Disagree	1 Somewhat Agree 1 Strongly Agree	-
10	3 Agree	2 Somewhat Agree 2 Disagree 2 Strongly Disagree	2 IDK
11	6 Somewhat Agree	1 Strongly Agree 1 Strongly Disagree	1 IDK
12	4 Agree	1 Strongly Agree 1 Disagree	-
13	9 Strongly Agree	1 Agree	-
14	7 Agree	3 Agree	1 IDK
15	6 Strongly Agree	3 Agree	1 IDK
16	10 Strongly Agree	1 Agree	-
17	8 Strongly Agree	3 Agree	-

Note: No other answers were selected by Participants for questions 8, 13, 16, and 17

Table A22

Respondent A Responses and Key Words

Question	Likert Response	Open-Ended Comments
1	Disagree	
1A		Data, Student Performance, RTI Trainings
2	Disagree	
2A		Minority & Multicultural Students, Emotionally Unsafe, Ferguson Tragedy
3	Strongly Disagree	
3A		2 Black Teachers, 2 Black Counselors, all other Blacks in non-teacher roles, Over 100 staff members, 16% Black student population
4	Disagree	
4A		PLC is professionalism & respect, Not so building-wide
5	Somewhat Agree	
5A		Most respectful & professional
6	Strongly Agree	
6A		Passionate Educator, focus on underserved, cares for holistic student, tries new techniques & materials
7	IDK	
7A		Not observed Researcher BUT know she seeks professional development experiences to better self
8	Strongly Agree	
8A		Ever-cognizant to plan for student who are "different" from others

Note: The letter *A* denotes the open-ended portion of Respondent's comment

Table A23

Respondent B Responses and Key Words

Question	Likert Question	Open-Ended Comment
1	Disagree	
1A		Most, some blunder w/o plan, some last minute, some not realistic because of grades
2	Somewhat Disagree	
2A		Lots of clubs & activities, seems like quite a few isolated
3	Strongly Disagree	
3A		About 12% African-American, only 1 African-American teacher
4	Somewhat Agree	
4A		Heard of spats, just have to stand up for self, be firm w/ your beliefs
5	Agree	
5A		But question what happens when in groups, some more professional than others
6	Strongly Agree	
6A		Consistently gets students below grade level & w/life challenges, students speak highly of her, understands students, they trust her
7	Agree	
7A		Ms. Young is "real", realistic with kids, teaches English and teaches Life
8	Strongly Agree	
8A		Past & current students flock to her for all kinds of help, helps them w/strategies to cope, she's an adult soundboard for them, gives projects & assignments so all students can shine

Appendix B

IEP Student Placement-Perspective Summary

I had a freshman student who was coming up to high school from the middle school. The student had an IEP and in the IEP, it specified that the student was diagnosed with Tourette Syndrome (TS). The primary challenge and "problem" with this student's placement, in my opinion, was that the student's tic was racial slurs and racial epithets. I realize that this was uncontrollable language/expression by the student. But, "Why would administrators meet and decide to place a student with this diagnosis in the class of the ONLY African-American district teacher in the building? Was administration acting in the best interest of the student? This was so incredulous that the case manager apologized to me to me for the decision and indicated that he/she was "out-voted" with the final placement decision.

IEP Student Placement-Perspective Reflection

Before completing sheet, I believe my philosophy…	may not [be] congruent with my organization's philosophy.			**IS NOT**
Code As…(select one/denoted by **bold**)	**GOAL**	Mission	Commitment	Vision
Values that come into play…(denoted by **X**)	Rationale for the values which you indicate play a role in your philosophical incongruence.			
Acceptance				
Care **X**	How could one possibly exemplify "care" if a student is being placed in a classroom/building environment that is almost certain to trigger challenges within that student's diagnosis?			
Cooperation **X**	I met with the administrators and the student's case manager. It is difficult for me to understand how this student placement was the ideal environment for the student, other students in the class, or me—the teacher. I essentially walked on eggshells for the year as I did not want to "trigger" any of the student's challenges.			
Courage				
Curriculum				
Knowledge				
Honesty				
Integrity				
Respect **X**	I felt completely disrespected with this administrative decision. Apparently, the student's case manager did as well for the case manager apologized to me on the first day of school and stated that he/she was ultimately "out-voted". This was difficult for me to comprehend.			
Responsibility				
Stewardship **X**	I feel as though it is our duty, responsibility and obligation to use our expertise and wisdom to help students be as successful as they can be and to help them circumvent unnecessary obstacles. It is difficult for me to understand this administrative decision.			

