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WHO ARE YOU? A STUDY OF AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP IN ACTION

By

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A DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

(in Educational Leadership)

The Graduate School

The University of Maine

May 2022

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WHO ARE YOU? A STUDY OF AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP IN ACTION

By Dan Chadbourne

Dissertation Advisor: Dr. Catharine Biddle

An Abstract of the Dissertation Presented
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The building leader is the pulse of the school. The behavior and emotions of building leaders set the tone for short term and long-term outcomes in schools. The ability of the school principal to be aware of the characteristics they have, what they believe in, and the goals they desire to achieve is critical. Principals who follow up with their own awareness and put into action those beliefs are served well. Research suggests that principals who consistently exercise their core values, establish goals, understand their purpose and lead with their heart are considered genuine in their leadership. Authenticity was the desired goal of this study, to find out if principals walk the life they say they believe. This study is presented with the framework of personal journeys of building principals and their awareness of their own authenticity and ability to act on their authentic beliefs. This study will inform the field of authentic leadership through the role of the building principal and how they stay authentic in the face of external challenges.

Keywords: Authentic leadership, self-awareness, self-discipline, crucible, trigger events.

DEDICATION

Thank you to my wife Lindsay and our two beautiful daughters, Charlotte and Amelia. Three shining stars that helped me navigate through the darkness to find my true north.

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I would like to thank the Educational Leadership Alpha Cohort for all of the support since we began this journey in 2018. The collection of people that joined is filled with a wealth of knowledge and expertise. Through their support, compassion, and honesty this group of people created an environment of trust and openness that moved me to not only be a better scholarly practitioner but more importantly a better person. Sue, Paul, Ryan, Brian, Josh, Dave, Laura, Mia, Rad, Glen, Scott, and Theresa, thank you for changing my life.

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I want to acknowledge the Bangor School Department for all their support. Beyond the financial commitment the Bangor School Department has meant a great deal to me in my life. It has provided me the opportunity to be more than who I thought I could be and allowed for me to grow professional in a way I never dreamed. The school department not only shaped me

academically but gave me mentors that shaped my life. There are too many to acknowledge here but specifically I want thank Gabby Price, the first person that made me feel I controlled my destiny. He taught me what it was to have a purpose and the importance of working and engaging in this world collaboratively. His mentorship made me the husband and father I am today. Dr. Betsy Webb was the first person to give me the opportunity in the Bangor School Department to formally have a role that would allow me to give back to a city that has meant so much to me. Dr. Kathy Harris – Smedberg and Mr. Robert MacDonald in their roles as district leaders gave me the opportunity to pursue my goals and provided encouragement throughout the process.

Finally, I want to acknowledge a family that provided support for me when I was truly lost while trying to find my path. Beth and Rick Warren gave me a chance to pursue my first graduate degree and along with their son George I was inspired to become an educator. Their friendship will last forever and I will always be humbled and grateful that they took a chance on me. Without them, I am not here today.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I began my time as a building principal in 2013. Since I have been a principal, our country has seen a rise in stressors, including mental health needs, awareness of sexual harassment with the #metoo movement, equity, and inclusion issues led by the BlackLivesMatter movement and a worldwide pandemic with COVID - 19. The nation seems to be in a consistent state of free fall and with the 2020 presidential election that divided the country and riots are taking over major cities in the United States. Throughout the social upheaval we have experienced in the US, superintendents, school boards and national and state departments of education are trying to roll out plans to return to school following guidelines from the Center for Disease Control (CDS) such as wearing masks, physical distancing, and cohorting students. Complicating the return is the balancing act teachers, parents and students are attempting in order to participate in school and trying to teach and learn. As such, the role of an authentic building leader has never been more important. George (2003) calls the moments mentioned above the crucible and he says, "... find yourself in a crucible that tests you to your limits. In this crucible you learn who you really are and what you want to become" (p. 27). Our educational leaders have found a common crucible with the inequities that our population continues to face.

George (2003; 2007) suggests that there is growing evidence that authentic leadership is not only a useful trait in leadership but that it is also needed. Luthans and Avolio (2003) argue that authenticity is derived from positive psychology processes and linked to greater self-awareness and self - regulation.

Authentic leadership is not something that one is born with; it is something that is acquired over time with experiences (George, 2003; Gardner, et al., 2005). Whereas George

(2003) calls it a crucible, Gardner, et al. (2005) refer to it as trigger events. Gardner et al (2005), reference trigger events as both positive and negative that impact the personal history of the authentic leader and with experiences that shape the authentic leader's self-awareness and self-reflection. My study identified these characteristics that a school leader might have gained through their own experience. If in fact the research is correct that authenticity is not something that you are born with and the leaders experiences have formed authentic capacity like George (2003 & 2015) and Gardner, et al. (2005) suggest then the purpose of these case studies will share an insight to the field and that of the practitioners.

The importance of my study is paramount. In 2022 the world needs people that are genuine, trusting, engaged, and emotionally invested in their work. School leadership, right now, will either prevent or propel the success of our students as they wade through the inequities that our world has offered them. Through the eyes of those leaders I will share and experience that they live each day, in their environment, with their voice, and their experiences that will shed light on the real work that it takes to have awareness of who they are and regulate themselves to engage in sustainable practices in their schoolhouses.

Problem of Practice

In 2013 at the start of my principalship, I was young and impressionable. I was hired on a Wednesday night by the school committee and the following day I arrived at my new place of work filled with excitement. The anticipation of driving to the school was overwhelming, I remember the butterflies in my stomach and how motivated I was to have the honor of leading a school building. As I parked my car and walked to the front entrance, the door opened and a teacher was standing there holding it open and said, “Hi, Mr. Chadbourne, I have been waiting for you.” This was how my day started at 7:00am. By the time I had finished my two-hour

conversation with the teacher I was met with a custodian at my office door with a list of how things operated in and around the school. By the time I finished reading the custodian's list, another employee arrived to tell me how she would continue to do things. When lunch arrived, I started to listen to the messages on the phone, many of them were sales calls from vendors and some from parents that desired me to reverse decisions that had already been made about placement and programming. After a few hours of exhausting conversations, I had a call from downtown about an issue that needed my attention immediately. It was clear to me that my job was not just to be the instructional leader of the school but that I was also going to be pulled in multiple directions and that I had no clue what was going on. That was my first day as a building administrator.

Now in my ninth year in the principalship, I have a much better understanding of who I am and what I want to accomplish with my time. I believe that I have committed myself to my core values. I continue to develop my purpose. I lead with my emotion and set goals. The problem, as a practitioner, is how do I do this? Do I really live the world I think I do? Morgan (1998) uses the metaphor of the psychic prisons and states, "organizations are ultimately created and sustained by conscious and unconscious processes, with the notion that people can actually become imprisoned in or confined by the images, ideas, thoughts, and actions to which these processes give rise" (p. 182). I continue to think, am I in my own psychic prison? I have many questions about this problem of practice as it pertains to myself as a practitioner and others in the field such as: Can leadership be authentic? Can building principals continue to live within their core values, purpose, emotions, and meet their goals? Or does the negotiating process dull the needle of our moral compass? Do they seek to grease the squeaky wheel in order to maintain the status quo? Or will they lead with authenticity and make public education more equitable for all?

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to seek a vantage point not accessible to the daily life of the practitioner and to tell the story through portraits about the relationship between the internal beliefs of building leadership and the actions they take. Using the lens of authentic leadership and the definitions of authentic leadership from George (2003, 2007, 2015), Luthans and Avolio (2003), Gardner et al (2005), and Walumbwa, et al. (2008), I will see the daily life of the principal, hear what the principals and from the teachers that work with the building leaders.

George (2003) says, “We need authentic leaders, people of the highest integrity, committed to building enduring organizations. We need leaders who have a deep sense of purpose and are true to their core values” (p. 5). This is the heart of what I hope to accomplish, do building principals lead with such integrity, purpose and do they stay true to their core values in the face of conflicting demands?

Luthans and Avolio (2003) use a positive psychological construct saying, “descriptive words [that] include, genuine, reliable, trustworthy, real, and veritable” (p. 242). They also contend that authentic leadership is the relationship between owning your beliefs and putting them into action. My purpose under this lens is to focus on the relationship between the principal’s self-awareness, the interaction with the crucible moments or trigger events, and the causation with the principal's ability to act using the characteristics of authentic leadership.

These crucible moments that George speaks of and that Avolio and Luthans will call trigger events/challenges can be very personal such as, a death or a loss of a job, or could be positive for example, the birth of a child or promotion within your organization, but I would argue that collectively we here in the United States are in a crucible moment that requires our

attention to leadership – specifically the need for us to understand the beliefs and actions of authentic leaders.

Gardner et al (2005), research on the value of authentic leadership and the relationship between authentic followership I want to know how the decision-making ability of the building principals impacts the perception of the staff and if they believe their leader is truly authentic. Gardner et al (2005) speak of the ability of the authentic leader to enhance the ability of their followers skill set. Accomplishing this study could give insight to the abilities of those authentic leaders and the impact between the purpose, core values, emotions, and desired goals of the follower.

Finally, Walumbwa et al., (2008) suggest the correlation between authentic leadership, ethical leadership, transformative leadership, organizational citizenship behavior, organization commitment, and satisfaction with a supervisor (p. 111). The interesting piece about this study is the impact of the use of authentic leadership and the perspective from the subordinate's point of view. The purpose of interviewing teachers of the case studies will allow me to reach the questions that come from the study of Walumbwa et al., (2008).

As a member of the educational doctoral program that is specifically focused on the practitioner's point of view and furthering the education of those in the field, I find it extremely important to leverage my own resources to improve my own practice. Using my own district will allow me access that would not be available outside my district and it would also directly apply to my own work as a leader in public education. The implications will give guidance to further practice, policy and research as it pertains to authentic leadership.

Research Questions

Krathwohl (2009) says that a good problem, “is (1) of interests, (2) embedded in theory, (3) likely to have impact, (4) original in some aspect and (5) feasible - within your conceptual, resources, ethical and institutional limits” (p. 87). My problem of practice blends these four criteria well and filtering my questions using Maxwell (2013) when he says, “. . . problem is developing research questions is confusion between your research questions and the goals of your study, within the latter, between intellectual goals - you want to understand by doing the study - and practical goals - what you want to accomplish.” (p. 76). Keeping in mind that there is a difference between the research questions I am asking and the questions that will be asking in the interview, Maxwell (2013) says, “Your research questions identify the things that you want to understand; your interview questions generate the data you need to understand these things” (p 77). The following is what I want to understand:

RQ 1: How do principals negotiate their purpose, core values, emotions, and goals to achieve authenticity

RQ 2: How do principals negotiate their core values in the face of challenges to their authenticity?

RQ 3: How do principals working towards authenticity put their purpose, core values, emotions and goals into action in their daily work?

I believe that the refined semi - structured questions in my interviews (see Appendix A) will address the civil unrest in that we are currently experiencing and identifying strengths and weaknesses in our ability to address the social inequities in our schools. The semi - structured interviews with a focus of principals using their core values, purpose, emotions and goals will

lend itself to the conversation about how these building leaders use their daily practices to address the gap our students face each day.

Methodology

Using portraiture methodology, I was able to research three principals in the state of Maine to examine their narratives about who they thought they were. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) discussed the methodological confluence of art and the social sciences. They said that portraiture methodology relies on descriptions as interpretive and analytic to combine “interpretive insight, analytic scrutiny, and aesthetic order” (p. 185.) Portraiture methodology relies on the following concepts according Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997): context, voice, relationships, emergent themes, and the aesthetic whole.

By using the context within portraiture methodology, I was able to bring meaning and understand to the physical setting, identifying my view within the research to the history and culture of the organization and the role of the people that define and shape the context (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, 1997). The voice of portraiture is multi-layered and proved to be one of the most difficult components of this methodology in my study. As the researcher it was important to be able to see the action within the participants and to ensure that the data gathered was addressing the behavior and conversations while at the same time remaining open to the possibilities of unanticipated changes within the environment. Remaining aware of the use of voice as by providing enough descriptive evidence was key to this study while also being able to reflect on my on professional background, history, and beliefs to ensure my perception of the reality. The dialogue between the researcher and the participants was also important to this methodology, specifically understanding my own life experiences, paying attention to what is not being said, and focusing on the dialogue of the participant and researcher.

Relationships between those that participate in the study and the researcher is key to the success of this methodology. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) said, “it is through relationships between portraitist and the actors that access is sought and given, connections made, contracts of reciprocity and responsibility (both formal and informal) developed, trust built, intimacy negotiated, data collected, and knowledge constructed.” My relationship with the organization afforded me access that a researcher might not otherwise receive but it was the development of those relationships that allowed me to search for the goodness, be empathic and maintain professional boundaries in my study. In this methodology I was aware and always listening for emerging themes. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) use five modes that help seek, find and understand the emerging themes they are, listening to repetitive refrains, listening to resonating metaphors, themes that are cultural or institutional, interconnecting threads of data from a variety of sources, and building themes and finding patterns from the point of view of the participants (p. 193.)

The piece of portraiture methodology is constructing the aesthetic whole. The four dimensions of portraiture include conception, structure, form and cohesion (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, 1997, p. 247.) Using the four dimensions, my study’s overarching conception was about authentic leadership from the perception of leader and follower. The structure of the story came through the emerging themes and by the leader. Giving life to the structure was the form which is expressive stories told by the leader but more importantly by the follower’s perception. The coherence in my portrait is when we see the findings and connected themes between each leader and how they understand their own awareness along with the viewpoint of the leader’s followers and their perception of what the leader truly is and does.

Positionality

As a building administrator I am aware of how my words and actions impact the school environment for teachers, students, and the community. My experience as a principal has shown me that the ultimate judgement from peers and the greater school community comes from the leader's purpose, core values, goals, and how they interact with their emotions. It sets the tone for how all operations of the school will run. Personally, my life hasn't been easy and it would come as a surprise to my younger self where I am today. My goal in this study was to gain a better perspective on how leadership's beliefs interact with that they do. Do understand if there are moments in life such as my own experiences that changed the leader in a way to be more authentic and how does that impact those around them. The programs that prepared me to become a certified principal spoke in a framework of interpersonal skills, intrapersonal skills, cognitive skills which was helpful and allowed us to focus on the art of negotiating what really was our leadership development plans. But there was no way to be prepared for the first year and those first moments to show a school community who you really are. In my ninth year as a principal I am just starting to understand what it takes to truly achieve authenticity.

I am a white, heterosexual male that grew up in a middle-class neighborhood in Maine. My neighborhood might have been considered middle-class but which end of the street you lived on came with judgement and I was on the wrong end. My family was dysfunctional at best with a blended mix from a previous marriage and an absent father. I experienced at a young age those around making promises and commitments and then not following through with them. Early in my career I felt similar experiences from peers within administration and teachers that would guarantee the world and fall flat on making a difference. Specifically, one experience when a person I looked up in a role above me encouraged me to take a leap with plan that would be

considered outside the box for my district and when I was called out on my actions that person fell flat on coming forth with the entire truth. Without these experiences I would have not feel in love with authentic leadership until I read *Leadership* by Northouse (2019) and he introduced me to authors and researchers that were trying to understand authentic leadership and how being authentic moves our world in right direction.

Knowing that I love life stories and understanding the interactions of people and finding out what makes them tick and what moves them to action, I was fully aware that my study would be qualitative. Putting context to the situation and voice to those that participate in the environment would draw inferences about the subjects within the school and open a door to the purpose, core values, goals, and emotions to the leader.

As a building principal I am an insider however, my own purpose in this study was to understand these leaders and how they operate while at the same time drawing conclusions that would have implications to the greater good of our practice, policies and where research could go with authentic leadership. I have been let down at every turn in my life and I fully desired to ensure that if given the chance I would be honest with my beliefs and genuine in my actions. I wanted to make this world a greater place and I believe that is why most of us are in this profession but are we willing to be vulnerable enough to understand who we really are.

Considerations for Scholarly Practitioners

The study of authentic leadership has great importance as we have seen our world change and the need for leaders to be genuine to inspire their followers and future generations should be of great focus as we move forward in the 21st century. To do this there are obstacles and ways of thinking that need to be overcome for the practitioner. Understanding our purpose, core values, goals and emotions is not a one-time learning experiences, it takes time to grow in order to refine

our thoughts and feelings of what we truly believe. It takes experiences of success and more importantly failure to be able to identify your self-awareness. Being vulnerable with those around you specifically your followers in a way that provides leaders with feedback to meet the needs in real time of your followers would promote their growth as well as the leaders. From those developed beliefs also come action and authentic leadership in action is judged from those that follow the leader. My findings show inconsistencies of what the leaders has said they believe and how they act to the perceptions of the those that follow the leader. There is no connection from these follower's perception of the inconsistencies from the leader's beliefs and actions. Typically, this not how the relationship works from followers and leaders and it would take a shift in our practices to obtain that connection.

This study has the potential to help others as it can assist in the development of those leader-follower relationships in a transparent process to engage the leader in seeing the ways in which they act within their own environment. Leaders within their own district struggle to have an understanding from the people they hear them preach their beliefs and engage in action on those beliefs under the current evaluation system. The findings support these inconsistencies of follower perceptions of the leader's purpose, core values, goals and emotions. If this study could provide a pathway to a more developed sense of trust with the leaders and follower and vulnerability from the leader then connections could be made that will help the leader identify their shortcomings and make real time adjustments upon reflection from the follower's perspective.

For those that create policy the most glaring finding is these inconsistencies between how the leader believes they engage with their followers and what the perception of the follower is about the leader's actions. The current system of supervision and evaluation does not promote

this connection between the leader and follower, it is a top down approach. Furthermore, those that make policy should consider the implementation of leadership coaching to help not only new principals but also those that have been in the principalship for many years. Instead of earning continuing education credits for reauthorization of certification those in legislature and educational committees could issue the same criteria for our leaders to have coaches work with them on their purpose, core values, goals and emotions and at the same time work alongside the principals in their environment to gain better perspective on what is happening which increases the value of reflections and promotes change when needed.

Future research is needed and, in my study, I used a qualitative approach and I do believe that a longitudinal study would be greatly beneficial for current and aspiring principals. The methodology of portraiture has great benefits for researchers but the limitations of time in my study prevented me from exploring additional questions and seek understanding to moments that a longitudinal study would provide.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

This literature review is intended to provide context for the need to study the authentic leader of a school building. This review begins with an explanation of a definition of an authentic leader, followed by several examples of viewpoints of authentic leadership. Additionally, the literature review covers the components of authentic leadership, the characteristic of those components, and the practitioners' ability to live in those components. The literature review will also discuss the impact the teachers of the authentic leader and the relation between the leader's ability and their followership. The focus of this study is to measure the effects of authentic leadership through a purposeful qualitative case study, and to use those results to inform new and future school building leaders and to inform practitioners in the field.

Table 1

Definitions of Authentic Leadership

| Authentic Leadership | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| George (2003) | “Authentic leaders genuinely desire to serve others... they are more interested in empowering the people they lead to make a difference than they are in power, money or prestige for themselves... Authentic leaders use their natural abilities, but they also recognize their short comings and work hard to overcome them.” (p. 12) |
| Luthans and Avolio (2003) | “Specifically, we define authentic leadership in organizations as a process that draws from both positive psychological capacities and highly developed organizational context, which results in both greater self-awareness and self – regulated positive behaviors on the part of leaders and associates, fostering positive self-development. The authentic leader is confident, hopeful optimistic, |

Table 1 continued

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| | oriented, and give priority to developing associates to be leaders.” (p. 243) |
| Shamir and Eilam (2005) | “Authentic leaders do not fake their leadership. They do not pretend to be leaders just because they are in a leadership position... authentic leaders do not take on leadership role or engage in leadership activities for status, honor or other personal rewards... they hold their values to be true not because these values are socially or politically appropriate, but because they have experienced them to be true... Authentic leaders are leaders how actions are based on their values and convictions. What they say is consistent with what they believe, and their actions are consistent with both their talk and their beliefs.” (pp. 396 – 397) |
| Walumbwa et al. (2008) | “Specifically, we define authentic leadership as a pattern, of leader behavior that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-awareness, and internalized moral perspective, balance processing of information, and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self – development.” (p.94) |
| Northouse (2019) | “Authentic leadership is a complex process that emphasizes the development of qualities to help leaders to be perceived as trustworthy and believed by their followers.” (p. 207) |

Authentic Leadership

The idea of authentic leadership is not new but can difficult to define. Authenticity in organizational leadership has been a focus of many studies (Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Caza et al, 2004; Kernis and Goldman, 2006; Luthans and Avolio, 2003; Shamir and Eilam, 2005; and Walumbwa et al., 2008). Authentic leadership is highlighted by dimensions (George, 2003), components (Walumbwa et al, 2008) and profiles of authentic leadership (Luthans and Avolio,

2003). For the purpose of the definition used for this study I will use a blend of these definitions of authenticity.

Northouse (2019) suggests two different types of authentic leadership approaches, a practical one and theoretical one. The practical approach he says, “Specifically, they want to know the ‘how to’ steps to becoming an authentic leadership approach” (p. 199). George (2003) is one example of the practical approach. He has experience as a corporate executive and his research has identified five characteristics for authentic leaders. George (2015) wrote in his article “Authentic Leadership Rediscovered”, “authentic leaders demonstrate these five qualities, understanding their purpose, practicing solid values, leading with heart, establishing connected relationships, (and), demonstrating self-discipline” (p. 1). George’s approach in defining the characteristics of authentic leadership expanded upon his work in 2003, with related characteristics which include passion with purpose, behavior with values, compassion with heart, connectedness with relationships, and consistency with self-discipline. His work with these five characteristics and related ones builds around the true authentic leader.

The theoretical approach to authentic leadership that Northouse (2019) offers is based on the theoretical approach. He says his theoretical approach is “based on finding from social science research” (p. 198). Walumbwa et al. (2008) use the following definition for authentic leadership,

“a pattern of leader behavior that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development” (p. 94).

Walumbwa, et. al, (2008) build their framework in this definition that promotes four key concepts: self - awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing and relational transparency that are vital for authentic leadership. What is important about Walumbwa, et. al., (2008) work that the above-mentioned components are preceded by the positive psychological capacities and moral reasoning that collide during critical life events. George (2003) calls this the crucible, where authenticity begins to develop and act when critical life events are experienced by the leader. Walumbawa et al, (2008) separated self - awareness and self - regulation from the positive psychological capacities and moral reasoning used by Luthans & Avolio (2003) to construct their framework, which includes the self-awareness and self-regulation with an authentic leader and follower. Walumbawa et al, (2008) include specific criteria such as, values, identity, emotions, and motives/goals for self - awareness; for self - regulation they use, internalized, balanced processing, relational transparency, and authentic behavior.

Luthans and Avolio (2003), suggest that authentic leadership can be defined by identifying the positive psychological constructs which include self - direction, trust, and a leader's consistency. They also say that a lot of attention has been given to the negative behavioral attributes and instead should be focused on descriptive words such as “genuine, reliable, trustworthy, real and veritable” (p. 242). The idea of owning your emotions and beliefs to identify who you really are and the idea of demonstrating your ownership by acting those beliefs out in your daily work can define your authenticity (Harter, 2002; Luthans and Avolio, 2003). Luthans and Avolio also further their definition by saying, “Specifically, we define authentic leadership in organizations as a process that draws from both positive behaviors on the part of leaders and associates, fostering positive self-development” (p. 243). Authentic leadership

has multiple points which include the actions or behaviors of that of the leader and the ability to care for those around them.

Luthans and Avolio (2003) highlight six points that they call “profiles” (p. 248) that are associated with the authentic leader. They include the belief that we all contribute positively, having a deep understanding of our core values, we are transparent in our own deficiency, we take risks by leading from the front of the pack, we build leadership capacity from within the organization, and that we have a highly developed moral standard (pp. 248 - 249). This part of their work is the self-discipline that an authentic leader would live the life aligned with their beliefs (Avolio, 1999; Luthans and Avolio, 2003; Quinn, Spreitzer, and Brown, 2000.)

Purpose

Identifying purpose has become more difficult for current principals. Dantley (2003) argued that current principals in schools operate in a with a neutral mindset in order to avoid friction with the greater school community. He also posits that it is a greater systematic issue as school leadership has to consider the high stakes testing results for their performance measures (p. 276.) This way of thinking has produced leaders that are not able to operate in the presences of their greater purpose, which increases the difficulty of school leadership to pinpoint what there is their true purpose. By (2021) suggested the lack of purpose is due to the “fragmented development of leadership theory and practice...” (p. 42.) His research resulted in the importance with the role of purpose in leadership and in order to develop purpose it is truly about collaboration as he said, “collectively combine our resources as scholars and practitioners in a joint and collaborative towards updating leadership convention for the twenty – first century” (p. 42.) Both Dantley (2003) and By (2021) give an outlook on the need to be able to identify leader’s purpose but also guide them with definitions that meet the needs of leaders today.

The actions of principals have a great impact on those that are the followers and the followers that have deep understanding of their leader is paramount in the success of the organization. Hong et al., (2021) conducted a study on purpose driven leadership, the study overall was connected to post-secondary institutions and the alignment of the institutions purpose and the leadership's purpose. However, Hong et al., (2021) findings do support the impact of leaders with a clear purpose on their followers as they posit that purpose provides a road map in the daily actions which inspires a commitment in the invested parties to produce sustainable outcomes (p. 1013). If leadership understands their purpose and uses it within their daily practice then it would be true the followers would understand it and work toward the success of that purpose which would be authentic.

The connection of authentic leadership and ethical leadership are present in the study by Eisenschmidt, et al., (2019) as they sought to investigate the moral virtues (Peterson and Seligman, 2004) that create purpose. They interviewed four principals in Estonia and Finland and concluded the specific moral virtues that connected the principal's perceptions of their work and confirmed it upon those principals' reflections. Eisenschmidt, et al., (2019) found that the principals in the study had virtues to have high expectations of themselves and their own learning, building a school environment that could sustain over generations, and doing what they believed best for their students (p. 10). They posit that these virtues are the platform for creating purpose in their subject's work. The importance not only to believe that they have an awareness to their moral virtues but to also live them in their daily work is crucial to their development of living their life they say they believe.

Core Values

Values are the compass that guide us through our leadership, George (2007) spoke of values as “the relative importance of the things that matter in your life” (p. 107.) Values define what we believe in and then set and expectation of how we will act in our daily work.

McDowell, et al., (2013) posit that the Watson’s (2008) caring leadership model is the basis for development of aspiring leaders and followers. If the leader approaches their leadership through “being heart-centered and authentically present in the moment...” (p. 43) then the leader helps to “... encourage and promote a flourishing human spirit in the workplace” (p. 50). McDowell, et al., (2013) and Walumbwa, et al., (2008) coexist as they both speak to the psychological capacities that generate characteristics of the leader in building a positive and ethical environment. The perception of values is the benefits of the culture through the caring perspective of the leader’s compass.

Leadership’s actions are at the center of whether or not a leader is considered authentic. Donaldson (2008) specifically identifies the importance of understanding your values and putting them into action when describing the intrapersonal aspect of leadership, “finding a sustainable fit between the leadership role they aspire to or currently occupy and their own values and beliefs as educators and as people” (p. 80.) Negotiating the values that the leader comes to the position with and finding the balance to the values of the people and environment is critical in being aware to authentically lead. Thus, inspiring those that follow the leader, if the leader’s values appear to be true and in congruence with their or the organizations values. Oh, et al., (2016) research study highlighted the influence that leader’s authentic behavior has on work engagement and concluded that “when employers become positive influences and practice the organizations core values, their employees’ willingness to work, show commitment and work engagement will improve” (p. 285).

Goals

Goals of leadership, especially in my study are referred to personal and professional aspects of the participants desire to improve their ability to be authentic. For the purpose of this paper goals are intended to elicit desired outcomes of the self. As it relates to the goals of the participants I was interested in if the leader's goals were geared towards their personal benefit or that of organization. Steffens et al., (2015) studies investigated this explicitly as their findings suggested that leaders who lead with the benefits of the whole are perceived more authentic than those that lead for their own personal interest (p.738.) Marquardt, et al., (2019) study examined leader's goal orientation and ethical leadership but, in their findings, they suggested that the influence of the leader's perceived goals can lead to undesirable behavior from the followers (p. 555.) Also, Marquardt, et al., (2019) posit that if leaders are transparent about their shortcomings and support growth from those mistakes is can lead to more desirable behavior (p. 556). Supporting the idea of authentic characteristic from Luthans and Avolio (2003) that leadership is in part authentic when it is, among other things, transparent and ethical.

Knowing your followers (George, 2003; George, 2007) and their personality is another important aspect for leaders whom identify as authentic leaders. Perry, et al., (2010) research suggested most effective practices as it applies to leaders' style and the personality of the followers. Perry, et al., (2010) identified leaders who, "promote employee well-being include consideration of fit between leadership style and subordinate personality" (p. 1150).

Emotions

Being aware of one's emotions and knowing the impact of emotions has an impact of the productivity and well-being of an organization. Northouse (2019) said, "... that people who are more sensitive to their emotions and the impact of their emotions on others will be leaders who

are more effective.” (p. 29) The connection to the emotional pulse the leaders has on their followers is also connected to the motivation for the follower but includes other variables as Ouakouak and Zaitouni (2019) founded that the use of emotional arguments helps build the relationship between follower and leader and also that, “job performance is also influenced by the extent to which leaders convey normatively appropriate conduct and provide emotions support in the form of positive emotions.” (p. 269) Thus being in tune with the followers from the leader’s perspective can yield a better relationship and outcomes for the organization.

Authentic leadership discussion historically looks inward at the leader’s ability to be true to themselves but Avolio and Gardner (2005) have suggested that the focused on authentic leadership development also includes the authentic relationships with the follower (p. 333) which contributes to the positive outcomes (Avolio, et al., 2004) of the organization. The understanding of the emotional capacity and an awareness to the environment connects well with authentic relationships in fact Ackerman and Maslin – Ostrowski (2002) even suggested it is the leader’s responsibility to have that emotional awareness. Indicating that not only should leadership beware of the impact their emotions but that being transparent with their followers can strengthen the emotional connection within the organization. Fambrough and Hart (2008) posit that leadership can be isolating and opportunities should be present for leadership to think about their own emotions, “Group or individual interventions involving personal reflection offer possibilities for deeper self – exploration...” (p. 753.)