How does the alignment of my perception of reality and that of my organization affect my job satisfaction?

1➔Dissatisfied   2➔Somewhat Dissatisfied   3➔Somewhat Dissatisfied   4➔Satisfied
5➔Thoroughly Satisfied

My numerical score from above is: **1**

1Ultimately my perception   was   **was NOT**   congruent with that of my organization

Diverse Staff-Perspective Summary

For six years, I have been the only African-American teacher in my building. We "outsource" services for our students who have IEPs and those who receive other "services". So, there are other African-American educators/aides in my building; however, these specific individuals are not employed by my district. Again, they are "outsourced". Additionally, there is a counselor, an assistant principal and a building principal in my building who are African-American. Again, I will reiterate that in a building of approximately 1,600 students of differing races and ethnicities, I am the only [visibly] African-American district employee with the title of "teacher" in the building.

Diverse Staff-Perspective Reflection

Before completing sheet, I believe my philosophy…	may not		**IS NOT**	
	[be] congruent with my organization's philosophy.			
Code As…(select one/denoted by **bold**)	**GOAL**	Mission	Commitment	Vision
Values that come into play…(denoted by **X**)	Rationale for the values which you indicate play a role in your philosophical incongruence.			
Acceptance				
Care				
Cooperation				
Courage				
Curriculum Knowledge				
Honesty				
Integrity **X**	I must ask, "How can one push 'diversity' of thought and acceptance of others with and among students, yet fail to do the same with staffing?"			
Respect				
Responsibility **X**	There is data and evidence which proves students succeed when they see a "mirror" of themselves" in the classroom. Yet, my building staff does not represent our student population. This was a goal set by the district that we failed to meet. Did we fully-commit to this goal to ensure our success?			
Stewardship				

How does the alignment of my perception of reality and that of my organization affect my job satisfaction?
1➜Dissatisfied 2➜Somewhat Dissatisfied 3➜Somewhat Dissatisfied 4➜Satisfied 5➜Thoroughly Satisfied
My numerical score from above is: **2**

Ultimately my perception	was	**was NOT**	congruent with that of my organization

Culturally Responsive Teaching & Gap Groups-Perspective Summary

Orientation Week of the 2014-15 school year began with clear data showing teachers/educators in my building that the "gap" had widened. African-American, Hispanic, ELL…and other student groups in my building—particularly African-American students—were grossly "behind" their counterparts academically. The staff was shown graphs and charts of our own school data to confirm this. However, there was not one specific, effective, building-wide, accountable plan(ned) initiative that was established for us. Teachers were instructed by administration to put forth special effort to help students in their classes who were in these groups—namingly, African-American students. That was it! We were simply told to make an effort to be more aware and help this demographic group. I thought to myself, "Unbelievable!"

Culturally Responsive Teaching & Gap Groups-Perspective Reflection

Before completing sheet, I believe my philosophy…	may not [be] congruent with my organization's philosophy.			**IS NOT**
Code As…(select one/denoted by **bold**)	Goal	Mission	Commitment	**VISION**
Values that come into play…(denoted by **X**)	Rationale for the values which you indicate play a role in your philosophical incongruence.			
Acceptance				
Care				
Cooperation				
Courage **X**	It takes courage to look at data and change what you are doing to solicit improvement. Remaining stagnant is easy. Change is difficult; courage is required to change.			
Curriculum Knowledge **X**	It is my belief that if we were taught and mandated to include culturally responsive teaching strategies, we could have been more effective in our instruction with this group.			
Honesty				
Integrity				
Respect				
Responsibility **X**	When "gap groups" fall so far behind their counterparts, one might conclude that there is something flawed within the structure. Initiatives to help all students are admirable. Initiatives to help those who need the most help are crucial. It has been documented that Culturally Responsive Teaching strategies help increase academic scores of all and specifically—students of color. Why not train ALL teachers on CRT?			
Stewardship **X**	It is my opinion that schools must not allow one segment of the student population to consistently fail. Schools can attempt to curtail this "failure" by implementing—with fidelity—strategies and initiatives to groups of students who are behind their academic achievement.			

How does the alignment of my perception of reality and that of my organization affect my job satisfaction?

1➜Dissatisfied 2➜Somewhat Dissatisfied 3➜Somewhat Dissatisfied 4➜Satisfied 5➜Thoroughly Satisfied

My numerical score from above is: **1**

Ultimately my perception   was   **was NOT**   congruent with that of my organization

Do They Really Care About Us?-Perspective Summary

My district was considering adding the word "care" to its mission/goal statement. Ideally, this sounded great, but I failed to see and observe "caring" actions and plans being extended in my building to **all** students. Even more so, I did not believe that the word "care" was being extended to all staff members in my building. I felt as though I was in the Twilight Zone because I really didn't see this term being displayed towards everyone—students, staff, administrators… I don't think that when it comes to STUDENTS my perception of lack of "care" is intentional—towards staff however, I can't say the same. I believe that in my building, there is not enough training, education, shared best practices…among staff & expected by administrators.

Do They Really Care About Us?-Perspective Reflection

Before completing sheet, I believe my philosophy…	may not **IS NOT** [be] congruent with my organization's philosophy.			
Code As…(select one/denoted by **bold**)	Goal	**MISSION**	Commitment	Vision
Values that come into play…(denoted by **X**)	Rationale for the values which you indicate play a role in your philosophical incongruence.			
Acceptance				
Care X	How can you include "care" as a term you'd like extended to all students, but not have the same expectation/emotion extended to your staff? This question plagued me as in my eyes, it was clear that "care" was not extended to ALL students or to me. It is difficult to have an "unbalanced" demographic of any student group—especially those with greater needs, not collaborate with the teacher about this higher "concentration" of students, not allot for additional resources, yet still "care". Confounding!			
Cooperation				
Courage				
Curriculum Knowledge				
Honesty				
Integrity X	It is my belief that if you have something in your mission, vision, goals, or commitment, it should permeate everything you do. It was not until after the school year began that the "imbalance was even discussed. It was not tended to until after the school year began. By then, it was too late! The year had begun. How do you remove a student from one teacher's class and place them to another teacher's roster AFTER the school year began because you (school) failed to effectively "balance" classes? Is this "fair" to the students and staff?			
Respect X	In my opinion, this act showed a lack of respect towards me—the teacher—and the students as learners.			
Responsibility				
Stewardship				

How does the alignment of my perception of reality and that of my organization affect my job satisfaction?

1➔Dissatisfied   2➔Somewhat Dissatisfied   3➔Somewhat Dissatisfied   4➔Satisfied   5➔Thoroughly Satisfied

My numerical score from above is: **1**

Ultimately my perception   was   **was NOT**   congruent with that of my organization

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Building Entry-Perspective Summary

In my school building, we have approximately 1,600 students. We have, I would estimate, upwards of 20 doors that lead to the outside. In previous years, students have even bragged about how they have successfully had pizza delivered to doors in specific wings of our building without staff or administrators knowing. Needless to say, this is a safety hazard. I thought, "We have no front door security system even after the infamous 2013 school tragedy?" This was unbelievable to me. I had even *heard* that a parent walked into the building and roamed for about 15 minutes without being approached by an adult and questioned about his whereabouts. Were we safe? *Years later, we did eventually get a buzzer entry system, yet it lacked "layered" security. Once an individual was "buzzed" in, he/she had access to all parts of the building; there was not a second or tertiary layer of security such as an additional set of safety doors before acquiring total access to the building.

Building Entry-Perspective Reflection

Before completing sheet, I believe my philosophy…	may not [be] congruent with my organization's philosophy.		**IS NOT**	
Code As…(select one/denoted by **bold**)	Goal	Mission	**COMMITMENT**	Vision
Values that come into play…(denoted by **X**)	Rationale for the values which you indicate play a role in your philosophical incongruence.			
Acceptance				
Care **X**	How can you care about student achievement and academics when they may not even be "safe"? According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, feeling safe is a primary need that must be met before anything else can become the focus.			
Cooperation				
Courage				
Curriculum Knowledge				
Honesty				
Integrity **X**	In our commitment statement, we touted the fact that we would keep students safe, but I wasn't so sure if we were practicing what we preached.			
Respect				
Responsibility **X**	I believe (d) it is our responsibility to keep students and staff safe.			
Stewardship X	We owed it to students, their families and our staff to be safe so that learning and teaching could take place.			