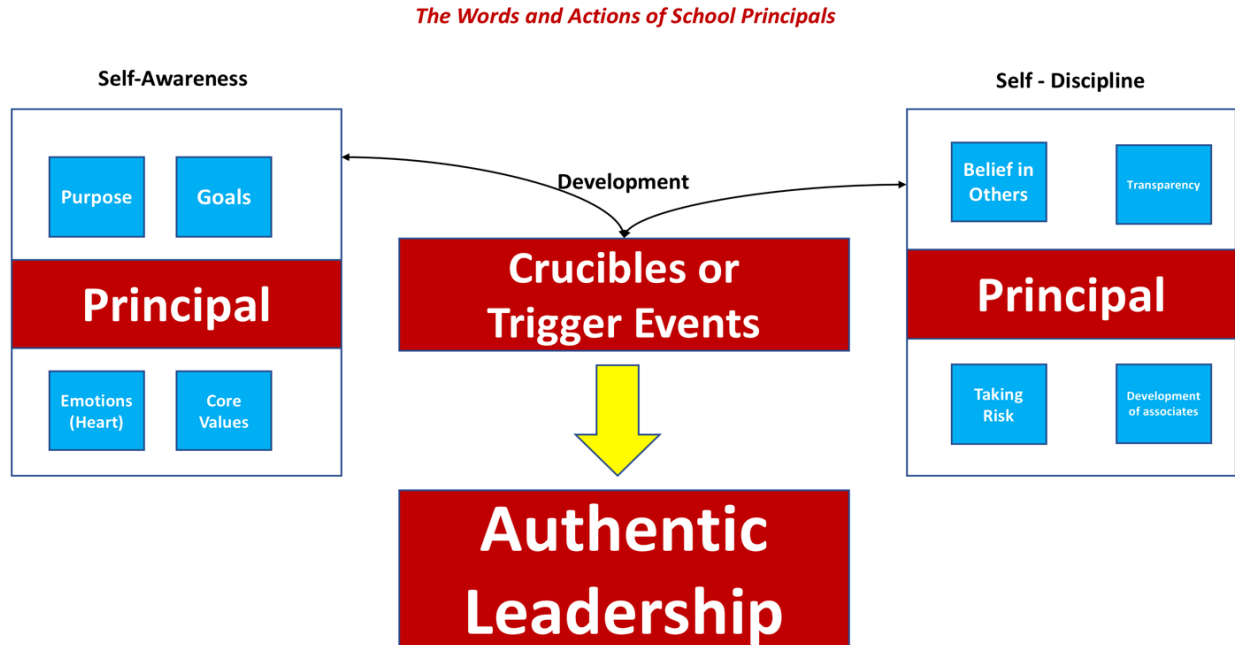
Conceptual Framework

At the heart of the conceptual framework is the principal. George (2003) identifies dimensions of authentic leadership as purpose, values, relationships, heart and self-discipline. He also speaks about the “development quality” (p. 36) that leaders need to be effective. These

qualities are coupled together with the dimensions of George's authentic leadership theory which are passion, behavior, connectedness, compassion, and consistency. The approach of Luthans and Avolio (2003) share a profile of the authentic leader which includes a belief that all in the organization can positively contribute to the success of the organization, deep understanding of the leaders core values, leadership shows full transparency in their own vulnerabilities, they lead from the front which expose the leader to risks, developing their own people to become leaders, and have a strong understanding of their own moral development (pp. 248 - 249).

Here is what I thought was happening by using the words and experiences of building principals (Table 2.) Principals are aware of what they believe in their purpose, core values, goals, and emotional capacities – then using their self- discipline domains they believe that they and anyone can positively contribute to the success of the organization by believing in others, they lead from the front by taking risks, they are fully transparent to their own vulnerabilities, and they develop their own people by having a strong understanding of their own moral development. The arches are the pathways that are on-going between their self-awareness, self-discipline and their crucibles or trigger events that promote their own development. Thus, creating authentic leadership.

Table 2
Conceptual Framework



The self - awareness of the principal is key to starting the process of identifying the authentic leadership. The self-discipline of the principal is the next step and is the action of the daily work of the building leaders, which includes the four identified competencies from Luthans and Avolio (2003). The arches that are going in both directions are the paths between that self - awareness and self-discipline, and it is ongoing, hence the arrows going in both directions. The on-going process of self-reflection is critical to the development of authenticity and the principal's ability to reflect on who they are (self-awareness) and how they behave (self-discipline) will lead them to and authentic principals (what they are and what they can become).

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Setting and Context

Leadership authenticity has never been of greater importance. At the turn of the century researchers that address authentic leadership spoke of the misconduct of major businesses such as Enron and Arthur Andersen (George, 2003.) Northouse (2019) spoke of critical world events such as September 11, 2001 and influence of other countries as it related to the United States presidential election he said, “People feel apprehensive and insecure about what I going on around them and as a result they long for bona fide leadership they can trust and for leaders who are honest and good.” (p. 197) In 2022 the world it not much different when questioning those that hold positions of power. The civil unrest, the COVID – 19 pandemic, the 2020 presidential election embroiled in chaos, the January 6, 2021 ambush of the United States capital and the on-going conflict in Ukraine suggest that Northouse (2019) perspective holds true today.

Given the events that are going on around us I believed it was of great importance to continue to inform practitioners, policymakers, and researchers about authentic leadership, specifically how leaders identify about their authentic leadership, the moments in their life that refined their beliefs and the perceptions form the viewpoint of the followers about the leader’s authenticity.

To achieve the desired outcomes from my conceptual framework and research questions I believed that using a qualitative approach with the use of portraiture methodology would reveal findings when the parts of the story come together to form the aesthetic whole (Lawrence – Lightfoot and Davis, 1997.) By bringing in the voices of the leaders and the follower perspective

of the leader it allowed for the study to bring to light authentic beliefs and actions of the three principals that participate

Research Design

The research design was influenced by my own personal goals of school leadership engaging in practices that are authentic to all those that follow them. My lived experiences, assessing the world with a 2022 lens and raising two daughters inspired me to know more about who we are as leaders, how we see ourselves, what impacts us to believe in our purpose, core values, goals and emotions and how is the perception of the follower connected to our own authenticity. Maxwell (2013) suggested researchers begin with personal, professional and intellectual goals when they begin to design their research but what stood out to me was the suggestion that some researchers separate their personal and professional goals when designing their research (p. 24.) I agreed with Maxwell (2013) that leaving out your personal goals when engaging in qualitative research you don't want to create the impression that the research is "sterile", lose insightful guidance on my study or to have the appearance that I would be hiding from my true motivations (p. 24.) The qualitative research design was going to involve people and their environment which Maxwell (2013) called process theory (p. 29) and I wanted to connect what the leader's belief and how their perceived action showed authentic leadership or from what we found inconsistencies in the perceptions of the follower.

The study was fully qualitative and leaned on portraiture methodology. The conceptual framework was derived from existing theories of authentic leadership specifically George's (2003) constructs of the authentic leader which included heart, purpose, values, relationships and self-discipline (p. 18.) Avolio and Luthans (2003) authentic leadership constructs by way of trigger events, self-awareness and the positive-self-development which include among others

the development of associates, transparency, and future – oriented leaders (p. 251). Finally, Gardner et al., (2005) congruence of authentic leadership and authentic followership. The conceptual framework developed from that for this study included the self – awareness of the principals along the self – discipline of the actions of the principal from the follower’s perspective in relation to the trigger events or crucible moments from the principal would lead authentic leadership.

The study used a semi – structured interview protocol (See Appendix A) for principals as well a semi – structured interview protocol (See Appendix B) for teachers. Using Krathwohl (2009) exploratory and emergent study approach I was able to reveal through the use of the semi-structured interviews the background of the principal and their development in this purpose, core values, goals, and emotions. Using the same approach with the teacher’s I was able to reveal the teacher perception of what was really happening in the daily life of the principals. The nondirective approach (Krathwohl, 2009, p. 301) was vital in allowing the participants to open up on their own answers and explored a deeper sense of the leader’s own authenticity and allowed the follower to expand upon their own sense of the leader’s actions. Using respondent validation from the participants allowed for validity and trustworthiness of the stories that were gathered.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was understanding the principal’s self – awareness and from the follower’s perspective if the principal’s action were aligned to the principal’s belief of their purpose, core values, goals and emotions. Also, to seek and understand the critical life events that these principals have experienced that challenge their core values. Maxwell (2013) said that “you should frame you research questions so they point you to the information and

understanding that will help you accomplish your practical goals or develop the practical implications of what you learn” (p. 76.) Specifically, this study desired to answer the following questions:

1. How do principals negotiate their purpose, core values, emotions, and goals to achieve authenticity?
2. How do principals negotiate their core values in the face of challenges to their authenticity?
3. How do principals working towards authenticity put their purpose, core values, emotions and goals into action in their daily work?

Methods

Participant Selection

The goals of my research are to understand what characteristics the principal can identify with that align to their authenticity and to understand they utilize those dimensions in their daily work. The research was done through case studies and Maxwell (2013) references that the sampling considerations are not just the participant selection but the environment and setting around the participant. There were three participants for the case study that are principals and there were three to five teachers interviewed for each principal. The principals that were selected for the study represented the grade spans of pre-kindergarten to grade eight.

Maxwell (2013) discusses five goals for purposeful sampling which include, achieving representativeness, intentionally selecting cases that capture the heterogeneity of the population deliberately picking cases that meet the theories I have adopted, establishing a comparison between cases, and selecting people that I can have the most productive relationship with in order to answer my research questions (p. 98 - 99). My purposeful sampling met all of these

goals but specifically the fifth goal is critical to understanding the case studies ability to be aware of their characteristics and executing those characteristics in their work.

Participant selection began with recruiting the people that are willing to participate in my study. The district that participated in this study had 10 potential principals and 100% of them agreed to be a participant. Using purposeful sampling and chain referral sampling I was able to come to the most diverse and greatest grade range span possible which includes participants that represent grades pre-kindergarten through grade eight. The teachers of the principals were asked to participate. The first principal, Josh, had 36 potential teachers with 10 of his teachers agreed which was 28%. The second principal, Joe had 23 potential teachers and six teachers agreed to be a part of the study which was 26% and the final principal Mike had 28 potential teachers and three agreed to be part of the study which was 12%. All participants have pseudonyms and ranges of years of service in education in order to protect their identity. Additional no demographic identification is provided as an additional layer to protect my participants identity.

Table 3
Participants

| Participant | Years in Education |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| Josh – Principal | 10 – 20 years |
| Aaron – Teacher (Josh) | Over 30 years |
| Hampton – Teacher (Josh) | 10 – 20 years |
| Ben – Teacher (Josh) | 20 – 30 years |
| Joe – Principal | Over 30 years |
| Saint – Teacher (Joe) | 20 – 30 years |
| Ryan – Teacher (Joe) | 20 – 30 years |
| Jared - Teacher (Joe) | 20 – 30 years |
| Kevin – Teacher (Joe) | 20 – 30 years |
| David - Teacher (Joe) | 20 – 30 years |
| Mike – Principal | 20 – 30 years |
| Charlie – Teacher (Mike) | 10 – 20 years |
| Matt – Teacher (Mike) | 0 – 10 years |
| Derrick – Teacher (Mike) | 20 – 30 years |

Data Collection

I used two different methods of data collection. Using my relationship with the origination I was able to engage in observation of the principal participants and by using memos, meeting minutes, and artifacts to see the operation of the daily operation of the environment, Maxwell (2013) said, “observation is often used to describe settings, behavior, and events” (p. 102) and that is the goal of the observation to help broaden the range of the phenomena.

Using Maxwell (2013) theory-in-use approach I will seek to draw inferences that wouldn't be possible from the interviews. I engaged in observations of the portraits from participants. The concepts of Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) concepts of portraiture have shown the power of observations and participant observation. In a 2016 interview Lawrence-Lightfoot says, “We do not know the intentions, motivations, and meanings attached to people's behaviors unless we see them embedded in context” (p. 22). I gained further understanding of the authenticity of these portraits while they were actually applying their decision making and engagement in their work in real time. In order to dig deeper beyond the interview of the principals I used another piece of the data collection by interviewing teachers that work in the building of the principal. The interviews helped gain a better understanding from the perspective of the teachers within the building of their building leadership's authenticity and how they build the emotional capacity of the school environment. Interviews provided the research with access to a more complex understanding of the phenomena.

Instruments/Protocols

I used a semi – structured interview protocol for the interviews conducted with the principal (See Appendix A) and a semi – structured interview protocol with teachers (See Appendix B) that was self – created to address the self – awareness of the principal with their

purpose, core values, goals and emotions. Additionally, the protocol provided an opportunity for the principal to discuss their daily routine of actions about their belief in others, how they develop their associates, their transparency and their feelings on taking risks or allowing risk taking. The teacher's protocol was similar in design to elicit the perception from the follower's point of view of how the leader's daily interactions were consistent or not with the leader's self – awareness.

Data Analysis

I used multiple methods when analyzing the data. Reading the observation notes, artifacts, memos, and the interview transcripts allowed me to utilize the cycles of coding (Saldaña, 2016) methods. I need to review the initial collection and incorporate what Saldaña (2016) suggests a “review before determining which coding method(s) - if any - will be most appropriate and most likely to yield a substantive analysis” (p.75), Maxwell (2013) notes that qualitative researchers need to pay attention to the alternatives that should be considered when looking at your data such as, “reading and thinking about your interview transcripts and observation notes, writing memos, developing coding categories and applying these to your data, analyzing narrative structure and contextual relationships, and creating matrices...” (p. 105). To that end I believe that the first coding cycle needs to be organic in nature with some structured guidelines without restriction to the development of my coding and interpretation of the data.

The analysis of my data began right after the first interview and observations (Maxwell, 2013). During this process I was reading the interviews and observation notes which were documented through the use of memos and notes. At this point I was analyzing what I've seen and heard and began to think about the relationships and emerging themes.

Generic coding is how I start my coding process. Saldaña (2016) suggest that when researchers are unsure of the coding that would best apply to their study that generic coding

could be a good starting point which includes, Attribute Coding, Structural or Holistic Coding, Descriptive Coding, and In - Vivo Coding, Process Coding, and/or Values Coding. I believe that when Saldaña (2016) says, “. . . [suggesting] a combination of these basic coding methods as a ‘generic’ approach to your data and analysis, but remain open to changing them. . .” (p. 73) it resonated with my study as I needed to be flexible during first cycle coding. This resulted in a deductive approach to my coding which was based off my research questions and conceptual framework which included the following codes:

Table 4
Deductive Coding

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Self – Awareness | Purpose Core Values Goals Emotions |
| Self – Discipline | Belief in Others Transparency Risk Taking Development of Associates |

Second cycle coding efforts were determined by the first cycle coding. I did what Saldaña (2016) suggests, “the primary goal during second cycle coding is to develop a sense of categorical, thematic, conceptual and/or theoretical organization from your array of first cycle codes” (p. 234). I used the incorporation of Eclectic coding at this point. Saldaña (2016) suggests that this type of coding can be considered a first or second cycle coding and fits well with exploratory methods, which was essential in my study. It is a process of open coding that allowed me to effectively use the various data collection methods, (i.e. interviews, observations, artifacts, and field notes) and help me better understand my research questions. The second cycle coding proved to be the most powerful given my wide variety of data forms. Saldaña (2016) said

that Eclectic coding is appropriate, “when a variety of processes or phenomena are to be discerned from the data” (p. 213) and this second round of inductive coding is what followed:

Table 5
Inductive Coding

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Principal’s Codes/Themes | Values – Compassion – Needs – Identity – Heart – Academics – Behavior – Vulnerability – Middle Management – Control – Perception – Vision – Trust – Stress – Mission – Worry – Resiliency – Direction – Relationships. |
| Teacher’s Codes/Themes | Trust – Honesty – Fairness – Communication – Vision – Care – Equity – Leading by Example – Respect – Thoughtfulness – Listening – Empathy – Support – Relationships – Vision – Care |

Using the memos, field notes, interviews, observations, and artifacts I began to analyze the data for emerging themes which Lawrence - Lightfoot and Davis (1997) refer to searching for patterns, naming convergences and defining forms. This inductive process and Eclectic coding helped to form the story and emerging themes of principals understanding of their purpose, core values, goals, and emotions, the humility the followers saw that lean toward authenticity, and the inconsistencies of the action from the follower’s perspective.