How does the alignment of my perception of reality and that of my organization affect my job satisfaction?
1➔Dissatisfied 2➔Somewhat Dissatisfied 3➔Somewhat Dissatisfied 4➔Satisfied 5➔Thoroughly Satisfied
My numerical score from above is: **4**
Ultimately my perception **was**   was NOT   congruent with that of my organization

Social Justice-Perspective Summary

My district began an initiative and solicited employees in the schools to be sponsors for a superintendent's committee. One task of the committee was to further staff's understandings of issues which students deemed necessary to be considered "socially just"; hence, the Social Justice Committee (which included students) was formed. My administrator personally asked me to sponsor our school's "chapter" of this committee. I agreed. However, after having to miss two building Professional Development meetings because I was attending **district** Social Justice meetings, my evaluating administrator wrote in my summative evaluation that I was "…having difficulty balancing social justice meetings and professional development meetings…" I didn't set the date for the social justice meetings; that was determined and set by district-level administrators. Soon after learning this had been placed in my evaluation, I resigned from social justice.

Social Justice-Perspective Reflection

Before completing sheet, I believe my philosophy…	**MAY NOT** [be] congruent with my organization's philosophy.			is not
Code As…(select one/denoted by **bold**)	Goal	Mission	**COMMITMENT**	Vision
Values that come into play…(denoted by **X**)	Rationale for the values which you indicate play a role in your philosophical incongruence.			
Acceptance				
Care				
Cooperation **X**	I thought I was "cooperating" with and being an active member of the committee that I was asked to sponsor. How could I be and effective sponsor of my building's chapter IF I missed district meetings? I didn't set the dates for the district meetings.			
Courage **X**	It is my contention that my evaluating administrator should have stepped up to the plate and informed/confirmed with the individual who informed him/her (my PLC leader), that I was not "skipping" out on the building PD. It should have been conveyed to the PLC leader that I had district commitments scheduled on some of the same dates—dates I could not reschedule. These were dates chosen by the Superintendent's office.			
Curriculum Knowledge				
Honesty				
Integrity				
Respect **X**	I felt as though I was disrespected because 1) This was included in my summative evaluation and was not brought to my attention beforehand; this was a major concern. I was completely "blind-sided" with this comment in my summative. 2) This could have been easily "resolved" had I simply been approached by my PLC leader. I would have then explained that the dates were set by the Superintendent's office. 3) I felt I had no other option but to resign as sponsor of this social justice committee because teaching is my first priority—not sponsoring clubs and committees. I didn't want my evaluation tainted.			
Responsibility				

Stewardship

How does the alignment of my perception of reality and that of my organization affect my job satisfaction? 1➜Dissatisfied 2➜Somewhat Dissatisfied 3➜Somewhat Dissatisfied 4➜Satisfied 5➜Thoroughly Satisfied My numerical score from above is: **1** Ultimately my perception **was**   was NOT   congruent with that of my organization

Curriculum Fiasco-Perspective Summary

In my building, our curriculum is not vertically-aligned; however, my Professional Learning Community (PLC) arrived at a consensus that we would use common pieces/text of high interest and that were somewhat current. We selected a piece that proved to be quite controversial. Needless to say, the piece "crossed the line" for some parent (s) who ultimately accosted the district's Curriculum Chair who in turn approached teachers who had already "taught" the lesson. Some of my colleagues believed that we should have autonomy to teach what we deemed appropriate. The Curriculum Chair and I agreed but stated there should be confines.

Curriculum Fiasco-Perspective Reflection

Before completing sheet, I believe my philosophy…	may not **IS NOT** [be] congruent with my organization's philosophy.			
Code As…(select one/denoted by **bold**)	Goal	Mission	Commitment	**VISION**
Values that come into play…(denoted by **X**)	Rationale for the values which you indicate play a role in your philosophical incongruence.			
Acceptance **X**	Although I agree that teachers do need to have autonomy in the classroom, this "freedom" must be balanced with the directives of the Curriculum Chair (CC). If there are differing opinions from what the CC is informing us of, then we need to have courageous conversations as a PLC with the CC and be open-minded about the CC's authority while simultaneously taking into consideration the thoughts of parents regarding their children and what controversial topics they [students] are exposed to initiated by the teachers in class.			
Care				
Cooperation				
Courage				
Curriculum Knowledge **X**	Curriculum Chairs are hired by the district to establish curriculum, make amendments to curriculum and help instill best practices and consistency among teachers in the whole district; this is a duty of an instructional leader.			
Honesty				
Integrity				
Respect				
Responsibility				
Stewardship **X**	I believe that one task of a school/district/teacher is to "protect" students. How can you protect them if you expose them to controversial topics that may be against the beliefs, values, and ideals of their parents—who have not even discussed said topics			

with their own children first? Extend common courtesy and ask parents for permission when including topics that are known to be controversial.
How does the alignment of my perception of reality and that of my organization affect my job satisfaction? 1→Dissatisfied 2→Somewhat Dissatisfied 3→Somewhat Dissatisfied 4→Satisfied 5→Thoroughly Satisfied My numerical score from above is: **2** Ultimately my perception **was**   was NOT   congruent with that of my organization

Teachers Bullying Teachers-Perspective Summary

Each year when teachers arrive for Orientation Week, they are sent electronic trainings that must be viewed and listened to. In some cases, there are also quizzes that correspond to the electronic trainings. Such trainings cover the topics of child abuse, social media guidelines and bullying among students. Each of these topics warrants trainings and actions should there be infractions of the district policy. However, there is something else that should be part of our annual mandatory trainings and that is trainings on teachers bullying other teachers. All of the negative consequences of students being bullied applies to adults/teachers/staff as well. Don't teachers deserve the same "safe" environment as students?

Teachers Bullying Teachers-Perspective Reflection

Before completing sheet, I believe my philosophy…	**MAY NOT** is not [be] congruent with my organization's philosophy.			
Code As…(select one/denoted by **bold**)	Goal	**MISSION**	Commitment	Vision
Values that come into play…(denoted by **X**)	Rationale for the values which you indicate play a role in your philosophical incongruence.			
Acceptance				
Care				
Cooperation **X**	How can teachers effectively work together when, just as students, some of them could technically by the mere definition of being bullied actually be bullied by the precise individuals with whom they are compelled to work?			
Courage				
Curriculum Knowledge				
Honesty				
Integrity				
Respect **X**	When you respect people, you don't send hostile emails, set up meetings with colleagues to overthrow individuals in leadership positions, refuse to meet & talk to discuss concerns, establish situations and events which lead to some individuals repeatedly feeling isolated and left out.			
Responsibility **X**	As professional learning communities and departments with the same goal—to teach and help students & each other learn—we are responsible for each other doing and being the best we can be. We cannot do this if we are inflicting pain, responding hastily & without taking the perspectives of others into account. We are responsible for helping one another holistically grow and develop.			
Stewardship				

How does the alignment of my perception of reality and that of my organization affect my job satisfaction?

1➔Dissatisfied   2➔Somewhat Dissatisfied   3➔Somewhat Dissatisfied   4➔Satisfied
5➔Thoroughly Satisfied

My numerical score from above is: **2**

Ultimately my perception   **was**   was NOT   congruent with that of my organization

VIP Data-Perspective Summary

In my building, we have an individual who manages data for us. When we teach a lesson, we can ask this individual to create a spreadsheet for us, we then input the scores and this data manager cranks out clear data. However, some data, in my opinion, seemed to be exclusive to only certain individuals. I requested data on the demographics of 9th grade classes; this was the data that the data manager already had. It took the individual over three weeks to respond to y data request. I was told I could NOT have the data I requested. However, the following semester, a different teacher obtained this same data and even shared the specific student demographics of all PLC teachers with each teacher's name visibly printed on the data sheet. Why couldn't I obtain this same data when I requested?