Study Timeline

The study began on February 19, 2021 upon approve from the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects from the Office of Research Compliance at the University of Maine. The request for participants was sent in February and over the spring semester 2021 participants were scheduled to be interview. The observations where on-going throughout the spring of 2021 as I was able to be in the physical setting of each principal’s schools. The

interviews were conducted between the March of 2021 through June of 2021. Data was collected and analyzed throughout the summer and fall of 2021.

Positionality

As a building principal I have been curious how I have come to understand my own self – awareness and concerned how my interactions have been perceived by those that I have worked with in my schools. Given the civil unrest and the pandemic in the world I am aware of how the uneasiness and worry can stress the human spirit. My background growing up made me squint at decisions that were made from leadership and question the leader’s desired outcomes. My experience as a teacher and coach have influenced me a great deal on focusing on the greater good than the self. My experiences as an adult learning have shown me the power of being vulnerable to my own shortcoming and finding ways to perceive through challenging situations.

I approached this study with the idea of create portraits of the positive aspects within an organization and relied on my own experience of find our authentic self. My intentions where to see if building principals have a clear understanding of their purpose, core values, goals, and emotions and how that came to light for them. At the same time truly understanding if they put their beliefs into action. I have a significant amount of familiarity with the participating district which yields questions about the critical lens, the use of portraiture methodology allowed me to mitigate my own subjectivity and allow the familiar to become strange. The finding yielded interesting outcomes that suggest the leaders are good at identifying who they are, how they came to those beliefs and where their blind spots are. But they also reveal a gap in the consistencies of their self – discipline which has implications for school administration practice, policy and future research.

Validity/Trustworthiness

My own bias is a threat that has to be recognized. Maxwell (2013) says, “it is impossible to deal with their issues by eliminating the researcher’s theories, beliefs, and perceptual lens” (p. 124). He suggests that I should be concerned with how my own values and expectations will influence the way in which I behave during the research and the conclusions that I draw. He describes that there could be positives and negatives and that I should avoid, “avoid the negative consequences” (p. 124). The threats and limitations, at the forefront come down to my personal integrity and understanding of who I am and what my own values, beliefs, and outlook on my problem of practice influence my ability to ensure my research is valid. This includes my position within my organization. I began my time in the organization as a student and returned as a teacher. Since 2013 I have held the position of building principal and district administrator. I have a lot of pride in my community. I believe the organization makes a significant impact on the health of our community and I also believe that our school leadership matters. With this sense of pride and position of school leadership also comes a responsibility to the health of our organization, that is why in my methodology I will not just look at this from a “everything is fine” perspective but I wanted to ask the tough question of what are we doing that is not working, how are we not meeting our own core values and purpose, and how do we reflect in a way that will address the social growth we are currently living.

Reactivity is also a threat to the research that I want to do. My own position in the organization and one that has many roles within the district I can’t ignore my presence in the setting. I am an influence on the environment and my desire to participate in qualitative research needed me to have a better understanding of how I impact the setting. This threat or limitation needs to be recognized and understood during my interviews. Maxwell (2013) says, “what is

important is to understand how you are influencing what the informant says, and how this affects the validity of the inferences as you draw from the interview” (p. 125).

Selection could be a threat as those in the sample frame are my colleagues. My intention to mitigate this is to use multiple principals in the portraits that gives me a wider range of people within my system to engage in my study. The study was comprehensive and significant time and effort was devoted to this, if I am to spend my time doing such important research then I believe the best use of my time was to utilize it within my own district. The outcomes of the study yielded important information that will help our leadership team move forward and possibly build a bridge of our own understanding of our self – awareness and our actions we take into our daily work.

Maxwell (2013) discusses, one strategy would be respondent validation. By using this strategy, I will ensure the accuracy of what was said and clarify what I heard. I will record the interview and use a transcribing software, such as rev.com, to collect my interview. I will ensure what was said by the respondent was accurate, allow them to clarify what they said or meant, as well as, allow them to make the decision to remove anything they said that they felt was uncomfortable sharing.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

Three principals volunteered to participate in this study. The three principals have different backgrounds? That has led them to where they are now. First, Josh, a humbled leader that questions every decision he makes and carries the weight of his school on him. Next, Joe who believes that all students should be able to access their learning environment but shares the difficulties when students' basic needs are not met. You will finally learn about Mike, a leader that defines middle management. Mike drives academic instruction under the guidance of the district's mission and goals and doesn't allow excuses about the lack of achievement with students. Mike's relationship with his followers is also an interesting game of smoke and mirrors.

Portrait 1: Josh

Background

Josh's road to leadership was not one that seemed to be driven by an internal desire to lead but rather his road was paved by others throughout his time in education. Josh's life events began from when he was young growing up in a self-described blue-collar town with a family that had not completed formal education beyond high school. "We [parents] didn't have a college education, but my parents saw value in it." He goes on to say, "My father was an agent for the bricklayers... I'd watch him [as he] would take me on the job and he was calm, compassionate to people." Josh expressed how influential his time with his father molded his budding beliefs on leadership by saying, "I watched his mannerisms and not get upset [with people] and you know, in a nice way be a little firmer with what he was doing, but it made me learn that compassion would be what leadership would be when you work with people". With the

push of his parents Josh eventually made his way to post – secondary education and as he shared, “My dad didn’t want me to end up like him”.

Josh’s thinking on why he is where he is now is represented by others that have put him in places and given him opportunities. He shares how many people saw something in him along the way that provided him moments in leadership that sharpened his craft and ultimately led him to the current seat. “I really feel fortunate sitting in this seat, and that has to do with a lot of the people along the way.” Josh shared how along his journey other leaders saw something in him to provide him with opportunities. Since he began in education he discussed how people around him will continue to give him additional tasks and responsibility that as he says, “I was able to lean on those people and they opened the door for me”. Josh’s humbleness and work ethic do not come without his own reservations about his ability to be a leader. Josh shared his constant issues with having confidence in his ability to lead and ability to make decisions. He shared, “I don’t have tremendous confidence sometimes... I debate over it, over and over” and went further to say, “... I have to pinch myself and continue to have the drive to do the best I can, it’s not something I feel like I deserve,” and “Can I stretch myself to be the [best] administrator, you know all the doubts or lack of confidence, that kind of goes through my head at times”.

Purpose and Core Values

Josh defines his purpose as an educational leader as, “Tremendous, the care of the safety, the kids who walk in here every day, to the care and the safety of the adults who walk in everyday”, he continues with, “that kind of moves into the experience, when the kids walk in and know the staff is in the moment, they [students] feel like they’re cared for, some wants them to grow, we want them to grow and thrive, exceed and reach their potential”. The enriching experience for Josh is a priority for him as he leads his school through their grade level

experience, which was echoed by Hampton, one of the classroom teachers, "... he wants what is best for his teachers, and I truly feel like he always puts the students first."

Josh's passion for providing an optimal experience for students is evident as he says, "I think my purpose is to provide an environment here at school that's enriching in every facet for students, and as I think about the adults is to help them provide that opportunity." Josh feels that he is a guide to the people in the building to get the most out of every moment and focus on the here and now.

One of Josh's teacher's, Aaron, spoke of Josh's purpose, "...first and foremost, to make sure he leads by example, and that example is open and honest". He goes on to say that Josh takes responsibility even when it is not his fault and that his ability to drive his staff to be their best even when the situation seems dismal. Aaron expressed, "... to be a really positive leader, but also, he is so grateful".

Ben, another teacher, suggested that Josh's purpose was more systematic in the approach of the building administrator. Including establishing a clear chain of command and ensuring those in the origination. Ben indicated a sense of relief for Josh as their school has a strong chain of command and takes the burden off Josh as he takes on so much and by having an understanding in the role of those in the administration spreads out the difficulties of the position.

Josh started to become aware of his purpose when he was a teacher. He was inspired by the leader of the school he was teaching at and that connection helped him uncover what he believed his purpose was all about. Josh said, "[As a teacher] I felt that I had a purpose, I had to grow and more importantly to allow students to grow and feel good about it". He identified that

his purpose should be felt with the entire school community, “My purpose is to cultivate [an environment] that [has] rich experiences, positive connections with the school community”.

Aaron’s experience with Josh’s purpose as a building leader was evident from the first year they worked together,

“Right from the beginning, I appreciated his humbleness coming in here, how honored he was, that he was the leader of this school and how he felt that he had qualities to lead. But he also welcomed everybody’s voice and wanted to connect with everyone and be able to hear them”

These early assumptions that Aaron spoke about were valuable to Josh’s growth as a leader, as he said, “Josh is one of those people that very much cares about what people have to say and using that [feedback] to inform his leadership”. Ben also echoed Aaron’s point of view when it came to listening from others for Josh to continue to refine his purpose, “[Josh] is willing to learn from others, but [he] ultimately [can] make the final decision on his own”.

Goals:

Josh seemed to set his goals high but with reservations that he can truly be the leader he desires. He said,

“I want to be the best principal I can be. So, for me that’s being better about staying current with best practice, know more about instruction at this particular level. Staying up to date with data and doing a better job with that. What are the numbers saying about teaching and learning here at the school? That is always a goal of mine”

These goals of Josh lead to a level of anxiety that he worries he is not doing enough he said, “I [want] to be reflective in what’s happening here now, am I doing enough with the deeper analysis of what is happening here and [now].” Josh spoke about the pressures to keep up on the

deeper analysis of his school, “I feel like I am managing the day to day but I feel kind of deficient sometimes and wanting to be better.” He stressed that one of his goals is to be able to use the data and information in real time to improve his ability to lead,

“When I talk to my colleagues I want to be on par with the deeper analysis, the process, the learning, the functions, and the structures that are happening in the school, I should be better at that and be a deeper thinker”.

Josh stresses about the perception of himself with his staff and that drives his professional goals. He worries that he isn’t pushing his teachers professionally and how that viewpoint determines what his staff think about him. He said, “I wonder if I am doing a good job [with professional development], I hope people see me as approachable and kind but I want to be more than that.” As Josh worries that his personability of being nice creates shortcomings about his ability to be an instructional leader, as he said, “I wish I knew more about math instruction, I knew more about [writing] instruction.” He showed an awareness that his staff may think that he is kind but are unsure if they know he desires to be seen as their academic leader.

Emotions

Josh presents as an emotional leader, one that his staff was willing to share. All participants shared a varying level of degrees of those emotions. Hampton, one of Josh’s teachers, said that at a staff meeting it was obvious that Josh was getting emotional and that humanized Josh. Hampton expressed that the staff meeting was in regard to parents within the community and that Josh was sad as he felt some of the staff didn’t have his back as Josh broke down in the meeting Hampton shared how he perceived that interaction,

“I guess [it showed] his more human side of just wanting everyone to respect him, but also make sure that we know that he is responsible for the school and that everything

will fall on his shoulders, to kind of protect the teachers”.

Hampton’s comments come from a story of another one of Josh’s teachers that expressed he was in over his head and that at the staff meeting Josh was brought to tears and the idea another one of his colleagues wouldn’t support him and his ability to lead. Josh’s ability to be emotional in front of his staff was also shared by another teacher, Aaron who said his emotional capacity to lead is “so genuine, I could cry”. Aaron when on to say,

“you know, he’ll, he’ll pause and I’ve seen it many times in the auditorium in front of people as he’s, you know, owning something or concerned about something he’ll just, he’ll pause and, you know, apologize gulp a few minutes. And then, you know, you could hear it in his voice and he’ll go forward, but he’s not afraid to show his emotions. And I think that that’s, I think that’s powerful, and I think that endears him to the staff because they recognize that when he reaches that point and he’s very genuinely touched or concerned or whatever, um, by that situation, and he’s not afraid to let them know that”

The teachers that participated in the study discuss Josh’s ability to show his emotions at certain times that have inspired or humanized him. One teacher, Ben, believes that Josh exposes his emotions too much at times, “I believe that he does share a little bit too much about how he feels... I mean there is a fine line.” Ben expressed that Josh will try to take responsibility for things that are out of his control and he will use more words than necessary to try and explain the decisions. “He might say five sentences about how sorry he is, he knows we work hard, the job of a teacher is difficult. The explanation about what’s coming next sometimes is little more than what [is] necessary.”

Aaron finds Josh's ability to lead with emotion as a positive thing for the school staff. He said, "[He] is so genuine that sometimes I could sit and cry". Aaron shared that Josh has no problem showing his emotions in front of the entire staff.

"He'll pause and I've seen it many times in the auditorium in front of people as he is owning something or concerned about something, he'll apologize, gulp a few times and you can hear it in his voice then he'll go forward. I think that endears him to the staff because they recognize that when he reaches that point and he's genuinely touched or concerned or whatever by that situation and he's not afraid to let them know that"

Aaron also shared that Josh's emotional style of leadership is not always to his benefit. "He cares about every [aspect] of this building. Sometimes I just want to shake him and say you don't have to be so concerned about [everything]." Aaron said that Josh personalizes everything and that he believes it is not in Josh best interest for his own health and longevity in the field of administration.

"[Josh] really wants to dissect everything and the what ifs. Sometimes it's hard to get him to stop, and [realize] it is okay. [He] doesn't have to take on all of this responsibility, guilt, and lose sleep but that's just the person he is, he is going to persevere on things. He will admit it, but then I know he goes home and still worries about it"

Josh was able to articulate his self-awareness through his purpose, core values, goals and emotions. Furthermore, his followers described his ability to lead from the front and was humble in his actions.

Portrait 2: Joe

Background

Joe began his career outside the state of Maine and began his leadership experience working for the government and moved onto a community college in the Pacific northwest. Joe returned to the classroom in the middle school setting and due to his lack of seniority became the building teaching principal, Joe said, “I became a teaching principal mostly because none of the veteran teachers wanted to do it... so somebody had to do it and seniority ruled.” Joe enjoyed the experience so much that he became a full-time assistant principal and followed with full time principalship at two different small districts in Maine.

Purpose and Core Values

Joe started to discuss what he felt about his purpose as a building principal. He said, “I sort of feel like my job is to create an environment where whatever people need to succeed. It’s my job to make sure that happens.” Joe explained his purpose as a building leader by saying,

Starting off with basic needs, of food and clothing and books, supplies and all the things that a child needs to be ready to come to school, [I] have to make sure the social workers are on that but also making sure the facility is ready and the heat’s reading and the boilers going. So, I have to make sure that my custodian is working on that. Making sure my guidance counselor is on top of those kids who have anxiety and why are children not coming to school. The biggest part of my job is making sure that my teachers have [what] they need to feel like they can be effective in teaching. What do individual teachers need to move them forward? And so, I think that’s a lot, that what I feel like is my job.