VIP Data-Perspective Reflection

Before completing sheet, I believe my philosophy…	may not [be] congruent with my organization's philosophy.		**IS NOT**	
Code As…(select one/denoted by **bold**)	Goal	Mission	**COMMITMENT**	Vision
Values that come into play…(denoted by **X**)	Rationale for the values which you indicate play a role in your philosophical incongruence.			
Acceptance **X**	Apparently, by the refusal on the part of the "data manager" per the building principal's command (as stated by the data manager), I was not privy to said data. However, the following semester and individual—not in leadership position—in my PLC obtained the precise same data and shared specifics of every PLC member's class with others.			
Care				
Cooperation				
Courage				
Curriculum Knowledge				
Honesty				
Integrity				
Respect				
Responsibility **X**	According to the Domains of our evaluation expectations, teachers are merely "Effective" when they utilize data and participate in Professional Learning Communities. Furthermore, according to the same Domains, teachers should be seeking multiple ways to improve their craft which will in turn, better help students. This was precisely the reason for my data request! Unfortunately, I was denied—it took three weeks to learn I was denied, but I was ultimately denied.			
Stewardship				

How does the alignment of my perception of reality and that of my organization affect my job satisfaction?

1➜Dissatisfied   2➜Somewhat Dissatisfied   3➜Somewhat Dissatisfied   4➜Satisfied
5➜Thoroughly Satisfied

My numerical score from above is: **1**

Ultimately my perception   **was**   was NOT   congruent with that of my organization

Vertical Alignment—Perspective Summary

For decades, our district and building have scored high on standardized tests. In fact, we have earned numerous awards for our aptitude in academics. This success could be attributed to numerous factors. We took great pride in the unique characteristics and traits of each building in our district. However, with standards-based assessments and the adoption of a standards-based grading system, it was evident that there were considerable differences between and among our own schools. Many teachers had long since complained about the need for vertical alignment in curriculum. It took until 2015 to begin earnest dialogue about vertical alignment in our core curriculum.

Vertical Alignment-Perspective Reflection

Before completing sheet, I believe my philosophy…	may not [be] congruent with my organization's philosophy.			**IS NOT**
Code As…(select one/denoted by **bold**)	Goal	Mission	Commitment	**VISION**
Values that come into play…(denoted by **X**)	Rationale for the values which you indicate play a role in your philosophical incongruence.			
Acceptance				
Care				
Cooperation				
Courage				
Curriculum Knowledge **X**	Research shows when there is vertical alignment, there are guaranteed curriculum components and learning that MUST occur. This helps each successive grade level teacher and ultimately the student overall. Teachers can "build" off of what they KNOW the previous teacher was mandated to teach and thus what the student had to have learned.			
Honesty				
Integrity **X**	It is difficult to tout yourself as a preeminent school and district if/when your learning is contingent upon which region of the district your school reside or which teacher you had the previous year.			
Respect				
Responsibility				
Stewardship				

How does the alignment of my perception of reality and that of my organization affect my job satisfaction?

1➔Dissatisfied   2➔Somewhat Dissatisfied   3➔Somewhat Dissatisfied   4➔Satisfied 5➔Thoroughly Satisfied

My numerical score from above is: **2**

Ultimately my perception   **was**   was NOT   congruent with that of my organization

Vita

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Goal:	To obtain a doctorate in P-12 Instructional Leadership	
Education: Leadership	Lindenwood University	(currently seeking) Instructional
	Lindenwood University 2012	Master's Degree *Administration*
	National-Louis University 2002	Master's Degree *Curriculum & Instr.*
	Washington University 1993	Bachelor's Degree *Comm. & Journ.*
	*Missouri Certification to teach 7-12 English Language Arts 1995	

Experience:	Parkway S.D.	English Language Arts Instructor	2009-current
	Hazelwood S.D.	ELA Team Leader	2007-2009
	Ferguson-Florissant S.D	F/T Positions Varied	1997-2007
	Hazelwood S.D.	ELA Teacher	1995-1996
Organizations:	Parkway NEA Representative		2011-current
	Parkway Administrative Leadership Development Program		2011-2012
	Diversity In Action (Alternate)		2009-2011
	Superintendent's Social Justice Leadership Advisory Council		2009-2011
	Empowering Young Women Sponsor		2004-2007
Volunteer:	Alive & Well Communities		2017-current
References:	Furnished Upon Request		