Joe’s belief in his purpose is driven by his ability to serve his teachers and ensure that the staff and students have the basic needs to engage in their daily work. Interestingly, Joe’s staff reported a mixture of understanding their leaders’ purpose as Dave, one of Joe’s teachers when

he said, “our principal wants us to strive to be the best that we can be. I guess try to bring your kids to [the] benchmark”. Another teacher, Jared, shared some confusion when speaking about Joe’s purpose, “I don’t think I know for sure, it’s not clearly communicated” and Kevin, another teacher said, “I think I could assume what his purpose is but it is not always clear.” Ryan, a teacher for Joe, expresses that Joe’s purpose is clear and student centered as he said, “I think our principal’s purpose is what is best for each child and he supports us to help us get that across”. Joe communicated his purpose was to ensure students and teachers had what they needed but there are inconsistencies in what his followers understand of the purpose of Joe’s role as their leader.

Joe’s experience in his current school has made an impression on him and his leadership unlike the other schools he has led. This is evident when he speaks about poverty. As Joe’s experience in rural schools he talks a lot about how resilient those people are by providing examples of how they will find a way, “The people in rural Maine are just as poor, but if they’re hungry they will go poach a deer, they go picking blueberries, even in those really poor districts kids came to school fed.” Joe’s comparison to the rural experience as compared to the current district he is in was highlighted by him saying, “Poverty here is more people who are on the system and are here for the services, when you have a child who can’t learn because they are hungry, you have to address that need.” Part of Joe’s current purpose is built around the basic needs of students and addressing their basic needs which has been a different experience than previous systems Joe has worked. Saint, a teacher who works with Joe spoke of the difficulties in their classroom and how Joe tries to assist with meeting the need for students with different socio-economic backgrounds, “Joe knows the [students] stories he knows their personal lives and will go above and beyond to help [the teachers] anyway he can.”

Joe's purpose and core values lead to his belief that he is there to ensure his students are safe and that families feel welcomed. He said, "...having school be a safe place where [students] feel cared about, that people want to help them, and that parents feel that they are welcomed at the school." Building upon this idea Joe went further to explain what one of his core beliefs that staff and families know,

I have your kids and that they know it and that teachers have their kids. I want everybody to have that feeling in our school. Your child is here and I am taking care of your kids... they are going to get fed, if they are upset [or] if they bruise their toes, hurt their fingernail we are going to have everything. I am going to try and teach them to read and write. That is my number one [belief] that parents have that feeling that I am taking care of their children".

Joe shared that his passion for students to feel like he is going to care for them comes from events in his life that have shaped his thinking. Joe talked about his own child going through a difficult time with a teacher that claimed to have "won a lot of awards" and that it was Joe's child that was at fault for not doing well in the classroom. Joe felt like the "teachers cared about [his child]" and that shaped Joe's thinking about how he and his staff perceived students that need attention:

[Parents] don't have better ones at home that they keep just for themselves. There are the [best ones], those are their treasures. And that was a defining movement for me. He was my treasure. I understand he can be infuriating, I want to get mad at him but he is the best kid I have... and I'm not keeping a better one at home just for me. So that was a really defining moment for me.

Joe's core values were further articulated, "It is important that there is somebody [at school] thinking about the kids' point of view" as Joe said, someone to "champion" for those students that need a person to believe in them. Which is something that Joe believes as one of his core values, always having the best interest of the student in your decision-making ability with his staff:

I will forgive a lot in a teacher if I feel like they have the child's best interest in mind, but we are here for the kids, and so the number one thing for me is that we are doing right by kids and would I want my child or my grandchild in your classroom. If I believe that you're doing what is best for kids, then I will work through any problem you have.

Beyond the tension that exists within the staff that participated they all agreed Joe has an affinity for student well – being. Jared spoke to Joe's ability to impact the staff during tough times, "He tries to be very positive to rally the staff and keep them uplifted". Ryan said, "He supports us fully, he makes that very clear to the [school community] he will be the first one to stand [with] us." Saint referenced the multiple times that Joe has gone above and beyond the call of duty but helping students with academic instruction, feeding the students, and consistently being an extra set of hands to make sure the students are getting what they need.

Joe spoke about moving his teacher's forward and providing them with what they need as part of his purpose as a building leader. Joe's purpose of instructional leadership is highlighted by his intentional professional development meetings that are to be meaningful, as he says, "[I] want to keep them excited and wanting to move forward, helping them grow as professionals and not just making it the same". He values the time from his teacher and it comes from prior experience, "I would feel like oh my goodness why are we even doing this, if we're going to take the time and have a meeting then it should be worth the people to be there." David, a teacher at

Joe's school shared that Joe is careful when using teacher time as he said, "[Joe] really respects our time, if he's pulling me out of the classroom it is for a really good reason." There were some inconsistencies with Joe's purpose behind professional development as Ryan shared that there is time when it feels like Joe is just making sure that "boxes are to be checked off" and provided an example about a school wide initiative that never took place, "if we're not going to implement it, why are we spending all this time studying it, talking about it, reading it?" Ryan's assessment doesn't go unnoticed by Joe but Ryan isn't aware of that as Joe also shared that some meetings don't offer the high-level intention he desired, "I would be really interested in what staff say about [professional development] because it should be worth people's time to be there."

Goals

Joe discussed the importance of relationships as one of his goals to his approach to leadership. An example that Joe immediately brought up was the ability to have difficult conversations when talking with

I had to have hard conversations with people and you have to have relationships with them, if you don't have those relationships with your staff, then it becomes a problem and I think they need to see you are not out to get them.

Joe spoke about his relationship with his staff,

I wouldn't say that I have a [close] relationship with everybody on my staff and so it does become more difficult to establish those relationships. It feels more like when I'm seeing [them], I'm criticizing them. That is something I am trying to work on as a building principal, but it is hard if you don't have people there all the time to build those relationships. Same as for teachers and [student's] parents, if you have to call a parent

because there is a problem, you don't want that to be the first time you talked to them.

Kevin's point of view was similar to Joe identifying that he does not have close relationship with everyone in the school, he felt that there are members of the school community that get more "space" and said, "We are all walking around in bubbles, [if that is the case] the bubbles should be the same space but some bubbles are huge and some are teeny". Kevin felt that the teeny bubbles don't get the attention as those walking around in the big bubbles.

Saint, a teacher in Joe's school, said that his greatest strengths are the relationships that Joe has built with the staff. "He treats everyone the same. He talks with them, he will share things about his [family] or he'll ask about our lives. Saint went on to say, "[He] has healthy relationships, we don't take advantage of him, he is friendly, he is sort of on our level."

Joe explained that all conversations are not meant to be negative when he says:

Mostly people want to do better, and we're really never talk about [being fired] or losing your pay. I think it's one of the fortunate things about our job when there is not a lot of punitive measures. We just want to get help for [teachers] to do better, help me, help you be better.

One of the ways that Joe discusses his intention to develop those relationships is to be accessible to his staff, having an "open door" and letting people see you out and about in the school. Joe spoke of his belief to be available to his teachers and identified some of his own issues with separating the need for his teachers to solve their problems or to just be an "sounding board" for them highlighted by this example of how his thinking is when talking with his teachers:

...you come to me and you're telling me all this stuff, and I am coming up with solutions and I can tell you don't like it. If you could just identify at the beginning, I just need to

talk you through this problem, that is different than here's a problem I want you to solve.

Joe said that he has incorporated that philosophy with his staff and it has been beneficial to his engagement with their professional relationships as he said, "I don't expect you to solve this but can I talk to you about something and that is helpful".

The relationship that Joe spoke of and being accessible to his staff wasn't portrayed by all participants. All of them agreed that Joe would be supportive but the majority of participants identified a divide within the group. Ryan said, "There are individuals who receive more care and attention than others, I'll be very honest with you, my principal has yet to ask me how my year is going". Ryan attempted to excuse Joe for his lack of engagement with him by saying he could be busy or Joe's schedule didn't fit with his own but Ryan's feelings became clear when he see Joe engaging with other members of the staff, "I know he is eating with other groups of people, you know, I feel that there could be a sense of favoritism."

Kevin spoke to a divide with Joe's staff as well, he discussed similarities in some of the staff's personal lives and how that has led to the formation of "in-crowds" because those in the in-crowd participate in activities outside the school with the leader. From Kevin's perspective this had created conversations with staff members that there are two teams within the building. Kevin spoke to the "bleeding of the boundaries" which makes him feel negative about the lack of cohesiveness with the staff members, "These kinds of behaviors make a person like me back away. I don't want to be a part of it, but at the same time, it feels crummy to not want to be a part of it."

Jared addressed the friction within the organization's relationships as how it relates to Joe's ability to respond and communicate with his staff. "[Joe] shows favoritism, for sure, he is

kinder to ones that he really likes and unkind and targets the ones he doesn't". Jared identified that there will be times when Joe will not interact with those that Jared thinks are not in his favorite group and expressed how it is an "interesting" environment because the non-favorites don't speak or are not heard so the overall messaging from the school is positive when in fact Jared said, "I know people are stressed, it [the school] is not cohesive because of the it, although many people vocalize that it's so cohesive and wonderful, but it's really not." Jared recognized that the people that are considered Joe's favorites might not even see the non-favorites perspective and wouldn't that no one dares to bring this up to Joe due to previous experiences. Jared stressed those that Joe likes to influence on the decisions and direction of the school but those opportunities are not afforded to the entire staff.

Joe's goal of building stronger relationships within the schoolhouse doesn't come without vulnerability for Joe as he said, "I don't do it as well as I should, but every once in a while, I have to [recognize] that I haven't touched base with [a teacher] in a while. So, I have to pay attention to that".

Emotions

Joe's ability to reflect has formed and developed his relationships within the school and the district. He had developed a protected time that allows him to reflect on those relationships and his sense of purpose, "I keep a journal at night and I write down a lot of things in that journal, I pray about a lot of things [and] that quiet time is every night". Joe also spoke of the importance of a "battle buddy" someone that you can process things with and over the years this person for Joe has been administrative colleagues and mentors but Joe spoke of a couple of teachers that help him keep him accountable. These teachers will inform Joe of things that he might not see in himself for example, "[Teachers] hold me accountable, [tell] me I wasn't my

best, kind of inappropriate, because I made a comment once, because I tend to use humor, it was an insensitive comment.” From Joe’s point of view his transparency with his staff allowed him the necessary tools to build capacity to lead with his emotions.

Saint spoke directly of his comfort level with Joe and how that impacts his ability to speak with Joe as he said, “I feel so comfortable with Joe, and I get the sense that a lot of other people do too, that they could say something”. David felt similarly to Saint when speaking of the emotions Joe will share, when speaking about a school related topic David feels Joe is, “is great about agreeing to disagree.” David speaks of the trust that has developed between him and Joe and how that trust has developed because of their common approach to school, “... we both invest the time in children so when I go to talk to him [about an issue] there is that trust [that I am doing what is right].”

Joe’s ability to lead with his emotion isn’t shared by all the participants, Ryan shared the lack of conversations he has had with Joe and believed that there was not a comfort level with Joe that allowed him to speak about issue as most of the leadership that Ryan has receive appears to be driven by measurable outcomes, “I think most of the [leadership] decisions are more data driven.” When asked about the emotional connection between his experience and Joe, Ryan said, “emotionally? I can’t give you an example.”

Joe clearly spoke to their authentic beliefs but what was interesting was the perceptions of followers with Joe’s actions. It was interesting to see the inconsistencies with what Joe said about his purpose, core values, goals, and emotions and how was supported by some of the followers but not all. Joe’s ability to understand what he needs to improve on, specifically his relationships with all followers was profound but the absence of the plan of action highlighted a current systematic problem with communication between leaders and followers.

Portrait 3: Mike

Background

Mike entered the educational profession right out of college. He began his teaching career at a private school and moved into the public-school setting. Mike worked his way into administration as a teaching principal before becoming a full-time principal. Mike came to this study with over 15 years' experience as a building leader, he has primarily resided in the early elementary schools as a leader and served as principal of three different ones in the same district. The three schools are vastly different as one was a high achieving school with the smallest population of students, the second was a school with the highest free and reduced lunch rate in his district and the third the largest elementary school in the district that was also a high achieving school.

Purpose/Core Values

Mike was very clear on what he believes to be his purpose as a building leader: "The overall general purpose is to ensure that all students achieve their highest academic ability... while also learning social and emotional [skills], along with ensuring that teachers have everything they need in their toolbox." Mike also shared that he believes your background or current living situation doesn't matter, "It doesn't matter what house you come from or doesn't matter if you have a house, our job is to move kids".

Mike's teachers shared three different points of view regarding Mike's purpose. Charlie, teacher for over ten years, shared she felt Mike's purpose was, "pushing the curriculum and making sure everything is happening that is supposed to have happened, being someone that is above you". Derrick, a teacher for Mike with over 20 years' experience, shared, "That is a hard question, organizing data, really busy stuff... I think I could assume what [his] purpose is but it's

not always clear”. Matt, under ten years experiences, felt that the Mike’s purpose what more of a supportive role as he said, “His purpose is have an overall goal or vision for the building, and to figure out where teacher’s strengths and weakness are... and then how to help them grow, how to make those improvements and stretch them.”

Mike wasn’t that far off of the theme of student achievement and the use of the data when he was talking about his purpose, saying, “When you are at our school, if we have cracks... we fill them so when every student [exits] here they’re solid” as it pertains to academic achievement. When asked if Mike things his teachers know his core purpose he said, “we talk about data” and data drove Mike to ensure that teachers had specific goals about how to deliver instruction:

When I first arrived here no teacher ever put in an acceleration goal, they stayed in the comfort [level]. So, I made them and I put acceleration goals [for] every classroom teacher and I had teachers come up to me and say that they realized they could continue to move those kids as much as they moved them. [The] main focus wasn’t always on them. You have to make sure you hit those students as well. I think the majority of the teachers would understand what [my] purpose is.

Matt was willing to back up Mike’s feeling that data points are important as a sign that students are succeeding academically. Regarding this value, Matt shared that Mike:

... believes that all student can excel academically... he is not afraid to say let’s look at these scores, why haven’t these [students] hit the benchmark, why aren’t these kids here and how are you going to get them there by a [specific] date.

When asked about Mike’s purpose as a school leader, Charlie previously shared that Mike conveys a sense in his professional interactions that he is “above you,” which has caused

him to question acting on his sense of what is right and wrong to enact in his classroom. Charlie expressed concern that Mike's continuous desire to talk about data, curriculum and achievement are overshadowing or crowding out what his intuition as a teacher tells him to do: "I get approval on everything [curriculum and data] ... but I certainly second guess everything I am going to do, it doesn't make me feel very professional to be honest".

Mike was very clear and direct that his leadership purpose is to ensure that teachers focus on student achievement gains regardless of the social-emotional and family factors that he feels can interfere with a teacher's tactical role in the classroom.

I will never let a teacher make an excuse of a student not learning because of [the student's] home [life]. It's not cute when that student comes in they're expected to learn for six hours a day. That is their role, you will teach them [and] I'll take care of the other stuff, I need you to teach. I believe that it doesn't matter where you are from, when you are in this school, you will learn.

Mike acknowledges that those home factors may be present but should in no way interfere with a teacher's expectations for learning. And, more importantly, Mike defines his role as the person who ultimately addresses those issues on his level in order to keep them out of the classroom and out of the teacher's consciousness as much as possible.

Derrick expressed how evident it is that Mike believes that all students can be successful in school and that each child deserves the opportunity to excel in their academic program but suggested that Mike is overly guarded and protective of time and how it is used during the school day. This perspective of Mike as a leader is comparable in some ways to Charlie's concern about leadership that's continuously driven toward results with less room than might be comfortable

for teachers in making day to day decisions in their classrooms. Derrick recalls a time that the staff wanted to take students out for an additional recess and Mike told them, “We’re not going to spend extra time outside, we still have work to do”.

Mike expressed some of his own emotions when talking about trust, which he appeared to find difficult to talk about. The hesitation was apparent as he slowed the pace of the conversation, took a few pauses, and lowered his voice. “I think [one] core value I have is trust,” sharing his belief that teachers trust him to lay out a plan and put it into action.

Derrick was very open to speaking about trust when it comes to Mike. Derrick has worked with Mike for over 10 years and feels that one incident early in their professional relationship has crippled his ability to trust Mike. “I’ve worked with Mike for so long and we’ve gone through [so much] and it was immediate, I cannot trust this guy”. Derrick experienced something early on in which he felt Mike listened to others and not him about his teaching thus creating a fracture in their professional relationship. Derrick went on to explain that Mike attempted to spin the situation, “He [was] like, well, I think that was a real turning point for you”. Derrick felt that he was being undermined and manipulated and said, “That’s the stuff it’s like crazy land for me, and I thought I can’t play [that] game”.

Charlie spoke of trust as it relates to changing things within the curriculum and taking risks in the classroom. He expressed that Mike does say that he trusts him but Charlie believes that is not reflected in the actions of Mike, “I think the words are there [but] I don’t necessarily think the actions reflect it, and that a department, that’s school district wide”. Charlie wishes that Mike and district leadership would be willing to adjust curriculum directives to match the reality of their individual classrooms, “This doesn’t fit our kids... it seems to fall on deaf ears and to me

that's a line that makes you feel you are not trusted". He spoke of recent curriculum changes in the district and expressed after they tried it believed that leadership would listen to suggestions from the teachers. That was not the case, "It's just done, there's not a lot of [opportunity] for feedback or even if it is given we [still hear] you gotta do it this way".

Interestingly, Mike spoke of such risk taking and trust that he has for his teachers as one of his core values, "We talk about risk taking in our staff meetings. I want them to push the envelope, I want them to stay within the boundaries but to trust their instincts and try and move students' '. Mike said that he desires that teachers put their trust in him and not feel intimidated by his presence when they are trying new things in the classroom. He said, "I'll keep [them] within the boundary. There are still boundaries but they also know they have the flexibility to [try new things].

Goals

Mike identified communication as one of his goals as the building leader. He expressed the importance of open communication and prides himself on knowing his staff well enough to give them information they need, when they need it. He shared how he likes to buffer all communication with staff, "You just give them breadcrumbs [at first] then you give them the full story when [they are ready]." As part of his goal of communication he believes he is protecting them from information that may influence their ability to have the student achieve in the classroom. Mike said, " [Teachers] get too emotionally drawn into [the students] situation and I've told teachers your normal may not be someone else's normal." As it relates to the emotional investment of children Mike was able to clarify that it is not that teachers can't be emotional about their students but rather they still need to help students learn. He said that his experience

has shown him that teachers can become overwhelmed if they know too much about students as he said, “I tell them to teach and I’ll take care of everything else.”

Matt shared that Mike’s communication goals have been effective for him but recognizes some inconsistencies from others on the staff as he shared, “I think we have a different relationship... I guess I am privy to more information.” Matt believes the success of Mike’s communication style is due to his presence in the building and his ability to always have “his door open.” He spoke of Mike’s engagement with others in the building and how he will discuss topics beyond the school day such as family and outside interest which in Matt’s words, “... makes teachers feel more comfortable, it makes them feel like he is approachable.”

Charlie feels differently than Matt when it comes to Mike's communication goals as the building leader. He is easy to give Mike an out on how things are handled by acknowledging things are beyond the control of Mike when it comes to decision making but he does not hesitate to when asked about Mike’s communication ability when it comes to things teachers need to know, “I think information feels like it is presented to use on a need to know [basis]. I feel like often times we get surface level information.” Charlie spoke to the impact this method of communication style has on the team, “I think it’s another part that takes away from us feeling like professionals and having that trust.”

Derrick’s experiences with Mike’s communication goals are unlike Matt’s openness and full access and also not similar to Charlie’s minimal insight. Derrick spoke of decisions made that impact his ability to teach without notice from Mike. He shared that Mike will decide on the direction of Derrick’s classroom and provide the information more like a memo than a conversation, as Derrick said, “[Mike] made a decision about how I am teaching and didn’t ask

me anything about it, I was [sent] an email that was very blunt.” Derrick shared regardless if Mike didn’t mean, “pushy, assertive or bossy that is how the message came across and it felt critical.”

Mike appears to have some awareness about the inconsistencies of his communication goals as he said, “I’ve said somethings that [were] off base. I’ve been out of line [but] you have to let things die down and then talk.” When it comes to access Mike falls on his strategic approach when communicating with his staff, “If I peak their interest right, the teachers are going to come listen, [they] will want more information.” This leads to his teachers going back to inform the other teachers which is how Mike addressed the access for some as compared to others.

Emotions

Mike’s ability to speak to his leadership as it relates to leading with emotions was not hesitant. He wasn’t as quick to speak about his data driven purpose as a building leader when it came to leading with his heart. He said, “Emotions can be a good thing to lead with [or] could be a detriment to those you lead”. Mike explained, “you have to show your emotions at the right moments. So, the teacher understands that you care, you care about them”. Mike admitted that he has a stronger personality especially early in his career as a building leader, “I was fiery a little, I think [I] let my emotions come over me instead of learning how to use your emotions to show care”.

Charlie was very articulate about Mike’s presence as an emotional leader, as he said, “when [I] push something that might be a little bit beyond the parameters of the [district] way, you can’t breathe, [Mike] just shuts it right down”. Charlie doesn’t blame Mike for the way he

acts when he is considering Mike's ability to lead with his heart as he said, "I feel like that is above him, I don't necessarily think he has a choice on that, I think maybe the shutting down is a defense mechanism". Charlie spoke about Mike and his interactions with him as an inspiring instructional leader, "I definitely don't call him an inspirational leader, I don't know what that looks like. I literally see [principals] as people that present what has to be done and when it has to be done".

Matt spoke of Mike's engagement with emotions and how it is difficult to read Mike but that his emotional ability to lead has grown and changed over the time that Matt has been under his leadership. Matt said, "[Mike] is not a super emotional person, I can always read when he's not happy about something." Matt said there is a physical change in Mike when his emotions are not on point, "His body language communicates that he is not in a good mood right now... he usually very short with [his] response[s], those would be the two big [indicators] to just keep walking and don't ask him questions".

Mike talks about his ability to convey his emotions in a way that wouldn't always seem positive to his staff. When addressing a change in the schedule Mike discussed how the change would be a shift in the staff's thinking and when a staff member raised their hand at the staff meeting Mike said, "I told them strongly to put that hand down nobody responded to me, decision over". Mike's leadership approach when using his emotions comes from his understanding that someone has to make a decision, as he said, "when I put something out, it's expected that it's done, if it is not done I am going to call you out on it. So, I think they learned through [my] emotion that when [a] decision is made, it is final".

Mike shared that his emotional leadership has been developed by those around him. He was articulate about what those he has worked for have said to him. He shared what one former supervisor said, “I have been told by [a] former superintendent that I’m not the brightest. I don’t have great vision, it’s not my strength”. Another former supervisor had the ability to make him feel like he was doing great but upon reflection of the conversation Mike would realize that he needed to get better. He said, “I [would] sit down and he could tell you your [leadership] was a piece of shit, and you left feeling high as a kite, that you could do anything”. He appreciated that approach and expressed how he couldn’t understand how to do it at that point in his career. “That is a knack, how do you take somebody who is struggling, manipulate them, mold them... and all of the sudden [you] start to pick yourself up and become better”.

Charlie expressed that he believes Mike knows he has blind spots and that there are areas that are challenging for him that he hopes Mike recognizes. He said that the actions that Mike does limit his ability turn those blind spots into a positive, he said, “Unfortunately, I feel like he has a hard time seeing that there might be other ways. He certainly appreciates his way and it doesn’t seem like he’s open to a lot of other ways”. Charlie feels like Mike is so up and down that when one of Mike’s blind spots is apparent to the staff they hesitate to bring it up with him because they feel like he isn’t approachable at that moment. One strategy that Charlie has used with his school team is not to confront Mike with what they see as his closed-minded thinking but rather make him feel like it was his idea. He said, “He doesn’t seem to like it when somebody else comes up with [an idea]. Can we get him to come up with this idea so we can get it”?

Matt shared that dealing with Mike and his blind spots can be difficult for the entire building to understand. Matt shared that Mike has gone to people that are in the building where

he will talk about decisions he has made and spend time reflecting on them to figure out solutions. “I think sometimes when he’s made a decision [that is specific to me] he’ll come talk to me about it and [explain] why he made that decision”. Matt shared that Mike relies on other administrators within the district a lot and through conversations with people in the building.

Mike shared that he reached out to his colleagues, “[I’m] fortunate to work with a team in this district”. He identified principals that have a strong vision, one who is data driven, one who is the “peak of professional[lism]”, one who he can process with, and one that you go to and you will get an answer. In Mike’s descriptions of these other principals it was as if he was listing his own deficits as a building leader and said, “So you take all of those [principals] and pull them together and it makes everyone in [our] district stronger”. Mike shared that he believed those around him on his administrative team make him better, “I get my strength on my vulnerabilities from the other team members' ”.

Mike’s emotional leadership descriptions showed a sense of vulnerability and he was honest about how his superiors' views of him greatly influence him. When asked how is able to deal with that honest feedback and understanding of himself he said, “I deal with it knowing each and every day, the students at this school are getting the very best from all the teachers and staff. I deal with it knowing the staff love coming to this school”.

Mike’s engagement with his staff is direct and there are inconsistencies of what his followers perceive of his actions. However, Mike’s belief in being a strong consistent leader leads to authenticity but brings with it an edge that he is not always approachable or his way of thinking is not welcomed by the followers. The interesting piece to Mike is the understanding

from his followers about his own self - awareness, as it doesn't seem to connect with them about his true purpose, core values, goals, and emotions.

CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to examine how authentic leaders understand who they are and if they execute those beliefs in their actions. Using the perception of the follower I was able to understand better that these leaders were in fact authentic in their daily practice. Conceptually I believed that my study would uncover how these building principals would negotiate their beliefs in the face of challenges to better understand how authentic principals stay true to who they are. This study included three principals from a large school district in Maine and it also included three to four teachers that work with each principal. The participants were able to inform the study and generate findings from their experiences. The research questions were critical in uncovering consistencies and inconsistencies from the follower's perspective and who the principals believe they are.

The findings of this study partially supported the original conceptual framework wherein the leader's self-awareness which included purpose, core values, goals, and emotions and their actions within their self – discipline and refined through their major life events would have proven the presences of an authentic leader.

Table 6

Research Questions/Findings

| Research Question | Finding |
|---|---|
| 1. How do principals negotiate their purpose, core values, emotions, and goals to achieve authenticity? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Leaders say they believe they are authentic; they speak to their purpose, core values, goals, and emotions. b. Humility is key to authenticity. |
| 2. How do principals negotiate their core values in the face of challenges to their authenticity? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. My study did find evidence of challenging situations for principal's authentic development. It did not find how they negotiate their core values in the face of challenges. |
| 3. How do principals working towards authenticity put their purpose, core values, emotions and goals into action in their daily work? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> d. True authenticity is measured by the followers or those that receive the principal's leadership. e. There are inconsistencies to the leader's message and the leader's actions from the view of the follower. |

Leader's understanding of their authenticity

The portraits from this study showed all three leaders believed they were authentic as they could articulate their purpose, core values, goals and emotions. Kernis and Goldman (2006) posit that awareness, “involves being motivated to learn about such things as one’s strengths, weaknesses, goals, aspirations, dispositional characteristics, and emotional states” (p. 295). Being aware of one’s self is a critical component to a person’s understanding of their authenticity. Josh, who struggled with identifying what he was good at as a leader, wasn’t short on things he wanted to get better at, Joe was clear on his beliefs and even said, “I am not shy about what I am good at” and Mike was able to identify the parameters in which he works with his skill set.

Josh’s ability to continue to push forward even when he faces his intrapersonal challenges is evident in his portrait and the emotional weight he carries is heavy on his mind and

heart. Luthans and Avolio (2003) suggest that part of the profile of authentic leaders is that they are “guided by a set of end – values that represent an orientation toward doing what is right for their constituency” (p. 248). Further Luthans and Avolio (2003) add that authentic leaders are able to be transparent in their vulnerabilities. Josh doesn’t suggest that he has in depth conversations and receives their feedback but the evidence does support his ability to have cognitive awareness to question himself and seek answers or solutions that are best for his followers.

A study by Karadag and Oztekin-Bayir (2018) found that the most important and reliable variable to determining authentic leadership is self-awareness (p.64). Joe’s portrait suggested his ability to define his purpose, core values, and emotions and like the other two portraits it paints a picture of what they say they believe in and/or stand. Peus, Wesche, Steicher, Braun and Fray (2011) shared that their finding revealed the self-knowledge and self - consistency as antecedents of authentic leadership (p. 343). Joe’s ability to convey his understanding of his purpose and core values are examples of their self-knowledge, Joe was steadfast in his beliefs about his goals and how he incorporates his emotions, albeit his followers shared a discrepancy in his self-consistency.

Mike expressed that he believes he is in educational leadership to move the academic bar for all students, regardless of their street address. George (2003) spoke of a critical component of authentic leadership is, “... you must first understand yourself, your passions, and your underlying motivations.” (p. 19). With Mike we see a person that has self-awareness, can understand his limitations and his need to be well received by those above him. He was not shy about taking the emotion out of his ability to lead and specifically how he leads with data. He articulates his inability to take excuses from his teachers about how students can’t learn and his

followers know that about him. Northouse (2019) discussed that authentic leaders are individuals that provide their followers with clear expectations and their leadership (p. 208) and Mike's understanding of his own awareness that he is authentic is evident.

Humility

A theme that emerged within my findings was how key humility was when understanding the beliefs of the leaders and the perception of their actions with their followers. Or, Daniels, Diefendorff, Bashur, Greguras (2020) found that the relationship between follower and leaders were impacted by the leader's humility and the follower's vulnerability to the leader. If the leaders were humble in their actions authentically then the follower would be more open to be vulnerable within their interactions with the leader (p. 117). Weidman, Cheng and Tracy (2018) discussed two different types of humility, one *Appreciative humility* which is, "associated with dispositions such as authentic pride, guilt, and prestige-based status" (p. 173) and self-abasing humility that, "[is] elicited by person failure, involves negative self – evaluations... is associated with dispositions such as shame, low self – esteem and submissiveness." (p. 173). The finding from these portraits is that humility is key to being authentic and the evidence is strong within all three of these studies that the level of comfortability with each follower and leader is critical to identify the leader's authentic beliefs. The intrapersonal perspectives from the leaders were astonishing as to their level of understanding who they are, whether it be the dispositions of pride, guilt, shame or low self – esteem.

Josh's humility was present the most frequently within his portrait. Josh came from a blue-collar family that had no formal education and he leaned into the experience he had with his father working with people within the bricklayer community. He articulated the impression that

his father left on him as how to be compassionate with people, listen to them and serve the needs of others. Josh's followers also expressed their impression of his humility and how that creates an authentic relationship with him and them. The followers' take was interesting as it alluded to the emotional toll the position takes on Josh and how ultimately it might not be in his best interest for his own longevity. Josh even expressed his own low self – esteem as he questions himself and shared how he doesn't have as much confidence as he had hoped.

Joe's humility follows some similar threads as Josh's but Joe's portrait shows that Joe's humility shines more from an internal desire to take care of everyone's students. He does express an awareness that he doesn't have the same relationship with all his followers and to some of the followers that is corroborated within his portrait. May et al., (2003) spoke of how humility is naturally within authentic leaders and knowing that authentic leadership requires the ability to be self – aware while also recognizing your own shortcomings (George, 2003; Luthens and Avolio 2003; Avolio et al., 2004.) Joe is clear about knowing his need to have a better relationship with some of his followers and even identifying he needs to improve as a leader. Morris, Brotheridge and Urbanski (2005) said, "... we suggest that humility provides leaders with a 'other' rather than 'self' orientation" (p. 1341) and Joe's ability to find the other with his other orientation towards his shortcomings with his relationships leads to his humility.

Mike's portrait showed evidence of his ability to understand his strengths and weaknesses which is a linchpin in Avolio et al., (2004) suggestions of being an authentic leader. Humility for Mike is more complex than the other portraits. His followers shared that they don't look to him for academic leadership, that he is good at being a systematic principal and that he likes to control the flow of communication with direction of the school and external issues with the community. Mike's portrait reflects a high level of confidence or the perception of a high level

of confidence and some of the opinions of his followers might indicate otherwise. Oyer, (2015) discussed the importance of the relationship of confidence and humility and the focus on leaders to continue to seek feedback on their leadership to increase their awareness (p. 78.) He described his method of self-reflection and that it is an ongoing process. He identifies his method of reflection as on going with informal conversations leaning on the strengths of his peers to help better understand decision making. Mike's humility is highlighted by such self-reflection and making corrections in his decisions and practice based on the feedback he receives from his peers, even when his followers don't see it.

Crucible Moments/Trigger Events

The second research question of this study was designed to elicit how authentic principals stay true to who they are in the face of external challenges. Through the study from the leaders and the follower perspectives it wasn't found that controversial issues compromised their ability to stay true to who they are. The initial thought in this research question was that there would be moments within the portraits that would test the leader's ability to remain strong in their purpose, core values, emotions, and goals or that it would show they compromise those constructs of who they are to alleviate the pressure from these external challenges. The absence of findings of these moments didn't come without a revealing of moments in these leaders that experiences that helped shape their authenticity.

Crucible moments as explained by George (2003) is the sequence of events in one's life whether it be a positive or negative experience but it is intended to push a leader's thinking, understanding and actions to a limit that in the end will improve them and see a new way. George's (2003) examples are deeply personal, a spouse battle with cancer or an individual battle

with cancer, it could be the death of a loved one or a moment of failure. The leader who experiences such impactful life events is to get through the crucible moment and come out the other end better for the experience of the journey. As George (2003) said, “The medium for developing into an authentic leader is not the destination but the journey itself – a journey to find your true self and the purpose of your life’s work.” (p. 27).

Josh’s portrait reflected the most depth to his experience with crucible moments, primarily his impressionable childhood with this family. He didn’t expose any negative experiences that refined his skills but Luthans and Avolio (2003) suggest that not all life events have to be negative, they refer to them as “triggers” (p. 247) that can elicit growth. Josh shares this trigger event as the relationships he had as he entered educational leadership and how he is transparent with his followers in the face of challenging decisions. His followers open about Josh’s ability to be emotional in conversations with them and Josh weights the voices of his followers to push him to think about things differently and make a challenging decision.

Joe’s crucible moment didn’t come out as broadly as the other portraits. One defining moment that served as a conduit to Joe’s purpose in his educational career, taking care of his students as if they were his own. Joe shared a significant moment that was personal and made an emotional difference in his approach as a public educator. Joe’s son was a student in middle school and Joe explained how his son wasn’t perfect and he knew it and, in his efforts, to work with the school to ensure his ability to be successful in school he shared the difficulties he had working with the school. According to Joe the teacher thought highly of herself and that she nor the school really committed to working with his son to get him to work towards his potential. Listening to Joe talk about meeting the basic needs of children, hearing their voices, and committing to building bridges and pathways of success instead of writing them off is evident

how much this trigger event impacted him. Joe expressed this the best when he refers to parents sending their prized possessions and that parents aren't keeping their best ones at home.

Mike's crucible moments are highlighted by a specific event from this study with him and that is how the perception of him from his superiors impacted him in his own leadership. Mike's journey in education has been challenged with a variety of different schools, three schools in his career in the principalship that have required his leadership to face obstacles with the wealthiest of families and the families with zero advantages in life. George (2003) posits that the journey is the most important aspect of finding who we are. His pathway in leadership has shaped him in finding his authentic self and he spoke of specific moments that solidified his thinking on who he really is. Mike shared how his own leaders felt about him and how they told him that he didn't have great vision and he shared he'd meet with his supervisors and get the sense he wasn't doing a good enough job but would be inspired to improve. This led to the development of his self – knowledge and his consistency. Peus and colleagues (2011) found that self – knowledge and self – consistency are critical in authentic leadership. Specifically, they discussed the predictability of leaders as a characteristic of trust. Mike found his form from these discussions with his leaders, although it could be perceived that his supervisors didn't communicate in a kind way, their brutal honesty shaped Mike's ability to be aware of who was and what he needed to do to move the organization. Peus, et al., (2012) suggested that consistency from the leader are, “antecedents of authentic leadership, which in turn effected followers' satisfaction with the leader, organizational commitment and extra effort as well as perceived team effectiveness” (p. 343.) Mike's followers even shared that he is predictable with how he operates within the schoolhouse and his consistency with them has been valuable in their ability to be effective.

Living the Authentic Life

The third research question was geared to understanding how the leaders put their beliefs in their purpose, core values, goals, and emotions into action. I wanted to understand if they lived the life they said they believed from the follower perspective. Kernis (2003) calls it authentic functioning which for my study is the ability of the leader to put into action their true self. The first finding from this question was that true authenticity is from the perception of the follower and the second was that the portraits of the school leaders in this study showed inconsistencies in the belief and the actions of the leaders. Leroy, Anseel, Gardner and Sels (2015) discussed the importance of the relationship of how the followers perceive their leaders in determining several concepts that included their own ability to be satisfied as the follower. This supports the theory that if leadership is transparent enough to put into action their authentic beliefs then their true self appears before the followers.

Josh's followers painted a picture of him that showed his ability was consistent with his own beliefs as a leader. Steffens, Mols, Haslam and Okimoto (2015) found evidence about how authentic leaders have a positive impact on followers and Josh's followers agreed with the emotional connection they have with him and how that endears them to his leadership. This creates a relationship between him, them, and how they operate together for the organization. Josh's followers articulated their feelings of trust with time using descriptions of their experiences with him in action. Trust is a critical component of being perceived as authentic which includes being sincere and honest (Agote, Aramburu and Lines, 2015) and with Josh his followers shared his sincerity which is evident by how he leads by example and takes responsibility for all decisions within the school. His followers spoke of Josh's ability to listen and value their voices. They shared his efforts to connect with everyone in the building to hear

their opinions and thoughts on the school. Two of his followers specifically said that he is willing to hear other points of view and this helps him refine his own leadership but that they are confident he will still make the final decisions on his own. This experience from his follower's perspective speaks to Josh's ability to believe in others and being vulnerable enough to make them feel he doesn't have all the answers by seeking their input on decisions.

The evidence for Joe from his followers in regards to his ability to put into action his purpose, core values, goals, and emotions revealed some inconsistencies. When attempting to describe Joe's purpose two of the followers were not able to articulate what they believed his purpose was the as a building leader, one follower identified it as a providing support to push the academic bar for his students and the last one was more aligned to Joe's description of taking care of the whole child. It was clear that Joe believes his purpose is to ensure all kids have their basic needs met and to improve them academically but the absences of some of his followers highlights an inconsistency in either the messaging or actions of Joe.

One of Joe's expressed goals was his focus on his relationships with his followers. As said previously in this study Joe understands his shortcomings in building relationships with the entire staff. He was forthcoming with a desire to be better at those relationships with his entire staff. The connectedness between some of Joe's followers is strong and their sense of competence and social connections (Heppner, Kernis, Nezelek, Foster, Lakey and Goldman, 2008) shined positively on Joe's authentic leadership from the perspective. The other participants painted a different view for Joe as they felt he created "bubbles" as Kevin has said and that some bubbles are bigger than others. Ryan was very specific about his experiences with favoritism as he believed others receive a high level of Joe's attention as compared to himself. Avolio and Gardner (2005) suggest that close relationships foster behavior that is in alignment with the

leader's values and thus leads to a greater sense of well-being for the followers and leads to a sense of authenticity for the leader (p. 326.) Given Joe's followers' perceptions of their relationship with him this leads to findings that are inconsistent with Joe's beliefs and actions within his school and shows that the true measurement of authentic leadership is measured by the followers that receive Joe's leadership.

Mike's portrait painted a picture that was aligned by his followers with some connections to his understanding of his authentic characteristics. Mike was able to express who he thought he really was and part of having authentic leadership is the discipline or regulation of authentic behaviors such as, internalized regulation... and relational transparency (Gardner et al., 2005.) Mike's ability to stay true to his core self or purpose was a highlight of this study, he believes that he is there for one purpose and that is to move students academically, regardless of where you come from. His followers agreed about his actions in their words they described a leader who focuses on data and strongly believes all students can learn. One follower suggested that sense of authority that entitles Mike but also supports that idea that Mike's actions are consistent with his belief about student achievement. Mike's relational transparency from the perspective of his followers shows some inconsistencies. Mike identified communication as a goal and in his opinion feels it is one of his strongest characteristics. As his communication relates to his transparency only one follower felt like they had access to Mike and his ability to be open about his own deficiencies as the others recognized that they believe he is aware of his shortcomings but isn't transparent about those shortcomings with his staff, which creates inconsistencies.

Authentic leadership from Mike's portrait has been difficult to understand as compared to the other portraits as there is evidence that he has strong convictions with his own purpose and core values but from his follower's perspective lacks the ability to be completely open which is

critical in the promotion of the organization through the authentic leadership theory (Avolio et al., 2003; Avolio et al., 2004; Gardner et al., 2005.) Mike as the building leader plays an important role in sustaining the teacher's psychological capital (Feng, 2016) and the findings from Mike's portrait shows some inconsistencies with evidence from the participants about his lack of emotional connections. Mike has an unwavering stance on his leadership and if his followers are not moving in the right direction he admittedly will call them on it and even when in Mike's eyes he is convinced he is doing it for the right reasons, the perception from some of his followers is that is messaging comes across assertive and critical.

Conclusion

The three portraits in this study showed varying degrees of authentic leadership, specifically the differences in perspective from that of the leader and those from the followers. Using the definitions of authentic leadership from earlier in this study we can see on and off ramps from the research questions to the findings.

The findings in the first research question are specific to the leaders, that those leaders understand who they are and what they believe in as their role of the building principal and the complexities of their role (Northouse, 2019). Shamir and Eilam (2005) suggested that authentic leadership, in part, is based on their values and convictions (pp. 396 – 397) and those hold true to how the leader can articulate their purpose, core values, goals and emotions. The second finding in the research question was that humility is key to authenticity. Each portrait painted a degree of humility from the leader, authentic leaders have a greater interest in serving others and empowering people and at the same time can see their own failures and work towards improving them (George, 2003.) Josh's portrait showed the highest degree of humility as it connects to his

vulnerabilities and his followers articulated as much. Whereas Joe and Mike's humility was channeled through their own shortcomings but less vulnerable with their own followers.

Wiedman et al., (2018) appreciative humility and self – abasing humility definitions didn't fit within each portrait as Josh showed signs of poor self – evaluation and at times, low self – esteem but extracted the arguably the most consistent portrait of authenticity.

The second research questions elicited specific trigger events or major life events that refined the leadership characteristics that would be desired for authentic leaders. My study did not find how these leaders negotiated their core values in the face of challenges; however, it did find moments in each portrait that were significant in shaping the leader's awareness of who they wanted to be. Josh's pursuit of finding his followers' voice to help him refine his ability to lead, Joe's experience as a parent and a poor interaction with his child's teacher lead him to believe all children need a champion and Mike's raw feedback from his supervisors helped him find his self – knowledge and self – consistency.

Findings from the final research question helped shine a light on if leadership in action is mirrored to the beliefs of the leader. Here we find inconsistencies but more importantly that the true measure of authenticity resides in the perception of the followers. There is a relationship that is forged between leader and follower and the leader's ability to foster and act equitably and consistently are driving factors in their perceived authenticity. Leaders that create an ethical climate, enhance their awareness while listening to their followers, being transparent about their own shortcomings with their followers and improving one the (Walumbwa et al., 2008) are perceived more authentic to their followers. The three portraits affirmed the inconsistencies within their setting in this study. Specifically, the relationship between followers and leaders, as

descriptions from the followers and the actions of the leaders showed greater access to them and information than others.

CHAPTER 6

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

As these portraits have shown, there is a need for school leaders to have a deep understanding to their self – awareness and put into action what they say they believe is their purpose, core values, goals and emotions. Conceptually the study was seeking to understand principal’s self – awareness specifically their purpose, core values, goals and emotions. Through the perspective of their teachers the study was to better understand if the principal’s actions were consistent with what they identified as their self – awareness. It also sought to understand the internal and external challenges of the principal’s life that are significant that cause the principal to reflect, refine and change their own understanding of their self – awareness, known as crucible movement (George, 2003) or major life events.

The study found that principals are able to articulate their own purpose, core values, goals, and emotions and they believe they are committed to their internal beliefs about who they are. The study also found some inconsistencies from the perceptions of the followers which leads to the finding that true authenticity is in the perception of the followers of those that receive the leadership. Humility was a critical characteristic of these portraits as it related to their perception of authentic leadership. Interestingly, the portraits didn’t show evidence of how principals negotiate their purpose, core values, goals and emotions in the face of external challenges but it did provide an understanding of specific events that helped them understand their own strengths and limitations. This chapter will focus on the implications of this study as it relates to scholarly practitioner practice, scholarly practitioner policy and scholarly practitioner research and will conclude with limitations of the study and a summary of the information.

Implications for Scholarly Practitioner Practice

Authentic leadership studies lean on the distrust of people in power and the selfishness of corporations to do what is right for those in power and not the greater good of the organizations which has led call to action for the need of authentic leadership (Avolio et al., 2004; Avolio and Gardner 2005; Gardner et al., 2005; George, 2003; 2007; Luthans and Avolio, 2003; and Walumbwa et al, 2008.) The findings from these portraits were interesting as it shows that the participating principals believe they are authentic and speak to their own characteristics as to their purpose, core values, goals and emotions. However, the findings also show inconsistencies within the followers of our principals that afford this study to propose avenues in which our principals can have the opportunity to continually grow their own authentic behavior and actions. The measure of a person authenticity is not a fixed trait, we grow and change with the interactions we have and the life experiences that are significant enough for us to take stock on who we really are and what our is our true purpose.

The inconsistencies in what the principals say and what they do from the perspective of the followers suggest an opportunity for practitioners to develop or engage in a practice that allow for a more open and fluid connection between the leaders and the follower that could provide the real time feedback from the perspective of the follower. Certainly, if this type of exchange become a practitioner's routine it would require prerequisites from the leader and follower. The most important thing between the leader and the follower would be trust. Trusting that communication could be open and without fear of retribution. The idea of sharing information that is critical to the development of the leader from the perspective of the follower which would bring greater awareness to the actions of the leader (Avolio et al., 2004). The leader and followers trust would also require the leader to recognize and lean into their vulnerability.

People in leadership can be afraid to admit their own shortcomings as it could lead to others taking advantage of those weakness or make the follower believe the leader is less than what they should be (George, 2007). The importance of receiving good feedback is essential to the development of growth for leadership. The current practices as it relates to the leaders in my study is that systematically they receive the constructive or critical feedback from their own superior. If a person is truly authentic in their leadership it demands that those authentic leaders understand what they are not doing well and identifying those short comings to improve their skills and those that follower them. These portraits should provide an opportunity to think outside the box as it relates to how we unpack our leader's ability to function within their vulnerabilities and it could require the ability or internal coaching or mentoring for leaders. Leadership coaching focusing on reflection and feedback (Joo and Jo, 2016) could play a critical role in the development of authentic leadership.

Beyond leadership and follower collaboration and the leader's ability to face their own short comings to refine their authenticity, leadership must have an avenue for reflection and retrospection. The three portraits identified ways of reflection have Josh leans on his people to reflect, Joe spoke of journaling and Mike reflects daily in real time. Self – reflection plays a significant role in leaders understanding who they are, it has the ability to improve their communication which helps avoid any misconceptions (Yamamoto, et al., 2013.) Our practitioners need to engage in the process of reflection on their own awareness and the actions they take as it is vital for them to continue to understand who they are, their followers' feedback and creating a plan for positive growth that leads to a more authentic self in their leadership.

Implications for Scholarly Practitioner Policy

The true north of a person is a commitment of a lifetime of experiences and is a helps you stay true to your purpose and values (George, 2007.) How can policy influence a leader's ability to stay on their true north or live an authentic life? From the implications of practice, it is my belief is starts with the development of leader and follower exchanges, leader's understanding of their own short coming and the ability to reflect on the experiences to help the leader continue to grow and refine their authentic beliefs and actions to stay to their true north.

The principal evaluation system that is currently used from my experiences doesn't yield outcomes that allow a building leader grow authentically. The system is top down and promotes systems thinking. George (2003) argues that it is important to work for an organization that aligns well with your own goals and values. I would agree but to achieve authenticity a leader must fully understand their shortcomings and blind spots within their actions. If we shifted our thinking of evaluations from district leadership to building level leadership to a more collaborative, non-punitive approach with leaders and followers working together, along with a reflective practice of leaders working with other leaders it could yield higher levels of understanding of who we really are and if we really put into action our purpose, core values, goals and emotions.

In Maine we utilize a top down evaluation system that is intended to hold people accountable and allow for growth. The Performance Evaluation and Professional Growth System (PEPG) is law in law in the state of Maine (Chapter 180, Maine Department of Education, 2022) and it allows districts to create, pilot and obtain approval on their constructed plan of the PEPG. The state of Maine provides guidance on options that a district and can adopt for example, The *Marzano School Leader Evaluation Model* or the *National Board Core Propositions for Accomplished Education Leaders* which is adopted by the National Board for Professional

Teaching Standards among others. These modals provide districts a road map how to build a successful evaluation system. The evaluation system with my portraits engage in a system where there are six standards; Learning and Teaching, Shared Vision and School Culture, Strategic Planning and Systems, Talent Management, Personal Leadership Growth and Fairness, Integrity, and Ethics. The rating scales are ineffective, developing, effective or distinguished (which you have to submit in writing that you want to be considered for this at the beginning of the school year.) There is one chance to perform a self -reflection which is primary used to develop future goals. The intention of the current evaluation system is twofold to hold people accountable and to promote growth. I believe many districts including the one of my portraits are doing the best with the rules they have and face obstacles such as structure, time, and money that prohibit the type of trust, recognition of our vulnerabilities without the fear of losing a position, and honest reflection to genuinely identify needs and actions of authentic leadership.

Two standards are identified in my portraits evaluation system that appear to elicit the idea of identifying purpose, core values, goals and emotions. First, Personal Leadership and Growth and second, Fairness, Integrity and Ethics. However, the performance indicators suggest that the ineffective principal doesn't align themselves with the organizations way of thinking and to be effective, a principal would develop a plan that only aligns with systems thinking. Morgan (1998) said, "Favored ways of thinking and acting become traps that confine individuals within socially constructed worlds and prevent the emergence of other worlds" (p. 185). The point is that not having a system that is open to growth and challenging the way in which the organization operates leads to a favored way of thinking that is punitive if a leader chooses to lead with their own convictions. It is important for leaders to work and live within organizations

that have aligned missions to their own authentic beliefs (George, 2003) but that doesn't mean different way of thinking should be punishable through an evaluation system.

Leaders need to address policies at the state and local levels that not only address accountability but also think outside the box in how we identify our beliefs, own our shortcomings and allow for continued growth. They are two different ways of approaching growth in leadership when currently they are embedded in one system. It is not enough to assume that reflection on one's authentic behavior is done through good practice because if it is not in policy and an expectation then we can't assume that leadership is engaging in these conversations, practicing they own ability to reflect and refine their actions to aligned with their beliefs. Leaders at the state and local level should fund programming for leadership coaching, currently it is in place for teachers to receive coaching during their probationary years and our portraits districts do engage in a mentoring practice for new principals but I would argue that understand who you are as a leader takes experiences and the notion that after a probationary period you "have it" is limited thinking. Using my own experience as a member of two different cohorts I pursuing additional educational opportunities I can attest to the benefits of networking and building relationships with practitioners across the state that have provided different perspectives of how we come to understand our beliefs and reflect together on our actions. It would greatly benefit practitioners to have a system beyond the current one where principals could engage in this type of cohort experience. Local districts need to consider how we structure time and money for such a rich experience. Beyond the element of top down evaluations, peer evaluations and observations could prove to be useful and effective. Regionalizing these efforts could address those districts with few schools and principalships but would also have to consider effectively using time as school leadership demands are at an all-time high and being outside

your building can be difficult. If a system truly wants genuine leadership that are strong in their own awareness and create a positive environment for teachers, students and their communities that educate the whole child then it is time for a system that address, supports and celebrates authenticity.

Implications for Scholarly Practitioner Research/Theory

The portraits in this study painted a picture of three principals and their awareness to their purpose, core values, goals, and emotions and offered a glimpse into what their followers perceived about those constructs as well as if these leaders actually behaved in a manner they say they believed. I certainly recognize the need for further research within the area of authentic leadership. Within the framework of this design it would be more beneficial if this study was a longitudinal study that follow these leaders over the course of a school year or multiple school years and if participates of a similar study included the voices of students, support staff, parents, and the greater community. This would give a more 360-degree portrait that could benefit a willing participant of such a study.

Further research on the impact of major life events or crucible moments would extend the understanding of how leaders identify their beliefs and would reveal the sequence of development in their actions. Leaders that share their life stories or major life events are perceived to be authentic and it provides clarity to who they really are (Shamir and Eilam, 2005) therefore an investigation into how these major life events are shared with followers if they make a positive or negative impact on the school environment and furthermore the intention of why a leader uses the practice of being open to allow followers into their personal life is of significance. Future studies should develop the emotional toll it takes on school leaders to be so

vulnerable or open with their personal lives and if that also supports a perspective of authenticity and creates a positive impact with the school community.

The relationship between authentic leadership and other constructs of leadership should be further developed. Northouse (2019) connects authentic leadership to leader – member exchange theory that is fostered by strong communication skills, high levels of trust and respect (p. 201.) The interconnections with authentic leadership, servant leadership, adaptive leadership and transformational leadership should be studied further individually and together to build a road map with multiple on and off ramps that could develop a leader’s ability to be true to their beliefs and incorporate it into their daily actions.

Additional research on authentic school leadership should be done in a more diverse environment and it should engage rural populations. One finding of this study was the inconsistencies between what the leader said their purpose, core values, goals and what the perception was from the followers. Further research could focus on a smaller school environment or a larger one. The size of the staff, student population and community could impact the leader’s beliefs and those perceptions from those that receive the leadership.

Limitations

This study doesn’t come without limitations when developing the portraits of the three principals that participated. The sample size is not large enough to be generalizable to all school leaders’ experiences or the perceptions of all followers. Another limitation as it relates to sample size is my closeness to my subjects. Working with these people and protecting their identity was critical and is a possible limitation to this study.

Reactivity was another limitation to this study. The influence of I had on the participants responses should be considered. Maxwell (2013) suggest that removing my influence from the

study is impossible but rather it was a need for the participants, as well as myself, “to understand it and to use it productively” (p. 125.) By the participants understanding my positionality and the ability to not probe with leading questions we worked to mitigate this limitation.

Given my position within the district of my participant research bias was another limitation. Again, like reactivity one is not able to completely eliminate research bias and the effort in maintaining my integrity was sought through the coding of the data first by the use of deductive coding from the conceptual framework constructs and then by the inductive coding methods from emerging themes and characteristics that the leaders and followers identified as critical for authentic leadership.

Summary

When I was growing up I was always in search of a better opportunity. My family was fractured, we were low income and my parents were as present as they could be, which wasn't much. I saw my friends have what I perceived to be rich experiences with their own families and I started to recognize that there are advantages and disadvantages in life. I believed that I could be like everyone else if I believed the way they thought and I did the same things that they did. This thought process eventually turned out to be positive, albeit not genuine, because I surrounded myself with engaged people that fully participated in school and extra-curricular activities. It was there I eventually found that my only path out of my current life was through education. I was attracted to the living up to other people's expectations and sacrificing my own independent thought to live up to what others thought I should be. Once I was out on my own in college and life I came to the realization that I need to establish who I was and work towards a career that was going to be fulfilling and purposeful. I decided that it was time for me enter the

field of education to help students find pathways to their own understanding of who they are and that no matter their background or family name they achieve at a high level.

I began my time in public school administration in 2013, prior to that I was a special education teacher at the high school level. Within my time as teacher I was fortunate to have multiple former leadership experiences that open my perception to how much I could influence the direction of growth and development of staff and students in a positive way. This led me to my first principalship and my desires as a formal leadership role was to be honest, open, and allow for others to give me feedback in pursuit of my own personal growth and create an environment of collaboration that allowed not only our staff to grow but that we would do anything it takes for the success of our students. To that end I started to formalize what I was doing by having strong sense of self and following through on things I said.

The significance of this study was to have a better understanding, beyond my own experiences of how leaders can identify their purpose in educational leadership and how they implement it by hearing from those that receive their leadership. These portraits developed primarily by the three participants that took the leap of faith in joining me on this journey and I am grateful for them. The findings revealed that there is work left to be done as it comes to a true understand of one's self and following through with actions that align to what leadership says is their purpose, core values, goals, and emotions as it relates to their leadership. My hope in this research is that we as practitioners can find a way to let our guard down to be open to feedback on things we don't do well and have the strength to be vulnerable enough to face our challenges. To stop being something we are not for external recognition or to please those in positions above us. The hope is that we can break down the barriers that are preventing us in finding out who we really are.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Semi – Structured Interview Protocol: Principal

The purpose of the research is to learn and understand the self – awareness of building principal’s core values, purpose, goals and emotions. It is also to learn and understand principals’ beliefs in others, risk taking, transparency, and the development of others in their association. Using trigger events or crucibles that helped or continue to help your development will allow you to reflect and engage in a conversation about your own authenticity. Your reflections will be used to analyze for conditions of authentic leadership, as well as, the conditions for authentic leadership in action. Your name will not be on any of the data. Data will be kept on a password protected computer and kept indefinitely. Audio files will be destroyed upon transcription. No other person will have access to the data except for my sponsor, Dr. Catherine Biddle. Your name and identifying information will not be reported in any publications.

Self – Awareness

- What do you believe your purpose is as a building principal?
 - How did you come to believe this?
 - Talk about the events in your life that have helped you develop your purpose.
 - How does your purpose in your role align with the expectations from your district?
 - How do you reflect on your own purpose?
- What are your goals in your current capacity?
 - How do you develop your professional goals?
 - How your own life experiences helped you create your goals?
 - Talk about your goals as they relate to the organization.
 - How do you reflect on your own goals?
- How do you believe your lead with your heart?
 - How do you perceive your ability to lead with emotion?
 - Talk about you own life experiences when leading with emotion?
 - How has your experience made you think about leading with your heart?
 - How do you reflect on your ability to lead with emotion?
- Talk about your core values?
 - How did you come to understand your core values?
 - Talk about your experiences in life that helped you develop your core values.
 - How do you reflect on your own core values?
 - How do you refine your core values?

Self – Discipline

- How does your staff know your purpose?
 - What do you do with your staff that would inform them of your purpose as a building principal?
 - How do you know that your staff understands your purpose?
 - Talk about how you live your purpose in your everyday setting.
- How do you believe you are transparent with your staff?
 - How do you consider yourself transparent with your staff?
 - In your role can you talk about how you ensure transparency within your daily action.
 - How do you reflect on your ability to be transparent?
- Talk about how you lead from the front?
 - How do you understand your own vulnerabilities?
 - Talk about how you lead knowing your own weaknesses?
 - How do you believe your staff and those you work with understand your vulnerabilities?
 - How do you reflect and refine your vulnerabilities?
- Talk about how you develop your own people?
 - Talk about the strategies that you use in your capacity to develop the people in your building?
 - How do those within the association know that you are interested in developing them?
 - Talk about the ways in which you develop your own people in your daily action.

Appendix B: Semi – Structured Interview Protocol: Teacher

The purpose of the research is to learn and understand the self – awareness of building principal’s core values, purpose, goals and emotions. It is also to learn and understand principals’ beliefs in others, risk taking, transparency, and the development of others in their association. Your reflections will be used to analyze for conditions of authentic leadership, as well as, the conditions for authentic leadership in action. Your name will not be on any of the data. Data will be kept on a password protected computer and kept indefinitely. Audio files will be destroyed upon transcription. No other person will have access to the data except for my sponsor, Dr. Catherine Biddle. Your name and identifying information will not be reported in any publications.

- How do know your principal’s purpose for being in the role of leadership?
 - Talk about what you think the values of your principal are?
 - How does your building leader put into action their values and purpose?
 - How does your principal lead with emotion?

- How would you describe the communication of the building principal?
 - Can you talk about the transparency of the leadership?
 - How do you feel like you know what is going on?
 - Talk about your experience of how your principal puts into action transparency.

- Talk about the principal’s vulnerabilities?
 - Can you talk about specific examples in which you think your leader was willing to own their own weaknesses or blind spots?
 - How does your principal give you and the staff opportunities to understand your own vulnerabilities?
 - How does your principal put into action, with the organization, leading from the front?

- How does your leader provide you with opportunities to grow as an educator?
 - Talk about examples that are present or have been present in the building that have provided your own growth from the leadership.
 - How do you reflect with your building leader on our own development?

BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

Dan Chadbourne was born and raised in Bangor, Maine. He attended Bangor High School and started attending the University of Maine after graduation. He earned a Bachelor's Degree in Child Development and Family Relations in 2005 and a Master's of Education with a concentration in Special Education in 2009. He was hired as a Special Education teacher at Bangor High School where he taught for four years. In 2013 he completed his Certificate of Advanced Studies in Educational Leadership and that summer was hired to be the principal at the Fourteenth Street School which serves students Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 3 on the westside of Bangor. He assumed the role of building principal at the Mary Snow School in 2021 which is a Grade 4 and 5 school on Bangor's eastside. Dan is a candidate for the Doctor of Education degree in Educational Leadership from the University of Maine in May 2022.